SHARE HELPS LARRY DAVIS FIND FREEDOM IN A WHEELCHAIR
by Karen Pragana and Jo-Ann Bettencourt

Larry Davis sits in his wheelchair, humming snippets of lyrics to an old Tom Paxton song. He can't remember them all, but his concentrated gaze hints that he is reaching into his memory to find the melody. *I've wheeled myself down to the crossroads of town...* Although the song was written about a disabled Vietnam veteran, Davis takes its sentiment to heart as he recalls his own feelings about life after a diving accident left him paralyzed. *I've barely begun, now it's over...* But in the seventeen years since then, he has come to revere his wheelchair like a friend. *...my mechanical wife...* It is a partnership he treasures.

"This chair goes everywhere I go," says Davis. "It's so much a part of me."

It's the part of him that allows Davis his freedom—to move independently through life. Motorized and equipped to enable him to drive his custom-built van, the wheelchair takes him around the house, into the neighborhood, and across the states. But recently Davis found himself going in circles quite literally when his wheelchair electronically failed.

"I only had drive power from one motor," says Davis, "so I could go around in circles—but I couldn't do anything else."

The solution seemed simple enough—just take the wheelchair back to the company where it was bought and have it repaired. But Davis soon found that this was impossible, because the company had gone out of business. After numerous calls to the dealer who sold him the wheelchair, Davis persuaded him to take the wheelchair to his repair shop and try to fix it. With each passing week, Davis waited and watched the walls close in on him.

"It was like being incarcerated," recalls Davis, "after having your freedom, then all of a sudden finding yourself in a jail cell."

Although Davis did have a spare chair to use in an emergency, he considered it obsolete. Larger and more cumbersome, the old wheelchair no longer felt comfortable to him. Also, its batteries were weak and couldn't take him any great distance.

"I could go to Shaw's and maybe get around the supermarket and back home," says Davis. "That's what I considered a day out, which is very limiting."

Expecting his broken chair to return home any day in working order, Davis instead received his $7,000 chair—still dead and now dismantled—looking "like a wreck." At a loss for where to turn next, he learned from his wife Bette that some professors at SMU were developing technologies to help the disabled. He called the university with his dilemma. Although the staff at the SMU Rehabilitation Engineering Center had never repaired a wheelchair before, they were willing to take on the challenge.

"We told him 'Bring it over and we'll see what we can do—no promises, but we'll give it a try,'" remembers SMU professor (Continued on page 6)
Your Letters . . .

Spring blossoms with renewed hope and the promise of a brighter tomorrow. We feel these letters capture that refreshing spirit, and we’d like to share them with you.

Joe Presutti with his computer.

Dear Mr. Cory,

I would like to thank you for my computer. You don’t know how it feels to be able to talk and write again. It is a godsend. Not only is it easy for me, but also for my family and friends. Thanks to you and all the people in SHARE from the bottom of my heart.

Yours truly,
Joe Presutti

Dear Les & Phil,

Here is a note and some pictures from Joe showing his excitement and joy with his new computer. He shows everyone who stops in to visit all the things it can do and all the new phrases he put in. He has a special phrase for each person. His company gets such a kick out of how it talks and says their names.

An illness like this changes your entire life. I can’t say that I’m sorry for going through this because I’ve become aware of so much, learned so much, and developed a strength and patience that I never knew I had. I would never wish this on anyone, but what it has taught and given us is so invaluable.

We never would have met you or become aware of SHARE or met all the other beautiful people in our lives now. The computer has given Joe a sense of well-being. Each morning he looks toward it, and I turn it on. It sure keeps him busy. He loves it!! He was only able to watch T.V. before. So this is good for his mind, to do something else. He smiles the entire time he is writing. Isn’t that great!

Love to all of you at SHARE,
Kathy Presutti

Dear Les & Company,

I finally got around to reading the Winter newsletter. As usual it was enjoyable; I read it from cover to cover, and as always it was deeply touching. I can’t remember the last time I cried reading an organization’s newsletter. I would like once again to thank you and the many wonderful people who work with you for doing this most vital and loving work.

I can’t express how much it means to me that SHARE exists, that the values of love, compassion, generosity, and sharing that you all hold are made manifest in such a real way. You bring hope to those you serve by restoring, or creating where none existed, a means of communicating and relating, of touching and being touched. What greater gift could there possibly be.

And you serve those of us with no handicap other than the all too human ability to forget what’s important, to take for granted what precious gifts we have been given. We all too often misplace priorities because in focusing on our issues we lose perspective of the greater whole.

