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ORAL HISTORY VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH
PAT BARBER
APRIL 13, 2014
INTERVIEWER: JENNIE TODD
VIDEOGRAPHER: PEGGY HOLTZ
RECORD ID: 089-DO

PB: PAT BARBER
JT: JENNIE TODD
PH: PEGGY HOLTZ

[00:00:10]

JT: It is April 13th. And we're here with Pat Barber in Bloomington, Indiana. And you are?

PB: My name is Pat Barber. And I have been living in Bloomington for the last 45 years. I was one of those very fortunate IU grads to get a great job here. When I got my degree in special education, my job was at Stone Belt Center in the early '70s. And at that time, Stone Belt Center was a facility in the location it is right now which was-- all the services occurred, children and adults went to that center. So from one end of the building to the other end of the building, children, preschoolers and adults with disabilities were served in that facility. No children were really served in a community setting, in a public school especially children with moderate to severe disabilities. They were all at Stone Belt.

JT: So school-age--

PB: Including school age.

JT: So they got their education at Stone Belt.

[00:01:19]

PB: In what was defined at that time as a segregated separate facility because it was a facility that only served individuals with disabilities. There were no children or adults that were typically developing. And I continued to work in Bloomington for the last four years. I've been retired for about two and a half. And the first 20 years of my teaching career, I taught preschool kids with disabilities and-- within Stone Belt and then within public school settings within elementary schools. And then the last-- about 20 years, I did coordination and administration kind of support for kids and families, identifying kids with disabilities and just kind of coordinating that identification, evaluation and IEP process as well as supporting teachers and programs.

[00:02:17]

JT: So at what point and timeframe did kids move from Stone Belt into the public schools, the community schools? And what brought that about?

PB: I would say that the primary entrance-- emphasis and push came from families to have their kids included in a normal typical regular elementary school. And, you know, I can't remember exactly when that happened when the first class moved out, but there was a class probably in late-- oh man, Jennie, I wish I could remember that. I think it's really critical, but--

JT: That's OK. -- Mid '70s, early '80s.

PB: I'm thinking it's the-- yes, mid '70s, early '80s, maybe late '70s. And it was a very young class of kids with disabilities. It—I think mid '80s. Anyway, this is probably an editing event, but--

[00:03:24]

JT: That's surprising that it took that long, honestly. I would have guessed earlier, but--

PB: There were high school classes that moved out, that moved to North High School and a couple of teachers that moved with students from Stone Belt to the high school. But I think it was like the mid '80s because I still remember some students that were in my preschool class that went to-- that moved in mass as a group of kids to a local elementary school to receive their services and they were all young like first-- kindergarten, first and second graders. And I would say most definitely, a primary push came from families working with the state, working with the local special education director because they truly wanted their kids to have the same opportunities. They-- the families really wanted their children to go to school with their siblings. They wanted their kids to go to school with other people in the neighborhood. It was just incredibly and still is.

It's just what most families want. And I would say one of the concerns that some families had and a lot of teachers had and a lot of other people involved in providing services especially to kids with moderate and severe disabilities would be, "Can public schools really do this? Is this really good for kids? Are they going to be-- are they going to be marginalized? Are they going to be singled out? Are they really going to get the support they need?" And another concern was that it would lose the network that a lot of families had because then kids and families are kind of scattered all over the community instead of localized or all grouped together in one facility like Stone Belt, it was an automatic network for families. They would see each other when they drop their kids off. They went to the same school events. And that was another concern with some administrators with that.

[00:05:42]

JT: So, how were those concerns addressed? Were the kids flourished in public school?

[00:05:48]

PB: I totally believe they did. I-- it certainly was a-- probably an emotionally letting go for those of us that worked in that kind of environment. But I definitely feel that kids flourished. And one of the fears or worries that a lot of us had is that, "Can anybody do it as well as we can?" They-- you know, people out there, they don't know kids with disabilities. Are they going to be treated well? And I have to say in all my years of experience that they are. I mean, good teachers, good principals, good administrators are good for all kids. And if there are good programs out there in an elementary school, then they're going to be good for kids that are struggling academically or socially as well. So, I feel very, very strongly about that that we-- you know, I had a parent say to me a long time ago that, you know, there wasn't a separate McDonalds that when they went to church, they all went to the same church.

