



SoundBites Podcast Transcript

Episode: Richard Pimentel

Dave Fabry: Welcome to Starkey Sound Bites. I'm your host, Dave Fabry, Starkey's Chief Innovation Officer. This month marks the 32nd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. It was signed into law on July 26th, 1990, by then President George H. W. Bush. One of the key players who help make the ADA a reality is a man who is very near and dear to our hearts here at Starkey. Richard Pimentel is a passionate advocate for those with disabilities, including those with hearing loss. We're honored to talk with him here on this episode of the podcast, and he joins us from his home over Zoom today. Richard, welcome to Starkey Sound Bites.

Richard Pimente...: Well, thank you. Thank you for having me. Starkey is forever my favorite company in the universe.

Dave Fabry: Well, I've had the opportunity to hear you speak quite a few times to our team at Starkey, and then also some of our partners, and you never fail to impress with enlightening stories, inspiring stories. Your story itself is just incredible, and I appreciate your being with us on the podcast today to share it. It's really a story of determination that has inspired so many people and led to real change in our country. And thank you for your continued service. We'll talk a little bit about how you acquired your hearing loss in service to our country, and then your continued service for those with disabilities to this day.

But let's start from the beginning. Where did you grow up and tell us about your family circumstances growing up a little bit?

Richard Pimente...: Well, I grew up in Portland, Oregon, which is a great town.

Dave Fabry: Beautiful.

Richard Pimente...: It's a town of rivers and bridges and one-way streets and militant bicyclists. I was raised by my grandmother who was disabled. She had a condition you rarely hear about today. It was called milk lake, women who were pregnant way back then would have problems, and she could barely walk. And so she raised me and we were poor. We were raised on welfare. It was tough, but since everybody was poor, we had no idea there was any problem-

Dave Fabry: Right. We level set. We don't even realize where we are just in that moment. Everyone starts where they begin and it takes us in different directions. What an interesting perspective, raised by your grandmother who had that disability, but you just make do if you say. What year was that? When were you born?

Richard Pimente...: 1948.



Dave Fabry: 48. Okay. So continuing then with that. And how early did you know you had a hearing loss? Was that acquired as a result of the injury suffered in Vietnam? Or did you have any hearing loss even when you were young that you knew about?

Richard Pimente...: I couldn't afford to go to college because we were poor, but the government was offering this really great program when I was 18, where you could trade government service for an entire college education. They called it Vietnam. When I put in for that scholarship, I was brought in and I served in the 101st Airborne Division, Screaming Eagles. 101. One of the Starkey family and I'll go ahead and make the jump and call him one of the family was my commanding officer General Colin Powell.

Dave Fabry: No kidding. Wow. He was your commanding officer.

Richard Pimente...: Yeah. What a great man. What a great man.

Dave Fabry: Had the privilege to meet him myself. And he indeed was, and it's unfortunate his passing just a couple years ago now.

Richard Pimente...: It broke my heart. He was someone you could trust. If Colin Powell told me that the sky was falling, I would've beat chicken little to the bunker. But when I was in Vietnam, I was in a bunker, speaking of bunkers, and a rocket hit it. So there was an explosion on the outside of the bunker and an implosion on the inside. I came out with a traumatic brain injury and a major significant hearing loss. I know you folks know veterans, that hearing loss is one of the most common injuries that veterans face.

Dave Fabry: In fact hearing loss and tinnitus or ringing in your ears, which no doubt-

Richard Pimente...: Yes. I have both.

Dave Fabry: ... are the two most common health conditions reported by veterans because of those extreme events, either from gunfire or in your case getting hit in the bunker. We know with some of the IEDs. Now we still have, really, there are precious few World War II vets still alive, but between Korean war Vietnam, and then you look at the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, and war has changed. But one thing that has remained the same is noise and many of those-

Richard Pimente...: It's loud.

Dave Fabry: Yeah. It's loud. And many of those veterans lose hearing or suffer hearing damage that leads to ringing in their ears. I'm so sorry to, I knew that before, but to again share that, it must have been very traumatic for you in addition. Other injuries that you suffered in that bunker explosion?



