

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

[Chatter]

**Avigail Oren:** It is Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. My name is Avigail Oren and I am here with Bob Teeter and Sandra Finley at Teeter Associates' offices at 419 College Avenue in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. In this interview today, we're going to focus on how Teeter Associates became involved with the GAP Trail project and helped the Allegheny Trail Alliance, the ATA, raise funds and support construction for over 20 years. So, I wanted to begin by asking you both to quickly explain where we are today – the space we're in, the history of Teeter Associates, and what you guys do here.

**Bob Teeter:** You don't want the four-hour version, do you?

[Laughter]

**Avigail Oren:** I have to be back on the road at 5:00, by 5:00 so...

[Laughter]

**Bob Teeter:** The short version – we started in 1985. We work almost all with nonprofits around planning and fundraising. We've worked with close to 250 projects, almost all in Southwestern Pennsylvania, on all different kinds of campaigns. We don't work with one particular type of organization, like community colleges and then go – we do community college but here and higher education, recreation. We work with hospitals, human service agencies, recreation – all different types of nonprofits. Some real big, some small. Some hire us mainly for capital campaigns when they're doing something really big. That's when they can afford to hire somebody external; if it's routine, small, ongoing things we usually don't do much with that. And, we say we try and take a look at a comprehensive view of the nonprofit. What is it that they want to do overall, so we can advise them how to get there – not just to get money but how to be stronger as an organization because if you're stronger as an organization, you're going to get more money. And, those things go together – having a real good overall plan before you're asking for money. Then we help people to decide how to sequence – who should they go to first, how do they get involved, who should be on their board, who should be

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

asking? So, we call it a “roadmap” – we say we try to answer everything that’s related to them trying to get larger funding. And, again, it relates a lot to planning.

**Avigail Oren:** And, what was your impetus for starting the firm?

**Bob Teeter:** I had a background in fundraising. I was Dean of Institutional Advancement at Saint Vincent College, which was running fundraising. I had an entrepreneurial spirit in 1985. So, things are lining up – this is a good time. And, it was clear that there was a need because even when I was at Saint Vincent, people would come and say, “Can you help us with this? We’re trying to work on this project, can you give us a little bit of advice?” And, it was so clear that many, many nonprofits didn’t how to raise big money. They were excellent at their mission, they did a lot of good things, they could handle the routine, ongoing things. But, there is a real big gap in terms of knowing how to step it up a couple levels and to get bigger funding and how to mix government and foundation and corporation, individual events – all those different types of things, which do you work on? It was obvious some people worked on the wrong things because they knew how to do it. “Oh, we how to do events, let’s have a golf outing.” It’s like, that’s probably the worst thing that you should be doing for what your needs are. And so, it was clear that that was needed. So, Sandra and I started in ’85 and worked in a couple different places actually – Sandra’s front porch for our first year that we got started. And then, we bought this office and then started from there.

**Avigail Oren:** So, in the beginning, it was the two of you working side by side?

**Sandra Finley:** Kitty, and then she left. It was mostly us. And then, at one point we were up to what, 12 people?

**Bob Teeter:** Yeah. Kitty was there part-time and my wife [Renée] was part-time and I had an office out of my house. And then, we did that for about a year and a half, something like that until the space came available. And, it was clear then that we were going to be able to get enough clients to have an ongoing business. And, as I’m sure you know, a lot of consulting groups are around for two or three years and that’s it and that isn’t what

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

we wanted. We wanted to build a reputation and be around for a long time.

**Avigail Oren:** Yeah, and you have succeeded in that, clearly. How many people are working here today?

**Bob Teeter:** There's five full-time people now.

**Avigail Oren:** Yeah. That's, I mean, really such valuable advice [you were providing] and you know, [valuable] help you're giving to such important institutions in our society. So, tell me, Sandra, what brought you into this line of work?

**Sandra Finley:** I was an English major and I worked in advertising in Pittsburgh and also in London. And then, when I married my husband, I stayed home for a while. And, I thought, "Well, I'm going to have to go back to work because my daughter wants to go to college now."

[Chuckle]

And, I answered an ad for a researcher-writer I was subbing. I finally got my teacher's certificate and I'm subbing, you know, waiting for that 6:00 AM call in the morning and I answered a job for researcher-writer, a tiny ad the paper and it was Bob. So, we got together and, in the meantime, I was involved in the Girl Scouts in Greensburg and I've done some grant writing and also with AAUW [American Association of University Women], just for events we were having. Just, you know, as a volunteer. So, I had a sense of a little bit about what it was all about, you know, the overall idea of supporting organizations financially and in other ways. So, that's why and it saved me from those 6:00 calls.

[Laughter]

**Avigail Oren:** It's nice that she's thanking you, you know, over 20 years later.

**Sandra Finley:** I'm actually retired, but it's only been a couple years I've been retired.

**Avigail Oren:** Okay. So, tell me – when did you first begin working with the ATA? What's the origin story of that relationship?

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

**Bob Teeter:** We started before it was ATA.

**Avigail Oren:** Okay, you were working with the RTC or...?

**Bob Teeter:** Mm-hmm.

**Avigail Oren:** Okay.

**Sandra Finley:** My in-laws had a camp, as we call them, up in Confluence. And one day, you know, we'd go up there because it was cheap, you know, and they said, "Bring the bicycles." We're like, "Oh, bring our bicycles." We get up there – the first two miles at Ramcat are suddenly trail. Those are the first two miles. Gosh, I couldn't believe it. It was so exciting. I always liked riding bikes. My husband is a rail fan and the rail trains are coming by, you know? So, not too long after that, I saw a picture in the paper. It happened to be Jack Paulik and Hugi [Ethal "Hugi" Koudela, PA Department of Community Affairs] and Malcolm [Sias] and it said, "We're going to go to D.C. with this trail." And, I'm like, "Oh, you've got to be kidding me," you know? So, I'm telling the office about, you know, this trail at Confluence. And, Bob calls me in one day and he goes, "Roy Houston just called he's sending this guy named Bob McKinley over – they need to raise money for that trail you're always talking about."

[Chuckle]

So, that's what happened.

**Avigail Oren:** And so, you do an initial meeting? How did it get started?

**Bob Teeter:** Well, we got hired by Regional Trail Corporation to work with them raising money.

**Sandra Finley:** They raised a lot of public money, but they had very little private money.

**Bob Teeter:** So, we were starting to help them with that. And then, because we've been around a lot, we have a pretty good relationship with a whole lot of major funders. So, when we were talking to a series of different major funders, they were saying, you know, "Which trail group is this and that other one was in a couple months ago and somehow or other this is too hard for

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

us to figure out,” somehow or other. They all want to match up so that we as a foundation don't have to try and figure out which ones are good and what really matches in there.

