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Sam Zamarripa came into my stereo store in Syracuse in 1976. He introduced himself, explained that he was a friend of a friend of mine, and we became friends. He told me that he had moved from Florida to work with Wolf, and he gradually introduced me to normalization and PASS. At first I was a participant in training events (while I was still in the stereo business). Later I joined the PEP staff, participated in many PEP evaluations, became a trainer in various TI events, and lastly accompanied Wolf on a 2-man, 15-day (14 event) trip to Australia in 1979.

I learned most of the important lessons during my three years at the TI which enabled me to undertake a 40+ year career as a disability advocate after I left the TI:

- the primacy of values, and how they underlie every plan, project, program, agency, and important decision you make in human services or advocacy
- the importance of clear thinking and talking as a counter to the muddled thinking and talking which often pervades human service systems and practices
- the necessity of perseverance & hard work if you want to accomplish anything
- the value of genuine camaraderie and the reality that there is very little you can do by yourself, no matter how smart or industrious you are

My experience at the TI gave me confidence that I could take on big challenges, sort out murky situations and figure out the right thing to do. Some of my strongest memories of the TI:

- a “Universal Issues” session in the Planning Workshop in Chicopee, MA, when John O’Brien walked us through the decision tree that put my life in stark relief - after that I was no longer able to rationalize staying on the branch of the tree that would keep me in the stereo business and forego the branch that would give me a chance to do something worthwhile with my life
- sharing an office with Joe Osburn, my first supervisor in the disability world
- getting to know Gary Nye and John Clay and other people with disabilities who survived oppression but still carried on and stayed hopeful

- having the opportunity to work with people who shared the same positive values

I attended Dartmouth College and Harvard Business School, and I learned more at the TI than at either of those institutions of higher learning. After leaving the Training Institute, I became the Executive Director of Disability Rights Wisconsin, a statewide protection and advocacy agency, for 31 years (1980 – 2011). I was recruited for the job by people who knew me from their attendance at TI events. I knew nothing about Wisconsin, its disability system or its advocacy network at that time. I was only hired by the Board because they resonated with the values the TI was founded on and they believed that my work at the TI gave me the tools I would need to be effective in the job.