And there wasn't a separate grocery store for her to take her son to. That-- and when her other kids would have friends over, her son with a disability with Down syndrome didn't. Those events just didn't happen.

JT: And did she feel-- excuse me-- that that was because they were in school with typical kids or that-- how did she feel that was--

[00:07:33]

PB: You know, that's an interesting question. I'm not sure that she could really articulate that. I do feel that, you know, over the years that one of the things that we did and maybe to a certain extent we still do in special education is that our focus is on the deficits. We write programs around what kids are not doing. We don't spend near enough time talking about what kids love, what, you know, what brings a smile to their face, what their interests are, what scares them, we really focus on deficits. And that's a pretty, that's a pretty tough way to spend your day in school.

JT: Right. And no other classroom does that.

PB: I don't think so. I don't think so.

JT: That's exactly—

PH: Well, a man that we interviewed is an attorney who talked about just like when you go to get a job, you're applying for jobs that you're good at.

PB: Yeah, yeah. And could you imagine spending your whole day doing stuff that you struggle with? I can't.

[00:08:41]

JT: Right, right that would mean-- make every morning to feel bad because these are things you can’t do and we're going to work on them until the end of the day. [Inaudible] last week.

[00:08:47]

PB: Exactly, right. And see your siblings go on this other bus and you're waiting to go on this other smaller bus.

JT: Right, the big bus or whatever.

PB: Yeah, those little yellow school buses.

JT: Right. Right. So, how did they-- this is what, you know, we're talking about earlier. What were the labels of the classrooms? I mean, was it like uneducable or educable--

PB: It was-- as I recall, it was severe and profound. That's my recollection. I keep thinking-- In the literature, there were much more derogatory ugly names like cretin and then moron, but I was not teaching when those became part of labeling classrooms. But classrooms were definitely labeled, severe and profound, educable, trainable.

JT: And how did those relate to-- because there was also the mild, moderate, severe and profound.

[00:09:41]

PB: And those kind of replaced-- As I recall moderate and mild replaced educable and trainable. Those classroom labels.

JT: And were kids referred to in schools as the person with Down syndrome, the person, the chair, you know, those sorts of label that you-- did that happen in the school systems?

PB: I think early on, it definitely did because I remember classrooms being called TMR classroom. You're the teacher for TMR, trainable mentally retarded. You're the teacher for EMR. And that was definitely in the '70s when I first started.

JT: OK. That's good. And so, talk about the attitudes the families had and the attitudes of the kids have when they were in those classes, you know, what kind of future were they looking forward to? What were the hopes and dreams that they at least had for their sons and daughters as they move through the school system versus, you know, how it is today?

[00:10:48]

PB: It's-- the best way I can describe it is to do the contrast. Because I feel now that families' goals and thoughts about their kids and their dreams about their kids that we all have about our children are just as broad and wide as we do for our kids without disabilities as compared to those early times like in the '80s and '90s when individuals were more involved in separate facilities. The goal was to get in the sheltered workshop. The goal was to maybe get a job out there for a part of your day. The goal was-- I don't remember hearing a lot of families talking about friends. Their goal was to keep achieving the next step, the next skill, the next, "Are you going to feed yourself? Can you tie your shoes? Can you get your pants on?"

[00:11:49]

It was always about getting a greater skill and not those extraneous things that we all know bring us a lot of joy like a friendship, like being able to go to the movies or just taking a walk or just that level of independence. Because now, I do feel that families are-- oh, I think their thoughts about their kids are so much bigger and they certainly still want their kids to be toilet-trained. And they want them to walk and talk and communicate. But I really do believe as they're getting older, they really want them to play in that baseball team or they really want them to be able to maybe sometimes drive a car or have a date or go to the prom and take some classes at Ivy Tech regardless of what their challenges are.

JT: That's good. Yeah. I worked in a day service provider for many years before I came to the institute. And so I was there in the late '70s and '80s.

PB: Was that-- where was that, Jennie?

JT: That was Morgan County Rehab Services.

PB: Oh OK. Right.

[00:12:59]

JT: And so, I worked with a lot of people that graduated Martinsville High School. And the families would say, well, we just couldn't wait to get them in the sheltered workshop. And so we would have parents in the sheltered workshop and their kids went to preschool.

PB: Yeah.

JT: So, you know, they didn't talk about getting a job out of high school even though they could have. You know, when you look at the people that use to come into our workshop, they were telling people that they should have gone directly for a job.

