

## 2018-10-11 Ridenour, Sias, Paulik

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- Eric Lidji:** Today is October 11, 2018. I'm Eric Lidji. This is the Great Allegheny Passage Oral History Project. And, I'm going to be speaking today with Larry Ridenour, Jack Paulik, and Malcolm Sias. We're at the Regional Trails Corporation Headquarters in West Newton, Pennsylvania. And, Larry, let's start with your relationship with the P&LE back in the '80s.
- Larry:** Okay. It all came about I guess – we all first met each other in 1986 when somebody from... It was – what's the guy's name that came and met with us? Were you at our first meeting in Pittsburgh one evening?
- Malcolm:** We were not.
- Larry:** That started with the Montour Trail Council.
- Jack:** No.
- Larry:** And, that included guys like our attorney.
- Malcolm:** Dick Wilson.
- Larry:** We started to do this on the Montour and it was about the same time that we got the Youghiogheny River Trail started. So, Dave Wright and I both worked for Allegheny County. I was a landscape architect and Dave Wright was an engineer – civil engineer – and both of us worked for the county and we were at the same meeting. And, all the members, most of the members, of the Montour Trail Council were at that meeting. And then, at some point, Dave Wright and I decided that we didn't want to get in each other's way and it would be more beneficial if he took the Montour Trail and worked with that, as a representative of Allegheny County, and I took the Yough Trail as the representative of Allegheny County. And, that's where I met Malcolm and Jack. And then, we went on from there. We met at a Knights Inn Motel in, was it in New Stanton?
- Malcolm:** I think it was New Stanton, yeah.
- Larry:** Yeah, we met there every month for maybe about a year. Then where'd we meet?

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**Malcolm:** Larry, you mentioned early on – the guy that I remember, you mentioned in your first interview. I read your interview. You mentioned – you didn't remember the guy from Fayette. But, if you remember, you started with three people. And, Dave Tremba was the guy that you're not remembering.

**Larry:** Yes, he was Fayette County.

**Malcolm:** Fayette – he headed the Connellsville Chamber of Commerce, I think, at that point.

**Larry:** Okay. Yes.

**Malcolm:** He's also since died, I think.

**Larry:** Oh, really?

**Malcolm:** I think, yeah. But, that's how I found out about it. I went to a meeting at Westmoreland County Court House – Dave Tremba comes up and starts talking about this project. He had somehow met you and he said, "Allegheny's taking the lead and they're looking for somebody from Westmoreland." And, that's when I made contact with you, and we'd all got involved. Jack and I were in the same office. But, yeah, it was basically, you, I, and Dave Tremba were from the three counties at the very beginning.

**Larry:** Yeah. I forgot his name.

**Jack:** Yeah, and then Dave Tremba – and this may roll forward, but not a whole lot further – then he organized that meeting. And, we were in Connellsville, I'm pretty sure. And, his vision – he did have a vision of the trail, "Let's create this trail and this link," and eventually he coordinated through, I think – he was a member of the chamber, whoever he was a member of – but getting a group of a lot of people, I think that the trail group in Fayette County existed at that time, but looking at getting together and doing a study on the complete P&LE Railroad to see what we wanted to do with that.

**Larry:** Yeah, but...

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**Jack:** And then, eventually hiring, through the National Park Service, we hired – what was that group, was the...

**Larry:** Did the National Park Service sponsor the RTC, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy? What was the guy's name? He had married some girl from Fox Chapel.

**Jack:** Eric Bugaile?

**Larry:** Hmm?

**Jack:** Eric Bugaile from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy?

**Larry:** No, he's state. He was our Pennsylvania...

**Jack:** Yeah, he was a state guy.

**Larry:** This was the guy – and I can't remember his name. He was president of RTC, which was based in Washington.

**Eric Lidji:** Not this RTC?

[Crosstalk]

**Jack:** No. That's the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

**Malcolm:** No, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, yeah, the Conservancy.

**Jack:** That's a different one.

**Larry:** This was the organization, was a spin-off of the National Park Service.

**Jack:** It was the AIHP.

**Larry:** Hmm?

**Jack:** AIHP was the funding group that sponsored that study.

**Larry:** Oh, yeah. That was this guy – this National Park guy – I was in...

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**Malcolm:** Johnstown. That was the Americas Industrial Heritage Project. Okay.

**Larry:** Yeah, yeah, that was different.

**Jack:** Okay. Okay.

**Larry:** But, we siphoned off some money from them.

**Malcolm:** That's how we got started. That was the first money you got.

**Larry:** I don't know who made that happen.

**Eric Lidji:** Let's go back, let's go back for a second because it's starting to get a little... So, you're working for Allegheny County, you and Dave Wright, and...

**Larry:** And, these guys are working for Westmoreland County.

**Eric Lidji:** But, at the time, there's no trail yet, right?

**Larry:** There was trail. There was 10 to 12 miles of trail from Connellsville to what's that...?

**Jack:** Ohiopyle.

**Larry:** Yes.

**Jack:** To Ohiopyle.

**Eric Lidji:** And, that was called what?

**Larry:** But, there's a little town outside of...

**Malcolm:** Yough River Trail.

**Larry:** ...at the other end. No. Let's see, Connellsville, went to Ohiopyle and then it – didn't it go...?

**Malcolm:** It wasn't even into Connellsville at that point.

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- Jack:** No, it was not.
- Malcolm:** It was just in the state park. There's only Ohio State Park.
- Larry:** What's that other town at the other end where – what's his name moved there with his wife.
- Larry's wife:** Confluence?
- Larry:** Huh?
- Larry's wife:** Confluence?
- Larry:** Yeah, Confluence.
- Malcolm:** Confluence and then the town of Ohio.
- Larry:** I thought it was done ten miles between Connellsville and Confluence. It was in the state park. It was all part of Ohio...
- Jack:** No, that was Ohio State Park. You're correct, I think. It was from Confluence to Ohio, that's correct.
- Larry:** And, that was in place whenever all this happened to start up.
- Jack:** That's correct. That is correct, right.
- Larry:** So, we didn't get to – whether there was a land – there's something in between there. Ohio wasn't... We built part of the section from Connellsville to Confluence, or did the state build that?
- Jack:** No, we did not. The state built that.
- Malcolm:** Yeah, the state built it. We built Connellsville to McKeesport.
- Jack:** Right. We went from Connellsville to McKeesport, and the state built that. They had those bridge issues just outside of Connellsville that they had to build to connect to Connellsville. There were those two main big viaducts.
- Larry:** Yeah, but – well I'm mixed up because...

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**Jack:** Yes.

**Larry:** ...I was thinking of that viaduct that went into Meyersdale. The section from Meyersdale...

**Jack:** Okay. That's different.

**Larry:** ...back to Confluence. That was after we all got involved.

**Jack:** That's right. That was...

**Larry:** But, the section that the state built first was from Confluence to Connellsville.

**Jack:** That's Confluence to Ohiopyle.

**Larry:** Yeah, okay.

[Chuckle]

**Jack:** That was it. That was the first section.

**Larry:** Well then, we built the section from Connellsville to Confluence?

**Jack:** No. We built from Connellsville to McKeesport.

**Larry:** Yeah. I'm very much aware of that.

**Jack:** But, we did not build...

**Larry:** Well, who built the section from Connellsville to Confluence?

**Jack:** That would be the state.

**Larry:** Right, okay.

**Jack:** The state built that.

**Larry:** From Connellsville to Confluence, right?

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- Jack:** Yes.
- Larry:** And then, from Confluence – that was in Somerset County after that. And, they got involved in that viaduct to cross the Yough, right? Yeah, then we paved that bridge. What was the river? Was that the...?
- Malcolm:** I think that all occurred after Linda became involved.
- Jack:** That's right. That was a later section. We're getting up into Somerset and that was later than what we did on this section.
- Larry:** So, we went as far as Confluence?
- Jack:** No, we didn't. We didn't.
- Larry:** We didn't go that far?
- Jack:** No, we pretty much stopped in Connellsville.
- Larry:** Okay.
- Jack:** We went from Connellsville north. We did not... The ATA...
- Larry:** Remember when the Feds got involved and we ended up having... It cost more to build a mile of trail.
- Jack:** Oh, oh, yes, yes.
- Larry:** Because they wanted fencing and they wanted all kinds of stuff.
- Jack:** That's correct. That's correct. When we used their money, it got expensive.
- Larry:** Yeah.
- Jack:** And, we were the first ones to use that transportation enhancement money.
- Larry:** Okay.

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**Jack:** What was it called? "Iced Tea," I think, back at that time.