- Richard Pimente...: Yes. Unfortunately common combination, a hearing loss and a traumatic brain injury from the explosion. So I had to come back and learn to do everything all over again. I had to learn to walk again, had to learn to be able to talk again. And then I've got the hearing loss. That's when I first knew that there was a problem and I didn't know anything about hearing loss at that time.
- Dave Fabry: Boy, and traumatic brain injury unfortunately continues to be a major source of conflict that occurs from some of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and PTSD that-
- Richard Pimente...: From that war.
- Dave Fabry: ... comorbidity with the PTSD, hearing loss, ringing and TBI. I know there's a lot of work in this area, but it is very challenging for many veterans. And having worked at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, I did see quite a few veterans as well. I worked as a civilian in the audiology and speech department, but I did see many active duty and veteran individuals who were seen at Walter Reed during the time, late 80s, early 90s.
- Richard Pimente...: I'm a big fan of Walter Reed. I went in and saw them use a 3D printer to print out a skull, a little jigsaw puzzle, when someone would have a traumatic brain injury, they could just print it out and then place it in the skull and it would fit perfectly. We saw that happen. It was one of the great medical advances that has helped veterans during the Gulf War, because there were so many of those improvised explosions devices and causing all of that.
- Dave Fabry: So many innovations came out of that center in the research and the unfortunate consequences of the conflict but led to so many advances. I think with prosthetics and then as you say, with traumatic brain injury and I really treasure my time there that I had early in my career. And I think it really helped me understand, because I was born just a little bit after you. I didn't have that same opportunity for the scholarship. Although I've worked with a lot of my friends, did go serve in Vietnam and then I was a little too old for some of the later conflicts.
- But it gave me a great appreciation for the service that you've given. And then continuing that journey, so many people don't realize the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the work that you put into that along with many others. We didn't have that before 1990. That's only a little over 30 years ago. Talk a little bit about what led to your involvement and your passion, your deep passion for ensuring that this bill get passed and ensure the rights for those with disabilities under that ADA Act.
- Richard Pimente...: Well, I came back in 1969, and I went to the VA. This may seem odd to you, but when I was disabled in Vietnam, being raised as a very impoverished, in an impoverished home, I looked at my injury as an opportunity to go to college. I thought, now I can go to college. And so I went to the rehab counselors in the



VA. They looked at my diagnosis, and they said, well, what do you want to do? And I said, well, I was a speaker in high school. I was a really good speaker and I want to be a business consultant. And the counselor looked at me and said, "No, you can't."

Dave Fabry: Wow.

Richard Pimente...: You can't be a speaker. I said, why? He said, "Because you're deaf." He said, "Deaf people can't be speakers because pretty soon you're going to be speaking like a deaf person and no one wants to hear that. And you can't be a business consultant because you've got a traumatic brain injury. How can you consult with people? We have to find you a job that fits your disability."

Dave Fabry: Placing a lid on what the expectation is for what you could accomplish in life because of your disability.

Richard Pimente...: I had all of these dreams. And here's basically what he told me. You have to modify your dreams. You have to give up your dreams to fit your circumstances. And I said, well, what do deaf people do? He says, "Well, we have a book." Do you have a book about what deaf people can do? He says, yeah. And he looked at it and he said, "Shoe repair."

Dave Fabry: Wow.

Richard Pimente...: You'll be really good at shoe repair. We could put you in shoe repair. I said, what do people with traumatic brain injuries do? He said, "Not much."

Dave Fabry: Oh my.

Richard Pimente...: It's shoe repair.

Dave Fabry: Wow.

Richard Pimente...: And I thought about that, because I never realized before that people with disabilities were not just blocked from doing the things they wanted to do, but they were pushed into other directions based on whatever impairment they had. That this job's good for the blind and this job's good for the deaf. And I thought something is seriously wrong with that.

Dave Fabry: Early in my career I remember working with those with significant hearing loss. Many of them worked in the printing press area for newspapers, because again, it was a very loud area and they thought, well, we'll take people who are deaf and put them in that area because then we don't worry about them losing more hearing loss. But again, talk about just funneling someone in, not from their aptitude and their ability, but thinking about-



Richard Pimente...: And who they are.

Dave Fabry: ... their disability.

Richard Pimente...: They weren't doing it because of who I was. They were doing it because of what I had. One of the great lessons for people who work in this field and what I think of Starkey, is that it's not the disability that comes first, it's the person that comes first. One of the things I figured out, even at the VA at that time, I said to myself, I have just been told that I have to change my dreams to fit my situation. I said, no, I'm going to change my situation to fit my dreams.