PB: Right. And individuals that are going to live on their own, maybe with somebody checking in or somebody paying their bills, but they're going to have this really nice life on their own.

JT: Right, yeah. So I remember taking lots of people that today, you know, I would be thinking, "What are you doing?"

PB: Right, yeah.

JT: So, that has been a big change that I've seen. And I was just curious how the schools, you know, what their philosophy--

[00:13:49]

PB: Mm-hmm.

[00:13:50]

JT: Were teachers supported, did you feel supported as a special ed teacher? And then, how did that support change when they did start bringing kids into, you know, mainstream classrooms and you were doing work with general ed. teachers? How did the support change? What was that experience like?

PB: It's hard to articulate with bullets for me because I feel like that we were asking teachers to do some things they had not done before to interact and support and teach kids that they didn't have a lot of experience doing in the past. And there certainly was some anxiety. There was some worry that they didn't have that magic dust that special ed. teachers did. I feel very strongly that it is a process, it's not something that's going to happen overnight and we cannot just place kids in this great classroom and they're going to learn by osmosis. If we just put them in there with, you know, 15, 20 other kids that do not have any disability that this particular student is going to just learn by being there. And I think it was and still continues to be a huge challenge.

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Training teachers, giving teachers what they need, giving the support that teachers need, and helping teachers, helping general education and special education teachers identify what they really, really need to help a student be academically and socially successful. You know, I know that Barb Horvath and I would have these conversations so often when we worked together with other colleagues that it has to be more than an assistant. It has to be more than bodies. We have to really do instruction differently. And everybody benefits, not just the student within IEP. And I think sometimes, yes, there was great support but I'm sure if you ask a general ed. teacher, they would say they were not supported that a lot of them would say they didn't have the support they need, they had kids with challenging behaviors, kids that were academically, you know, two and three and four grade levels behind the rest of the kids. I think it's-- I really believe it's something we're still-- we're going to always be looking at.

JT: Well, I was going to ask you and this is-- I was going to ask you to address that very point where general ed. teachers might say they're going to hold all the kids back by having kids with IEPs in the class because they're going to take up so much of my time. They don't have the support that they need or their aide can't really keep them up with the rest of their class. Yes, this is the right thing to do and yes, this is the way we're going forward because everybody benefits. So, do you have any scenarios or any stories where you could talk about that because it is still an ongoing issue?

PB: I’m sure it is.

[00:17:13]

JT: But if you could just, you know, kind of talk about how that worked out? Because it sounds like what you were talking about--

[00:17:23]

PB: Yeah. I mean indefinitely, I would see this. One of the roles I had as the coordinator of our preschool program was to help support five-year-olds when they left our program to go into gen. ed. kindergarten. And that was our priority for all of our kids whether it's full time or even a part of the day that they would be in their home school, gen. ed. kindergarten class. And-- -- it-- we-- when it-- I felt when I had-- when we were the most successful is when we started that transition process at least a year before the child left preschool. And that would include things like inviting the teachers, identifying who those teachers are going to be. And at least-- for the most part, we kind of know, kids generally go to their home elementary school whatever is their district line.

So we knew those teachers. We knew those principals. And so, they would come to-- they would visit the preschool class where their student might be, talk to the teacher. And then the preschool teacher would also go to kindergarten at least a year before that transition actually happened. Because, we, as, I think as certainly as preschool teachers, whether you'd teach kids with disabilities or not-- OK, thank you-- we can really lose sight of the expectations of the curriculum and what skills and abilities kids need to do to navigate in a group of 20. We have these nice classes and we're preschool teachers so, we want kids to learn how to get along, how to wait their turn, how to listen to the teacher, how to move with the group. Yeah, we're developing skills and knowledge but it's-- we're not doing it with 20 kids.

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So anyway, those-- it was-- we had the most success when we lined out a very specific transition plan at least 12 months before that transition happened. And it included lots of visits. It included parents going to the classroom because they are so critical to help us develop a transition plan, to develop and identify what supports and not just staff, but what kind of interventions need to be in place for their child. And it's always an eye opener for me to go into a gen. ed. class always. It's just a fascinating experience.

JT: That was good. All right, so let's see.

PH: I did have kind of what we—before we move on is maybe just explain going back to Stone Belt.

PB: OK.

PH: What a typical day in the classroom, what your classroom is like?