**Larry:** Okay.

**Jack:** I think we're deviating from where we want to go.

**Malcolm:** Let me just remind – all those meetings started in 1989. Those were the first meetings I was at.

**Larry:** Okay.

**Jack:** Okay.

**Malcolm:** That's when we all started to get together...

**Larry:** What's this guy's name...

**Malcolm:** ...and we ended up buying the railroad in '91.

**Larry:** Okay.

**Malcolm:** RTC, Incorporated – it took us that long to get organized.

**Larry:** Yeah.

**Malcolm:** We incorporated and bought the railroad at the same time off of your buddy, Gordon...

**Larry's wife:** Gordon Neuenschwander.

**Larry:** What?

**Larry's wife:** Gordon Neuenschwander.

**Larry:** Yes, he...

**Malcolm:** We bought the railroad in '91, so...

**Larry:** Right. And, how that came to be is at that point of time I was in private practice, and Gordon Neuenschwander was a township



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supervisor. When we had a big meeting here, his name was hardly even mentioned. But, he owned 100 miles of right-of-way.

**Eric Lidji:** Through the railroad?

**Larry:** He was the president of the railroad.

**Eric Lidji:** Okay.

**Jack:** That was at P&LE and the time?

**Larry:** It's P&LE. And, he owned the Montour also.

**Jack:** Okay.

**Larry:** The only that kept the P&LE live was they were leasing their right-of-way from Pittsburgh – was their main office, and their yard, their big assembly yard. And, they had a line that went up to Youngstown, Ohio. But, to do that, somewhere north of Pittsburgh was a high point on the railroad, and they had to take time to put another engine on it just to get over that hump. So, they were interested and they wanted to get rid of that. [Chatter 0:11:17.9]. I'm sorry. I did tell you I was 82.

[Chuckle]

**Eric Lidji:** So, let's go back for a second. You were working at the county and there's two trails. And then, you go into private practice?

**Larry:** Before then, I was in private practice before...

[Crosstalk]

**Eric Lidji:** So, you had met Gordon Neuenschwander before?

**Larry:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, okay. And, I lived in Marshall Township. He was the township supervisor and that's where I met him. And, I had a contract with Marshall Township to do a township park. So, I worked with him for maybe a year to get this project underway. And

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so then, maybe a year or two after that, this guy from Washington came in – and I was at the county at that time...

**Eric Lidji:** Washington, D.C.?

**Larry:** Yeah. Do you guys remember his name?

**Jack:** No.

**Larry:** Anyway, he was a mover and shaker to get this whole nationwide rail trail thing started. Anyway...

**Eric Lidji:** He was the National Park Service?

**Larry:** He was. And then, he spun off from that, as the director...

**Malcolm:** He was the founder of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** He was the founder of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy nationally.

**Jack:** That's the guy that just recently died too.

**Larry:** He came here and he said, you know, "There's an awful lot of industrial railroad right-of-way and I bet you a lot of that's going to be..."

**Jack:** Abandoned.

**Larry:** ...vulnerable to being transferred to a Rails-to-Trails. And so, he got the county to have this meeting. It was Allegheny County and he rolled out this concept map, where it was a map of all... And, that's where Metzger got... Metzger was one of those original guys and a couple more of those guys I'm going to meet Saturday mornings for the Montour Trail – the two trails together. The Yough Trail was 45 miles and the Montour Trail was 55 miles. And, Gordon owned it all. And, I went to Gordon and I said, "Gordon, I got a deal you can't refuse," and I laid it out. And, I had a map and showed him on it. I said, "Just give me two years or a year, and I'll get you the money

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to buy all of your right-of-way.” Well, he was on the verge of bankruptcy. The only thing that kept him alive was he leased his route. He had two routes. He had the one that went up over – and then the other one was his main route. And, he was on the verge of bankruptcy. There were only, like, ten people at the most that worked, was part of the P&LE. And, he had their headquarters in the P&LE Station Square. He since died of Lou Gehrig's disease. He just struggled with... She worked in the same building and he would come to work in a wheelchair. You need to find out – go to the P&LE... I don't know if they're still... And, just get a little bit of history on Gordon Neuenschwander.

**Eric Lidji:** So, you're in private practice and during this time a representative of the National Park Service comes down and presents this big idea, and lays out this map and shows here's all these railroads that are decommissioned or on the verge of decommissioning? And, you took that...

**Larry:** Yes, and I saw that. And, when I worked for this guy building a park up in the northern end of Allegheny County, so I decided to go and talk to him and see if it was possible. And, he was a citizen. He was a great guy and a gentleman. He wasn't one of these railroad barons and robber barons, and all that kind of stuff. So, I said, “Gordon, give me two years to get you the money and I'll buy it all from you.” At this point, the section from McKeesport all the way down to Connellsville was still – it was just being ready to be abandoned. And, I laid out this Rails-to-Trails. What was the law that – railbanking.

**Jack:** Railbanking – it's critical.

**Malcolm:** Railbanking.

**Larry:** So, we were able to get that Yough Trail to the railbanking and we were able, I think, to get the Montour the same – all hundred miles. And, this is where Dave Wright came in. And, I was working with them and then this one started, and then we decided to split and I spent my time on this one and he spent his time on the Montour.

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**Eric Lidji:** And, the big difference between two is that the Montour is entirely within Allegheny County, but the Yough Trail isn't and that's how you have to, then, partner with these other...

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** Actually, part of the Montour is in Washington County.

**Eric Lidji:** Okay. But, yours is – the Yough is Allegheny, Westmoreland, and Somerset?

**Larry:** No. It's Fayette County.

**Eric Lidji:** Fayette County.

**Larry:** Yeah. The county seat is Uniontown.

**Eric Lidji:** Right. So, that's when you start connecting with...

**Larry:** Yes.

**Eric Lidji:** ...the other representatives.

**Larry:** These guys

**Eric Lidji:** Okay.

**Jack:** And, what was critical about the railbanking, which was relatively new...

**Larry:** Yeah.

**Jack:** ...was the fact that all of this property, if it were just abandoned, then each deed of each property when P&LE had acquired this, could revert back to ownership of adjacent property. So, the railbanking...

**Larry:** Who the current was at that time.

**Jack:** That's right. Which was a lot of owners.

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**Larry:** Yeah.

**Jack:** But, it would have made it impossible to do the alignment...

**Larry:** Oh yeah.

**Jack:** ...because we would have had such a legal battle with property owners that would want to retain this property. So, the railbanking was extremely significant...

**Larry:** Oh, yeah.

**Jack:** ...in this approach as opposed to it being abandoned.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** I don't think we ever had any controversy along with...

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Larry:** ...the county or the township.

**Jack:** Well, I will say this, and we'll eventually get to this with Bob McKinley because some of those properties that I was with Bob on in securing – I was kind of part of the securing team with Bob McKinley – and there was a property in Fayette County, not far from Whitsett, that had not been used for a long time. But, these people put a fence directly across the trail. It was like, "Do Not Enter."

**Malcolm:** Barbed wire.

**Jack:** It was a wooden fence with wire. This is with Bob McKinley. We had to confront those people and take that fence down in order to get through because this was what was happening with the trail. And Bob, I would say, he would occasionally risk his life to do this because these people had guns and they didn't want anyone on their property.

**Larry:** Yeah.

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**Jack:** And, that was one situation that did exist. We had the right to the property, but we would have never had that without that scenario.

**Eric Lidji:** Because you would have had to go to each property owner...?

**Jack:** Each property owner would have had...

**Larry:** It would only take one to...

[Crosstalk]

**Jack:** One to break it up, to break it up.

**Larry:** So, the continuity...

**Jack:** And then, the deed research would have been extensive on backtracking the deeds to see reversionary clauses.

**Larry:** And, whenever we got the ownership, we also got a full set of railroad maps. I don't know where that could...

**Jack:** They're here.

[Crosstalk/Laughter]

**Malcolm:** Yeah, bell maps.

**Jack:** Reed has them.

**Larry:** With 50 or 60...

**Jack:** They're here.

**Larry:** Yeah, those are the maps?

**Jack:** That's them.

**Larry:** Yeah, those are the maps. Those are the originals. And, we should have a safe to put that stuff in now.

**Jack:** Yeah.

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**Larry:** I think about that every now and then. I said, "I hope they have the deeds and all that stuff because something might come up in the future, and we'd need to have that." And, this is where Dick Wilson, the attorney – that's another fella that we didn't mention that this... Dick Wilson is now – do you know anything about...?

**Malcolm:** He's in private practice.

**Jack:** In Pittsburgh.

**Larry:** He's practically dead.

**Malcolm:** Oh, really?

**Larry:** Yes. He has cancer and he's retired...

**Malcolm:** Oh, I didn't know that.

**Larry:** ...and he lives up in Oakmont.

**Malcolm:** Oh. Because I just dealt with him not that long ago.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** I'm going to try to call him, but I would love to see him. He was a railroad attorney, a real estate attorney for the railroads, and he would work for the P&LE and he knew Gordon Neuenschwander. So, it was easy for us to get all the legal documents that was necessary and to convert all that to us and to the Montour. Oh, here's the other thing. I don't know if it's important or not. What the hell was I going to say? I'll come back to it.

**Jack:** Then I think Larry was very instrumental in the ownership issues of this 43 miles. He said, "We're going to get this money." And, the three counties – Allegheny, Westmoreland, and Fayette – all those counties have different, I'm going to say, resource potential. Some of them didn't look at this as being that great of an opportunity.

