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John Pratt interview for the Lest We Forget Collection of Oral Histories

John Pratt

Judy Leasure

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John Brett

WRIGHT STATE
JOHN TAPE #29 & #30

**WRIGHT STATE
JOHN
TAPE #29 AND #30**

QUESTION:

John, why don't you begin by telling us about your family, and then maybe focus on Susie for a while for us.

JOHN:

Okay. Very well. You know that our relationship together over the years that I don't make speeches. I don't know how. I kid when I say I fired my speechwriter last week. But, I just talk as things come up and, uh when I start I usually tell you that when this is over, you'll probably see me maybe banging my fists on the table. Uh, crying, laughing and, you know. I'm kinda loose about the whole thing. I uh, operate better that way. I am an 80 year old retired mechanical engineer. That asked me if I'm retire and I say, no I just don't work for pay anymore. I'm still active. And, I'm glad; In fact before coming here today I had a talk with Susie. She calls me Monday's and Friday's and Wednesday nights from the workshop. And same questions, what I had for breakfast and are you gonna pick me up tomorrow and everything? So, we're gonna get together tomorrow, uh for breakfast and she likes to go shopping at Meijer's and of course, my daughter keeps saying, well that's your second home anyway. Anyway, I've uh, four children. Kathy, Mary Ann, Susie, and Ann. I'm slowing' down. (laughing) so, please bear with me. Cause I am so proud of these children and my family. And, when they say do you have a special child? I say I've got four of 'em! And they all have their own personalities. Um, my three older daughters are, uh, or my three daughters are professional ladies. Two of them our office managers for surgeons, and one's an RN

who is in charge of a cancer center. So, and then there's Susie, she's got charge of the workshop, she thinks (laughing). Uh, uh, she always tells me she's in charge and that she taught me that. So, we're getting into the... well, dating back, uh, I first got involved... you know... I've been in this business 44 years, and when I think back, you know that's more than half of my lifetime. So, if they say, that's all you wanna talk about. I say, that's all I know. You know, that's uh replaced a lot of things, but uh learned a lot of things, made a lot of friends, uh and I got in this thing when there was nothing. Uh, my first exposure was uh, when I volunteered the council for, er prior to that, uh, the Catholic Federation for Exceptional Children we started out giving, uh, religious instructions to the children, and they'll always be called children in my books. Even my 60 year old ones, they'll be caned a child. So, we gave religious instructions, um, to the uh children on a (inaudible) on Saturday afternoons. And, then there was a group formed and we talked and we wished and everything. And, there's some bright eyes people and uh, uh alert people who felt and shared my feeling. There was a need... well one of the needs were, at that time, to take our pre-trainables and get them into a county program. But, there wasn't anyone. There was a waiting list. And we thought how in the world can there be a waiting list? All we want is to put a dozen or two in. But, there was no room for 'em. Um, there was programs all over the town in church basements and (inaudible) barns and things like that, and there was no schools at that time. So, um, some wise guy by the name of John Pratt said, why don't we open our own school? And the friends at (inaudible) said, yes, that's a great idea. And everybody thought it was crazy, so Carl and I took a trip to Pennsylvania to visit a, a school for people like ours. And wanted a inspiration. Did you ever come out of a meeting and feel like you could scale a brick wall