PB: It's an interesting question because I can still picture Stone Belt because it was my first job.

[00:20:40]

JT: Yeah.

[00:20:41]

PB: And there were eight or nine classrooms and they-- one end were preschoolers, infants, preschoolers and then just gradually up to school-age. And there was a separate classroom even in that building for kids with more profound disabilities, severe and profound. I keep thinking that there's another not really positive phrase for that. But it was not unlike what happens in a gen. ed. class or in an elementary school. There were small group activities. There would be large group individual one-on-one sessions. Kids did not leave the classroom much. The only time the kids left the classroom is when they were going to lunch. There was outside time like a-- what would be considered recess gross motor time outside. But it was primarily instruction in the classroom.

JT: And this was every day?

PB: Every day, every day.

JT: And summers, did they have summer offers or did kids go to school during summer?

[00:21:50]

PB: When I started, they were really coordinating-- starting to coordinate with the public schools. So there were teachers in that building that were employed by the public schools. And that was in the early '70s. So they were contracted public school teachers and the building administrator, Joan Burton was-- part of her salary was reimbursed by the public schools as a principal. So, they-- we operated on a school calendar. So, there was-- like over the winter break or spring break, there were no classes. But administratively, Stone Belt had the resources, the funding to run summer programs within that building which was another concern for families-- what was-- what would happen to their kids in the summer when school is out. So they primarily did have programs that run year-round.

JT: And through your tenure as things like 94-142, and IDEA came about least restrictive environment, can you talk about how things changed and maybe kind of explain what Public Law 94-142 was or what the term least restrictive environment means, as it has come up?

PB: For least restrictive environment or what we all referred to as LRE, we really became-- we understood that to mean that we needed to support kids in a setting with other kids without disabilities with whatever support they needed whenever possible. And there were some that interpreted that to mean that every child had to go to a gen. ed. setting, and regardless of what their needs were. It was definitely a process for us all to learn about, but I know that it worried a lot of people.

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They envisioned all of these kids with what was perceived as very substantial disabilities being in a gen. ed. setting not learning, being disruptive, you know, then teachers having this attitude that they're going to have kids that can't achieve in the curriculum and they're going to hold the rest of the kids back. Again, -- in my experience with preschool kids doing that transition, I probably had-- I don't know that I had as many challenges as staff did working with older students. Because at that time in a kid's life, they're more like their peers than they're not.

[00:25:02]

PB: And we had the advantage of, I don't know, little kids just change really quickly, every day. So, it's-- I don't know. I think that, you know, teachers had a perspective and families had a perspective too. They believed and wanted their kids in a gen. ed. class. And it was with that component of the law that started the closure of some of the facilities like Stone Belt, more and more classes moving out. And more even facilities like Muscatatuck and Silvercrest eventually closing that we really needed to create more opportunities for our kids with disabilities in the gen. ed. setting. I feel like there's more to that Jennie, and I'm-- because it was such a big deal at that time.

And it gave all of us that really believed in doing that, it gave us a little more authority if you will that we have the backing of the law and we didn't have to hide around being afraid what would happen with kids. Because I remember when-- remember when the preschool moved out of Stone Belt. And that was probably-- yeah, it would've been in the late '70s. When you have children and that's my point of reference, is the birth of kids.

JT: Right.

[00:26:42]

PB: So in the late '70s, we had a federal grant with-- in cooperation with Stone Belt Center, Monroe County schools and what was the DTC then, which is now you. And it was a five-year grant. And it was to start moving preschool programs out into the gen. ed. setting, out into the public school. And one of our first locations when we moved out of Stone Belt was Building Eight up here. And I can't say that was too inclusive because we didn't share playground space with kindergarten, we didn't share the lunch room, we were-- you know, we had a separate entrance. So, we were still somewhat segregated, but it was a step, it was a step that we took. And eventually then, we moved into the heart of the gen. ed. setting at University School, which is-- when it was up here. And we did some inclusion activities with Campus Children's Center that was housed there as well as gen. ed. kindergarten. And after that then, it was-- this was before preschool was mandated. That was the piece of the law that was kind of forgotten, which is then they added that. I think it was 94-457? Anyway, it was part of the law where the three to five was added. And India-- or Bloomington and a couple other cities in the state were the only public schools that had programs for preschool kids with disabilities. And it really gave us an opportunity to get kids out there, just to get kids out there with other kids going to the lunchroom saying, yes, we want to have a music class, and we'd really like to do it with kindergarten.