**Sandra Finley:**

And, I ended up going to Hank Beukema at McCune with one of the board members. I don't know. It was a hot, hot day. Now. Hank Beukema had been at Heinz and when he was at Heinz, he funded the pig farm for the RTC. He'd also given money to the Somerset project. He had also given money to Montour because Charles McCune was- part of his property was near the Montour. And, I thought, “This is going to be a breeze.” We're going to go in there and ask if- this is back, we're talking a long time ago, '92-'93. We're going to ask him for \$25,000. And then, there's no question he's going to give it to us. So, we're in there, and I have this flip chart, and I'm going through showing him these pictures, here's what's going to happen, here's what's going to happen, here's our taking all the trash off of the thing. And, he's looking at me, like I thought, “Oh...” And, we get to the end of it, and it's a trail and it says, you know, D.C. And, he said, “That's what I want to know about.” He said, “We're not giving you guys any more money, just for trail building, until we know how this is going. I think my trustees will give you money for a study.” So, I come back the next day, and I said to Bob, “Oh, it's all over now.” Because I'd been to the trail retreats, I'd been to the meetings. They all seemed like wonderful people but so... not provincial, but connected to their own trail. And, Bob said, “We get the right person on the task force.” He said, “Linda Boxx,” and he said- Malcolm was the president of the RTC at the time. And so, Bob calls Malcolm and said- I'm sitting here, and he said, “Oh, yeah, I'll ask her.” According to Malcolm, when he called Linda, she said, “I'll do it for two years.”

**Avigail Oren:**

That's very funny.

[Laughter]

So, am I, if I'm understanding it correctly, you are the ones who brought Linda into trail building in the first place? Or, had she already started to build a relationship with...?

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

**Sandra Finley:** She'd had a trail in Latrobe. She probably told you about that trail. She showed up at the RTC board meeting because she wanted them to work on this trail, rail trail from Ligonier to Latrobe. And then, Bob suggested, "Put her on the board."

**Bob Teeter:** Well, it was key to me- if we were going to take a real big step, we had to do it in a different kind of way. And, Linda had the really right combination of things. I mean, having a foundation is fabulous. But, she had a passion for the project. And, she could work with different people. And, she has more patience on some things that these trail people really needed. I mean, somebody else would have come in and said, like, "We're spending ten minutes on that not two meetings." And, Linda was patient enough to take the time to work with them. Because if they didn't all come together, it could have never happened. And then, being able to listen to one another and come up with one thing and support one another, we think it was absolutely crucial. And, again, on an ongoing basis throughout that time, we're talking to the major funders because we wanted to bring them along. So, we said, you know, "We're going to be doing this. That's what you need to do. We're going to be doing this and will you help us?" And, I thought one of the key meetings was- Mike Watson was head of the Richard K. Mellon Foundation (RKMF), which is the biggest foundation, extremely influential. We talked to him and asked if he would bring a group together to help us really get launched. And, if he asked you to go to a meeting, you go to the meeting. And, I got behind it and did those kinds of things, you know. Everybody else was working on getting things ready. But, to me, that was one of the key things- was for him to say he'd get behind it and he would call a meeting.

**Sandra Finley:** Dave Burwell, the founder of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, he had worked with Nature Conservancy which was then funded by RKMF. So, Mike Watson was already familiar with the trail movement. And, he was so supportive. He took us all to the Duquesne Club for lunch. And, of the foundations there, the only one who said they were going to hold off was Heinz – they came in later.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

- Avigail Oren:** So, I just want to make sure I understand the chronology here. So, RTC comes to you, you begin talking to them about their fundraising needs.
- Bob Teeter:** They hired us.
- Avigail Oren:** They hired you, right.
- Sandra Finley:** Now, we did get some money for...
- Avigail Oren:** Say that again.
- Sandra Finley:** We did approach different foundations before ATA started.
- Avigail Oren:** Right. So, you approached the funders. The funders sort of pushed the idea of the ATA. So, it's sort of moves towards the funders and then back to the trail groups to instigate the formation?
- Sandra Finley:** That's exactly right.
- Bob Teeter:** Exactly.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Bob Teeter:** Of course, it made a difference with the trail groups because they're trying to get money. And, if the foundations are saying, "We probably will give you more money if you do it this way," which is what they really said. But, they said, "You'd have to come together. You can't give us five plans. Give us one plan." And, they pretty much said, "We'll give you a lot bigger money than what you have been getting."
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah. So, it was not just a logistical incentive. There was also the funder saying, "We want to see a vision."
- Bob Teeter:** Mm-hmm.
- Sandra Finley:** And a plan.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah.
- Sandra Finley:** This is what was the outcome of that meeting at McCune. Now, you've probably seen this already. [Sandra is showing

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

Avigail the binder holding the master implementation plan] But, this is what they ended up funding. Mellon, McKenna, McCune, the Steel Heritage funded this project, which we had engineers do the whole section. We had fundraising, we have advertising, PR, and Teeter Associates coordinated this. We didn't do every section, but we did all the final writing and putting it together. So, that's what came out of the meeting at the RKMF office.

**Bob Teeter:** And, to me, another key point was Linda and Sandra and I put together a proposal, had each of the groups sign it and then we submitted it to three sources who we had already talked to so that all three would fund it. And then, the seven [trail groups] would say, "Hey, this is starting to work." So, I remember we mailed it from here and Linda was doing the last-minute editing with it. Sandra put most of it together, but it was sort of like a galvanizing thing. They all had to sign it. They were going to get a check and then they had to figure out how to work together in order to put the right kind of a plan together to- in my mind, that was a significant event because it was signing something and it was submitting something as a group.

**Avigail Oren:** And, was this in '95, '94?

**Sandra Finley:** '93.

**Avigail Oren:** '93. Okay, so it was earlier.

**Sandra Finley:** Let me make sure – '94. It was '94 and we finally got everything together and started asking for the money in '95.

**Avigail Oren:** Okay.

**Sandra Finley:** So, it wasn't till '95 that we actually got- the organization was incorporated in '95, January '95.

**Avigail Oren:** So, tell me about the master implementation plan. So, that was funded? The creation of the plan was funded by Mellon?