with your, uh, fingernails? Well, this is what happened. So, we went to, made a presentation, to the council for retarded children which was a group of 21 people on the board, I think there was. Big board. And, uh, we practically were thrown out because they said, we were starting a splinter organization and we're gonna ruin everything and everything like that. And they wanted to know how are you, a handful of people, who know nothing going to open up a school with 10 children? So, my parting was, I says, well Jesus Christ opened a church up with twelve people, so we're gonna give it a shot. And, we did. We opened up a school, we hired Virginia Gibbs as a teacher who had been teaching religion and, uh, and, with help from Father Schwartz from St. Joseph's Orphanage. We started a school. And it when some five years till, uh, some of the people you will hear in this, there children were, uh products of this school and, and when we discontinued it when there was openings in the regular a programs to get in so that went well. So, uh, it went real well. We had day camps and everything. And, the thing was to get the parents together and the children together, because if somebody wanted to know something there was really no place to go. Uh, the doctor's, the worse thing they could do was to tell you, your child's retarded. See Susie started out, she was born deaf, and Dr. Seifer, uh made eardrums. Both ears, and uh, she had about 40% hearing now, but she wears a uh, a hearing aid, and uh, gets along real well with it. So, she went through, uh, Kennedy School for the deaf for three years and uh, until they decided and told us, finally had the nerve that she was retarded and we should seek help so we went and got the help and we joined the council for retarded children the same organization that said we were crazy for thinking about opening a school. And, I was nominated for the board. So, anyway, to make a long story short, I went on the board,

and became treasurer and I just followed this thing through. We, we operated a shelter workshop. Not as we know it today, but back then, we were in the Brown Street... 29 South Brown Street. You remember the church? Three employees and volunteers for 60 clients in the shelter workshop back then. We uh, the counts of retarded children, run it, and uh, we got along good. And, finally then they uh, bill was passed called the 169 bill for, uh MR and disabilities. Which, at that time, was under uh, the offices of the comi, uh which was, that was a different story there. Was knew for everything to come on, and uh, we had a few fights with the company at that time, because this bill said you take this over and you provide these workshop facilities for these, uh people. And at that time we were getting funding from the United Way. But, things kept going, and going, and going and presentations and budgets and everything, and we can... things just weren't moving, so the, the United Way said, well we are discontinuing your funding as of the 25th of next month or something. And, uh, so if you don't get money from the company you're gonna have to close, period. I mean, you know, we're not gonna keep payin' when there supposed to be... so I went to a county commissioners meeting, er uh, I mean the 169 board meeting, and I made this presentation with the threat, not a threat, it was a fact that we were going to have to close operation 29 S. Brown street if they did not pick up their responsibility. Well, in a week they had showed up with trucks and moved the shelter workshop over on Wayne Avenue. Dayton Gym. I wasn't too proper for a while. However, down the pike I ended up on the same board that fought with me. Three times, by the way. Anyway, uh, Susie was progressing at that time. I haven't talked about myself too much, I believe. Susie was progressing and she graduation from Southview School, and she joined the workshop at one of its locations and she loves it. She

absolutely loves it, and all these people love it. Uh, it's a something for them, and if you want some inspiration, go over there at, uh 8:00 in the morning or 2:00 in the afternoon and see that bus unload and see them children were so called, pile in there and put their arms around each other and this and that from everything. They're going good. Well, dating back to where we started with the uh, uh, Catholic Federation for Exceptional Children, you know we got the bright idea we needed homes. Some place to, and this is um, 45 years ago or something. And, um, everybody said, yea we otta have homes and uh, why wasn't anybody doing anything about it. Well, and at that time people didn't know. You know, there was nothing really pulling them together. They wanted the work, but today we got groups of parents that are for the adults, groups of parents for this, we got about six different groups of parents for all these different groups, the different stages where these children, or clients as they say, are. Well, back then we had one group. So everybody was helping others. Pitchin' in and everything like that. So, I appointed a committee and we formed the Resident Home Association. And the rest is history there. Damn, I'm proud of that organization, I'll tell you that it's grown from the first house to many homes and apartments in RHA I'll let the administrators give ya the exact figures and we have homes being bought now, so, we're on our way. But, we're not moving fast enough. They closed the uh, Orient, and they closed the other institutions and they sent these peoples home from institutions back to the county and said, here ya are folks. And, yes here we are. And what are we going to do with these people and where will they stay rather than many institutions? So, uh we're progressing... RHA and choice in the community living are my two favorites. Two of the best. Have to knock on wood on both of those. But, uh, it, it's wonderful that there is a place for these children to go. Now,