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Or, we want to do it with even if-- with another preschool class. Because it's a lot-- it's very difficult to push for inclusion and push for those opportunities when you're in a separate facility. Just can't make that happen.

[00:29:04]

JT: OK. That's good. Yeah, that was-- So, you maybe kind of talked about the pushbacks of-- and I guess, you know, I was thinking that originally when they started calling it mainstreaming and started putting kids into the gen. ed. classes that they started with things like art and lunch and PE. So do you want to talk about, you know, what the term mainstreaming and how that began with-- and again, I keep making you talk about-- you taught preschool and I feel like I'm making you talk more about older kids because they weren't really mainstreaming preschoolers into art and--

PB: No, because there wasn't-- public schools didn't provide in-- or starting to do that with some of their Title I preschools but no, you're right.

JT: So if you can talk about that in any way, shape or form, just like the term mainstream.

PB: Sure. And it came up again for me and for others in preschool when you're transitioning kids into kindergarten. And I do recall lots of conversations where people would talk about mainstreaming and that is exactly right. That's-- early on, that's what they talked about in what teachers and schools called specials. We would mainstream into what-- we'll always start like this. We'll do art, music and PE, maybe not art, and this conversation would happen. And it was clear in the law, mainstreaming was not a term in the law, it was LRE. So, how that word mainstreaming evolved is still kind of interesting to me. There was also a phrase that I would hear a lot, reverse mainstreaming, that we would keep kids in this self-contained special education classroom where they spent the majority of their day. And we would then, you know, maybe 30 minutes or 15 minutes, place a child without a disability in that classroom for very-- I'm not even sure how specific those reasons were, what was supposed to happen then.

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I always felt and, you know, maybe there's not that much conversation about mainstreaming or including kids in specials but it was always a challenge for me. I didn't understand it at all why we would place kids in those-- in a special because typically, those are the most challenging programs for kids. They last 20 minutes. They only meet once or twice a week. And historically, they're not the teachers that we spend a lot of time training for differences. And even just supporting kids with behavior, it's-- 20 minutes is not a long time to try to problem solve through some of those issues. And it's not-- it was interesting to me because I-- you know, they-- the reason would be that it's social. We're going to do this for social reasons. Well, I don't see-- I never saw those opportunities to socially interact during music, art or even PE.

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They're very structured. It's very-- things happen at a pretty quick pace. And I think it was very, very difficult for kids. And I also thought it was very, very difficult for kids to develop friendships that way because they were seen as visitors. They were only seen as they just come in for that. I felt like we were having a lot more success if I could get a kindergartner into a classroom for that first 30 minutes of the day, if they could transition then, do the greeting, if it's a circle time that they're part of that social beginning of the day. Because again, I feel like we're talking about situations where those teachers that are considered special area teachers, they have enough challenges. I mean, they don't feel like they have the support that they need.

[00:33:08]

JT: Yeah. I never thought about it that way because that's typically where you saw a lot of kids and it's like, well, they can sing or they can, you know, do a sport or, you know, something like that you do in phys. ed. class or in a music class so.

PB: Right. And I think it kind of also slighted or I'm not sure of-- the word I'm trying to think of really what happened in special area classes. I mean, the teachers did have a specific curriculum, they had expectations. And I think sometimes we would sit at IEP meetings and not-- and forget that, that there were expectations. They had goals to-- that they want the kids to achieve every nine weeks that they would assess. And it wasn't just to give the kindergarten teacher or the gen. ed. teacher a break. There really was a strong curriculum in there.

JT: Well how did the IEP process changed through the years?

[00:34:11]

PB: Boy, it sure has. It really has. Maybe it needed to. I think it's-- I believe it changed from being driven and developed primarily by one person, the teacher, the primary special ed. teacher to being developed by the whole team including and especially the families. And I really believe that that impetus has come from the changes in the law and the advocacy by families and teachers as well, especially teachers that really understand they can't do it alone. But that's the biggest change I've seen.

Because I remember being asked early on to have this IEP ready. I was supposed to come with the final document and there wasn't as much emphasis or support to make sure we did those meetings when parents could be there as there definitely is now. Because I would often sit at a meeting and it was just myself and the principal.