**Larry:** Oh, yeah.

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**Jack:** And, Larry and Malcolm, they spent a lot of time working with the counties trying to acquire the funding...

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** And, we went down to Fayette too.

**Jack:** ...for this.

**Larry:** Was it only you and her...

**Jack:** And, Larry, I think, can tell us about...

**Malcolm:** It was you and I that did this.

**Jack:** ...he came up with a lot of funding from other than Fayette County to acquire the Fayette County property. They couldn't come up with the money.

**Larry:** Okay, it was the other thing.

**Jack:** So, you know the history about that pretty well.

**Larry:** Yeah. Here's the other thing. Dick Wilson put us in touch with a railroad appraiser. And, we paid money to have an appraisal made – every mile. And, the farther away you got from Pittsburgh, the cheaper the miles cost.

**Larry:** And, this guy gave us a report, came up with the sum total of all of it. And, not only the right-of-way south but a lot of places where from the right-of-way down to the river – the railroad owned that slope.

**Jack:** Mm-hmm.

**Larry:** And, some of it was up this way too.

**Jack:** Right.



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**Larry:** So, we bought not only the right-of-way, but we bought all that adjacent – all the land that the railroad owned, we got that. And, Malcolm and I went to all three counties, to the county commissioners, and made a presentation, and told them what this...

**Malcolm:** If you remember, we wrote a memorandum of understanding which all three counties signed.

**Larry:** Yeah. Dick wrote that up, though.

**Malcolm:** Yeah, Dick prepared most of it. And then, all three counties signed it, and basically, each county agreed that they would pay for the section, they would pay for the land within their own county.

**Larry:** Yeah.

**Malcolm:** But, as Jack started to say, you had the money for Allegheny. Which Allegheny was by far the most expensive. It was \$200-some thousand. And then, we got to Westmoreland and ours was only – we only had 10 miles – and ours was, like, \$26,000 or \$28,000, which at that point, we were trying to buy a crossing off of them in Cedar Creek and they wanted more than that.

**Jack:** \$100,000 for the crossing.

**Malcolm:** They wanted more than that for the crossing. We ended up buying the whole 10 miles for, like, \$20-some thousand. But, Fayette's had 17 miles and theirs was \$40-some thousand – I'm going to say \$43,500, or \$47,000, and they never did come up with it. They came up with, I think, maybe 50%. And, Yough River Trail Council, at that point, they said they would kick in \$10,000, and I'm pretty sure you paid the rest in Allegheny County just to make it happen.

[Laughter]

**Larry:** Paid \$100,000. But, I mean, there were so many people involved in this project. And, I think it was because it had such a great appeal to everybody. The county commissioners – that was Tom Foerster

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– you know who that is? Anyway, he loved this. Every time we opened a section of trail, he was right there and took credit for it.

[Chuckle]

**Jack:** That's what they were good at.

**Larry:** I didn't care how much credit he took, just so we got the money, and along all the way until we bought the stone and all that stuff. I think we estimated that we could build a mile trail for \$10,000.

**Jack:** That's right. Larry and I... Because we were involved in a lot of the construction at the time, we had a – I forgot about that – we came up with a rule of thumb, we can build a mile, a trail, for, like, \$10,000 – everything.

**Larry:** Here's the other thing that's part of the deal. We didn't want the rail, and we didn't want their ties either because we heard somewhere that we were going to have to pay \$8 apiece for every salvaged tie. So, I told Gordon in the deal, I said, "We don't want your ties. You've got to get rid of it. All we want is the ballast and the right-of-way." And, that's what we got. But, what we had was where each tie was, and then over on the side, and I guess maybe still on our right-of-way? He stacked up all these damn rails.

**Eric Lidji:** So, you have, essentially, not washboard, but...

**Larry:** Yeah, it was washboard.

**Jack:** That's correct.

**Larry:** And, we had to grade it and we rode the heck out of it, and this is the ballast that was about like this.

**Eric Lidji:** Yeah, like a softball?

**Larry:** Yeah. So, they rolled it, and rolled it, and rolled. That's the other thing that's so neat because even the local townships – some of them... Like Elizabeth Township, whenever they weren't fixing the

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roads, they were out there using their equipment. We even bought a grader for one of them. Was that – that was...

**Jack:** Elizabeth Township.

**Larry:** Yeah, we bought an old grader, used grader, and they did...

**Jack:** They built the trail. We bought them the...

**Larry:** And then, we had citizen volunteers that redid all the bridges. These little culvert bridges, nothing serious. But, these wooden bridges... The steel I-beams were still in place. We had a design. We had some design from the feds to put the decking down and the side, and they had to have at least ten feet wide. And, that's how we built this section of trail.

**Jack:** But, yeah, going back, Larry, to that – the railroad ties. That was a huge negotiating point to have them take the railroad ties because it would have cost us a fortune to get rid of those railroad ties.

**Larry:** Oh, yeah.

**Jack:** And, they took them. I mean, the rail had value.

**Larry:** They took some of them.

**Jack:** But, when they took the rail, they also took the ties, which was...

**Malcolm:** That was an offset because they could sell the rail. But, a lot of the ties they paid to get rid of, so...

**Jack:** The ties.

**Larry:** Oh, and then, yeah, Bob McKinley came in. Because he was like the trail rider. He used his car, we gave him some gas money. And, he rode up and down the trail.

[Door Slamming]

**Larry:** What's that? What's that noise?

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- Female:** Door. The door opened.
- Larry:** Oh. And, he caught one of the townships stealing the ballast for their road work.
- Jack:** That's right.
- Larry:** And, we put a stop to that real quick because we wanted the ballast.
- Jack:** That was in Fayette County.
- Malcolm:** That was in Fayette?
- Larry:** So, this guy rolled and rolled as tight as it could, and then they came in with this Ashton Number 10, which is the fines, and they put it down – one or two townships were not even cooperative, the rest were. And, they put it down with their own – they laid it with their paving machine. You could lay that stuff down when it was damp. You could lay that stuff down just like asphalt. And then, they rolled it, and rolled it, and rolled it. We put down four inches and it went down into the big ballast and there was still about an inch and a half of fines on the top. And, I think they redo that.
- Jack:** That ended up being the standard for our trail and for the Great Allegheny Passage...
- Larry:** Yeah.
- Jack:** ...was to put down this Ashton Number Ten limestone dust and roll it in. And, it seems to be a preferred surface for most trail users. It's really liked up and down the entire trail.
- Larry:** Well, we could only pave it with asphalt when we got near a town?
- Jack:** The crossings were paved.
- Malcolm:** Road crossings.

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**Jack:** The road crossings were all done with asphalt. And, that was a process. We worked with all the municipalities on getting that done. They were good partners of ours – the municipalities – on doing the road crossings.

**Malcolm:** You guys, one thing I'd like to hear you guys talk about – but you remember, the very first money we got was from AIHP, and we got, I want to say, \$400,000 or something.

**Larry:** I don't remember that kind of money.

**Malcolm:** And, we decided that we were going to build a piece in each county. We weren't going to build just one piece.

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Malcolm:** Each county was going to get a piece so we could get everybody excited, and then we get it in connecting pieces. So, we ended up building the piece from West Newton to Cedar Creek in Westmoreland, we built a piece in Elizabeth Township in Allegheny, and we built a piece in – you would know what piece...

**Jack:** Fayette County.

**Malcolm:** ...Boston or somewhere in Fayette, we built a couple miles in three different spots...

**Larry:** Yeah.

**Malcolm:** ...just to get the thing off the ground. But, that was with \$400,000. So, comparison to that is I'm off to bid right now on 3.3 miles of Westmoreland Heritage Trail, and it's \$1.5 million. So, that's the budget estimate. So, that's the comparison.

[Chuckle]

**Larry:** If you have federal money and you've got use their standards?

**Malcolm:** Yeah, exactly, yeah. But, you guys – I just wanted to hear what you guys – because we went through a whole process of deciding that

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we were dividing this money, we were building a piece in each of the three counties...

**Larry:** Yeah.

**Malcolm:** ...because we wanted everybody to get something in this first round. We didn't want to just build one big section somewhere.

**Jack:** Right. And, we did – to roll this back one frame – we hired... And, Larry and I met many, many times, it was with GW S&M to do the design. They designed...

**Malcolm:** Squirrel Hill.

**Jack:** ...the entire trail to where it could be built – all the way from Connellsville to McKeesport. And, we then took segments which Malcolm is referring to, and we developed a strategy. "How are we going to do this?" And, we did come up with doing three sections. We did from West Newton to Cedar Creek. And, in Allegheny County, we did the section – it was below Buena Vista. We did a five-mile section down there and I can't remember. But, when we did that section, it was so popular that the local residents were upset because too many people were coming to use the trail because we were putting a trail right in there. And, you would remember Larry...

**Malcolm:** There's wasn't enough parking.

**Jack:** We didn't have enough parking.

**Larry:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And then, the one in Fayette County we did...

**Larry:** It was in Boston, wasn't it?

**Jack:** It was on this side of Boston. It was on this side of Boston we did it.

**Larry:** But, it was – the trailhead was part of the...

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**Jack:** I think it was from Boston – that would be south for about five miles.