**Sandra Finley:** Well, no. Well, Mellon, McCune, McKenna, SIHC [Steel Industry Heritage Corporation]...

**Avigail Oren:** Okay.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

- Sandra Finley:** This is what Hank Beukema said he wanted.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Sandra Finley:** He wanted to know how we were getting there, how we were going to raise the money. And then, of course, Mike Watson also, you know, had the same list of things they needed – how we were going to maintain it. A lot of this is sort of ancient history now because of technology. But, we had to get an engineering firm to walk the trail and all that stuff. And this process was funded. So, the individual trails were still not going to major sources, but we're still looking at funding.
- Bob Teeter:** But, it was clear to us, because we knew the people, that it was going to be real big money, a lot different to what they were used to, so that it could drive it [the trail] going forward. And, you know, when a couple of the big foundations say, "If you get it together, you know, we're going to be able to find it, but you have to have it together." And, our sense was, it's worth all the work because it's going to [get funded]- which, of course, that did come through time after time.
- Avigail Oren:** So, how long did this plan... This is a binder [sitting on the desk between the three of us] that looks like it's three inches thick, minimum. How long did it take to put this whole thing together?
- Sandra Finley:** This was about a year.
- Avigail Oren:** A year of work?
- Bob Teeter:** It has a date on the side there.
- Sandra Finley:** Yeah. So, it was a little over a year – '97, May of '97 we presented it to the foundations. Linda took it to the different foundations.
- Bob Teeter:** You didn't show her the other files and stuff we have here yet?
- Sandra Finley:** Not yet because she just walked in.
- Bob Teeter:** Okay. You should see the things that we have here so you have some sense of it because that was all the early things

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

and, you know, putting together all the documents and drafts and minutes of meetings and all those kinds of things.

**Sandra Finley:**

The reason it came to us is that, in the beginning, as I told you, those seven trail groups except for OhioPyle – which was always going with anything that you wanted to mention – They all had their own, you know, system. And so, at the beginning, they were saying, “Once this thing is funded, we’re forgetting about this ATA stuff.” So, I mean, this is not it... So, they didn't want to institutionalize it. They didn't want to have an office. So, they kept using consultants – mainly us for the back-office stuff so that when it was built, they could say, “Okay, we're all going back to our own little bailiwicks.” That was McKinley, especially Bob McKinley was the RTC person. Unfortunately, he passed away, but the trail was almost done when he died. He just couldn't- he had to stop. He was such a wonderful man. He was a great ambassador. But, that big thinking was just not- he was worried about the Yough River Trail.

**Bob Teeter:**

And again, that's another significant part of it. I was trying to think of the parts and to me, one was Linda and leading and that had to be there. The other was the trail groups and the volunteers and them all working together. For the other pieces, a whole lot of what Sandra did and then we ended up hiring a full-time secretary that worked on the trail. We paid for it and then they reimbursed us. Sandra worked almost full-time on it. And then, we had other people that could jump in and help. So, our role on fundraising was a significant role. Our role in terms of getting the materials organized, getting the meetings planned, writing up the background, keeping the documents, all that kind of stuff – because of what Sandra just said. They didn't want to form a permanent organization. So, Linda kept saying, “Well, you guys aren't permanent. You'll do it for a while and then we don't need to do it anymore.” And, everybody was all right with that. But, I'm still- like, people came through and took the files when we quit doing it. And, we have more files on that than probably 30 of our clients. [From the beginning and for many years this is the way I would describe it. Linda handled the decision-making (like CEO) and managed all major activity and the board approved major decisions. Many, many volunteers helped with a wide variety

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

of activities. Teeter Associates' office was hired by ATA to be the central operations—follow through on answering questions, phone, proposals, reports, email, etc. That's why we had the files—correspondence, meeting minutes, financial records, proposals, contracts, etc. Sandra coordinated most of the daily activity for many years. She was extremely committed and always did very good work and much above and beyond the normal.]

**Avigail Oren:** That's what I wanted to ask. Was this usual [or] unusual? I mean, to me it sounds like an extraordinary commitment for a firm to do that intensive work on one client.

**Bob Teeter:** Oh, just the short version is – we had done things similar to that. You're familiar with Community Foundations? Westmoreland County wanted to form a community foundation. And, there were a couple people that had the idea and they wanted to move it along and came to us and said, "Will you incubate it?"

**Avigail Oren:** Wow.

**Bob Teeter:** So, we ran it out of here. We did all the things, we answered the phone, we were their address, we send everything out. We kept all the documents. There was a board, but there wasn't a staff. So, we really were the staff until they got enough money a couple years later, that they could move out. Then Fayette County said, "We'd like to have a community foundation." McCune Foundation said, "We'll give you half a million," to us, to run the project. Then Greene County said the same thing, but after we moved each one out. So, we've had that kind of a role with a few other places. Most of our clients, we don't do that. But, if it's something that's needed and we really can work at it over a period of time, we do.

**Avigail Oren:** I think that's really, really interesting. I mean, that probably sets your firm apart from others, right, that you... I like the word "incubate," right...

**Bob Teeter:** Yeah.

**Avigail Oren:** ...that you have created space in your practice to nurture little baby trails, little baby community foundations.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

[Chuckle]

So, I want to get back to the implementation plan. Over the span of that year, you mentioned that there were engineers who walked the trail...

**Sandra Finley:** Mackin Engineering was hired to do the engineering part. You're talking to someone at Mackin, I think.

**Avigail Oren:** It's possible, someone may have.

**Sandra Finley:** Oh, so that was the construction needs. The long-term maintenance plan was done by a woman named Susan Thager. She worked with Steel Heritage Project and she did some work. She looked at other trails, other long-distance trails to find out what it cost per mile for maintenance. At that point, it was considered \$1,000 a mile per year for upkeep. Of course, that's changed, but actually, it hasn't changed that much. The design guidelines – Larry Ridenour, did you talk to Larry?

**Avigail Oren:** Eric [Lidji] did, yeah.

**Sandra Finley:** Well, Larry was staff with Allegheny County Parks, you know that. And so, he was really into the design. And, he did that part of the plan and he was paid separately. He was a consultant for this part. Larry was really the driving force, I think, for getting it to.... Not so much, I mean, he was different than Linda. And, he wasn't looking further than... I mean, Allegheny County was a major interest. Getting further was interesting to him but not- it didn't have the same momentum. He just rolled with the project. Every time I talk to him now, he's like, "The best thing I ever did!" The marketing strategy – one of the board members, who just passed away recently, from Maryland, had been with... what's the optical company, the guy that makes sunglasses, the company – I'm trying to remember the name of the company. Anyway, the marketing person for- the famous wraparound glasses, sunglasses...

**Avigail Oren:** Oakley, Ray-Ban...

**Sandra Finley:** Ray-Ban, I think that was the company. Anyway, he and Linda and I sat around and did the marketing strategy. Teeter did the

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

fundraising strategy. So, that was how we put this together [indicating the large binder]. And, it was probably outdated the day we presented it.

[Chuckle]

Just because things changed so much. I mean, we're talking marketing. This is before Facebook or before Instagram. But, it was something concrete. I think that was most important thing.

**Bob Teeter:** And, it was fairly comprehensive.

[Crosstalk]

**Sandra Finley:** Yeah, it was comprehensive.

**Bob Teeter:** There had been no change, yeah.

**Avigail Oren:** Yeah. It looks like there were eight sections.

**Sandra Finley:** Yeah. It was just acknowledgments. We try to acknowledge every person we ever could.

[Crosstalk/Chuckle]

**Avigail Oren:** Wow. It's important for getting these done, right? Yeah.

**Sandra Finley:** I think it is. I think that's one of the big things about this project is... And, Linda will tell you, you know, she acknowledged everybody first.

