

Community Affairs Coordinator for CIL: Picket Lines and Curb Cuts

[Interview 5: April 23, 1997] ##

Bonney: I'd like to go back this morning to the early seventies and the startup of CIL. Earlier, we talked a little bit about how you and others started CIL around 1971, and you had mentioned that originally it was a desk at PDSP. Could you tell me a little more about how CIL was run out of PDSP and what kinds of things were being done at that point?

Zukas: First, we were fleshing out our conceptions of what CIL should be. We incorporated, and we were looking for money. I think I

talked earlier about one of the two times in my life when I had stayed up until dawn working on a proposal for Tom Joe.

Bonney: Tell me what the original conceptualizations were for CIL.

Zukas: Basically, what PDSP was doing for the students--to have that available for the community. That is to say, to provide some of the services that significantly disabled people will need to live in the community.

Bonney: Can you give me examples of those services?

Zukas: Three come to mind: financial benefits advice and advocacy, attendant referral, and wheelchair repair.

Bonney: Did CIL try to establish one or two or three of those right away? What were the first services they tried to focus on?

Zukas: As I recall, we didn't actually start providing direct services until '73 or '74.

Bonney: And by that time you had moved out of PDSP, is that right?

Zukas: Oh, yes. Our first funding was a \$50,000 planning grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

Bonney: Is that Mr. Tom Joe?

Zukas: No. I think Herb Leibowitz was involved. The regional administrator was Dale Williamson.

Bonney: Now, at some point, did you use this \$50,000 fund to get the first CIL office and sort of organize yourselves into an entity?

Zukas: Yes.

Bonney: Okay. And then at some point, CIL received a grant from the city of Berkeley. Can you tell me about that?

Zukas: You mean for direct services?

Bonney: It was a community development block grant for about \$19,000. I thought it might have been used for housing, but I'm not sure about that.

Zukas: When was this?

Bonney: I don't know the date, but it was in the early to mid-seventies. You don't know anything about that?

Zukas: No. We did get some money for our housing component, but I think that was in the mid- to late seventies. I went through some of my archives looking for stuff which might be of use to the Berkeley Historical Society exhibit and I came across the proposal to Tom Joe, and part of a proposal to the city of Berkeley, and I think that was for funding our services to Berkeley residents.

Bonney: At some point, the CIL established a transportation and access community affairs position. You, I believe, were the director of that, and Eric Dibner worked with you as your assistant?

Zukas: Well, I don't think Eric was ever officially my assistant. In 1972, I was involved with the city on curb ramps, and Larry Biscamp and the other higher-ups thought I had a knack for dealing with government agencies. So when we got the RSA grant, they put me on staff as the coordinator of community affairs.

Bonney: What did you do as coordinator of community affairs?

Zukas: At first, work on improving architectural accessibility.

Bonney: In terms of transportation or buildings or what?

Zukas: Buildings.

Bonney: City buildings?

Zukas: Yes.

Bonney: What buildings did you work on?

Zukas: The elevator at City Hall. I remember a county building in Hayward.

Bonney: So CIL was not focusing just on Berkeley then.

Zukas: No.

Bonney: What other issues did you work on as community affairs director?

Zukas: The first time I remember that we got politically active was when Nixon vetoed the Rehab Act of '72 and we organized a

demonstration at the HEW building the day before the '72 election.

Bonney: Was this a big demonstration?

Zukas: As I recall, yes.

Bonney: About how many people were there?

Zukas: My guess is about thirty.

Bonney: What activities did the group do when they were at the HEW building?

Zukas: There were speakers--

##

Zukas: --set up a picket line.

Bonney: Who were the people that spoke?

Zukas: I don't remember. It seems to me that Judy Heumann was one.

Bonney: What did you do specifically to help organize this demonstration?

Zukas: I think strategizing. I'm feeling more and more like a klutz.

Bonney: Why? [laughs]

Zukas: Because I don't remember most of the things you are asking.

Bonney: That's okay. I assume this was a peaceful demonstration?

Zukas: Yes. We created the Disabled and Blind Action Committee as our political arm.

Bonney: This was one of their activities then? Because we talked about that a little bit earlier.

Zukas: Yes.

Bonney: Tell me what your impressions were of how the city of San Francisco responded to a demonstration back in '72 of people with disabilities. It was not as common as it might be now. How did the city respond to that?

Zukas: I don't remember.

Bonney: Was there a lot of police presence?

Zukas: I don't remember. [laughter] I don't think so.

Bonney: All right. Let's go back and talk about curb ramps for a couple of minutes. You started saying today that you were working on curb ramps with the city of Berkeley. Can you tell me what that project was, what it involved, and how you identified curbs to be ramped, et cetera, and how they actually came to be ramped?

Zukas: This was one of the questions that Linda Rosen asked me, so I did some research. First, the city rebuilt Telegraph [Avenue] in 1969 and the Rolling Quads found out, and they went to the city and asked them to make--by the way, this was between Bancroft and Dwight [Ways]. The Rolling Quads asked them to make the curbs accessible.

Bonney: What was the city's response?

Zukas: I can't say exactly, but it was done.

Bonney: So the first curb cuts in the city of Berkeley were on Telegraph Avenue.