**Larry:** Yeah. And, remember, there was a wreck – I remember a boxcar that was flipped over.

**Jack:** But, here's what the philosophy was of our organization – the ART Regional Trail, and we kind of developed this – it was we are going to build these three sections in pretty popular areas and people are going to use this, and they're going to want more. They're going to support this. And, I think that's what happened because there was a lot of – controversy on it – if you build this it is going to be really hard to maintain and you're going to attract these vandalisms. And, we had to deal with that for a long time.

**Larry:** Right.

**Jack:** And, Rail-to-Trail projects have proven that that's not the case. In almost every instance, when you build these trails, the – I'm going to say low-life-type people – they go away because they don't want to be there anymore because there are too many positive trail users that use this. And, we did find out that, in terms of creating garbage and trash, the trail users – they're pretty neat people. They pick trash up, they don't throw it down. And, that's been, really, something that people have come to accept that, yeah, when you build these trails, they don't cause vandalism and a lot of issues with the trails.

**Larry:** Right.

**Jack:** But, those are the three sections that were originally built. And then, with that AIHP money, and then we expanded beyond that, which was a lot of individual sections to put the trail together.

**Larry:** Yeah, well there are other trails too. Like up in Armstrong County, I think...

**Jack:** Yes.

**Malcolm:** Oh, yeah?

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**Larry:** ...there was a guy, real active, a real enthusiastic...

**Jack:** I guess, then, when the RTC got formed, when did we hire Bob McKinley? Does anyone know when that was? I mean, he was our first...

**Malcolm:** Well, we formed in '91...

**Jack:** Okay. It wasn't too long after that.

**Malcolm:** ...and I think we hired McKinley about a year later. When you say – I think we hired him in, like, '92. So, let's talk about Bob McKinley for a while because if you remember you and I were on that interviewing committee and we interviewed a bunch of different people.

**Larry:** Yeah. I don't remember any of that.

[Crosstalk]

**Jack:** I think I was involved in that too.

**Malcolm:** You don't remember that? Yeah.

**Larry:** I remember hiring him. And, I remember that we started to have those annual gatherings. Do you remember that?

**Malcolm:** Oh, yeah, yeah – the retreats. We started having those weekend retreats.

**Larry:** Yeah, yeah. We started having retreats about the time we hired Bob.

**Malcolm:** I think we might have even had a retreat before we hired – the first thing before we hired Bob.

[Crosstalk]

**Jack:** I think we may have too. I think we did. I think we did.



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**Larry:** Yeah.

**Malcolm:** Yeah, we used to go up to that Camp Sequanota from up on 30 by Jennerstown.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** That's right. By the Mennonite, the Mennonite church camp.

**Jack:** Right, and have the overnights.

**Larry:** Was that the Mennonite church camp?

**Malcolm:** No, it was a Lutheran church camp. But, that's actually worth noting because we have – I mean, people would come from all of our chapters, the whole way from Connellsville to McKeesport. But, people came from the Montour and people came from the Steel Valley. And, everybody came because we were the only ones holding some kind of a function.

**Larry:** Well, we were also going to Harrisburg and different, I mean, the three of us and some others for workshops, and learn about Rails-to-Trails, what the standards were. And also, when we went to Harrisburg, if you remember, we got a packet of information. I know... Metzger. I remember going down there with a handful of people to this thing in Harrisburg. BCR put it on. And, we had a pack of information on how to build rail trails with some standards and everything like that. We came back and then we went – it was always in January or February, we organized this gathering of people from all over to work on all these trails, or even want to learn about it. When I moved to Kentucky, I put together a similar thing.

**Malcolm:** Oh, yeah?

**Larry:** We had, like, 170 miles or 117 miles, from Lexington to Ashland, to state line. And, those people were still in the dark. I think we only have 35 miles of rail trail.

**Larry's wife:** You got it reverted.

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- Larry:** Huh?
- Larry's wife:** And, you revert it to the homeowners.
- Larry:** Yeah, because they didn't know anything about railbanking, as you may know all the details. But, we only ended up 90 days and we had to have a willing seller, like a P&LE, in order to get a rail backed. And then, the only way that we can lose that status is if a railroad comes in or some transportation entity and says, "Well, we need this right away," and then they've got to buy it back from us. So, whatever that is.
- Jack:** And, I might say that it might have been 15 or 20 years ago, but that challenge really didn't get big, but in Allegheny County, there was a commercial hauler that wanted to put a rail line back in to haul...
- Larry:** Well, there were two things.
- Jack:** So, we were challenged on that but not aggressively.
- Larry:** Right.
- Jack:** Twice, if I can remember.
- Larry:** We weren't challenged on this trail.
- Jack:** Right. Right.
- Larry:** So, we had two things going at the same time. We had Allegheny County commissioners shelling out the money.
- Eric Lidji:** What was the idea about starting the RTC?
- Larry:** The idea behind it was it crossed three counties. And, none of the county commissioners wanted to be the first spot where they could be sued. So, the RTC was the middle organization that could be sued. And, the counties, the three counties, were not liable.

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**Malcolm:** That was part of it and we also had a huge discussion about the fact that we knew we were dealing with three counties were different – financially worked differently. We wanted the trail to look the same. We wanted 43 miles from Connellsville to McKeesport. We didn't Fayette's trail, we didn't want you to know when you entered Fayette County or know when you entered Westmoreland from Allegheny. We wanted one continuous trail that all looked the same, it was engineered the same, designed the same, and built the same.

**Larry:** Right.

**Malcolm:** So, we wanted to stick to all the same standards, so we wanted to tie everybody together...

**Larry:** Wanted that continuity.

**Malcolm:** ...and work together. But, Larry's right, we spent a long time investigating, if you remember, whether this should be a nonprofit corporation, whether it should be some type of authority, whether it should be... Those were the things we discussed with attorneys. When I talk to you, I'll tell you about a meeting we had in Pittsburgh when we started writing bylaws and trying to figure out how to organize this thing. Where we're sitting in a room with, like, five different attorneys because every county had an attorney.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** And, this is where Dick Wilson came in.

**Malcolm:** RTC had an attorney. And, we're sitting there talking and talking about all these bylaws. But, it was an interesting process, but we eventually came to the conclusion that we would form a nonprofit corporation if that's what made the most sense.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** And, we had the cooperation from the county commissioners – actually all three. I don't remember having any trouble with Fayette County.

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**Jack:** And, in creating that, I do remember that the counties were, "Well, if you create this, it's kind of like creating another park. But then, we're going to have to put all this time and money into maintaining it." And, that ended up not being the case. And, I think all the counties really eventually saw that, and really bought into, "This is really a good thing. We want to see this continue to occur within our county." And, the three counties being one under the corporation, it did turn out that that was really a good way to go. And, it was then, also, looked at from a state level and other organizations that this model Regional Trail Corporation did an incredible job of developing and maintaining this trail through a nonprofit organization, is kind of what is still kind of nationally is being a pretty incredible situation that happened.

**Eric Lidji:** When did it become clear that you needed an employee at RTC?

**Jack:** Yes.

**Larry:** Within the first year, I think because we had other jobs.

**Eric Lidji:** And, what did that person do? What was the work that was clear you needed to have someone on the staff?

**Larry:** We needed boots on the ground, I think.

**Malcolm:** We were fortunate in that we had a very active board. Larry continued to be very active...

**Larry:** You started...

[Crosstalk]

**Malcolm:** ...Jack continued to be very active. We all were very active but at the same time...

**Larry:** Well, I was not the first president.

**Malcolm:** You were the first president.

[Crosstalk]

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**Jack:** You were. You were.

**Larry:** And, right here is the second one.

**Malcolm:** I was the second one.

[Chuckle]

**Malcolm:** But, we realized that we needed someone who could pursue this stuff day in and day out.

**Larry:** Yeah.

**Malcolm:** And, that's when we advertised for a trail manager – we called that position. We spent a bit of time talking about what that would be called. We stayed away from executive director, all that because we felt like trail manager was what the board felt like this guy should do.

**Larry:** Yeah.

**Malcolm:** But, I wanted to remind you about was Bob McKinley. When we interviewed Bob McKinley, you're the one who really liked Bob...

**Jack:** That's right.

**Malcolm:** ...through the interview process. I mean, there wasn't any of us that didn't like Bob, but you were very impressed. Bob had done a whole lot of different stuff, but he never did anything, like, he never did anything that was relative to managing a trail as I was concerned.

**Larry:** Well, he had a personality.

**Malcolm:** He had a good personality, but he had also done a tremendous amount of volunteer work. If you remember, he talked about all these things he did through the JCs and these other...