[Chuckle]

Don't you think, Bob, she...? She wanted to make sure everybody felt that they had, you know, that we couldn't have done it without them. I mean, it's true.

**Bob Teeter:** Yeah.

**Avigail Oren:** Yeah. So, you present it [gesturing to the plan in the large binder sitting in front of us]. I'm assuming you first presented to the trail groups or to the ATA board. And then, the plan is to take it to the funders. Talk me through sort of the week following the presentation to the board – how you began to approach these funders.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

- Bob Teeter:** Yeah, again, we see it not as approaching them for funding but working with them all along.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Bob Teeter:** So, it isn't like, "Well, we have a proposal." They know we have a proposal. They know we've been working on it. We keep them updated on a regular basis. And, you know, sometimes it's calling them and updating them. We work with them, a whole lot of projects. So, in fact, you know, we have a meeting coming up and we'll maybe go over 15 projects with them. So, maybe we'd say, "Well, you know, the trail is getting close to ready." Then we'd have a separate meeting with one of them. So, it was an ongoing process. So, it wasn't any surprise. It's like, well, now we know the plan is ready, it's time for us to put some money in.
- Avigail Oren:** So, I did not understand that. That makes a lot of sense that it was more of a continuous process. And so, as soon as [the master implementation plan] was done, they started funding? I mean, was it that simple?
- Sandra Finley:** Well, no, there was a lot of public money in this project. But, having the millions we got from private made it- leveraged more public funding.
- Bob Teeter:** [Public funds] Needed matching costs a lot of times and then that, of course, gives credibility for a government source to say these couple foundations that are involved. So, it was really a mix – the government funding are the huge funds.
- Sandra Finley:** Rick Geist, of course, put the line item in the budget. But, at that point, I don't know that too many people besides Geist were really excited about it. But, when they saw the support and they saw that there was that plan and then people did get on board and the money started too, they [the ATA] did hire- I'll call them a lobbyist client, Delta, out of Harrisburg to help with the line item.
- Bob Teeter:** Rick Geist had a significant position.
- Sandra Finley:** Oh, yeah. He was transportation [chairman, in the State Assembly].

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

**Bob Teeter:** It wasn't like he was just another legislator; you know, he was the head of transportation. And, we were a client with them and Delta Development were lobbyists. They were paid lobbyists. You know, they raised money for the funders and then they connect with them and all that kind of stuff.

**Avigail Oren:** It was sort of a separate sphere from what you guys were doing?

**Bob Teeter:** We matched up very closely with them...

**Sandra Finley:** We worked with them on all the paperwork that they had for the legislators. They were here, we were there. But, they definitely had, you know, the connections that we didn't have in Harrisburg. I mean, we had Rick Geist and a couple other people.

**Bob Teeter:** But, that was our ongoing....

[Crosstalk]

**Sandra Finley:** That was their business, yeah. So, getting that big line item passed was really, you know, the first big... And then, I think the first couple of grants are half a million from Mellon. I've got to give you the list later. But, everybody did come through and then Heinz came through, too.

**Bob Teeter:** I'm sure we have the listing somewhere.

**Sandra Finley:** Yeah, I got it. I should have brought down here.

[Crosstalk]

**Bob Teeter:** But, again, it was larger than what the individual groups working...

**Sandra Finley:** Yeah.

**Avigail Oren:** Because you were able to leverage them all together.

**Sandra Finley:** Yeah. I mean, in the beginning, we were, you know, \$25,000 was a big grant.

**Avigail Oren:** Right.

**Sandra Finley:** And then, you know, then ATA was getting a million.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

[Chuckle]

**Avigail Oren:** So, I want to understand. So, you know, the grant world I'm familiar with is you sign into a portal, you fill out an application, you wait six months, you find out if you have money or not.

[Chuckle]

To me, this sounds like a very different process. Was there ever an application made or a proposal written? Or, was the plan really the proposal?

**Bob Teeter:** Let me back up just a second.

**Avigail Oren:** Okay.

**Bob Teeter:** We don't do it that way in terms of... What we do is have ongoing relationships, talk about the project, we're thinking of working on this, here's where it is right now, that kind of thing. So then, we give them all the things we have. Then each foundation has their own way of doing it. You have to fill out these forms. We had to fill out the forms the same as everybody else, but it was almost like, "Well, you fill out the forms and it's not final until we take it to our board." But, we know that they're going to strongly advocate for it. So, it was more that we were, you know, almost certain we're going to get it – not guaranteed, but almost certain. So, it wasn't filling out an application and hoping – which is what a lot of people do, but we didn't do it that way. They were ongoing partners with us. I mean, you know, Mike Watson calls a meeting at the Duquesne Club, then brings a bunch of funders and six months from now he turns down a proposal – wouldn't that look sort of odd? Why were you bringing us in and telling us this is a good project and you didn't fund it? So, most of them, the funders, that we thought...

**Sandra Finley:** I think people really respect Bob. You know, they feel like he's absolutely on the up and up. I mean, you know, he talked-before we ever put anything in and we did talk, we crossed every T and dotted every I. I mean, we did everything we needed to do. We turned in every report when we were supposed to turn it in. You know, we didn't skip that at all but before it ever went in, those conversations [happened].

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

- Bob Teeter:** And, the behind-the-scenes conversations, too. You would take that... “Linda, next time you see him, you ought to tell him that it’s almost together and you guys are going to fund.” You know, we all worked together in that kind of a way.
- Avigail Oren:** That was going to be my next question. Tell me about that coaching part, you know, you sort of have- you’re the ones with the expertise and having these conversations. And, you're working with people who have the passion, who are doing the work on the ground. How do you... Yeah, I want to hear how you approach those teachable moments or, you know.
- Bob Teeter:** We do that all the time. I can't remember all the particulars there.
- Sandra Finley:** But, I mean, as a foundation person, of course, you didn't... Linda – you did coach Linda, but it was more- it's just talking through- trying to look at it from the funder’s point of view. And, even though she's the funder, there were times when you know, she doesn't even see it, a different perspective, don't you think?
- Bob Teeter:** Yeah. And, again, because we had these ongoing conversations and when you have a real good relationship, they would say, you know, “The thing that I'm most worried about is that- perform a budget. You know, you guys only did that three years, I wish you'd do it a little bit more.” Well, then we do it and put it in the proposal. And then, we coached the people that were doing it and say, “When you meet with this foundation, here's two or three key things that they're concerned about.” And, what we do, we write bullets down – here are the key things that they're going on. So, if you're the person going to the meeting – and sometimes we go, [but] most of the time, like for our project now, we don't go, we have a board member and the executive director – we coach them and we say, “Here's what you ought to do. You want to send this ahead of time. This one ought to be at their site, this one's time to go for a tour.” So, they're not all the same. So, we see that as our responsibility to gather the right information. We might say, like, you know, “Why are two older white men doing this? Maybe we ought to have a younger woman involved in

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

this.” And, you know, we try and look at every one of those details that we know that funding source asked for.