We forget that compassion must be exercised or it will atrophy, and that the ideal of love is to be lived on a daily basis.

Your newsletter reminded me of all this, and more, and once again I feel fortunate to have been touched by you all and the work you do. Thank you.

Steve Sherblom

A NOTE-WORTHY ADDITION . . .

Do you know someone who would enjoy reading SHARE Notes? If so, please send us his or her name and address to add to our mailing list. Give someone a Note-worthy surprise!

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A Party to Remember
SHARE PAYS TRIBUTE TO VOLUNTEERS AT APPRECIATION DINNER

The night beckoned them away from their computer labs and community projects and brought them into the spotlight as SHARE toasted its hard-working volunteers and their immeasurable contributions to the Foundation. Held at JT's in Somerset, Mass. on January 19, 1988, the annual dinner meeting is SHARE's chance to honor those individuals whose efforts lie behind SHARE's brightest successes. This year SHARE presented three plaques and fourteen certificates of appreciation for volunteer efforts in engineering, fund raising, and client outreach.

Rania Lavranos, Jean Limoges, and Robin Singer each were awarded plaques in recognition of their long-standing dedication to SHARE's work. A senior at SMU, Rania has applied her electrical engineering studies throughout her college career toward helping SHARE clients. As chief organizer of SHARE's annual Walk-A-Thon, Jean has been the driving force behind many of the Foundation's fund raising activities. Robin has enlisted her talents in a number of capacities, from developing software programs, to planning fund raisers, to helping clients use their communication systems.

In addition to these special citations, SHARE also presented certificates to acknowledge the individual work of fourteen volunteers throughout southern New England who have devoted their time and talents to SHARE. This year's recipients were: Lenny Bean, Robert Bjorklund, Ron Jalbert, Susan Toland, Lloyd Nadell, Wendy Malenfant, Robert Judd, Filip Cruz, Robert Martin, David DiPietro, Robert Helgeland, Dan Lyons, Celia Zeitler, and Ed Mello.

SHARE NEWSMAKERS: MRS. VIRGINIA HADLEY and DEAN DONALD HOWARD

SHARE is proud to announce the appointment of two new members to its Board of Directors--Mrs. Virginia Hadley and Dean Donald Howard. Chairman Dr. Richard Warren installed them to the twenty-one member board on January 19, 1988 during SHARE's annual volunteer appreciation banquet.

Mrs. Hadley is the director of the Counseling Center at Southeastern Massachusetts University. Dean Howard serves as the university's Dean of Students.

SHARE thanks the new members for lending their expertise and enthusiasm to the Foundation's efforts. Welcome A-Board!
SHARE'S ANNUAL REPORT SHOWS SERVICES ARE HIGH

The latest Annual Report sums up a productive year for SHARE and the SMU Rehabilitation Engineering Center. Volunteers combined their expertise and ingenuity in the Center's engineering labs, creating, modifying, and repairing numerous communication systems for SHARE's clients—33 new systems were designed and delivered to the disabled, 21 systems were altered to meet clients' changing needs, and 11 systems were serviced.

Beyond this body of work, SHARE addressed the concerns and queries of the disabled and their advocates through its auxiliary services. SHARE professionals conducted 37 client evaluation-consultations to determine how SHARE best could help them. Other specialized services ranged from locating software and equipment to tutoring clients in the use of their systems and related programs. SHARE also loaned 18 pieces of equipment to clients and educational facilities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Through SHARE's speaking engagements, 15 organizations learned about the Rehabilitation Engineering Center's efforts to enhance the lives of the disabled. Outreach spokespeople addressed religious congregations, fraternal clubs, and educational groups throughout southern New England.

Moreover, SHARE reached across the country to support and serve individuals who have cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, Lou Gehrig's disease, spinal cord injuries, and other disabling conditions. While 125 clients came from Massachusetts and nearby Rhode Island, 28 others spanned the map from New York to Florida to Kansas to California.

The close of the year finds SHARE and the SMU Rehabilitation Engineering Center working ever harder to reach their goals and those disabled people across the nation who need them most.

SHARE Salute
LENNY AND SUE: SENIORS ON THE GO

Since then, they have worked in some capacity on just about every system that has passed through the Rehabilitation Engineering Center. Whether writing programs, copying disks, or developing hardware, Bean and Toland have logged in nearly 18 volunteer hours each week. Viall says they worry about the "mish-mash of pieces" that make up a communication system.

"It's nice to be able to give them a task and not have to worry about how well it's going to be done," says Viall.