**Jack:** Right.

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- Malcolm:** You were very impressed with all these projects that he accomplished with volunteers. And, we were talking and we knew that a lot of this had to get done with volunteers.
- Larry:** Right.
- Malcolm:** And, a lot of this had to get done by all these older people that we had that were willing to form these chapters and do this work. Someone had to create enthusiasm and keep them all going and do that kind of stuff, right? And, that's what impressed you so much about Bob. That's what impressed you so much about Bob. That's what I remember you talking about.
- Larry:** Yeah. And, we met across the river.
- Malcolm:** In that old building.
- Larry:** Was that the Chamber of Commerce building?
- Malcolm:** Well, we used to meet in the West Newton Senior Center when we first...
- Jack:** That's right – West Newton Senior Center.
- Larry:** Right. Okay.
- Malcolm:** But then, Bob moved to the building that was torn down to build a little park. We rented it off the guy that makes the pie makers. Who was that?
- Jack:** Palmer.
- Malcolm:** Palmer Manufacturing – we rented that building which is now no longer there, and that's where Bob's office is after we moved out of West Newton Senior Center.
- Larry:** Yeah, and then he moved back here.
- Jack:** Then he moved up here.

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**Malcolm:** Then he ended up in the basement at **Drug Fair [? 0:41:58.9]**, or whatever that's called.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** In the back of the drug store before that we go with this.

**Malcolm:** And then, we built this eventually.

**Larry:** And, that's the other thing. I mean, this Gordon Neuenschwander was so cooperative – he gave us... And, you probably have them there in the drawings for this building. This is an exact replica of the old train station, although the inside is repurposed for other things.

**Jack:** And then, Bob, he was good at helping us get grants. Bob really looked at the grant – and he was a good grant writer because...

**Malcolm:** With DCNR – he wrote DCNR grants.

**Jack:** ...with state and even federal grants he acquired a lot of grants for the Regional Trail Corporation. And, the reason I bring that up is because this particular building – we had grant money to do this building and when Bob was still around... This building was done in two phases with the West Newton Station. The shell was put up with one grant and it wasn't enough money to finish it. And, there was another outstanding grant that was out there that never executed until Bob was gone. And then, we completed this building with the phase two, second grant, that was out there.

**Larry:** And then, the local school district was involved in building...

**Jack:** Yes. Oh, thanks.

**Larry:** ...this. When we got all this property...

[Crosstalk/Chatter]

**Jack:** Larry, she made coffee back there.

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**Larry:** ...when you go south about half a mile, there's a rail yard out there. And, this car was just sitting there and we inherited that.

**Larry:** So, the local school district, they got somebody with a crane, or two cranes, however, they moved it to this location, and then the local Go-Tech metal people, whatever, they turned it into what it is now. That was all donated labor. And, you guys must have got the money somehow.

**Eric Lidji:** So, you were saying that Bob McKinley had a good personality. Can you describe that?

**Larry:** He was everybody's friend. That's all this stuff coming up – that was... There was a point – I'm not sure why I turned the other way... How long was he employed by RTC?

**Malcolm:** Bob was extremely enthusiastic.

**Larry:** Oh, yeah, for sure.

**Malcolm:** He was really good at getting everyone going and getting everyone involved. I referred to him as like the cheerleader for trails. He was all over that. He was good at getting the grants and stuff like that – where he failed us, bringing everything to a conclusion all the time. So, it was kind of funny, I think we struggled with Bob a little bit in that regard because he was kind of like everywhere all the time, but nothing got totally completely done. So, we were always like, "Bob, you've got to finish this, you've got to finish" ... It was that kind of thing. But, he really did move us forward because I think his enthusiasm and his love of this trail and the whole love the concept.

**Larry:** He made friends. Anybody that he met, he made friends.

**Malcolm:** He drew a lot of people in. He drew people into the concept.

**Larry:** And, he could deal with townships

[Crosstalk]



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- Malcolm:** He was really good at dealing with those people who lived along the trail who just were scared to death of this trail and thought it was the worst idea in the world. We had people tell us that homeless people from Washington, D.C. were going to hike up the trail and end up in their little community. I mean, it was just amazing what people thought could possibly happen out of this. They were scared to death. But, Bob was one of those people who could just talk to them about all that and not get excited about it and sort of calm them down, move it forward.
- Jack:** I think what you were saying – he was everybody's friend, and that's kind of what he was. As Larry had previously said, he had this little vehicle as a tracker and he...
- Malcolm:** Oh, yeah. Yeah.
- Larry:** Yeah.
- Jack:** ...was up and down the trail every day. That was what he loved to do.
- Larry:** We never had to worry about whether he put in his eight hours.
- Jack:** That's right. And, some of those sidebars really kept from probably doing a lot of managerial things because if there was someone called and said there was a problem in Connellsville, he's out the door, he's going to go solve that problem. That's what he really liked. He liked being on the trail. That was his favorite thing to do. And, he did help us a lot on the construction projects. He wanted to be out there while they were going on. And then, even to go back – because we hired him around '91. He helped us secure the properties too. I mean, getting all the gates put in. He spent a lot of time – and I worked with him a lot on that and locating, and Larry too, on where we needed to put gates to secure our property. And, Bob spent a lot of time on, “We need to secure it even before we do anything with it.” And, I know he ran into a lot of issues with some people that were always trying to break the gates. Like, if the gate's broken, Bob would be there the next morning putting the new gate up, or being challenged by...

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- Larry:** What was the township where Whitsett is located? They were the ones that were stealing the ballasts.
- Jack:** Yeah, yeah. In Fayette County.
- Larry:** Yeah.
- Jack:** Dunbar Township? It might have been Dunbar Township. But, there were a lot of issues with people and the townships and trail users. A lot of trail users – they had a beach up in Fayette County – they called, what, “Round Bottom” – and all the people that used the trail – when we put these gates up, they did not like that and they would rip them down. We would have to almost armorize some of them. And, we did hire this group of people to put these gates in. And, Bob and I, the one time, we were checking on them and we rode up to these people – these are our contractors – and they were kind of white-faced, and they said, “Man, these people told us if we put another gate in, they're going to kill us. That's what they told – these people from Fayette County told them. So, there were a lot of unhappy people until we actually secured this and kept...
- Malcolm:** Well, the rail – if you can think about it – the railroad already had a service road that ran alongside it, and then you had the river. So, people used the river as a partying point. The road gave them access to whole corridors – like a linear dump. Because people would just – back then – people would just dump things everywhere. So, we cleaned up so many garbage dumps it was ridiculous. But, all these people wanted access to this because they had had it for their whole lives. And, they wanted to be able to run up and down here and party, or do whatever they wanted to do – race their ATVs or race their Jeeps – and we started closing it off and getting control of it, and cleaning it up. And, they didn't like that. So, it took a little while.
- Larry:** Did we ever have any issues with Bob not following orders or doing stuff that we didn't want him to do? I think that came up.
- Jack:** I think a lot of it was keeping him in the office because he liked to be out on the trail monitoring and talking to trail people. And, as Malcolm said, in following up with a lot of these grants that were

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just kind of – the time frames, we were losing time on grants and actually losing grants because we were not doing the work that we said we were going to do.

**Larry:** But, I think with his personality, he overcame a lot of fear – the neighbors were afraid of what the trail was going to do. He'd get all these, you know – people don't understand anything, then they're afraid of it. So, I mean, with his personality, he was able to overcome a lot of that fear.

**Malcolm:** You can't understand the difference from then till now.

**Jack:** That's right.

**Malcolm:** It's like, if all of a sudden now that trail was not there and three counties announced they were going to buy that corridor and build a trail from, you know, McKeesport to Connellsville – like we talked about – people would love it. They'd be all over it. Everybody would want to be a part of it. But back then, nobody even understood what this was. You know, all there was was this little piece in Ohiopyle that only a few people had been to, so they were more scared than anything else. They just saw this as, “You're going to draw a bunch of people into our backyards and our neighborhoods, and they're going to be nasty people cause trouble, they're going to steal stuff out of our yards.”

**Larry:** Later on, as a reason I got fired, was up on...

**Eric Lidji:** Fired from what?

**Larry:** From my job.

[Crosstalk]

**Eric Lidji:** At Allegheny County?

**Jack:** [Inaudible 0:51:00.5].

**Larry:** Yes. Was because I was going to – I was as bad as Bob McKinley, only my personality is not his.

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[Chuckle]

**Larry:** So, this was up in – oh, hell, I can't remember the...

**Larry's wife:** Calm down.

**Larry:** Huh?

**Larry's wife:** Calm down, dear. Plum...

**Larry:** Plum Borough. No, one of those up on the Allegheny River. There was a railroad that wanted to give us, I think it was like five miles of trail, and I jumped right on that. And, this is where the adjacent landowners... I mean, I didn't win them all. That was one I lost. Oh, and then there was another one in Bradford Woods too. A couple of them that I lost just because of the power that the adjacent landowner had with their township supervisors or the county commissioners. In the case of – you say Plum Borough, it was the next town out there... No, it was in Allegheny County because that was whenever... The first time in 50 years the Republicans won the courthouse and it was like a different form of government. You had three commissioners, and two had to be of one party and the third one was the minority party. And, it was always the Republicans were the minatory. In this particular time, the Republicans, by accident, won two seats and we had one Democrat that lost his seat. Anyway, for a long time, I mean, we had the Democrats in charge. It was Larry Dunn, was a Republican, he had a partner. He had been the minority for ten years or something like that. And, he couldn't do anything except just attend meetings because the two Democrats always passed what they wanted. And, the one that was the champion of all this was – oh, God, I can't even remember his name – but you had Tom Foerster and then the other guy, they were always for the trail. So, when Larry Dunn got... He had his running mate – we called them “Dumb and Dumber” because they didn't know squat what they were doing. I can't remember the section of trail that was in question, but I was trying to get permission to buy this section – oh, he was going to give it to us. This guy didn't want it. It was a liability for him. But, it went right down through the middle of the township, and the township municipal building, and the ballfields and one of the elementary

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schools – it had all been connected with this little piece of trail. And, I was just going at it. Told him how great it was and what a benefit this would be. But, all these landowners that were along the side went to this guy who was a township – I don't think he was a town... I'm sorry, I get the detail mixed, but they went to the owner of the Ford dealership on Route 8. No. What's the one that goes up along the Allegheny River?

