

Carol discusses her experience driving a homemade iron lung from Vancouver to Las Vegas for a resident who needed to travel.

Carol: The one experience I had which I am not sure would have had is that two – like this one resident, he went to a conference, a polio conference in St. Louis. So that would have been 1982 and at that time, he had to rent an iron lung. So, he flew from Vancouver to St. Louis and he was renting an iron lung so that he could have an iron lung with him, you know when is in St. Louis and then he wanted to Vegas. But then he found out he couldn't rent one in Vegas. It would have to be shipped from LA to Vegas and it was going to cost a lot of money to do that. So, he asked me to drive his iron lung from Vancouver to Vegas.

So, he flew with a couple of workers to St. Louis and then they flew to Vegas and I drove his van and I towed his iron lung in a little trailer with me down all the way to Vegas from Vancouver. But what he had was a homemade iron lung because the metal one is too heavy [David: Okay]. There is no way, you know just pushing it on and off, it's too much work. I am not sure if was his dad or somebody in his family that actually made one out of wood and they sealed it completely with metal and they put bicycle tires on it. So it's this big box, wooden box completely. It works! It works! And they put the plastic or rubber as the neck part and they sealed it properly and they put bicycle tires and I drove this thing.

I took one of – so I had another nursing friend who came with me because I said, "I am not driving all the way down". This is back in '82 all the way to Vegas without like by myself, I didn't feel comfortable. He said, "Oh that's fine, just bring your friend." So, he paid for the trip and we met up with him in Vegas and then he used the iron lung. So, I think when he first got there, there was something wrong with it. So, we had to fiddle around it with it to make sure it worked properly or the seal was a little bit not right. So, the orderlies that came, you know, we were figuring out how to make it that it works for him and it worked.

Then on the way back, I flew back with him and then the other, I guess, the orderly. They drove the van back. He went with another person who was also polio and the resident didn't need a iron lung. So, they all drove back together. This resident and I flew back. What happened to with that one is on the plane for some reason, so he was using his Pneumo Belt but the ventilator failed. So, he couldn't breathe so had to frog breath the whole back. So he was a bit, a bit unhappy. We got put into first class because it was easier. They had to transfer him right. He couldn't move anything. So, they said, "Oh we will put in first class. We will treat you are in first class [Laughs]". But he couldn't touch any of the food, he couldn't really take advantage, anyhow it was fine. We got back. He frog breathed the whole way. Swallowed air the whole way home.

David: That's very stressful but –

Carol: Yeah, but it's fine. He was actually – I was nervous, I go, "Oh my gosh! What are going to do? If you can't breath." He was, "I'll be fine. I'm just bummed that I can't eat the food. You go and eat both meals for me" [Laughs].