

# Canadian furniture refinisher, group make aids for disabled

United Press International  
PORT CREDIT, Ont. — In a small cabinet-making shop in Gene Walser's backyard, a project is underway that brings more independence to the lives of the disabled.

Walser, with a group of volunteers and persons performing community service in lieu of jail terms, produces devices to make the homes of the disabled more livable. Their latest achievement is an eating aid for quadriplegics.

The device was originally developed by the department of orthopaedic surgery at Chicago University's medical school. But

the Canadian volunteers made several improvements in the last year that will allow a person with only neck and head movement to have the pleasure of feeding himself.

The table-top portable eating aid — consisting of a cup, plate and a spoon mounted on short metal posts at mouth-level — is the result of more than 800 hours' work by some 50 volunteers. Its design was acclaimed at a rehabilitation engineering conference in Washington, D.C. The National Research Council of Canada is considering its mass production.

Walser, 54, who has a furni-

ture refinishing business, has made several more of the devices, each with added modifications, and intends to make more.

A scrapbook in Walser's office shows the changes his group, Housing Modifications for the Handicapped, has brought to the community's disabled. Among them:

- Until a wheelchair lift — a small open elevator — was installed in one woman's home, she daily dragged the wheelchairs of her twin sons afflicted with muscular dystrophy up and down a flight of outside stairs.
- A high railing built beside a toilet enabled a 37-year-old man in a wheelchair to use the bathroom without help.
- A small set of stairs enabled a man with a double leg amputation to put himself to bed without assistance.

The suburban Toronto group operates on about \$10,000 a year from corporate and service club donations and fees charged to regional government agencies.

The group has gone beyond construction work. With lawyers and architects donating their services, Walser's group carried to the Ontario Supreme Court and won a 2½-year legal battle to allow the family of a teenage polio victim to build an extension to their home to hold a wheelchair lift. Neighbors had objected that the addition would block their view.

Walser actively began involvement with the disabled 8 years ago when he began making modifications to his own home for his wife, Gerry, who has had multiple sclerosis all their married life.

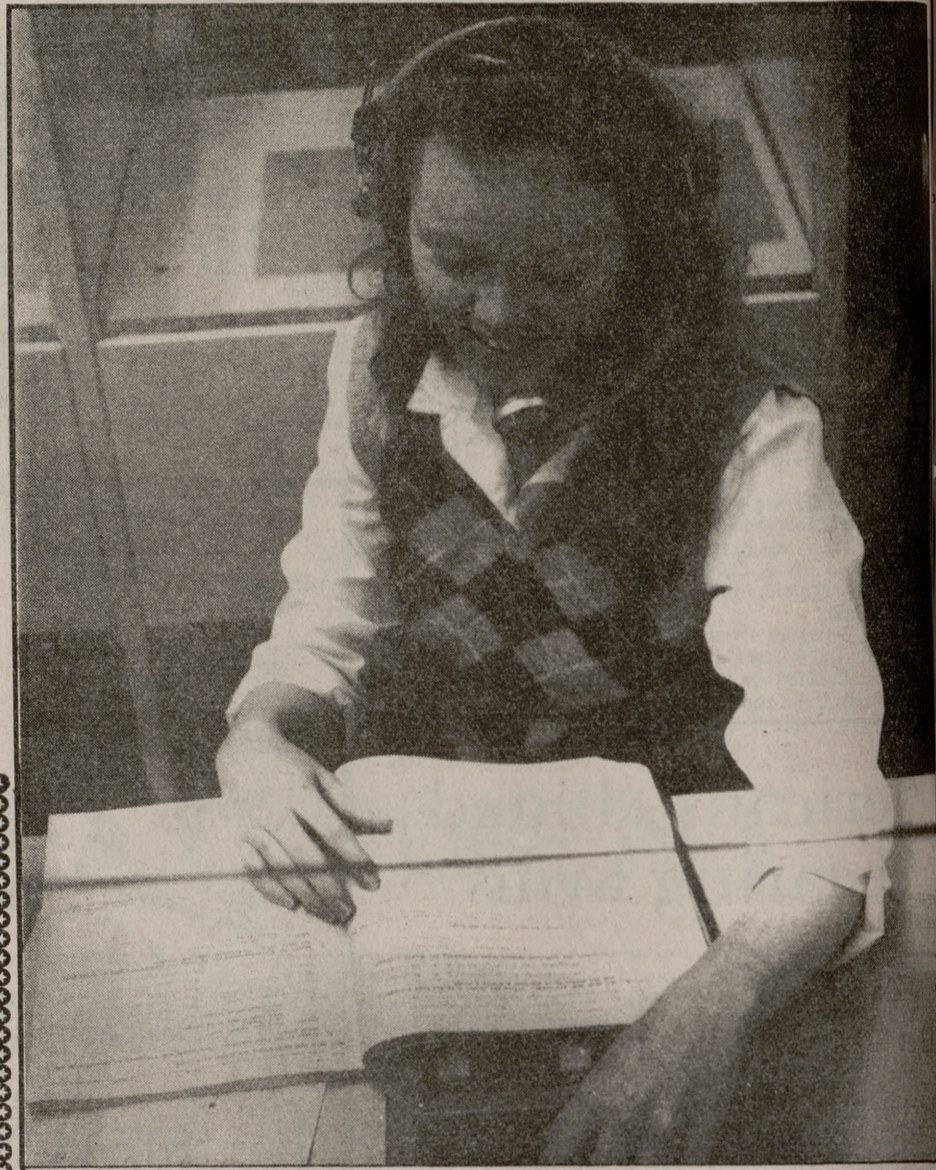


photo by Laura Hatt

## Habla espanol?

The language laboratory in the Academic Building is a familiar spot for many students. Laura Waltrip, a junior chemi-

cal engineering major, listens to tapes to supplement her conversational Spanish class.

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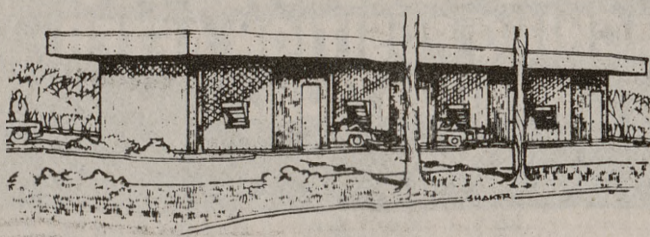
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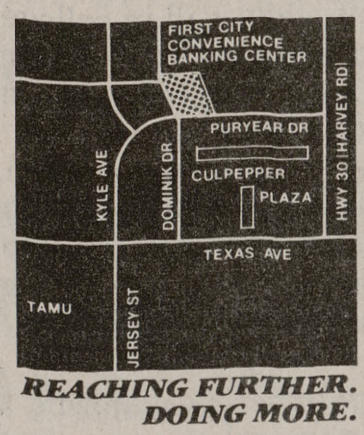
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