**Eric Lidji:** Twenty-eight.

**Larry:** Hmm?

**Eric Lidji:** Twenty-eight.

**Larry:** Yeah. It's 28? That Ford dealership... And, they went to him and he had donated a lot of money to Larry Dunn, so he went to Larry Dunn. And, he said, "I don't like what this guy's doing. He's giving Allegheny County a bad reputation," and blah, blah, blah. The next day, or a few days later, I was called into the – I wasn't even called into Larry Dunn's office. He wasn't man enough to fire me. He had one of his aides... So, by this time – this was within a month after the politics changed in the county and they had already eliminated the planning department – there was, like, 30 people – and that's where I was. So, they knew this was coming. So, they moved me into the engineering department where Dave Rhett was, I took all the files and everything. So, this guy doesn't know where I was. Somehow, he found out that I was in the engineering department. So, the head, the director of engineering said, "Larry," this was, like, 11:00 in the morning, he says, "you're supposed to be in my office at 1:00. This was 11:00. He said, "I have no idea what it's about." Because he really liked the trail stuff we were doing. So, at 1:00 this guy came in and he says, "You have enough time with the county to retire, don't you? Like, 10 years? To get your..."

**Jack:** Vested.

**Larry:** Hmm?

**Jack:** To be vested – ten years.

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**Larry:** Yeah, to be vested, in the, whatever. So, I said, "Yeah, I am." I was at the county for 11 years. He says, "Well, that's good." He says, "I think you ought to take your retirement because if you don't we're going to fire you."

**Eric Lidji:** What year was that?

**Larry:** Hmm?

**Eric Lidji:** What year was that?

**Larry:** Oh, 2004... No, no. I spent the last five years working for the Rivers of Steel. That's a federal spin-off, working for Augie Carlino at the Rivers of Steel. So, in 2004 – so this is about five years – So, 2000 and...

**Eric Lidji:** It'd be 1999.

**Larry:** It will be 1999 is when I got fired. And then, the mayor of the city called me. I went back into – I could also get back into private practice. So, the mayor, Tom Murphy called me, "Hey, Larry." He says, "Don't take any job. I got work for you!"

[Chuckle]

So, the grapevine – they hear this... And, that's how we built the section along the Parkway East from the Hot Metal Bridge to the county jail – that section – the city owned it. And, they owned the land on the other side too. So, I went in and did the drawings, did all this stuff, and we got that built and then she retired in 2004. I said, "I guess it's time for me too, to retire." And, that's when we moved, in 2004 in May, that's when we moved down to, I think, Lexington, Kentucky. And, I've tried to get a trail project going down there, but I think the only things I got... In the Mammoth Cave National Park, they've got 25 miles and now the state built 30 miles and they've got a few more to go. But, when I arrived there, there was a citizen group called the Kentucky Rails-to-Trails Council – in Lexington, not in Louisville. There's three areas of the state that it has any population to speak of. One is Louisville, Lexington, and a whole bunch of townships or suburbs, whatever they call them in

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northern Kentucky south of Cincinnati. So, anybody, if they want to live in Kentucky to pay their taxes, they live across the river. So, it's like one big metro area. And, we tried to get a hundred and, I think seventeen miles. There's only six miles south of Interstate 64. It was a – the L&M was a railroad, and they sold out to CSX, and then CSX abandoned it. And, he needed his 90 days to the railbank it and the state doesn't want it. The Farm Bureau wrote a paper on why Kentucky shouldn't get involved in Rails-to-Trails. So, we didn't fully know this in the beginning, but we never got anywhere. After about a year I said, "That's like riding a dead horse."

**Malcolm:** Yeah, I have two things I want to ask you about before we get done, Larry. What do you remember about us forming the ATA?

**Larry:** That was your fault. It wasn't your fault. He's the one that brought Linda Boxx on to our board of directors.

**Malcolm:** That's right.

**Jack:** When was that, Malcolm? I remember you'd liked her.

**Malcolm:** '93, '94 – but if you remember, we had a discussion. We sat down at a meeting, we had gotten into fundraising with the group and we had hired Teeter Associates, and so on and so forth. But, we had talked about the fact that we really needed some people who could help us plan a funding campaign.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** And, you knew her. Wasn't she on your county park work?

**Malcolm:** She wasn't on it at that time. She was in a planning process with us. But, George Decatch was involved from Allegheny County. You had George Decatch, Mike Deal from parks.

**Larry:** Right.

**Malcolm:** They were involved. But, at the same time, we come up with a plan... Maybe you weren't at that meeting because it was, I don't

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know, it was the funding part. We said we have to reach out and round out this committee, get some people.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** George Decatch is also an employee of Allegheny County. He was a little higher level of pay grade than me. And, he was loyal to...

[Crosstalk]

**Malcolm:** He was like an economical developer or something. And, George reached out to Jim Lineberg. We sat down at a meeting and George said, "Well, I know this guy called Jim Lineberg. I'll reach out to him." And, I said, "Well, I know Linda Boxx, I'll reach out to Linda." We were looking at pulling some new people onto the board that could really help us in that area to bring some funds in to get this thing done. And, those two come in at the same time. And then, we got lucky on that because those two...

**Jack:** Meshed.

**Malcolm:** ...really meshed. We brought in Teeter Associates, and that's when the funding began to flow for Regional Trail Corp...

**Larry:** I see. Did we have anybody similar to that in Fayette County?

**Malcolm:** Not that I know of.

**Jack:** No, I can't think of that, no.

**Larry:** The only guy... The guy had a car dealership down there.

**Malcolm:** We did have Dave – he worked for the guy that did economic development in Fayette County. He was second in command. Now he heads one of the foundations in Pittsburgh.

**Jack:** Oh, Dave... I'll think of his name – Rogers.

**Malcolm:** Dave Rogers.

**Jack:** Yes.



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**Malcolm:** Remember Dave Rogers?

**Jack:** That's right.

**Malcolm:** He worked Mike...

**Jack:** Mike Krajovic.

**Malcolm:** Mike Krajovic...

**Jack:** Krajovic.

**Malcolm:** ...who headed that Fayette Economic Development Council. Remember, Mike was kind of... One day he'd be good with trails and one day he'd be not good with trails, you know. So, he was one of those wishy-washy kind of guys. But, this Dave worked for him, and Dave ended up coming onto our board. And, Dave was a little bit of help in that, but Dave went onto work for – what foundation did he work for? It's one of the bigger- he heads one of the bigger foundations.

[Crosstalk]

**Jack:** One of the foundations in Pittsburgh.

**Larry:** One of the reasons I think we were successful is we had enough foundations in the Pittsburgh area that we could always get the local match for any state or federal money. Is that a true statement?

**Malcolm:** That's true. Yeah. But, Larry, with ATA, though... We started out with ATA because, if you recall, the foundations said to us, "This whole thing's too confusing. We're getting too many requests too many trails. We don't know which ones to fund, which ones are important, prioritization, all that kind of stuff." And, we ended up going to a meeting at the Duquesne Club in Pittsburgh. Were you at that meeting? You were at the meeting, right?

**Larry:** I remember that. Yep, yep.

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- Malcolm:** And, we set down with the heads of a bunch of different foundations. We had Bob Teeter there, Linda Boxx was there, and I was there. And, I thought Jack was there, but Jack says he doesn't think he was there. I'm trying to remember who was at this meeting.
- Larry:** I was there. I was at that meeting.
- Malcolm:** I think it was you and George Decatch were there from Allegheny County.
- Larry:** Yeah. And, that's when Linda came on board.
- Malcolm:** Well, it was on the way home in the car that we had this big discussion about getting...
- Larry:** She was in the car? Was she at that meeting?
- Malcolm:** It was Bob Teeter, her and I drove down together from Greensburg. So, after we had the meeting at the Duquesne Club and we're on our way home in the car, we're talking about that we needed to get these seven trail groups together. And, that's what began the ATA. Because then a week or two later, Linda calls me – I was the president at the time – and she calls me and says, "I'd be willing to undertake that," trying to get those groups together.
- Larry:** What groups were all chat – all the local... You mean like the different counties?
- Malcolm:** No, it was the seven groups that were working. Montour was one of them. RTC, Somerset County, Maryland...
- Jack:** State Parks.
- Malcolm:** ...I think at that time Friends of the Riverfront, the State Parks...
- Larry:** Okay. Yeah. Okay.
- Malcolm:** ...and I think the Steel Valley.
- Jack:** Right.

