

Taking Care--Documenting the Occupational Culture of Home Care Workers  
Archie Green Fellows Project, 2014-2015  
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Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Kimberly Cole interview, 2015-05-05 : interview conducted by Michael  
Robert Bussel and Donald Eugene Stacy**

**INTERVIEW LOG**

00:00:42: Lives in Medford, Oregon. Born 1961 in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

00:01:07: Has worked in hotels, restaurants, done child care and home care as “personal service worker.” Has done latter for past three years and for the most part cared for one person.

00:02:21: Person she cares for has hard time keeping caregivers. Disabled but lives independently. Thought it would be easy job, but has been very challenging. Didn’t know how to balance out her consumer’s stories at first. Concerned about taking her out in public.

00:04:55: People need people to be close to them. Automatically developed connection with current consumer. Others had told her it would be hard to achieve.

00:05:59: Consumer like one of her children. Wanted to see her live with dignity. Consumer does Special Olympics, goes into stores, Kim takes her places. Feels protective of her client. Must separate fact from fiction in what she says.

00:08:35: Job requires “a lot of heart.” Must be able to love that person. Kindness and understanding needed. Otherwise, won’t work. Learned on the job.

00:10:00: Every day is different. Depends on consumer’s mood. Can get dismissed by her. Works around it. Take a drive, run errands, do laundry, go for coffee or breakfast, to Goodwill. Also cleans house or “does something fun.” Lot of work.

00:11:43: Involved consumer in holidays with her family. Best friend-they are “pretty close.” Only one she can really trust.

00:14:13: Concerned how her family would react. Children took to her. Really good with kids. Never met anyone like her. Has passed the challenge...her client would never fire her.

00:16:21: Able to joke around. You have to...could go insane if you thought about it too much. All people with disabilities are different. At Special Olympics, consumer has her sit on sidelines. Jokes about her lack of sportsmanship. Can say “off-the-wall stuff that cracks me up.”

00:18:30: Gratifying to be there for someone. Feels good about her ability to take care of her consumer. Can’t go in and try to change their lives. Must let her be who she is.

00:21:29: Without a union, wouldn’t have gotten into the work. Had been in child care for fifteen years but didn’t know about union in home care. Later met home care providers through child care union activities. Organizer got her interested and “talked her into it.” Hadn’t voted until four years ago.

00:23:33: Has “become a whole different person.” Had been a loner. “Union brought me out.” Able to express herself about people we care for and the jobs we do.

00:24:18: Job is now important. Somebody standing behind me every day. Better pay and health care coverage a big victory.

00:26:13: Must have heart and soul to do the work. Got to be “real human” to take care of person who is not your kin.

00:27:15: Relaxes by spending time with family. Also wants to spend time with herself. Focus on having weekends off and time for herself.

00:28:16: Very rewarding work. Glad at what I do, glad to find union. Woman she cares for has made her a better person.

00:29:01: Community starting to know more about the work. Realize that people need independent living. Important that society know they are human beings—just a “little more special.” Glad that the state has such a program.

00:31:08: Important to keep funding home care. Keeps people independent, not put away. Keeps community from looking at such people as a “danger.” Makes a difference.

00:32:25: When she takes her consumer to public place, people “understand.” Has never seen people treat her consumer differently. Surprised by that.

00:33:43: End of interview.