The purpose of this qualitative study was to gather information about the history and evolution of occupational therapy in Wyoming from Charlie's point of view. Charlie was one of 29 individuals interviewed for a life history study, which is part of a larger life history project entitled, Life Histories of Individuals Who Have Been Influential in Developing Occupational Therapy (OT) in North Dakota and Wyoming. This study is intended to provide current and future generations of occupational therapists with a view of how occupational therapy has evolved in the state of Wyoming.

Charlie grew up wanting to be a locomotive engineer and started down that path at the age of 18 but was laid off two years later. He was first introduced to occupational therapy when he became a paraplegic from a toboggan accident in 1975. Through the hospitalization and rehabilitation, Charlie was treated by OTAs and Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs) and appreciated how they helped him. Charlie attended COTA school in Duluth, MN and graduated in December of 1978. Charlie is a member of the Wyoming Occupational Therapy Association (WOTA), he has served as the Vice President for WYOTA. Charlie served on the conference committee for the state wide occupational therapy conference.

Charlie is 62 years old and has been a practicing COTA for 38 years. Charlie attended COTA school in Duluth, MN and graduated in December of 1978. Charlie is a member of the Wyoming Occupational Therapy Association (WOTA), he has served as the Vice President for WYOTA. Charlie served on the conference committee for the state wide occupational therapy conference.

Data was collected from an interview and internet search. The interview schedule was set up in an order that flowed sequentially. Charlie is passionate about occupational therapy; he was instrumental in establishing practice in rural settings, bringing his personal experiences with therapy, and his focus on client-centered care. He values the collaboration he has had in inter- and intra-professional team work in order to give back to the profession, as evidenced by his dedication to continuing education.

During the time Charlie entered into the field of occupational therapy a high demand for COTAs. There were new regulations mandating the need for national certifications for COTAs before they began practicing.

Charlie’s initial entry into the field began at a nursing home. During that time COTAs were highly sought out in both nursing homes and psychiatric settings.

He is highly passionate about giving back to the profession what it gave him in his time of need.

He would like to see the profession continue to grow and improve while continuing to stay grounded in the foundation of occupational therapy.

The students would like to sincerely thank Charlie Baumer for his time and willingness to share his life story with them for this project.

References