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- Larry:** Yeah.
- Malcolm:** I think it was like seven groups. You were kind of moving away from RTC through by the time we really got going with ATA. Were you for not? That's what I'm trying to...
- Larry:** Well, I had, really, nothing to do with forming the ATA.
- Eric Lidji:** Do you have any memories of the formation?
- Larry:** Other than what he just told me,
- Malcolm:** But, you definitely remember that first meeting...
- [Crosstalk]
- Larry:** I remember that meeting, but I don't remember what happened.
- Malcolm:** ...when they said, "Look, you guys got to get your act together." That was pretty much the message we got.
- Larry:** Well, and then we started having our monthly meetings at Linda's place in...
- Jack:** In Greensburg.
- Larry:** ...in Greensburg.
- Eric Lidji:** What was the second thing you wanted...?
- Malcolm:** The second thing I wanted to ask you about was trail chapters. We haven't talked about chapters.
- Larry:** With what?
- Malcolm:** Trail chapters. We went through the whole process of forming Mon-Yough Trail Chapter, West Newton Trail Chapter. We haven't talked about that at all. But, you were instrumental in getting Mon-Yough underway and pulling people together. But, those chapters were so

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– they're important now – but they were so important at the beginning of the RTC.

**Larry:** Yeah.

**Malcolm:** If you remember, our strength came from those strong chapters underneath us.

**Larry:** Right.

**Malcolm:** And, that was your concept. You brought that concept of these chapters from a friend's concept of the "Trail Appalachian," or something.

**Jack:** The Appalachian Trail.

**Larry:** Yeah, part of that. I walked the whole Appalachian Trail during this period of seven years. I went out every summer for three weeks and did 300 miles, and it's 2,100 miles long, plus some. Anyway, I got a summary of a master plan. The Appalachian Trail was a volunteer organization – The Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Before that it was the Appalachian Trail-something, ATC – it's always been the ATC. But, I walked this and I knew the benefit. And, I had been a fan of the Appalachian. I grew up ten miles from the Appalachian Trail. So, I got their report on how to form a trip and what to do. But, even when it was started 100 years ago... Maybe it's not a hundred, but it soon will be. Bendon McCaw was with us. Anyway, I got this booklet of their manual of how they organized, all their policies, and all that kind of stuff in there. So, I plagiarized that a little bit. And, I said that, "You know, this would be a way if we could maintain this – Youghiogheny River Trail is what it was that we were all involved with till you get to, well, to Connellsville.

**Jack:** Connellsville.

**Larry:** And, meanwhile... What was the guy's name over at Somerset County? He was with the...

**Malcolm:** Hank Parke?

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- Larry:** Hmm?
- Malcolm:** Hank Parke.
- Larry:** Hank Parke was the mover and shaker over in Somerset County. And then, he got the guys from Maryland State Parks – got involved from the Mason-Dixon Line down into...
- Malcolm:** Cumberland.
- Larry:** Hmm?
- Malcolm:** Down to Cumberland.
- Larry:** Yeah.
- Eric Lidji:** So, what was the idea of the chapters?
- Larry:** To do maintenance and to form trail riders to just got out, and just pay attention and see what's going on so that Bob McKinley didn't have to do it all. So, it was the trail riders and then in each county, there was a crew. Who's the guy that had the machine shop right next...
- Malcolm:** Charlie Smith.
- Jack:** Charlie Smith.
- Larry:** Charlie Smith – he had a group, he called it... What was his...?
- Jack:** Charlie's Chain Gang.
- Larry:** Yeah, and he gave me a t-shirt. It was an orange t-shirt, it said "Charlie's Chain Gang." And, honest to God, these guys would go out maybe two, three weekends a month, and they built a lot of these small collar bridges so that there was continuity. Then they rebuilt the campgrounds.

[Crosstalk]

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**Jack:** They would also build those bridges... They went to all the counties and built those bridges for Fayette County and Westmoreland.

**Malcolm:** They built the ones in Fayette County too.

**Jack:** They built all the small bridges whenever we connected the trail segments.

**Larry:** And, we have the artifacts – I don't know if they're still in storage – with a chiropractor? There was some chiropractor that headed this group through here. Or, maybe it was Allegheny County.

**Jack:** No, it was in Allegheny County. I can't think of his name.

**Larry:** You know, he took our plans, we had plans from the National Park Service to build these bridges. Raised the money... I don't remember having to give him any money.

**Jack:** Big guy, tall guy...

**Malcolm:** I don't remember who that is.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** ...build these bridges.

**Jack:** Had glasses.

[Crosstalk]

**Malcolm:** [Inaudible 1:10:23.8]?

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Eric Lidji:** How much trail were they responsible for – each chapter?

**Larry:** Each county?

**Eric Lidji:** Each chapter.

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**Larry:** Right where the county went.

**Eric Lidji:** The chapter was equal to the county? Each county had a chapter?

**Larry:** Yeah, right at the county line and where the next...

**Malcolm:** Yeah. Basically, the chapter was just a membership organization...

**Larry:** Yeah.

**Malcolm:** ...and the RTC...

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** Well, they had monthly meetings too.

**Malcolm:** Yeah, they had monthly meetings.

**Larry:** And then, when we had the annual meeting, these guys all showed up and learned it more and more.

**Malcolm:** But, the chapter concept was each chapter took care of their geographic section of trail. Like there was one for Allegheny, one for Westmoreland, and one for Fayette. They took care of it. They did everything. They did all the maintenance on their section of trail, and they helped to build new sections of trail when we were first starting. But, they also organized a lot of events because a lot of what they had to do was raise funds so they could pay for taking care of the trail.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** And, I think those counties and those successful at that. They got into all kinds of stuff.

**Malcolm:** Yeah, they were running events all the time to raise money and do all this kind of stuff. But really, the strength of the RTC, I think, came from the bottom up. In other words, some of these chapters had hundreds of people who would lead to a couple dozen people who were doing the work. But, from those couple dozen people, we

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would bring the best people onto the RTC board. We'd mixed them in with the people from the counties and the leadership people and that's what gave us such a strong board. It was this grassroots feeding effort.

**Larry:** Yep. So, what would be a date that you said the Yough River Trail started?

**Malcolm:** We bought it in '91.

**Larry:** In '91.

**Malcolm:** And, you built the first section... I think you opened the first section in '93.

**Jack:** '93, '94. I would say '93, '94.

**Malcolm:** I would say – yeah.

**Jack:** But, to go back to those trail chapters. I think what made them so successful is because the trail is being built when these chapters were just beginning and getting started. And, they were part of the process. They were involved in the building of the trail. So, consequently, the Regional Trail Corporation was a real asset to them because kind of the umbrella of building the trail. But, yet these trail members, with the trail chapters, they were actually participating in the construction. And, that hasn't always been the case for a lot of the other trail chapters. And, the fact that they actually helped build the trail from the grassroots up – they had a super buy-in in maintaining that trail.

**Malcolm:** They owned it. They considered themselves owners.

**Jack:** You're not going to mess with us. You're not going to mess with us.

**Malcolm:** They treated it like it was their own property.

**Jack:** Yeah, yeah.



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**Larry:** I think it's safe to say that this trail is a spin-off or product of how they built the Appalachian Trail. Even to this day, the Appalachian Trail is maintained by 36 chapters from Maine to Georgia, and they have partnerships with all the adjacent state entities, like the state forest. It goes through 14 states. And, I bet you there's 30 or 40 state agencies that partner with a chapter. And, they're not all by state by state because there's some of these groups that have been there since the beginning, like the [Inaudible 1:13:59.8] Club. And, there's others. They're not just aligned with the states. And, in Georgia and then the Carolinas – you got the Carolina Mountain Club, you got all this stuff. You probably see some of these things around here. And, there's still... I might be mixing up with the Boy Scouts, but I think they're over a hundred years this has been going on. And, they have, every two years, they have a biannual meeting somewhere along the trail at some college because they draw 2,000-3,000 people just for the summer for, like, two weeks. And, they keep that continuity going. And then, they fund – like I've been a member since I was in college, I guess, of the Appalachian Trail Conference. Well, it was called the Appalachian Trail Conference. And, probably about 20 years ago, they changed it to “Conservancy.” Because now, I think it was only a couple years ago where they finished all of the right-of-way. And, now they're concentrating on a corridor to protect everything because now they got a lot of challenges. They've got power lines, they've got all kinds of – what are these things they put up for televisions, this stuff?

**Jack:** Cell towers.

**Larry:** Hmm?

**Jack:** Cell towers.

**Larry:** Yeah. Oh, God. I mean, they got all kind of challenges, but they've got a core group. Now they're really... Okay, 1960...