**Avigail Oren:** Yeah. Wow, I mean, I'm just continuously struck as you speak by how deeply engaged you really were in this process. I think oftentimes, we hear “consultant” and we think, “Oh, plans are going to land...” You know, “They'll come, they'll observe for six weeks. A plan will land on your desk and you'll have recommendations,” right? And, this is a completely different method of working.

[Crosstalk]

**Sandra Finley:** Bob had worked with Linda before on some projects in Latrobe. And, and you already had a relationship with her when this all started.

**Bob Teeter:** Yeah, she and I had worked together a lot. I knew her even when I was at Saint Vincent.

**Sandra Finley:** You knew her dad.

**Bob Teeter:** You know, and worked with her dad. And, her dad was involved at Saint Vincent and I was Dean of Institutional Advancement. Yeah, the thing...

[Crosstalk]

**Sandra Finley:** So, it was a close relationship than probably a lot more.

**Bob Teeter:** Keeping in mind – Sandra worked almost full-time on this all those years. And then, we had a full-time secretary. And then, we had other people that helped out from time to time, too. So, it was a different kind of a role for whatever- how many years was that?

**Sandra Finley:** Ten.

**Bob Teeter:** Ten years.

**Sandra Finley:** It was ten and then...

**Bob Teeter:** You should see the files because you'll get that understanding.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

**Sandra Finley:** I'm going to give her the list of what... Here's what the person we hired took to do the job. These are some of the things they did so...

**Avigail Oren:** Oh, my goodness. So, this is a packet. It looks it's probably ten, twelve pages long.

**Sandra Finley:** Yeah, we had mail every day. And, have you met Roy and Mary yet?. They did "Linking Up," it was a little booklet. And, if you gave so much money, you got a free "Linking Up." Well, we had to mail those out of here. I mean, it was like for Bob, it really was ATA.

**Avigail Oren:** Wow. So, just for the record – this packet I'm holding is just the everyday procedures that might come up for this full-time staff member who was on the trail – everything from: this is how you would answer the phone. These are how to deal with information requests or donations, take payments, pay bills, enter things in... Is this database like the donor database? Yeah?

**Sandra Finley:** We had developed a big database in Filemaker Pro for that. We had Macs then. It had funders, people who asked for information. We sent out three times a newsletter to everybody in that database. It was, like, 4,000 people. It was more than that at one point. But anyway, the database was good for when we had invitations for parties and events. Unfortunately, somehow it didn't- what's the right word? It didn't get over there.

**Avigail Oren:** Migrate?

**Sandra Finley:** Yeah, it didn't migrate to Microsoft when Michele took it over. And, that I probably... You know, every reporter, anyone who- every legislator.

[Laughter]

The database was a hassle doing it, but once it was done or we were keeping it up – you know, you had an event, here were your invitations. Also we sent out newsletters.

**Avigail Oren:** Right. And, it was, you know, it was comprehensive.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

- Sandra Finley:** Yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** Because you had done the work.
- Sandra Finley:** And, we tried to do every year, a letter update to the key funders and the key legislators just to keep them in the loop all the time.
- Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm. I'm seeing here, too, that you were keeping the media clips as well.
- Sandra Finley:** Oh, yeah. Oh, you should see this. We still have some of those upstairs. Because in the beginning, we had to convince people this could happen.
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Sandra Finley:** You know, we're talking the '90s. And, the only really big trails were out west, you know, and they weren't even done then. So, all these media clips – when we put them together and we took them on the funders, we put them together when we went to little senior citizen centers to convince them. And, we put together a display that we took to every possible event in the area to get the interest. At that point, we had so many breaks in the trail, that you had to detour around it. You know, there were, I think there were only, like, 40 miles done when we first started. And, they were spots, you know – Somerset. So, just making people believe that this could happen – sending out stuff to bike shops, to camps. Just in those early years, some people [argued], “Not my backyard.”
- Avigail Oren:** Right, right.
- Sandra Finley:** And, “What's the point of this thing?”
- Bob Teeter:** Again, this really was the operation office. There wasn't anything other than construction stuff. We didn't have anything to do with...
- [Crosstalk]
- Sandra Finley:** No, we did not.
- Bob Teeter:** But, everything else was here. There wasn't anywhere else. I mean, individual trail groups kept their own things, but for

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

ATA, for the whole, coordinated all the things Sandra talking about, everything was here.

**Avigail Oren:**

Right. Well, I mean, what is striking me about this packet is that it's not only the database, clips – those sorts of tasks. But, even preparing the bulk mail. This procedure is tedious, but it needs to be done in order to get the bulk mail rate.

[Laughter]

I guess, really at the heart of the duality of the work, you know, it's really strategic and tactical on the one side and also a little bit tedious on the other.

[Laughter]

So, tell me about the historic interpretation plan for the trail that you coordinated.

**Sandra Finley:**

Well, Don Briggs – have you heard? Okay. He was working in D.C. – the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. ATA is part of it. I mean, part of the GAP, that's part of it. But, he really wanted to, well, he really wanted people to- the National Park Service to get involved in this project. And, we had different meetings with him. And, he finally said, "If this would have more gravitas if we could show the historic relevance and the environmental, geological things about the trail. So, would you- I'll give you a grant if you'll do this project." So, Linda and I got together – a group of people that had different areas of expertise. And, we had meetings. We had people coming in from D.C. and we had put it together. I don't know if you've seen it or not, but I got a copy upstairs if you want it. And, the whole point was to say, "This trail is not just something you get on and ride like some of these out west," not to be tacky about the out west ones. But, it's a history, you know? George Washington came here, you know, the mills were here. We can even see the whole history of the region along this trail. And, we put that together. I think we finished that in '98, I think, or maybe 2000. And then, we used that later for a number of things. Pulled it out for that little booklet we did. And, some of the foundations are more interested in history than others.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

- Avigail Oren:** Who, for example, was more interested in...?
- Sandra Finley:** Buhl.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Sandra Finley:** Part of the project, when Don Briggs gave us some money, we ended up putting out ten interpretive signs, key ones that we felt that- the Western Maryland is the rail trail, P&LE and the rest of Maryland, too. Okay. So, we did signage on the Western Maryland, we did signage on the Salisbury Viaduct. So, that's, you know, one. And then, we also had a list of priorities – what other signs do we need? Because one of the things we found most interesting – we did a survey. People wanted water, they wanted toilets, they want to know what they were looking at.
- [Laughter]
- Avigail Oren:** In that order.
- [Laughter]
- Sandra Finley:** Exactly. Water. I can always find a tree for a toilet. But, that was really... I mean, I go down a trail and someone standing there reading the sign, they go, "Oh!" I'm so happy. Makes you feel good that they want to know about the history, geology, etc. Now, Ohio State Park got a huge grant from DCNR and they did their whole section, the whole section of the trail goes through there and they're really nice signs. But, they made them compatible with ours. You know, so it looks very similar.
- Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm. And so, the ones on the Steel Valley section of the trail are different?
- Sandra Finley:** Yes, Augie [Carlino, President/CEO of Rivers of Steel Heritage Corporation] is his own person.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- [Chuckle]
- Sandra Finley:** Go with that.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

