



Interviewee: **Eric Miazga**

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Interviewers: **Athena Aardweg, Judy Barricella**
& Tony Buba

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Voices of Our Region
Eric Miazga
June 12th, 2008

Eric: Umm... My name is Eric. I grew up in Erie, PA in '90. I was born in 1975. I had a pretty normal life. I went to school or any regular elementary school with a special home room. And high school was the same way. In the high school, I wrestled and I was in the Chess Club. From high school I went into college. I studied computers at Edinboro University, graduated in '91. Looked for a job for about two years in Erie. Couldn't find nothing. They ran a special program for the handicapped at CCAC. I went through that program, set me up with an internship with the city as a programmer. And it ended up that they hired me at the end of the internship.

Interviewers: So . . . so you came down to Pittsburgh by yourself?

Eric: Yeah. I came all the without my family. They're still up in Erie, but I mean, I'm a man. I need to work, and in Erie they was nothing in the field. So I basically dove in head first. I learned to swim all by myself.

Interviewers: So how long have you been working for the city?

Eric: I started my fourteenth year last week. (Laughing) I'm a programmer on—I develop basically web applications for internal and external use. We're now in the process of rebuilding a whole website so we been busy for quite a while. And that's a whole new aspect of the field for me. I had to do this for myself. I'm being just—being human. I mean this is just something you have to do. The good part is, I met my wife here, and I am married, we've been married four years and that was actually two weeks ago, we were married four years and that is working out very well. Very happy.

Interviewers: What's your family think about you getting married?

Eric: They were ecstatic. I mean no one ever thought I would get a job, let alone getting married, owning a house and having a dog.

Interviewers: Eric, who's had the biggest influence on your life?

Eric: I think my Dad. I think. He always told me I could do whatever I wanted to do. And he always tried to push me in the right direction and I always did think that he would be very proud, proud of me.

Interviewers: Well, what are you most proud of?

Eric: I think being married and owning a house. And knowing I'm making it with my own smarts. And no one, no one else's.

Interviewers: You ought to be a mentor. No?

Eric: No, that Could be scary.

Interviewers: Scary?

Eric: (laughing)

Interviewers: He's gonna retire at 52; he'll have to do something.

Eric: I'll go play golf.

Interviewers: Are ya?

Interviewers: Is that what you're do when you retire? Just pick up golf?

Eric: I golf now. I like golf.

Interviewers: Do you?

Eric: I just don't have the time to do it. So we go home and I cook. And I'm kinda old fashioned because I don't go home and pull a TV dinner out. I go home and I make mashed potatoes and gravy and chicken or beef or whatever and it takes a while. We eat. And then we clean up and basically go to bed.

Interviewers: But what do you do for recreation on the weekends?

Eric: Well, we bowl. we like movies, we like concerts. I mean, we live a normal life and basically whatever we want to do, we do. I mean, like, if we need help we get help. If we don't we do it ourselves. When I bought, I bought a ranch...

Interviewers: Oh, Okay.

Eric: ...house for myself, not knowing ever going to get married. I did have two steps to get in, umm. But when we did plan to get married, we went to OVR and they helped us make the entrance accessible and we also have accessible bathrooms for my wife. When I bought the house I guess. I guess. I mean and the funny thing is her parents live a eighth of a mile away. Because the funny thing is, see, we were so close together really, we all rode together but you could be on ACCESS for days. And I mean, we started talking and then she asked me to go bowling, to watch her bowl. She didn't think I'd be able to come because it was Saturday morning, very early, but when I showed up, I think I shocked her and the rest of her team!

(general laughter)

Interviewers: What do you see for your future?

Eric: I know I'll probably never be rich. I just want to have a comfortable life with my boys and my dog. And I mean live life as comfortable as I can. And me, I'm very lucky because I know that there are, quote/unquote, 'normal people' that don't have a job, can't find a job. And I don't know what I would do if I didn't have a job.

Interviewers: Do you golf from the chair or do you stand?

Eric: I golf. I stand up, I hit the ball and my wife, after she laughs (unintelligible). I hope to take her to the driving range, one day, and she left.

Interviewers: Have you seen changes in the work force? Any improvements?

Eric: I've seen changes. And some are good, some are bad. I mean, I guess (unintelligible) don't really know that this (unintelligible). I started noticed more when I (unintelligible) because of (unintelligible) being in the chair. And things that I take for granted, like going up a two inch step and she can't, and "why'd you put that there?" And that opened my eyes. I guess they get better and they get worse at the same time.

Interviewers: What about your speech? Has that been a problem for work?

Eric: At the very, very beginning, it was. I mean... Funny thing is, when I started here, and people were, I would be speaking, there were times when you could tell me to (unintelligible) really listening, and being negged at. Oh yeah, uh huh. And that used to make me angry, but as people got to know me, I mean, they got used to my voice. And my favorite word was 'what?' Because I think if you say to me 'what did you say?' I know you're listening. Or trying to, at least.

Interviewers: Any final words you want to say to everybody?

Eric: I'm deeply happy with my life. Do what makes you happy.