JT: Right. Wow. And so that was the other-- the follow up question I was going to ask you, you know, the voice of the family and the voice of the student. Kindergartners aren't necessarily going to have as strong a voice as someone in high school, but the role that that played in the change and when teachers and principals started listening to the parents and thinking, "Oh, yeah, you do this." But then, you're not, you know, you're not college-educated professional like myself.

PB: Right.

[00:36:13]

JT: But you know your child. So, when did the voice of the parent gain the respect that it has today? You know, maybe that's the differences. Is it now that we, you know, we really are trying to get people to talk to us and we really want their input, where before-- and I was guilty of this too. I did a lot of appointments, you know?

[00:36:35]

PB: Because that's-- that was the expectation.

JT: Right.

PB: It wasn't that we were shutting people out.

JT: Right. And it didn't matter if the family came or not. You know, so I guess I'm curious in the schools when it really started making a difference.

PB: You know, Jennie, I would-- I'm not sure that I have an answer for that. I don't know that I could say that there was one specific event or one specific law that changed. I think attitude started to change with the rules, with parents, and with people showing that kind of respect. I wish I could really identify if there was one specific event. But I do think it's like this-- all of this is-- was a process because I believe that there was a time when I would be in public schools that parents were not welcomed. I mean, it wasn't just parents that had kids with disabilities or, you know, parents that had kids with an IEP. You didn't get in that school. You didn't get in there without an appointment. And it is just by nature, schools are much more welcoming still in their desiring to keep kids safe with the locked doors and the security and all of that.

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But I think that is true for all families and all kids that principals and teachers are much more respectful. I know for myself and for me, it was a lot of people that I worked with early on that, you know, when you're a beginning teacher, I always felt like the best thing you can do is to-- when you're in your school or your agency or your setting, is to kind of align yourself or mentor with people that are demonstrating those behaviors, those work skills, the interactions with kids that I wanted to-- I wanted to be. Like there were a couple of people, I want to be like that teacher. I want to have those attitudes. And there were a couple of people early on that I observed that. That one person in particular that she was the only person that I knew working with in the early '70s that was talking about parents, that talk about families, that what's the family want, what are the parent-- what are their goals.

You know, nobody else was saying that. You know, you would do your developmental checklist whether it was the Wabash or the Portage or whatever tool we had in the early '70s, and what's the next step. She was the only person talking to me or just in general, what are the goals for families. And that really kind of shaped how I continued to grow professionally and what kind of educator I wanted to be. And some of my early experiences in the field involved living with adults with disabilities, doing after-school programs for kids with disabilities. And it did gave me-- give me kind of that perspective of, "Hmm, they're just with me a couple of years. I don't own them. They're not mine. I really need to be able to support the families to achieve their goal that they're after."

[00:40:05]

PH: That's great. It did-- you mentioned a couple assessments.

[00:40:09]

PB: Yeah.

PH: It'd be interesting to just kind of briefly talk about what they were.

PB: The Wabash came out of Wabash Center. And it was Wabash Comprehensive, something-- it was in a big binder and it was basically developmental checklist. And the curriculum that it was paired with was just activities to put in place in your classroom to achieve this goal. And it really was what some of us might call splintered skills, just skills, not overall development. And it was splintered skills broken down into things like gross motor, fine motor, self-help skills because we're really concerned about that with kids with disability-- well, with all of us. But as I recall, some of these early ones didn't really talk about social and emotional and how we can help just support that, support that development.

PH: And the other one is Portage?

PB: Portage. And that was a tool that came out of Chapel Hill. And that one-- the Wabash did not continue to become updated. Some of the curriculum and the assessments out of North Carolina did continue.

[00:41:54]

PH: It'd be interesting to see if there're copies of those around to just have an image, you know.

JT: Yeah. I can't remember the ones we used but there were checklists to can tie a shoe, you know, can brush teeth.

PB: Right.

JT: Can do all these-- just--

PB: And some of those were really based on what you saw. You saw that a child do that one time, that very specific skill, you were done even though he didn't do it at home. He didn't do it when he needed to do it. He would only do it in this very contrived setting. So it really wasn't part of his--

JT: Right, his daily routine.

PB: Yeah.

JT: Do you have any of just personal stories that you'd like to share about a specific kid or a family or another student-teacher relationship or anything that you can think of along the lines of what we've talked about?