**Avigail Oren:** That's fine.

**Sandra Finley:** There were a couple that we did with Friends of the Riverfront, but then because they had so much trail that's not part of the Great Allegheny Passage – they kind of went with theirs and did some on the Great Allegheny Passage to match up with theirs. But, they all have a similar look, you know, the big art, few words. We had- I don't know how many words – we have 90 words or something. But, we were allowed to use captions. And, the last big interpretive thing we did was the Mason-Dixon Line.

**Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm.

**Sandra Finley:** And, you've probably seen pictures of that.

**Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm. Tell me about that.

**Sandra Finley:** Well, Linda is brilliant, she truly is. We got money from Don Briggs again to do this although we ended up spending a lot more than he gave us. Linda got some more money for it beyond what I worked with her on. I was imagining some place where you could put your foot on one side and here's Maryland and here's Pennsylvania. But, Linda wanted it to be more exciting than that. So, we did so much research. We read every book that was on the Mason-Dixon Line, she and I did. We went to meetings of the Mason-Dixon Society. And, what ended up, the stone blocks that spell out Mason-Dixon – that's a photo op you'll see everywhere. Now, you used to see the photo op of one foot in Maryland and one foot in Pennsylvania before we put the installation up. But, that's a good place to stop and visit. And then, the Mason-Dixon Line had all the markers, you know, M&P, it was the Calverts in Maryland – Penns, P for Penn. And so, we had an obelisk made because at that point, there had been some obelisks along it at one point and most of them are gone now. Along the Mason-Dixon Line, Mason and Dixon placed the stones but later, decorative obelisks were erected. So, that was a lot of fun. And, a lot of people got interested in that one.

**Avigail Oren:** When was that? When did you begin planning for that?

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

**Sandra Finley:** Oh, the trail was done by then. I mean, the most part and we're still getting into Pittsburgh. I think that was 2015 when we finally finished that one. About the same time as we got- or May '14. I can get that for sure. But, we spent a year doing that.

[Laughter]

Spent a year doing this research and going to... There is a Mason-Dixon Line Society. Yes. And, what was interesting was this society had a day when they all went out to see how close the Mason-Dixon Line was to what we call the Mason-Dixon Line. And, it really wasn't off very much. And, you know, these guys were going over the mountains in their little things with their telescope. Wasn't their machinery...

**Avigail Oren:** The surveying equipment?

**Sandra Finley:** Yes. But, there was a special thing that had been developed and they got them from England because that was the best surveyors at the time. Of course, the Penns and the Calverts had money and they wanted to make sure each of them got their due. But, it was very close to what modern equipment could come up with. So, we got immersed in that.

**Avigail Oren:** I'm actually really- clearly, I'm a historian. So, I'm so interested in why that... There are so many places on the trail where you can take a really deep dive into something interesting. So, what was it about the Mason-Dixon Line?

**Sandra Finley:** This is what we did. So, I have to get the interpretive thing out. We identified, like, 108 possible, you know, from Kennywood to Mason-Dixon Line to... the Beehive Ovens, you know, 108 things that were significant, you know, significant. There were more down here. And then, we judged them by different criteria, you know, [it's] historic, people know about it. As it turns out, most people had heard of but don't know about the Mason-Dixon Line.

[Laughter]

So, that's one reason it got bumped up. Plus, it was in a location that was very- it's close to the Big Savage Tunnel.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

People loved the Big Savage Tunnel. Then you can ride right down to Cumberland, you know, from the Mason-Dixon Line, I mean, the Big Savage Tunnel down the Mason-Dixon Line. So, that was one. When we took this- our interpretive plan – we took out to every trail group. And then, we had special meetings. It was part of what the National Park Service wanted. But, when we listed which ones people wanted to know the most about, M&P came out. And, what's interesting about Mason-Dixon Line, in my opinion, personally – people go, “Oh, yeah, that’s just the north and the south.” What wasn't even the north and the south then – we didn't have a country then.

[Laughter]

So, we did put up two signs there, too, as well as you know, you can see the surveying tools there. They’re ingrained in the path. So, that was one of the big reasons, I think, that we felt that that was something that was pretty much common knowledge but not always the correct common knowledge. And then, the opportunity to talk about both the Penns and the Calverts – that part of the history when we’re just a new country.

**Avigail Oren:**

Mm-hmm. Now, I thank you for sharing that because I think that’s a backstory that I haven't heard about the trail at all. So, would you see that as sort of the culmination of the historic work you did or have little things continued?

**Sandra Finley:**

Well, one of the interesting things that happened, I thought, was the different towns like Rockwood – they called and said that they were going to get the money together for a sign. We helped them with it. So, having these small communities say, “Confluence did one,” this was money that they raised themselves because they wanted people to know. And, they used our information but that they were taking initiative, which that engagement is what you want.

**Avigail Oren:**

Right. So, it's coming from the bottom up, not just top down.

**Sandra Finley:**

Yeah, exactly. The more you can do that, I think, the more you... This type of thing has to be... Volunteers are out there

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

every day – the more that they're engaged, you know, the better the rider experience is. And then, like, we have the wildflowers at Cedar Creek, we got some expert in to tell us about that. There are so many different things that are really fascinating and that can bring to people who live nearby. I was just out there not too long ago looking at the wildflowers at Cedar Creek. It's right off of the trail. People have to know about it.

**Avigail Oren:** Yeah. Whatever, I'm biased, right?

[Crosstalk]

**Bob Teeter:** It's lucky that I have a real interest.

[Laughter]

**Avigail Oren:** Well, just full disclosure. I love interpretive signs.

[Laughter]

**Sandra Finley:** That was so sweet of you to say.

**Avigail Oren:** I mean, yes, I love them. I am often dragged away from them by family members who are less invested.

[Chuckle]

**Sandra Finley:** I think that's one thing about, you know, we feel that the signs that we put together, were for – okay, not everyone is going to read every word, but if a few people read it and go home and look it up – hey!

**Avigail Oren:** Yeah. It's a little appetizer. Yeah. So, you know, I've sort of talked us through moments but, moving up to the big picture, I'm curious to hear about the biggest challenges and, at the other end [of the spectrum] – things that were easier than you ever expected. You know, things that just magically took care of themselves as you were working on this trail, the high moments, and the- let's not call them low, but the bumpier moments.