**Malcolm:** We should keep talking about the Gap because that's what we're here for.

**Larry:** Okay.

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- Malcolm:** We only have so much of your time. But, let me ask you guys another question. Because somebody else, I think we should mention who has died is Jack Cusick, who was very involved with all of us. And, Jack's not going to get to tell his story, so I think we should take second and talk about Jack Cusick and what he did here in West Newton.
- Larry:** When Jack became involved, he had retired from Bell Telephone and lives here...
- Jack:** In West Newton?
- Larry:** In West Newton.
- Jack:** Right.
- Larry:** And, he was involved early, and all the electronics and all that kind of stuff because of his job with Bell Telephone. So, one thing that we got when we bought the right-of-way is we got all of these licenses by all these people that cross the trail or parallel the trail, like power lines and telephone lines, and other...
- Malcolm:** Pipelines for gas, all kinds of utilities.
- Larry:** So, they were allowed to make deals and the P&LE got money off of that – annual or monthly. How many were there, maybe...
- Jack:** There were a lot.
- Malcolm:** There was probably a hundred of them.
- Larry:** It was a whole 45 miles.
- Malcolm:** Just West Penn alone – I think we had 30 or 40 of them just with West Penn that we ended up...
- Larry:** So, that was Jack Cusick, and I miss him up with Jack Paulik. I find myself saying, "Jack Cusick."

[Laughter]

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- Jack:** I know. I'm still here.
- Eric Lidji:** And, what was Jack role?
- Larry:** Jack's an old volunteer.
- Eric Lidji:** Would that just be licenses?
- Larry:** Oh, he took care of all the licenses. We had like 40, at least 40...
- Jack:** I guess to back that up – he was a member of a local chapter and then also he was appointed to the board of directors for the Regional Trail Corporation. So, he sat within both organizations. And, he was very, very active in both of them, extremely active.
- Malcolm:** He took over all those license agreements and organized them the whole way up and down the trail...
- Larry:** And, sent them bills once.
- [Crosstalk]
- Malcolm:** ...and re-contacted all these people and started invoicing them on behalf of Regional Trail Board, and that's where we got the first steady income that we actually had.
- Larry:** We started to get, maybe, \$25,000 a year. He reaped the benefit of all those licenses.
- Malcolm:** And, that's really what allowed us to hire Bob McKinley. That was the beginning of, that's what the trail manager's salary came from was...
- Larry:** Yep.
- Jack:** And, he was very good. He researched all of these easement agreements and he came to a conclusion and would always present that to the board, "Here's what I think we should do." It was like having a professional you hired to do this because he put more

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time in than anyone through that period to organize those easements and come up with a logical way to do that. Incredible.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** With a lot of volunteers that applied their talent and the experiences to help us get this thing going the way we did... And, when we found out these people, we said, "Okay. Yeah, come on, we'll give you a job."

[Chuckle]

**Malcolm:** It just seemed like sometimes along the way we would need a certain expertise, or we'd need a certain person, and that person would show up. I mean, we got lucky a lot of times in doing this process. Somebody found the right person, or they came along.

**Jack:** But, Jack was also really involved – Jack Cusick – in the maintenance and development of the trail. He would go out any time you needed someone to go out and look at a problem and support, usually, what we decided we needed to do, and get the local trail chapter to say, "Yeah, this is the right thing to do." He was extremely good at that. And, I know because I was working for Westmoreland County at the time... At the time, it was much more fun to work with these volunteer groups, which Jack was a part of, than with real county employees because their attitudes were like, "We're out here because we want to be here and we like it," as opposed to a municipal attitude of, "We're just doing our job." And, I saw that division between the two groups. And, it was people like Jack that propagated that pride of the trail. It was incredible. He was responsible for getting that parking lot built and paved over in West Newton by the cemetery.

**Larry:** Across the bridge.

**Jack:** He was the one that was responsible for that.

**Larry:** Yep.

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- Jack:** And then, when we were lobbying to move their maintenance center from – it used to be under this building that we built, we built a new building for them. And, the local trail chapter was kind of blocking it, wanting to move. Well, Jack was a large proponent of, “Hey, we need to do this.” He really kept the local trail chapters... He gave them the vision of the bigger picture. Good guy.
- Larry:** We didn't have quite the same cooperation down in Fayette County.
- Jack:** No.
- Larry:** And, they had a rail yard there too.
- Jack:** Okay, we could talk about Fayette County for a minute. And, as Larry had said that, but the other counties kind of stepped up and paid for most of the acquisition of the right-of-way. And myself, and Larry, and Malcolm, we really put most of the time into developing and managing their projects for constructing the trail in Fayette County. We really helped Fayette County buy and build their section of the trail.
- Larry:** Yeah. This rail yard, it was up at a higher elevation and there was a viaduct – it went across at a higher level.
- Jack:** Highline.
- Larry:** So, the trail had to go down and it was an ash pit, or something, at that point, before they built the rail yard on top of that. And, right down below it, along the river, was a city park. So, we came down that hill, went right through the city park, and then went down the street where, what, five – four or five – blocks to get through the town and out the other end of it. And, in some places, the right-of-way was, maybe, this wide, but that'd be exaggerated. So, it went along the fence of the – was it West Penn Power down there?
- Jack:** Yeah. I'll comment on that when you're done.
- Larry:** So, our right-of-way went right along the fence and then we connected with the section that the state parks built. That's how we got to Connellsville, and then we were done.

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**Jack:** See, through Connellsville, politically – and I don't know the politics behind it – but as Larry mentioned, West Penn, the bureaucrats in Connellsville, they sold a piece of this property initially which went through West Penn, which broke up the alignment. The alignment was broken that we were talking about – the alignment that could have been preserved for the [Inaudible 1:22:47.0].

[Crosstalk]

**Larry:** Well, and they took down part of the bridge.

**Jack:** It was gone.

**Larry:** And, the train station.

**Jack:** They're actually, in Connellsville, in retrospect, now that the Highline is considered a very popular trail, Connellsville could have had an elevated trail the entire way through that town, but they demolished a section of it before we even got there. And, the city, again, they didn't look at the trail at that time as being... It was always third class. "We're not worried about that. We're worried about our businesses and our acquaintances with our businesses." So, we had to, in building that trail through Connellsville, we had to work around that the whole way through Connellsville. And, that'll show up in other points in other sections of the trail.

**Larry:** Now, that's where Bob McKinley got gung-ho on connecting, right at Connellsville, connecting another rail trail down into West Virginia. He saw an abandoned railroad coming up from Morgantown.

**Jack:** Yeah, it goes through Dunbar.

**Larry:** Hmm?

**Jack:** It goes through Dunbar, part of – that's Saltsburg.

**Larry:** But, I don't think it ever got built, did it?

**Jack:** That little spur got built.

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- Malcolm:** There's two or three miles built here and there.
- Jack:** Yeah, there is.
- Malcolm:** But, they're in a fight with... One part that got broke up, torn back up and the railroad took it back over and tore it all back up.
- Larry:** Oh, really.
- Jack:** Yeah. It was...
- Malcolm:** Sheepskin Trail.
- Malcolm:** Yes. Donna Holdorf is working on that Sheepskin Trail.
- Larry:** It was the Sheepskin Trail, wasn't it?
- Jack:** Sheepskin Trail, yeah.
- Eric Lidji:** With the little bit of time we have left, is there anything else you want to get Larry's thoughts on?
- Larry1:** But, that was Bob's vision. He wanted to connect it from Connellsville down into West Virginia, into Morgantown. And, there's a woman that worked for the National Parks Service – do you remember her name? She's still active.
- Jack:** Peggy Pings?
- Larry:** Peggy Pings. Write that down.
- Malcolm:** She's retired now. She retired.
- Larry:** Is she? Well, she was down living, I think, in Morgantown.
- Jack:** She was in Morgantown.
- Larry:** Yeah. And, she built trails form Clarksburg up to – she had a network there – but they never quite caught up into Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

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- Malcolm:** We have an annual Christmas party at Westmoreland Heritage Trail that we do. And, a lot of times it's usually Rivertowne Brewery. She shows up at that quite often. A lot of people do. A lot of the older people show up at that. And, she's married now and she brings her husband and all that.
- Larry:** Good. I can't think of anything else.
- Jack:** Other than the fact Larry, you obviously had a vision that was like, "Maybe it can happen. Maybe it won't." And, it actually did, the connecting Pittsburgh to D.C. That was pretty incredible.
- Larry:** It helped that Allegheny County had two projects going at once. So, in a way, there was this friendly competition between Dave Wright and myself, but we helped each other. But still, the fact that the Montour – when we bought the right-of-way for this 45 miles, we also were buying the right-of-way for the Montour. So, there's some similarities there. And, there was – I don't know quite how to say it – but one success was feeding off the other.
- Eric Lidji:** Synergy.
- Larry:** Yeah. Yeah.
- Eric Lidji:** Yeah. Shall we leave it there?
- Malcolm:** Yeah, I think we're good.
- Jack:** Yeah.
- Larry:** Can you think of anything?
- Malcolm:** I can't think of anything else.
- Larry :** Do you have a card?
- Eric Lidji:** I do.



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[End 1:26:28.2]

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