[00:42:52]

PB: You know, there-- I have forgotten a lot of names but situations I haven't.

[00:42:58]

JT: Yeah, that's fine.

PB: And when I reflect on specific situations and events that happened that really make me smile, that make me glad I was a part of it, they typically have to do with kids and families, and especially families. You know, even up until the last couple of years I taught, I was still learning that families really know their kids. And I do remember one of the last ones that I remember was for this parent who had a child with a pretty significant-- her child was profoundly deaf. And there were many of us within the school and he was young, really young, he was like two.

And we were, of course, big believers and we're going to support him in his home school. We're going to support him in his community. We've got a really great preschool. We can put these services in place. And this mom was so respectful. She was not rude. She wasn't confrontational but she just was very clear and could support why she wanted something that we would have perceived as more separate, more segregated. And she could be very specific. And I agreed with her. I totally agreed with her even though I knew that there were things we could do and we were going to have to-- this three-year-old was probably going to spend an hour-and-a-half on the road coming back and forth to his school in Indianapolis.

[00:45:05]

But that I'm thinking-- that's not my call, what was emotionally draining for that child. And she was right, Jennie. She was right. You know, he is-- given what her goals were for him to be in this school that he would eventually be in as a kindergartner, he did get a really nice strong foundation. And he is being successful in a pretty-- a fully included setting. And that was one of those specific situations that went in a different direction, not full inclusion but I really did learn over the years that I really-- parents know their kids. And I came out of-- at a time that in the '70s and '80s that I know your kid better than you do. And that's how I was taught and that's how other teachers taught.

JT: Right. Yeah. I mean I had that same experience. And at the end of the day, I leave and the parent is still with the child.

PB: Exactly. Right, right.

[00:46:14]

JT: And so, it's like, "OK. I don't want to be responsible for this child or this family." So, I need to just listen to what they had to say and tell them what I have to say and let them decide because I got to go home to my family.

[00:46:29]

PB: Right. And the other thing too, that was-- I agree with that that at the end of the day, I went home to my family. But after a couple of years, that child went on to somebody else. And-- but the child was still going to the same home, have the same parents. And I always believed that parents have goals and we really, really have to listen to them. And we may not achieve every one of the goals that they want within the timeframe they want, which I think is true with all of us, but we can take those little baby steps to get there.

JT: Right. I think what is really difficult is when you know the parent-- when you pretty much know the parent is making the wrong choice.

PB: Yes.

JT: Like there were people that should be working and the parent would say, "Well, no, community's going to be harmful." You know, she had a bad experience in school and so they're not going treat her well and they're going to make fun of her. And that you've been there with them and you've seen them in the situations and it was exactly the opposite. So, those are difficult. But in most situations and even in these situations, you still have to just say, "OK," you know.

[00:47:43]

PB: Right. Yeah.

JT: And he's going home with you, not me.

PB: Exactly. And yeah. And sometimes we-- part of our support in a relationship is certainly with the student and the child but it's also with their family and trying to support them from where they are and not necessarily where we want them to be.

JT: Yeah. That was a really nice story. Is there anything else?

PH: Well, I thought, did you have to do any home visits and you said you work from three- with three to five at Stone Belt, were you ever doing any home visits, doing-- before they come into the program or?

PB: I did. I did home visits as a teacher and I always did home visits as a coordinator.

JT: What was that experience like?

[00:48:42]

PB: When I was a teacher, the first few times I did a home visit because I was young, I was in my early 20s, and I certainly didn't know how to conduct myself. I would go in the house thinking now what-- why am I here, what's my goal. But it gave me an opportunity again over time to realize that what the parents had to say, what their priorities, what their concerns were incredibly relevant. But I think the biggest thing I saw when I would visit kids at home is that they're really different. And I'm sure it's true of school-age kids and adults but little children are who they are at home. And I would have-- and we all would, you know, bringing this team together of doing this initial evaluation.

[00:49:43]

We would hear parents say that they can do this or they-- they're struggling with that. And their performance at home is entirely different than when we bring them into a classroom where they've never been before. And we saw some skills, some abilities, some interaction, just the level of comfort that I wouldn't see in any other settings, which is certainly logical. But again, when I started teaching, I know, I know more than you know, mom. So I found early on that the home visits are really, really critical. And I also found it important as I transitioned to become the coordinator to give families options because there would be situations where parents would prefer I not come to their house. And so then, it was just like, "Do you want me to come there? Do you want me to come to your-- to the elementary school? We can meet there." And the vast majority of families, I would say without question, wanted me to come to the house.