when I appointed the committee to look into our first resident home, I never dreamed that Susie would ever be... you know I was thinking about the people today, not the people thirty years from now. Well, anyway as time went on and everything, Susie now lives at Springmill with seven other ladies resident home. Very, very nice home. And when you talk to people, you know, they, in fact uh, my wife had an aunt and she said, you know we drove up and down Springmill and we didn't see a sign that said retarded children's home. And, no, and you won't because it's usually one of the nicest kept homes on the street. And, believe me, uh, you don't believe me drive by it. And, so uh, that goes well and they have a beautiful staff. It takes early in the game there's quite a turnover in this business because everybody thought boy this is an easy job. It's not an easy job. It's, God, you have to be dedicated, uh, to manage these homes and work with these people which they're full of love and everything like that so, uh. We feel that we may have made great strides to today. But, we are back to the point where Henry Ford was when he made the '37 V8 coupe. And, look where he is... the Ford line has come? Now, that's where we need to come. We need to make people aware of our needs, uh, and we can demonstrate what these people do. There's some operate a But we have um, people in the community. They work in grocery stores. Kroger, by the way, has a lot of uh, our graduates. And, uh, the Montgomery Board of Mental Retardation who operates Monaco Industries which is a shelter workshop, uh, bought a grocery store for training. They train these people that work at grocery stores and everything. We have the 2nd shelf uh, it's a second hand clothing store that when we started the school was created to raise funds to keep it going and that was run by Mary Pansickle. Uh, who was with, she'd just retired a year or so ago after 30 years of service. Beautiful job that lady did. But, everybody gets

in and does their things and... everything's been north of town....now there is a younger group organizing and starting in Centerville which I am real pleased with. Um, we need the younger people to come along and somebody has to replace us old timers one of these days and uh, get in line. But, I don't know what I would have done after 52... I guess I'm having senior moment here... after 52 years of marriage, uh, very happy marriage. My wife passed away. And as far as having a retarded child, we were blessed. You know, we didn't say why me? Because I look back of how our family was formed having a Susie. The girls were never ashamed of her. They had their company there and if somebody came Susie had to kiss 'ern goodbye. So, so uh, weekends that I'm not picking up Susie, why one of the daughters is, and, in fact, uh, they have a girls day once a month where all the grandkids and them, they get together with the babies and everything, but, and they meet at one of the houses and they include Susie and everything. Susie, I think is, thanks to the resident home and the programs, is leading a very, very normal life. Susie's IQ, I think is about 48 or something like that. And, uh, they have one problem with her at the resident home, she wants to do everybody's work, so, she gets barred from the kitchen once in a while 'cause she wants to do all the chores, but you know, they spread 'em apart.

QUESTION:

John, can you go back, talking about resident home, at that was the first, first, uh effort in Montgomery County to establish residential services. Uh, and it seems like, you know, you just make the decision and it's there, but, it didn't quite happen that way.

Um, tell us about the struggles of getting those homes open, and what the attitude in the community was? And, what it took from parents and from advocates to make sure that it

happened?

JOHN:

Well, you know the philosophy was, that's great you build a home for these people. But not in my neighborhood. You know, what's it gonna do to my property values and everything like that? And, um, we just. I don't know why I keep saying we, because I hadn't done much about it. But, uh, resident home just built a new home of their own out in Trotwood. And, after all the haggling and everything we finally got it on the roof. But, it took over three years to get it off the ground because of the delays and the lawsuits, and the petitions, and everything like that. It uh, nobody wants these homes in the neighborhood and we just don't go out and buy homes anywhere, and, now when I say we, I was part of the uh, home buying situation through the MR board and um, people don't want 'em in the neighborhood because they don't know what they are. They're usually the nicest homes in the neighborhood, the one here. You couldn't ask for a nicer home. Uh, there well maintained and there's usually no problems and everything. People come and go normal, and everything like that. And once there settled, uh, if they would have moved in over a weekend and nobody knew there was retarded people living there, they would never know, because it's, it's normal. And this is the thing we do is try and provide normal living. But, there was organized groups, uh, try to keep, keep us out. You know, we don't want you. Take your people over in the street. Do this and that. Take 'em out on the west side. Take 'em to Brookeville. Get 'em out of... we don't want the in Dayton. And that was a very, very challenging thing at that time. Nobody wanted us in the neighborhood. And, uh, we worked with the neighbors, and petitioned and everything and than I think at one instant when we wanted to open a second home of RHA in the