Zukas: Anyway, Eric tried to find out when it was. I asked Eric when it was done, and someone found as-built drawings dated January 1970.

Bonney: The Telegraph Avenue work was done in 1970.

Zukas: Probably 1969.

Bonney: This coming Friday, Hale, there's a celebration to commemorate the first curb cut, and this celebration is saying that the curb cut on Center Street--and I forgot the other corner--

Zukas: Shattuck.

Bonney: And Shattuck. That isn't the first curb cut, is it?

Zukas: It might have been that the curb ramps on that section of Telegraph have all been replaced, so it might be. I came across a list of locations which I think was the next series that we asked the city to do. The ramp at Shattuck and Center looks more primitive than those, so it might be the oldest existing curb ramp. In any case, I consider that the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration is a couple of years late.

- Bonney: And the twenty-fifth anniversary you're speaking of is of what?
- Zukas: Allegedly, the first curb cut.
- Bonney: I've been told that when you started working with the city originally on curb cuts, you would identify the suggested places and you would tell the city traffic engineer, I think-- Chuck [Charles] DeLeuw--where you wanted the places, and the city would dump asphalt at night if they had asphalt left over from other projects.
- Zukas: Chuck DeLeuw did come to a meeting at the CIL apartment, but that was long before. Did you call him city engineer?
- Bonney: City traffic engineer? I'm not sure of his title.
- Zukas: That was long before he became traffic engineer. That was when he was working for DeLeuw-Cather, which is a big civil engineering firm. They were developing the Berkeley Neighborhood Traffic Plan. At the outset, the Berkeley city engineer was named Bill Dabel [spells]. In '71, we went before the city council and asked for fifteen more curb ramps. In '72, we asked them to pass a resolution to make all corners accessible and to allocate \$30,000 a year for curb ramps. They passed the resolution, but said that the allocation should be part of the budget process. I developed a curb ramp design which was used by the city--
- ##
- Zukas: I developed a curb ramp design that was used by the city for ten years or so, and until they adopted the design in Title XXIV. And for a few years they developed a list of curb ramps which they submitted to me for approval.
- Bonney: I just want to clarify one thing. Did they put the \$30,000 a year in the regular budget process for curb ramps? Did they actually do that?
- Zukas: I don't know that it was \$30,000, but every year they awarded a contract.
- Bonney: What was your curb ramp design? What did it look like?
- Zukas: It was four feet deep by eight feet wide, which in a standard six-inch curb is obviously much steeper than the one in twelve, which is the universal accessibility standard.

- Bonney: Did it cut the sidewalk out or cut back into the sidewalk? Or did it lay cement or something around the curb and fan out?
- Zukas: It was cut into the sidewalk. As part of our cross-disability consciousness with curb ramps, curb ramps were put outside the crosswalk. So there would continue to be a curb in the regular path of travel to alert blind people that they were about to step into the street.
- Bonney: Do you like that system better than the one we have now where curb cuts are ridged to warn people when they're going into the street?
- Zukas: Yes, because most blind people regard the grooves as virtually useless.
- Bonney: What do you think moving the curbs into the crosswalk has done for people for use wheelchairs?
- Zukas: Two things. It means we don't have to go out of our way as much, but there is more of a jolt because of the lip. And more importantly because of the angle between the ramp and the gutter. One of the nicer things about my design is it specifies that the transition between gutter and ramp be a four-foot radius vertical curve.
- Bonney: When Title XXIV was being developed, did you try to get your curb ramp design implemented at all?
- Zukas: I think so.
- Bonney: And it wasn't accepted for some reason?
- Zukas: Yes.
- Bonney: What were the objections, do you remember? Were you part of discussions about this?
- Zukas: To some extent.
- Bonney: Did the people explain why your design was not used?
- Zukas: Not that I remember. But I think the fact that it was out of the normal path of travel must have a lot to do with it.
- Bonney: Who were you talking with around Title XXIV? Who were the players?

- Zukas: State Architect Barry Wasserman, at the time that they were being developed.
- Bonney: Hale, are there examples of your curb cuts still in Berkeley?
- Zukas: Yes.
- Bonney: Where are some of them? Can you give me locations?
- Zukas: On Telegraph south of Dwight.
- Bonney: On both sides of Telegraph?
- Zukas: Yes.
- Bonney: Okay.
- Zukas: It's very spotty because some have been redone.
- Bonney: Is there truth to the story that you would identify places for curb cuts and then the city would put asphalt at the end of the workday if they had asphalt left over from other jobs?
- Zukas: Perhaps, when the curb was less than two inches high. An example is at Shattuck and Russell. There are some locations where they have put in curb ramps where they're not needed. For example, at the corner right out here, which is the corner of Stewart and Milvia--our corner--where the concrete has been cut across. I saw that after they did it, and I called and told them there was no reason to put one. And for a number of years the city was not putting in any asphalt ramps. I hear they are reconsidering that. Eric hired a guy to do what should be the ultimate survey of all the corners in the city.
- Bonney: That's being done now?
- Zukas: Yes.
- Bonney: Are you working on that?
- Zukas: No. I thought of applying.
- Bonney: Why didn't you? You'd be great.
- Zukas: Well, I decided that the notetaking was too complicated.