Dave Fabry: So it really changed the trajectory of your life-

Richard Pimente...: Totally.

Dave Fabry: ... by giving you that limitation of the diagnosis of, we're going to channel you into a Shoemaker. And then you said, not doing that. I'm not going to be funneled into that. I'm going to change the system.

Richard Pimente...: That's right. I would've been the worst Shoemaker in the history of the world. I'm sure.

Dave Fabry: Did you ever for a moment consider, or have you along the way considered what it would've been like, no disrespect to shoemakers, trust me, I've known a few. But [inaudible] no interest in it, but the only thing qualifying you was your hearing loss. It seems absurd, and yet this conversation was only taking place less than 50 years ago. I think for many of the younger practitioners listening to this to realize this is not a conversation from 100 years ago that you read about in a history book, this is 50 years ago.

Richard Pimente...: Absolutely. I got into college, I found a professor who said, I'll teach you speech. I know who you are from high school. And then I found that there was a lot of people at my school who had disabilities, who were being told the same thing. And then what I found out was that we were excluded, physically excluded if you had a physical barrier, excluded because of my brain injury and because of my hearing, people who were blind. Most of my friends in college were people with disabilities and the disability movement was just starting to grow at that time.

Remember what I wanted to be. I wanted to be a speaker. I wanted to be a consultant. I was an old high school orator, whatever that's worth. I saw what this movement was about. I made friends with a fellow that had cerebral palsy. His name was Arthur Honeyman, he had pretty severe cerebral palsy, but he was a genius too. He was an evil genius. But he was a genius. His speech was unintelligible. No one could understand it, because he spoke in a very guttural way, and his high notes, the high frequencies were garbled.



Really what he was saying was in the lower frequencies, but it would mix anybody who had regular hearing up. They couldn't tell what he was talking about.

Dave Fabry: For sure. You add in the hearing loss.

Richard Pimente...: Guess what? I had no upper register hearing, because it seems like that's what you lose in combat.

Dave Fabry: It is. It is.

Richard Pimente...: You lose the upper. All I had was a lower register. Providence, I understood Art. I was the only person in the entire university that understood every word he said, *because* of my hearing loss.

Dave Fabry: I think also, it's interesting I'd forgotten this part of your journey. When I was growing up, I had a neighbor across the street that became a close friend of mine growing up, Peter Klein, who was imprisoned by cerebral palsy as well. His brain was a genius, like you said. He was a musical genius. His musical collection was unparalleled in the neighborhood. I'll beg to differ, I think that your hearing loss helped, but the fact that you saw him as an individual and you saw him as a person, not by the body that scares people in some cases, unfortunately, with cerebral palsy, because his motions are jerky, certain aspects and there are many different variations of cerebral palsy.

I think I'll beg to differ and say that your hearing loss probably helped, but the fact that you were able to see him as an individual rather than a disability and channeling into limiting him in the way that your view of him, because so many people view those with cerebral palsy in particular, as not only affecting their body, but their mind. And as you said, he was an evil genius.

Richard Pimente...: For sure. He was an evil genius. Well, his IQ was over my cholesterol level. Anyway, at that time, and this may surprise some of your audience, at that time, people with disabilities were separated from the rest of society by law. There were things called the Ugly Law. And you may want to look them up, go ahead and Google or whatever you use, write the word Ugly Law, throw Harvard law in there. There's a big article, about 23 states have had laws that said, people who are crippled, maimed, deformed or otherwise unsightly or improper persons may not be out in the public thoroughfare.

People with amputations had to cover them up when they were in public or they could be arrested for offending the population. Now, many of your listeners are simply not going to believe that ever happened in the United States.

Dave Fabry: Not that long ago.



Richard Pimente...: It was the law. And it wasn't that, you know what ended all that? 30 years ago, the ADA.

Dave Fabry: Yes, sir.

Richard Pimente...: And the crux of it was that I explained to Art about the dreams, that we must change our circumstances, not our dreams. That was my goal. Art and I became friends. Art called me one night at the dorm, all he could do was knock over his phone and then the operator would come on and he'd make Art sounds. And then whatever, they'd send it to my phone. He said, "Pancakes, birthday, 10 bucks." I knew what he wanted. He wanted me to go to his room, get him dressed, take the wheelchair down, three steps of stairs, go to the pancake house, have pancakes. When we got there, they refused to serve us.