neighborhood, and I don't know this personally, uh, whether this is rumor, but anything I really don't know I consider rumor. But, uh, supposedly at one of the hearings where they wanted to open the Hamphill Home over in Kettering which is about, oh two miles from the one on Springmill. The Springmill people came to the hearing to tell them what a nice bunch of people they had there. So, uh that uh, that was the biggest challenge. And it still is.

QUESTION:

What do you think peoples fears is about having resident homes in their neighborhoods?

JOHN:

Okay. Well, some of the major fears neighbors have had about us opening a home in a neighborhood, they've heard so much about the halfway houses and things of this nature. Uh, and also we're in competition for houses, for this is mental retardation and there's uh, mental health groups. And, uh they have had some bad experiences along the way with some of the homes, you know, and they just don't want 'em around because they don't want their children being with their children and things would rub off and everything like that. Now, to give you an example, uh, I live in Kettering and when we came back from Florida from where I was transferred for a couple years. Uh, I bought a house in Kettering, I lived there 42 years. Uh, we had a neighbor move in who had a handicapped child also. But, the lady had never accepted it. So, she quit speaking to my wife and I because she didn't want their girl being around Susie, afraid she'd pick up Susie... something from Susie, you know like a, a habit or something that they might do. So, there's a lot of people that, you know, who don't accept the fact that, you know there

is, your child does have a handicap. But, uh, it's very difficult and you know I've discussed this, uh with a lot of my friends over the years, my associates I've been in the business, um where I've come in contact with a lot of people in my work and uh, career. And uh, they say well, we just don't like it. We might move. And, my philosophy is gee, sorry you're leaving such a great neighborhood. You know, it you cannot argue... there's three things you can't argue about... that's religion, politics, and the location of a retarded home (laughing). You'll never win a one! No, it uh, but uh, now the models are coming down now. When I say the models, the type of home we run and everything and they're getting down now to four people rather than eight. That's more normal. We're moving into apartments and these people have been trained to live on their own, do their own cooking and things like that... and work... with a minimum of supervision and that's what they call going out in the community or anything like that which uh, lot of parents think that's great and a lot of parents don't think to much of it. Uh, but it, it's still a fight, you know, and I don't know why we can't go out somewhere and buy some acreage and have ten homes built. But, then when I look it wasn't... RHA's went through trying to build one house. Uh, that's it, so it's... and... I no there's some people who really feared in the neighborhood and everything. Back then, when everything was just getting started, everything was kinda iffey, uh, but things are pretty well, governed now and pretty well run so I am extremely happy with the progress that has been made. I can't take that away from all the hard work these people have put in over the years. But, we can't quit now. We just, like I say, we're back where we were four years ago at a certain level and you just gotta keep going. And not, right now it is a fight with the economy and the budgets and the money and the, I'd like to see the people who run the shelter workshop

