

HUMAN BOOK

Ken Thomas

Every year at Augustana college in Camrose they have an event called the AUGUSTANA HUMAN LIBRARY where persons come to give talks about their life stories. I have been honored to give a talk about myself a few times at this event.

Go to their website to read about this event

<http://guides.library.ualberta.ca/augustana/human-library>

The following is what I told the audience that came to my session

First read my article **MY PERSONAL PERPECTIVE** so they can get an overview of who I am.

How do you perceive that others see you...what prejudice/stereotype have you been labeled with?

When a person first meets me and other persons with disabilities who cannot speak or has a speech impediment like mine which is sometimes hard to understand at first. I am sure the persons first thoughts are as I try to talk to them

- What is he saying I cannot understand him
- Is he mentally challenge
- Why is he by himself
- Where is his attendant aide
- Should I try and help him or call security or the police
- Etc. I have heard all these things over the years from usually older people or persons who have not been around persons with disabilities very much. It probably more prevalent in smaller communities like Camrose.

Ask them what they think about what I just said

When have you been the subject of stereotyping or prejudice? Give an example(s).

When I first applied to run/wheel in the ten kilometre road race in the Master games when is was held in Edmonton in 2006. My application was turned down because I told them I used a wheelchair and wheeled backward. They said I could not enter unless I wheeled forward because I could hurt myself or another runner. This really got me mad I **DO NOT LIKE TO BE TOLD I CANNOT DO THINGS!** MY sister Lorna who is reading this produced a 58 minute documentary about my life centered around this incident at that time. The documentary is called **CATCHING MY BREATH** We will be

showing clips of this film, also I think the library has a copy. At least in the Edmonton public libraries they have copies of this documentary.

When you reflect on your experiences with stereotyping and prejudice...what are your:

-emotions,

Sometimes I have a quick hot temper when someone tells me I have to do or cannot do something. after I settle down I try to explain to them my point of view, or type a letter to them etc.

-Hopes

To live a full active fun filled life as I have done so far. With a lot more adventures a head of me.

-Fears

Loosing my independents and being forced to do things because some uneducated person deems it is unsafe.

- For over 30 years I went swimming by myself and the staff at the pool use to give me a little assistance getting in/out of the pool and help with my shoes, socks and coat. At the pool I was swimming at for about ten years the new administrator decided it was unsafe to allow the life guard or other staff to help me at all. I had to get a volunteer to help me in and out of the pool for about a year. Then the pool closed for a year, so I went to another pool, where the staff are helping me again.
 - **DATS DRIVES ARE NOT SUPOSE TO HELP PERSONS WALK UP MORE THAN THREE STAIRS NOW AND SOME OTHER POLICIES.**
 - Sometimes the news the media covers about healthcare makes living in the communities harder for persons with disabilities

When faced with stereotyping/prejudice what did you do to help solve problems or tackle difficult situations (eg. World Master's Games).

Write letters speak out, take action.

What values do you hold...what do you believe in?

- Speak your mind
- Listen to what a person has to say and then decide if you agree somewhat agree or disagree with them.
- Be ownest , be true to you self and others
- Sometimes you have to accept things you personally do not like at least for a while until you find a solution!

The last five years I have been run/wheeling in the Edmonton half marathon and last summer I wore a Go-Pro camera on my helmet during the race. After I taught myself how to edit the footage and made my own documentary film which is called 2015

Edmonton Half Marathon from a Backwheeler view. It is on You Tube THE LINK TO THIS VIDEO IS ON MY WEBSITE WHICH IS WWW.BACHWHEELER.CA

I am still trying to live life to the fullest and taking on new fun challenges!

Any questions you have?