Dave Fabry: Wow. Incredible.

Richard Pimente...: The waitress even said, how dare he come out in public where people were trying to eat, and she was going to call the police and have us arrested. To which Art said, call them. And she did. And the police came and said, if you don't leave we're going to take you to jail. Art said, "I want to go to jail. Richard wants to go to jail too." I'm thinking, no, I don't.

Dave Fabry: Wait a minute, recruiting me in this.

Richard Pimente...: I want to be a business consultant. I don't even think you'd be a shoemaker if you went to jail. Anyway, but I said, I wasn't going to leave him. You know why? Because what I learned in Vietnam is the most important thing that I carry with me today. You never leave a fallen comrade on the battlefield under any circumstances at all. And what I realized when I got home that shaped my entire life, was all my comrades do not fall on the battlefield. Some of them come home to fall, and some of them are home all the time and fall. And I wasn't going to leave Art.

I said, I'm going to jail too. And we went to jail and we became a college celebrity because people said, that's the stupidest arrest I've ever heard in my life.

Dave Fabry: What are you in for? Pancakes.

Richard Pimente...: Yeah. Pancakes. Yeah, there we go. We decided that we were going to change that law, that one little law in Portland, Oregon, and that threw me into the larger disability movement. And because I was a speaker and I was totally motivated, I became one of the main people in the disability movement. I ended up writing the rules and regulations for the enforcement of the ADA and working for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and making sure that vets were going to be covered under that.



What I knew was this, and I know that you know it, and Bill Austin knows it totally. I told him once, and he is like, he'd come home. I said, very simply, when you save someone's dream, you've saved their life.

Dave Fabry: 100%.

Richard Pimente...: And what you do at Starkey is you save people's dreams. And by doing that, you are saving their lives.

Dave Fabry: That's a powerful message for those listening to this podcast who are involved in service provision, taking our technology and then using their expertise to provide the outcomes to individuals. I think several points here that you've made are so powerful of, thinking beyond the audiogram. Too often I find people start, you get busy and you start looking at the hearing test and as you're going through, and you're just thinking about what technology you're going to apply without thinking about you're working with more than the person's ears. You're working with that individual and everything that brought them up to that day and their journey.

And how many times have people with hearing loss and other disabilities heard what they can't do. And understanding that I think is equally, if not more important to making sure that you are matching whatever gain targets, to speaking a little jargon for the people that are professionals listening to this. There's so much beyond the audiogram that goes into that individual seated across from you. And I think you've articulated that so well.

Richard Pimente...: Well, the other issue is that, it's not a one-horse race. For persons with disabilities if we're talking about employment or socialization, they're also dealing with someone else. So changing attitudes towards people with disability is important. But we also realized that we need to go to employers, we need to go to teachers, we need to go to counselors. We need to go to the general public and not just change their attitudes about people with disabilities. We need to change their attitudes about themselves, about their ability to work with people with disabilities. How to focus not on the person's disability, but the person with the disability.

And that's how employment, that's how socialization, that's how all of this happens. And it's a partnership. You've got the technology down better than, in my opinion any company even dreamt of having it. But what we have found out and what I have found out, is that teaching people with disabilities to effectively interact and make other people feel comfortable with them is one of the keys to everyone being successful. And that is what we focused on, not just the law, but I designed a program years ago for young people with disabilities, teaching them how to work better with their teachers, how to work better with their classmates, how to even work better with their relatives having the disability.



I think that there is, if you don't mind-

Dave Fabry:

No.

Richard Pimente...:

... a Starkey story that I love.

Dave Fabry:

Sure.

Richard Pimente...:

Just to illustrate what I wanted to say. Years ago I got a call from a counselor here in, where I live in. I live in Boise, Idaho.

Dave Fabry:

Beautiful area.

Richard Pimente...:

And they said, we've got a little girl here who's deaf and hearing aids aren't working for her. And the mother doesn't know what to do. And she's very poor. And she wanted to know if someone could come teach her little girl how to be a good deaf girl, a proper deaf girl. And I thought, is this call really happening? I said, okay. I'll come talk to her. I did. I went and I talked with her. She's a beautiful little child. She was 12 I think at the time. And I said, let me see your hearing aids. See, when I came back, there were no hearing aids that worked for me because of the frequencies and-

Dave Fabry:

The distortion too. No doubt.