(Continued on page 7)
TECH TALK

WOODS HOLE WIZ WORKS DOUBLE-TIME ON COMMUNICATION CLOCK
by Robin Singer

SMU students aren't the only students eager to help SHARE assist the disabled. For the past eight months, Dave DiPietro, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)/Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) Joint Program student, has been volunteering his time and considerable skills for SHARE.

Dave's mechanical engineering studies led him to a position with Woods Hole's Deep Submergence Laboratory (D.S.L.), the group that found the Titanic in the summer of 1985. He is building a mechanical arm for a deep, underwater research vehicle, the successor to Jason Junior—the "robot" which brought back movie images of the Titanic to D.S.L. scientists. Dave's project will earn him an MIT/WHOI Master's Degree and will allow scientists to remotely collect scientific samples from the sea floor.

Dave has applied those same mechanical engineering skills to projects that help the disabled. No sooner had he offered his services to SHARE, than he was put to work designing and building a mounting apparatus for attaching a head switch to a hospital bed. The device worked well and was used by a woman in a Newport hospital.

Les Cory barely let Dave catch his breath before handing him his next challenge—to design a picture board communicator. Looking much like the face of a clock, this device features pictures instead of numbers and a single hand which rotates. Each picture symbolizes a topic such as food, drink, or T.V. When a disabled person wants to communicate that he is hungry, for example, he presses a switch to start the hand's rotation around the clock. Once the hand points to the picture of food, the user releases the switch. This allows a disabled person to alert those around him to his needs. Each picture board communicator can be customized to an individual by simply changing the pictures.

In designing the device, Dave used a low horsepower gear motor and adapted the shaft to hold the "clock's" hand. He altered the motor's wiring, mounted the motor on a board, and framed the board to hold it upright. He then added a switch to complete the electro-mechanical configuration.

Assisted by Falmouth High School student Shawn Kelly, Dave is making up a number of these devices for SHARE clients. Shawn has suggested several improvements, and future versions of the device may include a bell, so that a client can attract the attention of his or her companions when ready to communicate.

Dave has been willing to take on any SHARE tasks that have come his way, including transporting donated computers and evaluating potential SHARE clients. His willingness to help stems from a deeply-held belief that everyone should do some kind of community service. But he insists that working for SHARE is not an altruistic act; since he loves to work with his hands, he says he really enjoys the projects, which "fill the hobby role" for him.

He feels that his work for SHARE helps him maintain a nice balance in his life.

K-SHIFT PROGRAM IS A-O Kay
by Paul Remy

Since I type with a head pointer I can only type one key at a time. This worried me because most programs for my IBM computer require two keys to be pressed simultaneously to perform many tasks.

I told Phil Viall about my dilemma. Fortunately, he had good news by telling me SHARE volunteer Edward DeSouza had developed a program called K-SHIFT (KSHFT). This program allows the computer to "remember" when the <SHIFT>, <CTRL>, and <ALT> keys have been pressed. Thus a disabled person can use a command by typing the keys one after another rather than at the same time.

Minutes later, Viall presented me with a copy of the program. As soon as I got home, I asked my mother to insert the disk containing the program into the disk drive. After the drive's door was closed, I typed "KSHFT" and it was ready to use.

Typing capital letters became a breeze. If I wanted to type a capital letter "A", I first would press the <SHIFT>. In turn, my friend, KSHFT, would hold this key down for me while I typed my desired letter. KSHFT also helps me in typing characters such as a % sign. In order to use other program commands, the <CTRL> or <ALT> and another key also must be pressed simultaneously. For example, I have to press <ALT> and the letter "S" to save text files after using my word processor. So without KSHFT, I would have difficulty saving files.

If you have difficulty pressing two keys at once and are using an IBM or IBM-compatible computer, please contact SHARE about obtaining your own free copy of KSHFT.

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Viall says that the ideal candidate for work in the rehabilitative engineering field is someone motivated to apply this problem-solving ability to finding ways to improve the lives of the disabled.

"Those people are golden," he remarks.

Davis says he is fortunate to have found "an organization like SHARE that is trying to do something for people with disabilities." And likewise he "firmly believes that one hand washes the other." Happy for the chance to foster awareness, he is soon to return a favor to SHARE by inviting SMU students to examine the many computerized and electronic features of his specially-designed van.

"They're more than welcome to tear it apart, to check everything out," Davis smiles, "as long as they put it back together again!"

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LET'S HAVE SOME FUN!