and run the school and programs and run the homes make twice as much money. But we really can't sustain the amount their getting right now, and that's the thing. And, why I appreciate a home so much is, which was one of my favorite, when I was on the uh state board for the Ohio Association for Retarded citizens, we met every month at one of the facilities and took tours and to see what these institutions were like. You know, that they heard, and 50 people in the room, probably not much bigger than this just to sit around the day, and things like that, and, it something had to happen. And they are downsizing the institutions and close 'em and bringing people back to the community where the belong. And then these institutions back oh say 50 years ago. A lot of people were put in these institutions that didn't belong there. They were kind of social misfits, so they got 'em out of the, the realm of things and this is where they hid the retarded in bedrooms, and behind wooden fences and everything like that cause an experience I had walking across one of the campuses up at Orient, a fella came up to me and I thought he was a visitor or something, and he asked me. Sir, where you from? And I said, I'm from Dayton, Ohio. How 'bout you? He said, well I live in this place here. He said, would you do me a favor when you get back to Dayton? I said, what's that. He said, would you call this number and this is my old man, and ask him why he hadn't been to see me in three months? Talking in a normal, you know... and that person didn't belong there. But they did. So they had sent something. They had a cleanup there... uh...

QUESTION:

John, let me ask you, uh? You go back far enough that at a time when Susie was born there weren't very many options at all, would you talk about there weren't homes there wasn't schooling. Um, is your experience similar to other parents from that time? What

your experience was of, what doctors and therapists and people told you to do? And what you needed to do for your daughter?

JOHN:

You know, Susie had a lot of sickness when she was young. At six months I think she had whooping cough and it went into pneumonia and she went to the hospital and at the hospital she got diarrhea and went to another hospital and she had quite a bit of sickness. But, we had a pediatrician. He was good. He came to the house, and he didn't want to tell us anything, you know. So, uh and we went from doctor to doctor and they sort of him-hailed around and everything, and then there was the deafness problem that they blamed it all on her being born deaf. Well, we got that rectified and everything, but then we knew something was wrong. But, we didn't know what. So, Susie was two and a half I got transferred to Florida. And uh, we took her through an evaluation clinic. Well, one of the, they blamed part of it on her hearing cause she had lazy hearing, they said. I never heard of that term before that or since. And then, one said, my advice to you... she will never amount to anything, you should put her into a facility immediately and forget about her. Now that was the... so we lived in Florida a couple years, and uh, they just didn't have any adequate facilities uh in Ft. Lauderdale at the time for Susie. Uh, my dad had had a stroke and Jean's dad had had a heart attack and this and that. So, at that time, my wife, Jean was in bed down there 'bout have the time with rheumatic fever and that, boy what a time there. So, we got Susie enrolled in sort of like a morning day school or something which was sort of a play school. Poor Susie got kicked out. (laughing) Being, uh, deaf. Not having a hearing aid or anything of that type they were afraid that one of the kids were swinging and get hit in the head something of that. And,

uh poor Susie's uh caper there. So, that's when we came back from Dayton. That's when we actively start getting in here. And, uh, retardation is a great leveler. And you say, why? Well, I think you're chosen really. Uh, Jean had a German measles when she was carrying uh... she but you know, every, uh, I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a thing. That uh, so you know look at the Kennedy family they have a retarded child. Look at me I'm down at the other end of the food chain. (laughing) We have retarded child's and the like and say it has no barriers. And the thing to do is to accept it. You're here for a reason. And, uh, and I think it puts a lot of us to tests. Are, uh, family I think was closer the fact that you know Susie was handicapped and that things... and one of the things I find today and maybe I shouldn't say this, but the people with retarded children... the people who are bringing retarded children in to... or developmentally disabled into the world today are coming into something that's at least ready for them. Which is a big difference, 40 years ago when they came into the world and, 50 years ago and there was nothing for them. So, uh we're trying and with some success is to get these people interested. Uh, and get out there and fight. Because we're not going to get anything without a fight. And the thing is, we have to get out of the box and reach these people out of the box and try to get them interested, and cause I don't know where the funding's gonna come from if it gets any tighter in the state. So, this is why we're actively working on, uh getting some new things in the pipes to try to interest people into, uh, donating, er, setting up escrow's to help us out and that where we need the help. Because we can go down and have all the sympathy in the world from the county, but they haven't got any money. They don't have any money and that's what we're running into now. And, it's the same way on the state level. Uh, and uh I

don't want to throw cold water on the thing, but it's a tough ballgame and you professionals who are working with this everyday know this much more than I do that it's tough. Especially, there are so many people out for money. You know, I'm getting requests by phone and through the mail from organizations I've never heard of, you know. So, I got a ploy now. I tell 'em I'm in the same business that you are. And, if you send me a check for \$25.00 in your name, I'll send you a check for \$25.00 in my name. BANG! (Laughing) So, it's tough. Uh, it's really tough.