Richard Pimente...:

Right. When I was in Vegas, I was asked to give a talk. I met Bill, I met Tani. Bill found out that I'd helped with the ADA and I had a hearing impairment, that's waving a red flag in front of a bull. He says, "Well, we got to fix you up." And then I said the words that I thought he was going to attack me. I said, hearing aids don't work for me. He said, "You're coming to my company."

Dave Fabry:

That placed the limit on him, and he took that as a personal challenge.

Richard Pimente...:

He did. And I said, they just don't have the technology. He says, "You come in here. We're going to look." I said, what if you don't have anything that'll help? He looked at me quite seriously and said, "Then we'll invent something."

Dave Fabry:

I believe him. I worked with the man too and I know exactly what you, you knew what you were doing and you placed a limit on him to challenge to see how he could help you better. And he took it personally and he continues to this day, as you know-

Richard Pimente...:

And he did it.

Dave Fabry:

Yeah. And he did it. And he continues to be one of the most innovative guys that I, and his energy, I wish I could bottle it. Even at 80 he has more energy than most 50 year olds.



Richard Pimente...: Anyway, I called Bill immediately. I said, I got a little girl and the mother wants me to teach her to be a deaf girl. Bill says, "How soon can you get her on a plane? Mother too." And we did. And he of course did what Bill does. She came back, she had wonderful hearing aids. But here's my point, a year later, even though she's got the best hearing aids you can have, a year later, she calls and says, "I was doing well in school, but now I'm not doing well in school. And I think I might have to quit." I said, why?

And she said, "Because of this. The hearing aids are great, but sometimes people will not look at me, the way they'll speak and I won't hear what they have to say. And so I'll say to them, what did you say? Could you repeat that? What was that again? And then they'll just look at me, they don't want to talk to me anymore. And when I asked them to repeat it, you know what they'll say? They'll say, nevermind, it wasn't important." And I said, what do you really hear when they say that to you? She said, "They're saying, nevermind, *you're* not important."

Dave Fabry: You're not important.

Richard Pimente...: And then I don't want to talk to them anymore and I'm not doing well in school anymore. She said, "Do you have a solution for that? Do you have a technical solution for that?" I said, no, I have a human solution for that, that works with a technical solution. She said, "What is it?" I said, here's exactly what I want you to do. I want you to go to school tomorrow and I want you to find everyone who said that to you, all the teachers, all the students. And I want you to go up to them and say, sometimes I don't hear so well, I've got hearing aids and they're wonderful, but maybe the way you speak or the cadence or whatever, and I'll ask you to repeat it. I'd like you to know why I'm doing that.

I'm doing that because I want to know what you're saying. I'm doing it because you are important to me, and what you say is important to me, that's why I'm asking you to repeat it, because I care and you're important. She went to over 30 people in her school and said that the people, she was having problems with. Guess what happened? It all worked. And they realized, oh my, because she said, if you say something to me and I say something back and it doesn't make sense to you, how it started, I give you permission to say, what did you think I said?

And let me tell you the best way to communicate with me, let's work all of this out. So combination that will work the best is the best technology in the world coupled with the communication, interaction, love, and goodwill and patience of both the people involved in the communication. I believe that that would be a killer combination to help people who are hearing impaired. You've got the, oh my gosh, have you the technology, but we're training young people to do that, to explain to people, here's what you need to do to effectively work with me.



And here's what here's, what do I need to do to work with you and make people feel comfortable? Making that linkage will set you up for life with a job, with your education, with all of that. It's that wonderful combination between the two.

Dave Fabry: Absolutely. And it's the technology and then the caring. The caring of the two individuals in the communication and the caring of the professional to help understand the challenges faced by the individual that will, you can't accomplish everything with technology alone or caring alone. You need both in order you to achieve that solution. And then those simple tools, I think, you've really provided some ways for young professionals in our field to advocate for their patients and advocate by ensuring, I mean, Tim Shriver talks about the inclusion revolution within Special Olympics.

I know that's also a part of your message too, is really not thinking about what that disabled person is labeled with or what they can't do, but trying to provide access and accessibility. And with ADA, with what you've done to ensure that they have the opportunities to be included in life.