JT: Which schools in Bloomington did you work in?

PB: The-- all of the elementary schools.

JT: So, you floated between--

PB: Yes. I had a home-based office kind of place in the administration building.

PH: The mic is starting to rub on your sweater.

[00:51:13]

PB: Is that better?

PH: That should be.

PB: OK.

PH: There.

PB: OK. So, I had a home-based office in the administration building at MCCSC here. And-- but I always met families. I always did IEP meetings at the elementary school or in the families' homes. And that would be based on whatever the home elementary school was for the family.

JT: So that's pretty much how you spent your early teaching.

[00:51:52]

PB: Right. And early on, I did teach and we had preschools and three or four elementary schools. And so I would show up in my classroom every day like any other teacher. And I had eight or 10 kids and we had preschool all day. Because at that time, we were part of a special education cooperative. So, kids were coming from Greene County, from Eastern Greene County, from Owen County and from Ellettsville from Richland-Bean Blossom.

[00:52:26]

JT: Do they still have those cooperatives? They have vocational cooperatives.

PB: They do with the vocational school here, but not here in Bloomington.

JT: OK. So everyone is seen in their home schools.

PB: Yes. And that is-- that was one of the-- I would say what a very significant early on push with least restrictive environment was pulling kids out of Stone Belt, out of those separate facilities and doing everything we could to put them in their home elementary school.

JT: OK. Well, is there anything else you want to say, anything that you think we'd forgot or that I didn't ask you?

PB: I can't imagine what it would be or that I would have any answer for it then, so. [laughing]

JT: Or anymore stories?

PB: I have lots of stories but they're just not coming to me. But that's OK.

[00:53:20]

JT: It's all right, we could come back. [laughing] We could come back and tell us more stories.

PB: I graduated from IU in ’72, ’73 and this building had just been built. And prior to that, there were classrooms around the community. And the one classroom I remember is on Matlock Road, if you're familiar-- that building is still there. And then there were classrooms and churches. And there were primarily classroom-- there were classrooms for kids with pretty substantial disabilities that were not-- or they were at home. And to me, that's not been that long ago.

JT: And so the Stone Belt piece, was there more about Stone Belt that you wanted to tell?

PB: Well, it was really organized by a small group of families like eight or nine families. I don't know if any of them are-- maybe one, a couple of people are still alive. Leslie Green might know.

JT: Would that be the ARC?

[00:54:26]

PB: That would be the ARC. And at that time, it wasn't the ARC, it was Association for Retarded Citizens. And one of the stories about that whole-- that experience for me because I was a new grad and we-- even then, we're trying to be more inclusive and drop some of this really negative language. And I remember parents talking about they wanted their Stone Belt buses to say "Stone Belt Center for Retarded Citizens." They wanted those buses all around town because they knew that there were many more kids, children not being served that were in their homes. And their families wouldn't know anything about it.

[00:55:10]

JT: So they thought if they could use the buses, they would reach out for help.

PB: Yes.

JT: Was it hard finding people back in the day? I mean, you hear all the stories about people keeping their loved ones locked up or, you know, just isolated where people didn't even know they existed. Was that-- did you have experiences like that?

PB: I did early on. And it took several years as well as I think the laws and families to get local physicians, all physicians on board for physicians to make those referrals. Because I do believe there were-- there was not an awareness that there could be support and that it was valuable because I think-- I do believe there was a perception that whatever we could do for an individual with a disability maybe it didn't matter. We just keep them at home and love them. And I heard that. I'm sure you did too.

JT: Yeah. Or keep them at home and ignore them.

PB: Well, then always that. But I-- but also, I believe as a part of the law, we would see we had-- we were mandated and still are, I'm sure, to do child find. I think it's still called that. And that is about finding kids that need support and doing evaluations. And a lot of that outreach for us was not just with families but with our local preschools and child cares and especially pediatricians.

[00:56:46]

JT: Right, because that's where the people that you're helping were seen.

PB: Yes.

JT: Lots of families. Or the welfare of support--

PB: Absolutely, right. Those agencies that were in homes.

[00:56:58]

PH: OK. OK, that was good to add.

[END OF INTERVIEW]