QUESTION:

What do you think if you can look back, what was the, what was the most difficult thing all those years ago and you know, for your family, and finding a place for your family, and for Susie to be accepted into the...

JOHN:

Well, you know things are getting better today. Back then, because Susie was an oddity, you know. Kids would follow her around in the store. And, you know, you wanted to say, what do you want?! You know. But, you don't and, and we've been places where, uh there'd be a couple sitting there and Susie would be talking... and Susie wants to talk! I talk to her no matter where we are. She'll say, where's my mommy? I say, now you know your mommy's up in heaven with Jesus and she'll say, Well what'd she have for breakfast? And this goes on, we can be in a restaurant and I don't try to shut her up or hide her. Then you'll see somebody over there or you'll nudge 'em to make sure they see 'em. But, you know, and that was hard for me. Social acceptance, you know it, but it's getting better. But, you still see that. And, you, it, it was hard but you learn. And, uh, you know lots of times I felt like, so one day for

meanness, some woman was just staring at her, and staring at us and eatin' and Susie got uh, up, Susie recognized it and she got upset, you know, so I excused myself from my wife, I took up Susie and walked over to that table and I said to the lady. I said now, get a good look at this. If Susie is staring at you, that's cause she's retarded. But, I don't know what your excuse is, but you're really bothering her. And the lady started blushing and everything and uh, I think I ruined her meal. Then I got back and it ruined mine. Cause I shouldn't have done something like that. (laughing) But, uh, it's. But I've... well we were trained not to live in a world of self pity 'cause we had a retarded child. God gave us that child, so we don't run around and want everybody's sympathy that we got a retarded child. We just want her to accept us and Susie liked a normal family and that's why we tried to keep it. I mean, we never every went anywhere without Susie, and, you know the family. So, we've had a good life. I mean, we are fortunate. Uh, our life is different, they want to know why, you know. Like with me, why I don't play golf and go bowling and fishing and everything. And I've got a workshop and build a railroad in the basement cause it's... a lot of people with retarded children, you know they stick around home a lot. And that's what I do mostly. Except sneaking out and working with you people. Which has really been a pleasure.

QUESTION:

Do you feel that Susie's future is secure?

JOHN:

Well, as today as secure as anything can be. It uh, you know, uh, in working with the homes and everything like that they, they've got good philosophies and everything, but we hope it's secure. But, we don't know. You know. Uh, two years ago, you'd never

thought we'd been in the shape we are today. Airplanes flying into building and troops back in the war and i've lived that part of my life and here it comes up again, you know and... I'm hoping that it is. But, another thing. I've had some, I don't know, no questions are stupid if the people are uh, really interested. There's only stupid answers I think sometimes. And, they don't mean to be stupid, but they just don't know how to respond. That, uh, I've been uh, at a table with three guys and this happened, ohhh, four or five years ago and this old retirees from Monarch. Ya get together, well some of the group gets together once in a while, every once in a while I get together with them, we have lunch. And this one guy was asking about retarded and he says, well, you know these menstruate and everything like that? And I thought, why in the world would somebody ask a question like that? And, uh, so the only thing I could think of, I says, you know, I don't know. But, I'll ask her next time I see her. And, you know, that... but I was... and I've had people say, what's her problem? And I feel like sayin', what's yours? You know. I say well she's handicap. She has a hearing handicap and uh, she wears a hearing aid. The receiver's on one side and its bone conduction on the other side. And kids would come up and want to know what that is cause it's something strange. But, you get used to that. And, uh I pray everyday that, uh today she's secure. And I got a sign that says, Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery and today's a gift. And I try to live with it.