Richard Pimente...: And disability in and of itself is not a bad thing.

Dave Fabry: No. No. Think about how it changed your trajectory, the challenge that-

Richard Pimente...: Totally.

Dave Fabry: ... you had put you on a different path than you ever would've had if you hadn't had adversity.

Richard Pimente...: Do you know what people with disabilities tell me? When we ask them, what makes you successful? And what they'll say is while the disability is a challenge, the challenge itself educates me. And we say, well, what characteristics have you developed because of your disability? And one person said, well, creativity. What if you're in a wheelchair, and you're at home and you've got kitchen cabinets and you have to get the plate up, how do you do that? You've got to be creative.

We put, I don't want to say lying, it cheapens it, but we put a little saying together, and the disability community has embraced it. What we say is, my disability has given me the gift, the genius of creativity based on necessity.

Dave Fabry: Absolutely.

Richard Pimente...: And so if you were going to hire someone, wouldn't you want someone who's creative?

Dave Fabry: Of course.



Richard Pimente...: Absolutely. Also, what if I told you that the disability will give you confidence? How will it give you confidence? Well, because you're going to be challenged. And when you're challenged sometimes you're going to fail. But that's okay. Because, do you know what confidence is? Confidence isn't that you'll never fail, confidence is that when you do struggle, you will get up again and you will go on. Nelson Mandela said it best. You know what he said? He said, "I never fail. I never lose." And I thought, well, that is about as arrogant as anything I've ever heard in my life, but how's he going to follow this up? And he said, "I don't fail. I either win or I learn."

Dave Fabry: That's great. Win or learn.

Richard Pimente...: You don't win or fail.

Dave Fabry: Win or lose. It's win-

Richard Pimente...: You win or learn. And I learned from it. Just that little girl learned how to make people feel comfortable with her. We were working with a big company, and one of their top executives had a major hearing loss. He was about ready to lose his job, because he would have meetings and he couldn't keep track of it. People would start talking and interrupting and he wouldn't know who's talking. We talked with him and said, well, what can we learn from this? He says, "Well, I am in charge, but I don't know what to do." And I said, well, why don't we talk to them?

We got the group together and he said, "This is my problem. When we talk, I'm not sure who's talking and I lose about a third of your conversation. It's hard to catch up and important." One in the group, it wasn't me, one in the groups said, I remember in grade school before we talked, we had to raise our hand.

Dave Fabry: One person at a time, that way.

Richard Pimente...: One person at a time. If we all did that you'd know who's talking and you could focus on us right away, couldn't you? He said, "Yeah." They did that. He had one of the most successful departments in a multinational corporation when they thought they were going to have to let him go because of his hearing loss, because he was able to communicate with the people about what his needs were. So that wonderful technology, but most important it is the caring, it is the belief. Your folks, the most important thing that you give your customers is not the technology. The most important thing you give your customers is your belief and faith in their future.

Dave Fabry: Absolutely. Well, I think so many things that you said there, we should all learn in conversation to raise our hands so we're not talking each other, but it is especially useful for those with hearing loss, to minimize the background, to know who's talking, to visually be able to see that. Just such a wonderful



example of how innovation sometimes comes out not related to technology, that raising the hand and turn taking can provide benefits in excess of where the technology can.

I want to transition and want to say, first of all, how cool is it, not many of us have had a movie made of our life or a portion of our life. And actually someone I know very well, Steven Sawalich, was the director of *The Music Within*, the movie where Ron Livingston played you, Michael Sheen was in it, Rebecca De Mornay. Leslie Nielsen, I think played somebody we know in that. And it's a wonderful film that really chronicles your life story, at least a portion of it. And I would encourage people to, I'm sure it's out there on Netflix or some streaming services where they can find it and learn a little bit more about what it was that was your life story up until the point where you worked to drive change with ADA and with attitudes about those with disability.

But now I want to transition to what you're up to today, because I see this time is flown by. We're almost out of time already. You talk about technology and we got a pretty good technologist working at Starkey, our chief technology officer, Dr. Achin Bhowmik, comes from Intel, but he's been with us now for five years, and really helping drive the use of artificial intelligence, the use of embedded sensors in hearing aids. And I know you're wearing those devices and you mentioned that you feel they're quite sophisticated.

