

Pioneering pastor struggled to find transportation

<http://www.accesspress.org/2012/11/pioneering-pastor-struggled-to-find-transportation/>

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In June 1972 Barbara Andrews was one of a group of persons with disabilities who urged the Bill of Rights Committee of the Minnesota Constitutional Study Commission to include a provision in the state constitution prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability. Andrews, who had cerebral palsy and could not drive, described some of the transportation problems she encountered in the Twin Cities in the 1960s and early 1970s while serving as a campus pastor at the University of Minnesota and attending Luther Seminary in St. Paul.



“My main source of transportation has been the private cab companies of this area, some of whom have refused me service from the very beginning though I am able to get in and out of the average car with little or no assistance. I was fortunate enough to travel with the same cab company (Yellow Cab) from 1963 until 1971 with few problems. In June of 1971 I was refused service, without warning, by that company, which claims to have a picture of the ramp leading into my house and further claims that it supplies insufficient access for a person of my needs. On the basis of that picture, which I have never seen, the cab company in question claims that it cannot afford to handle the high risk insurance it says is necessary in such cases.”

Andrews recounted her attempts to get transportation from agencies designed to help persons with disabilities, “each one seemingly more expensive than the other.” The small suburban cab company (Town Taxi) that did provide her excellent service was unable to transport her throughout the entire metropolitan area.

Even that company stipulated “that all drivers need not be expected to transport handicapped people.” Andrews received a Master of Divinity Degree from the seminary and in December 1970 became the first woman ordained by the American Lutheran Church. News accounts of her ordination were republished in newspapers around the country. She became an assistant pastor at the Edina Community Lutheran Church. In that context, she concluded her testimony to the committee with this statement:

“As a handicapped person, I am met with a variety of reactions by fellow handicapped persons. In many ways it looks like I’ve made it in both the straight and the handicapped world, which makes me both an object of pride and envy. But whatever way one looks at me, it is a misnomer. I am intelligent and well-educated and to some have achieved a certain degree of success, but all those things are being threatened by a decreasing mobility in a profession that demands mobility. ‘Hire the handicapped—it’s good business’ is only a slogan as long as there is no way to get to that job, if and when you find it.”

The Constitutional Study Commission refused to recommend including a prohibition on discrimination on the basis of disability in the Minnesota Constitution, but the following year the Minnesota Legislature added discrimination on the basis of disability to the Human Rights Act and

prohibited cab companies from discriminating on that basis.

Andrews died in Detroit in 1978 in a fire in her apartment building. The complete text of her testimony is included in *With an Eye to the Past* on the DD Council website at www.mnddc.org/pastpdf70s/72/72-DTPBNA.pdf

Would you like to make history?

Access Press is interested in reader submissions for the monthly History Note column, to complement the articles written by Luther Granquist and other contributors. Submissions must center on events, people and places in the history of Minnesota's disability community. We are interested in history that focuses on all types of physical and cognitive disabilities, so long as the history has a tie to Minnesota. We are especially interested in stories from Greater Minnesota. Please submit ideas prior to submitting full stories, as we may have covered the topic before. Past History Note articles can be found on www.accesspress.org. Contact us at access@accesspress.org or 651-644-2133 if you have questions.

The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, www.mncdd.org and www.partnersinpolicymaking.com