QUESTION:

I'd like to ask, what is it you think people need to do, uh to make sure that Susie and people like Susie are secure in the future?

JOHN:

Well, you mean like financially? Or?

QUESTION:

I'd like to know your opinion about that?

JOHN:

Yea, well you try to do what you can financially. Everybody cannot leave their child an apartment building like they have in the past. They do what they can. They cover them with insurance and things like that. In fact, I'm re-evaluating what I'm going to do in looking over different plans. I figure about, it's about time for me since I'm working in this field to try to get, uh convince other people that are coming in there that we have to see what's there financially. Another thing, we have to really look at and that's who we put in office. Now, that's not the President or the Vice President. That's your congressman, and senators, and things of this nature on a local level. Uh, we've got to have people who are schooled in being able to talk to these people and work with `em. They get them involved we... like I said this is another thing. We gotta get outta the box. Uh, and... if some think you're impossible why they'll take just a little longer. But, uh... I look back... where... what we got and what we started from back then and what... but it... uh, it's been a lot of work. Uh, but it's fun work. You know. Has been for me. I had to make it that way. But, I think that if you, if there's some way that there is enough money to make that money financially secure. That nobody can borrow out of that, but it was always there, that uh, and continue... you know getting more people interested and getting more homes built and things of this nature... you know some of these people they're, they have voting privileges, they pay income tax, they pay social security and uh, they're earning part of their incomes and I'm real proud of what Susie can do and uh, and, I'm blessed. We are blessed with Susie that she's ambitory (inaudible) and can get around

and you know... When I know of other parents, uh, they're not as lucky or as, what you know their child is... Susie's multi-handicapped particularly in her thing. But, uh, some are lot less ambulatory. An example of that is our Still Water's uh ... and I still want to call that a sanitarium, uh from years ago, but it's our Still Water facility is for the more profound um, retarded and disability thing.

TAPE #30

JOHN:

Well, it's a shock, you know. In fact, when new babies are born this is something every family like, between, now I had remarried, uh Susie has a step-mother now. They get along beautiful. In fact, after she and this teach that I hired and worked with four years ago twice. Somehow our paths crossed and we got married. So, we've been married about four years now. And, a beautiful lady. And between us this year. We've got twelve new great grandbabies. (Laughing) So, they say we're trying to populate the universe. But, this is one fear and everything like that, that we pray that everyone's gonna... we've been blessed. But, for the ones that are uh, fortunate or unfortunate to have this burden that's a lot of people consider it is a burden, and you... well I don't know whether it's really a burden, but it's a deal that it takes a little more effort to work with and everything. Uh, you have to accept that God is giving you this baby for a reason, and this babies another human being, and uh it's had life long before it was born. Uh, and you seek out uh, through United Way and places like this, they will put you and direct you to the proper organizations, uh that uh, can help you in what to do. And the main thing is, get involved. You have to get involved to know what's going on and get involved to see if there's something you don't like, you can change. And something you need

that's not there, you can work for. But, it's a total involvement uh, and there's plenty of room for volunteers, uh who, but the thing is... it's work. And we need people who want to work in every line if for just come and open and holding doors for 'em when they get off the school bus or somethin'. There's so many things. Come to the uh, the meetings, uh there's an organization called the Advocates in Dayton. Uh, it's a fine organization made up of parents that advocate for the retarded. Uh, if there's a problem they try to get in and represent and help you. They work with Columbus. Uh, the state level, the federal level. They have regular meetings. So, my advice would be as to join the Advocates, uh and join parent groups. And become acquainted with other people and uh don't be ashamed to ask. I wish there'd been more people for me to ask four years ago, but it's... and uh you'll enjoy it. It a... it's fun. I mean it's... well it's part of growing up. And, I know I started to grow up. But first I was 24 years old before I knew my father than I was. And, when I started having babies, that's when I started to grow up. And uh, it's been a wonderful life.

END TAPE