What areas do we need to continue to work on and do better and what other advice do you have for technologists working in this field that is ultimately about changing humanity?

Richard Pimente...:

Well, I don't fool over on the engineering side. Achin is doing wonderful things because it's not just technology, it's the human side. He and his son, his son is a prodigy working to develop early warning systems for people with disabilities, with all the fires and tornadoes and all the climate change stuff, to give them an early warning in communication and to set something up, which was marvelous in saving life. What I say is, let us marry the best of technology with the best of the humanity and teach people with disabilities to reach out and communicate, and teach people who work with people disabilities on how to effectively communicate as well.

I'm putting together a program on, how to teach people with disabilities to make other people feel comfortable with their disability. That will be for hearing or cerebral palsy or whatever. And trust me, working on that now, and I wanted to write it in such a way that I can give it to Starkey and all your people can have that. Not only to say here's the technology, but here's what you can do to realize your dreams and recruit people to be part of who you are. And to look at the disability, not as a tragedy, but to look at it as a learning experience.



I know that it's time, but I want to, if I can, it will only take two minutes. Can I talk at it?

Dave Fabry: Sure.

Richard Pimente...: I wrote something the other day and I thought of Starkey when I wrote it. And if you don't mind, and if you like I'll send it to you if anyone wants this. But I wrote this originally for a group of people who tried to get people jobs. Okay?

So this is called, Baggage or Backpack. When companies consider hiring someone, they may be worried that the person they're interviewing is carrying baggage. The answer to that question is probably yes. We all carry baggage of one kind or another. As many of my friends did in my generation, I came home from Vietnam with my share of baggage: a hearing loss, a traumatic brain injury, an Agent Orange poisoning.

However, I learned from my experiences and I no longer think of what happened to me as baggage. I embraced it. I learned from it. What was once my baggage now has become my backpack, not something burdensome and heavy that I begrudgingly carry. It is now something valuable and precious that teaches lessons and develops new skills and inspires me to be creative every day. Helen Keller once said, "The road of life has many curves, but a curve is not a dead end, unless you choose not to make the turn."

Turn your baggage into your backpack and help others do so as well. There and your greatest journey is still ahead of you. Believe in others so that they may believe in themselves. Lesson taught, lesson learned.

Dave Fabry: Okay. I can't follow up with anything after that. Please do send that to us. And for those listening to this podcast, we'll make it available to them because it's so beautiful, and may life-

Richard Pimente...: It's what you do.

Dave Fabry: ... for everyone move from that, into the backpack from their baggage. And I think it is, without the baggage, it's hard to transform into the backpack, to provide that opportunity for learning. I think you said it, I can't go any further and we're just going to stop. I do want to say, for Achin, I appreciate your sharing that anecdote about your work with Rowan. And I would also say that Eva, his daughter, I don't know whether you've had a chance to meet her yet, but she's equally-

Richard Pimente...: Not met her.

Dave Fabry: ... brilliant and focused, both on the technology and the humanity. I think, for each of us that worries about what technology means for our future, the



humanity in combination with technology can achieve great things. And I think what you said about backpacks and baggage is so telling, and I appreciate very much your sharing the time with us today on this podcast, and it's just a privilege and honor to speak with you.

Richard Pimente...: Well, thank you. I just have to say one thing a lot of people don't know. The Starkey family, Bill and Tani, inspired me and my wife. They saved my life when I was not doing well. We now have adopted 10 homeless children and we are raising them. My role model for what's important in life is Bill and Tani and the family of Starkey.

Dave Fabry: Well, you are part of our family, too, Richard. I can't tell you how much I appreciate your sitting with us today and sharing that. And please let me know if there's anything I can do for any of those 10 or any others. You are part of the family and family takes care of each other.

Richard Pimente...: Trust me. If any of them has a hearing loss, you'll be the first to hear about.

Dave Fabry: That's a deal. Well, we appreciate very much our listeners for listening to this episode of Starkey Sound Bites. And if you enjoyed this conversation with Richard Pimentel, please rate and review us on your preferred podcast platform. You can also follow us or hit subscribe, so that you're sure not to miss a single episode. We'll look forward to seeing and hearing you next time. Thank you again, Richard.

Richard Pimente...: Thank you. I appreciate it.