Fund raising can be a fun outlet for helping others. Just ask Jean Limoges, Ron Kostyla, Bob Martin, and Robin Singer—all SHARE volunteers who have spearheaded past fund raising events.

From Walk-A-Thons to Golf Tournaments to Music Concerts, each gathering of SHARE supporters has raised money for the disabled while bringing friends together for the good of a cause.

We at SHARE are eager to hear your fund raising ideas. Please drop us a note if you have any suggestions or if you'd like to join us in our efforts to raise the funds that foster our work.
THE FIRST ANNUAL
SHARE FOUNDATION GOLF
TOURNAMENT
June 12, 1988--Sunday
1:00 PM Tee-off
at
Allendale Country Club in Dartmouth

Tournament Dinner
June 12, 1988--right after the tournament
6:00 PM
at
The New Bedford Elks Club

THE FIFTH ANNUAL
BEN BOYLE GOLF CLASSIC
June 25 & 26, 1988--Saturday & Sunday
12:00 noon to 2:00 PM Tee-off
at
North Kingstown Golf Course in Quonset

Tournament Banquet
July 9, 1988--Saturday
6:30 PM
at
The West Warwick Elks Club

Once again it’s time to take to the hills and tee up--and this year you have your pick of the greens! Twin golf tournaments are slated for two weekends in June, with all proceeds to benefit SHARE.

The First Annual SHARE Foundation Golf Tournament opens on Sunday, June 12, 1988 at the Allendale Country Club in Dartmouth, Mass. Hosted by SHARE volunteer Robert Martin, the fund raiser offers golfing fans a new location to enjoy the sport while supporting SHARE’s endeavors. Tee-off time is at 1:00 P.M. Tickets are $50 per person and include greens fees, golf carts, and accessories. The price also admits players to a steak dinner at the New Bedford Elks Club following the games.

Post-tournament festivities begin at 6:00 P.M. when golfers can compare scores and collect prizes.

Two weeks later, golfers again can swing into competition at the Fifth Annual Ben Boyle Golf Classic. A fund raising favorite hosted by the Sunday Morning Golfers and Pawtuxet Valley Rotary Club, the tournament will be held on June 25th and 26th at the North Kingstown Golf Course in Quonset, RI. Tee-off time is from 12:00 noon to 2:00 P.M. Greens fees, golf carts, and admission to the tournament banquet are covered by the $40 ticket. Held on Saturday, July 9th at the West Warwick Elks Club, the banquet offers a family-style dinner, a chance to claim prizes, and a fun night for everyone.

TICKET INFORMATION

... For tickets to the First Annual SHARE Foundation Golf Tournament, call Bob Martin days at (617) 996-8210. The tournament is limited to 100 players, so call now for your ticket!

... For tickets to the Fifth Annual Ben Boyle Golf Classic or to sponsor a tee, call Ron Kostyla at (401) 821-7527 or Bob Bjorklund at (401) 822-1184.

SHARE SALUTE
(Continued from page 4)

Embracing these projects has not only fulfilled Bean and Toland’s desire to help SHARE, but also has given the students hands-on experience in their respective majors of Electrical Engineering Technology and Electrical Engineering. Soon they will bring their talent and knowledge to professional careers, and Viall is sorry to say goodbye to such dedicated assistants.

"The problem with working here is that as soon as people are ready to make a large contribution, they are ready to graduate," says Viall. "But since they go on to bigger and better things, I’m happy for them too."

Thanks and Farewell . . .

All of us at SHARE would like to extend our congratulations and warm appreciation to those graduating SMU seniors who have devoted many volunteer hours helping the disabled. We wish them well as they embark on their own careers to meet new and exciting challenges.
CONGRATULATIONS!

... to Lois Floyd, SHARE client, for spelling her name unassisted on her computer system.

... to Linda Texeira, SHARE client, for passing the first portion of her GED exam.

... to Andrew Katz, SHARE board member, on receiving the Isidore Eisner Citizenship Award.

... to Ron Kostyla, SHARE board member for being chosen Citizen of the Year by the West Warwick Lions club.

... to Jerry Lemay, SHARE supporter, for completing work on his Doctorate in Electrical Engineering.

SHARE salutes these individuals for their achievements and inspiration. Best wishes and continued success to you all!

SHARE Foundation
C/o Southeastern Massachusetts University
North Dartmouth, MA 02747

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NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editors/Writers: Jo-Ann Bettencourt
Karen Pragana

Production: Phil Viall

Layout: Jo-Ann Bettencourt
Karen Pragana

Photographers: Margie Walder
Erin Mary Finn

Printer: New England Printing and Graphics