**Sandra Finley:** I mean, there were times when, you know, the hardest part ended up not being the Big Savage – DCNR came in pretty big on it, beginning to the point. Now, you talked to Jack and

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

how many different little pieces of land [had to be acquired in Allegheny County to complete the trail]. And then, having to put those bridges [at Whitaker and Duquesne] over the line of tracks. That had to be the most challenging part. At that point, we were basically out of it. We were still doing some reports and putting in some grant proposals, but they were ones that were ongoing. We had the relationship with them. But, we ended up- I mean, I ended up going down and watching this stuff as- I don't know, I was an interested observer.

[Chuckle]

Jack, I mean, I always admired... But, that was our part it wasn't... You know, getting that last, I don't know, \$500,000 – the ISTEA money and being able to... Linda did all that, matching up that money at the end – she and Jack and Allegheny County. So, at that point, we really weren't as involved.

**Bob Teeter:**

One of the challenges was, early on, getting the people who were the real trail group people out there, really doing the trail, accepting other people like us and Linda, and how that mix was going to come together. Because as you recall, you know, a couple of people were sort of like, "We're the people doing this. We really ought to be making the decisions and you guys are sort of a different breed of people," and how that mix came together. Because that could have gotten off track. In fact, it was very close to getting off track and if that structure hadn't come together, the people that have contacts and have expertise and can do a lot of things but don't know the things that trail group and how that came together. And, I thought was real significant early on.

**Sandra Finley:**

Yeah, right. It was hard at the beginning.

**Avigail Oren:**

Yeah. What was the deciding factor that got these more territorial members to accept the vision of the ATA and going after the private money and...?

**Bob Teeter:**

You want to start?

**Sandra Finley:**

I was going to say that, I mean, to a certain degree – I'm going to give Linda a lot of credit because she got herself a bike and

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

she got out there and started riding the bike. Linda worked to get to know the volunteers, she went to meetups, she helped with trail group events. And, you know, I did too, but Linda was 24/7. And, we went to these trail meetings and then, of course, bottom line is they saw the money coming in, they thought this was going to make it. And, at that point, everybody jumped on, I think. Don't you think?

**Bob Teeter:** Yeah. Then it wasn't a problem. But, up until then, they were still leery, yeah.

[Crosstalk]

**Sandra Finley:** I mean, I can think of so many people who went, "What are you talking about?"

[Laughter]

But, we've worked with a lot of clients and I never worked for a client I didn't believe in. But, the trail people were really committed in a different way. People we don't get to see every, you know, we mostly see boards and not the volunteers of these different groups. So, I think they just- most of them- each one has its own personality. The Montour is mostly engineers and they are pretty quick to catch on to things. They might think they want to do it their own way, but they get the picture, you know? And then, as you go along, you get different personalities. I don't know. There's not one person I met on the trail that I don't like.

**Avigail Oren:** It sounds to me that it was a lot of relationship-building, that it [relationship building] was what it took before the money showed up. But, before then, it was relationship-building.

[Crosstalk]

**Bob Teeter:** That's what I think and before the money showed up, it was still – they were a little leery and then some of them wanted to almost say like, you know, "We know more than you, rather than, "We all know something." If we all put it together, it's going to work. If we keep that barrier- and that took a while to make that happen. And, again, part of the thing you know, when Linda became head of it, and then her patience, you

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

know, there are very few people that could have kept the patience with some of them. Because sometimes it would have been like, "You're wrong, let's move on. We can get it done much faster," and she didn't do that. And, that helped.

**Avigail Oren:** So, people perceived her as a collaborative partner that was on- that always felt on their side while at the same time moving their side forward?

**Bob Teeter:** The first few months that was in question and then it started to become obvious and then steadily building over a period of time is the way I saw it.

**Sandra Finley:** Yeah, I really do believe that this helped getting this thing, you know, because we got everyone we could involved in this.

**Avigail Oren:** In the master plan?

**Sandra Finley:** Yeah. You know...

**Avigail Oren:** Because they can't see it [indicates the binder], sorry.

[Chuckle]

**Sandra Finley:** Yeah. You know, we called the trail groups to give their input. I mean, like I said in the beginning – when I came back from McCune Foundation, I just didn't think we could do it. I liked them. I've been to a lot of the retreats. I've been to their meetings, but they all just seemed to have their own... You know, it's like Pennsylvania, you know, all these little areas...

[Laughter]

**Bob Teeter:** Just as an example I could think about – six months ago, we were working with a client and it was different groups. In fact, we talked about the trail and how the trail came together. And then, we talked to a couple of foundations about getting these groups to work together. And, they said, "I don't think they will." And, we went back and after we looked at it for a while, we said, "You have a lot of work to do and it's probably not time for us to not push on the fundraising middleman." And, like, it couldn't work there. It just couldn't. It would have been really good for them. But, some of them were so independent and they didn't like each other. And, you know, they got big

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

money before and we didn't. We're doing more important things, you know. It was all that kind of... They couldn't come together. They would have done better. And, the biggest foundation told us, like, we tried a couple times and we didn't get anywhere. So, we said at the end of our study, that model probably won't work there. So, it isn't like that works everywhere.

[Chuckle]

**Avigail Oren:** Yeah. So...

**Sandra Finley:** There was some pushback but it wasn't what I would call vindictive or anything like that. It was just, you know, well, we didn't have a name. It's just the Pittsburgh to D.C. Trail. And then, the Pittsburgh to Cumberland Trail and then we had that trail meeting and tried to get everyone involved in the name. And then, they were like, "Oh, well, you know, this is the Yough River Trail." And so, getting to say this is part of the Great Allegheny Passage was interesting.

[Chuckle]

**Bob Teeter:** You also remember – a couple people thought that one of them should be head of the group rather than Linda.

**Sandra Finley:** Yeah.

**Bob Teeter:** I mean, and that was significant at the time. Sort of like we're the ones have been working on this for a long period of time.

**Sandra Finley:** Linda had only been on the RTC board maybe a year and a half or two years when this happened. She and Jim Linaberger. I think Eric has talked to Jim. They were our fundraising committee for the RTC. So, not a whole lot of people knew Linda, you're right, at that point. And, these guys, even though they had been meeting- even though they were on their own trails, they met together, you know, like Hank Parke and McKinley – they'd all hang out, go meet somewhere halfway and talk about what was going on. So, she hadn't been in that mix.

**Bob Teeter:** No.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

- Sandra Finley:** And, yeah, we did evolve. She has a good way of talking to people, you know, for the greater good, right?
- Bob Teeter:** Yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah. So, I'm hearing that it was partially relationship-building and personality and getting people used to that idea, and partially to a bit of serendipity that these weren't already groups with entrenched positions or egos or, you know, that you are able to bring them together where other partnerships are not always as successful. Something you said actually made me want to ask a question. You said you had talked to a different set of clients about your work on the trail. How often are you using the trail as a model? Has it become sort of a cornerstone case study for Teeter Associates or...?
- Bob Teeter:** It's a good model – a whole lot of places for different things. So, yeah, again, that was only six months ago. But, there's other ones that are the same sort of thing. And sometimes, it's only maybe two or three and we've done different things. You know, for instance, actually, part of it relates to Richard K. Mellon Foundation also. There were three economic development groups in Westmoreland County that were all significant. And, Mike Watson had said like, "There's overlap, we're funding a couple of those. I wish that could be done in a different kind of a way." So, he gave them money to do a study to hire us to find a way and they ended up merging. Now, they're getting, like, today, you know, when Natalie [Rega Nichols, President of Teeter Associates] said- Mellon called said, "We want to give them some more money for this other project." They listened. They found a way. The boards talk to each other, they could see the bigger picture. And, that's exactly what happened. And, like the Allegheny Trail Alliance – there's different components of that, that match up to other places. And, I think, for all nonprofits everywhere – that's really important because there's not as much money available. And, if you can find ways to collaborate and work together and share things and not overlap and ATA's a perfect model that, you know, different structures, different places, you know, because the one I'm talking about – the economic development – they needed to merge. Allegheny Trail Alliance

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

didn't need to merge, but they all need to work together with some structure. So, that basic concept, I think, it's going to be more important in the next ten years with nonprofits because they're going to go out of business.

**Avigail Oren:** There's too much duplication or replication of...?

**Bob Teeter:** And, the money is not increasing and their payroll increases because everybody gets raises. So, their budgets keep going up. And, the money isn't there. And then, people were saying, "Well, you know, could you share a chief financial officer? Do you really have to have two?" You know, those kinds of things. So, that model applies in a lot of places.

**Avigail Oren:** Very interesting. I feel like I got my education here...

[Crosstalk/Laughter]

**Avigail Oren:** ... for my friends who are in nonprofits. So, as we wind down, I want to ask you about what you have found most rewarding about working on the GAP Trail project.

**Bob Teeter:** The result. It's just so easy. It's funny how different people talk about different kinds of ways. You know, some people say, "Geez, we work with a lot of economic development groups," like, that's helping different communities. Isn't it within the community? And then, somebody else's, "But, that's really good for health, you know, get out there and ride the trail and get some exercise." And, somebody else comes in and says, "My word, it crosses a whole lot of different communities." So, people seeing in different ways but all different kinds of benefits. Again, different for different people. So, seeing it done this and people enjoy it is really good, I think, from my standpoint.

**Sandra Finley:** I volunteered to do the count. We do it three or four times a year. I do at least once a year. Which just means just make sure the counters are working right. You know, we need to know how many people travel on the trail so we can tell people how many, you know. So, we have these...

[Crosstalk]

**Avigail Oren:** Accountability. You stand next to the counter making sure...

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

**Sandra Finley:** Well, no, you can't stand right next to it. But, you're standing close to it.

**Avigail Oren:** Okay.

**Sandra Finley:** Okay. You stand there... I mean, because the problem of you standing next to it is, you're going back and forth all the time not realizing it.

**Avigail Oren:** Right.

**Sandra Finley:** They've got this all figured out.

**Avigail Oren:** Right.

**Sandra Finley:** That's the guys in Maryland doing that. But, I'm out there, you know, people would stop, some of them will just go, zoom right by. There's some, "What are you doing?" The stories I've heard, you know, this one guy – he walked his daughter up to the school – some little patch town at the end of Fayette County. And, she actually could walk from her house to her school on the trail and he told me that. And then, people have their dogs, you know, their dogs love the trail. And, it was just... This one man honestly – he was telling me that he is a recovering addict. And, this has really helped him. So, I just stood there going [gasp]...

[Laughter]

**Sandra Finley:** The two hours I'm there, I think it's only two hours we do. It's like, you know, really is... As Linda said, "You get on the trail and people go, 'Boy, I'm so glad I'm here.'" And, you think, "We had something to do with this."

[Laughter]

**Avigail Oren:** Yeah.

**Sandra Finley:** A lot of people had something to do with it.

**Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm.

**Sandra Finley:** The other thing that I like about it is that I think it does just show people that these communities can work together that they- I mean, there's always something going back and forth.

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

But, that's life, right? We have people who were- who stay with it. I don't know. Dave Hamilton just died recently. He was one of the over-the-hill guys. Bob, remember Dave? And, he was in his 80s, he played a bagpipe. He would bring his bagpipe and his kilt to some of these events. And, it was just something that enhanced his retirement, you know. I can tell you so many stories of people who retired and then got involved and it's like they were young again.

[Laughter]

**Avigail Oren:** Yeah.

**Sandra Finley:** Anyway, and I try to get out there because it's there and we need to get out there.

**Avigail Oren:** Yeah, that's wonderful. So, this is the point at the end where I sort of open the floor and you can say other things that are really important or interesting that I didn't know to ask you or think to ask you about – favorite stories, pivotal moments, it could be anything.

**Bob Teeter:** I think you covered all the things that I wanted to go over. Another thing I do think is if you take two minutes and actually physically see the things that will reinforce part of what we talked about.

[Crosstalk]

**Avigail Oren:** Okay, great.

**Sandra Finley:** I love Whitsett...

**Avigail Oren:** The...

**Sandra Finley:** The little town of Whitsett. And, they have a barbecue in the summer and you know, Whitsett is a... We also did the historic nomination for downtown Greensburg. We wrote the nomination, two of us did research. Anyway, when it was, you know, how you go in front of the board? Happened to be in Gettysburg. So, I went and represented the project. And, there was someone there from Whitsett. It is one of the most intact patch towns, black. People would come up to work in the mills and it was one of the few segregated towns. And now, it's a

## **BOB TEETER AND SANDRA FINLEY**

---

mix. It's gotten to be more of a mix. But, the people are just a hoot. And, they work on the trail, the Johnson family. They're up and down the trail. They have this big barbecue, everybody comes. It's something I never would have known about if I hadn't worked on the trail. And, the other thing is, you know, Linda – there's nobody who, nobody... It doesn't matter what you say about this trail – it wouldn't have happened if Linda hadn't been there.

**Bob Teeter:** She had just a real unique way of matching with us. And, again, we've seen it 250 times. And, there's a lot of people that have fabulous skills, but she had the right set of fabulous skills for this project.

**Sandra Finley:** And, I mean, she was 24/7. I don't know how she did it.

**Avigail Oren:** Wow. That is an emerging theme in these interviews, certainly.

**Bob Teeter:** Oh, I'm sure. Yeah.

**Avigail Oren:** Well, thank you both. I'm going to end the recording now.

[Chatter]

[End 1:09:26.3]

cr-t/p

**www.AroundTheClockTranscription.com**  
**412-853-3299**