

BRETT AND RHODY INTERVIEW

Avigail Oren: It is Friday, May 17th, 2019. I am in the State College Municipal Building today with Brett Hollern and Roland “Rhody” Rhodomoyer and Linda McKenna Boxx. My name is Avigail Oren. What we are going to focus on in this interview is the rehabilitation of the Big Savage Tunnel and the Bollman Bridge. I'm going to start out first by asking Rhody to give us some background on his career with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – DCNR – before transitioning to your role as the project manager of the Big Savage Tunnel rehab. We're going to dig into the details of who you worked with, how it all went, what the struggles were and, Brett, that's where you'll also come in to share your contributions to the Big Savage Tunnel project. We'll then transition to the Bollman Bridge project which you both played an instrumental role in getting done, and conclude with some final thoughts about what it means to have built such a massive and beloved trail. So, Rhody, tell me: when did you come to work for the PA DCNR and what was your career like there?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: 1969, September 25th.

[Chuckle]

That was with DCNR. I was with PennDOT from '63, September 3rd of '63.

Avigail Oren: Okay, that's incredibly specific, thank you. And, what was your role when you arrived at DCNR in September of 1969?

[Chuckle]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I started there as a surveyor.

Avigail Oren: And, what were you working on?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: State parks had no good boundaries anywhere. There was a couple, few other places, but it was a major undertaking because I was by myself and then when you pick up crews that had no idea what was going on. So, it was, I mean, we got some stuff done but not anywhere near what you get done today.

Avigail Oren: And so, did that have you traversing the entire state?

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Rhody Rhodomoyer: Everything east of the Susquehanna River...

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: To between World's End and Ricketts Glen or between the north branch and the east branch.

Avigail Oren: Okay. And, how long did you stay in that surveyor role?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oh, probably forever, I guess.

[Chuckle]

Trying to get out of it. But, yeah, I got into construction management and that was probably in, oh, maybe ten years after. So, probably like in the early 80s.

Avigail Oren: And, before you managed the Big Savage Tunnel, had you ever done trail-related projects?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oh, yeah.

Avigail Oren: Okay, what were some of the...?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Just Hickory Run, Frances Slocum. You know, there's a bunch of trail projects – Nolde Forest which was an educational park. I did quite a few trails with other people in there, you know. I needed somebody to help to do the survey. [Also rebuilding Pine Creek Trail for a couple of miles. Big project.]

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, that was the main three. I mean, there was probably some others that weren't as significant. I know Nolde Forest was probably one of the biggest ones because the trail went the whole way around the park.

Avigail Oren: And, I confess to great unfamiliarity with construction and project management. Is this something you learned on the job?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

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Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, the surveying – there was more stuff going on in construction with state parks than there was in the survey field. But, the lucky part about it was – I had the survey knowledge which took me right into the construction. I mean, it was, you know, I could check everything that somebody did because I had the instruments to do it and the knowledge to do it.

Avigail Oren: Can you explain a little bit more? I don't necessarily understand how those two skills are connected. So, I understand what surveying is and I have seen construction happen. But, what exactly do you mean by being able to check?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, it's usually the project needs to be surveyed first. So, there's always a good check. And, getting back to what we're saying about the construction, the survey, usually once the construction starts, all that's over. And, the only thing I meant was if there was anything that needed to be checked from the specs and what they told you, I had the ability to do that.

Avigail Oren: Okay, and so that was, like, a bonus you brought to this role that other people didn't necessarily have.

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, it was a plus.

Avigail Oren: Okay. And, explain to me what a construction manager does. What's the purview?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Just went in and make sure that the contractor conforms to the specs and plans. That's basically it.

Avigail Oren: And, how does that fill a day of work?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Usually the whole day.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: So, what are the ins and outs of the day on the job?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, with the construction inspection, especially if it's into a major construction, you know, my job was to sit there make sure they were doing it right.

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- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** When they were drilling in the Big Savage Tunnel – I got up on the thing with the guy and, you know, made sure that 12-[foot] rods went in the 12-foot rods in the top. And, you know, I mean, it was just they could slide anything and they'd want to if somebody wasn't there watching what was going on.
- Avigail Oren:** So, it's an accountability role?
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Yes, totally.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay. Because, you know, I don't know that I necessarily would have understood that from just the title. So, how did you come to be the project manager for the Big Savage Tunnel? Was this a lottery?
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** You have to ask these two.
- [Laughter]
- Avigail Oren:** Okay. Instead of asking, I'll put it this way – not how did the Big Savage become a project, but when did you find out that you were going to be the construction...?
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** The Department of General Services was supposed to supply inspection for the tunnel.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** And, when I got real close and after AWS or...
- Avigail Oren:** AWK [AWK Group of Companies] I don't believe it is an acronym as much as it is just their name.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** ...AWK had their plans and everything was all made out, Department General Services backed away. They weren't going to do the inspection. So, one of the DCNR guys said to me, "There's something open, you're going to retire. Are you interested?" I said, "Yeah." So, you know, the process of all the papers you fill in, whatever, the reference the whole bit. And, was hired by them.
- Avigail Oren:** I see. Okay.

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Linda Boxx: So, Jim Eppley was that guy?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Jim Eppley, right.

Avigail Oren: So, you essentially retired from DCNR in order to do this job?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes.

Avigail Oren: Okay. I understand, okay.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Thirty-eight and a half years' worth.

[Chuckle]

And, that was with the six at PennDOT, too. But, 38 1/2 with the state.

Avigail Oren: Okay. Let's then fill in how the Big Savage Tunnel came to be. I know that it was the only option because there was no way to get around Big Savage Mountain. Linda and Brett, why don't you take me up to the decision?

Linda Boxx: Well, back in 1995, we had our first trail summit – the first time all the trail groups got together. And, it really became very clear that Somerset County had the most obstacles and we would never connect to Maryland if we could not get through Big Savage Tunnel. So, as the ATA formed legs and arms and started operating, trying to figure out the scale and scope of everything that needed to get done, you know, the Big Savage Tunnel was always, like, on my radar anyhow. Like, okay, we can get some of this little stuff moving but how do we get the big stuff going? And, I told Avigail, my computer crashed yesterday. And, I do have a timeline of, you know, sort of important dates and one of the important dates was a trip that Rick Malmstrom—who was the ATA rep from Friends of the Riverfront—and I went down to Harrisburg to meet with John Oliver who was then secretary of DCNR. I have the date [April 7, 1997]. And, he said, “You need to go see Rick Geist. I said, “Well, who’s Rick Geist?” He said, “Well, you need to go see him.” I said, “Okay, next time we come...” He said, “Go see him right now. Go see him right now.” And, it's like, “Well, we don't have an appointment with him.” You know, how do you just go? And, he said... You know, so we called his office and he said, “Yeah, he should be finished with whatever around

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3:00. So, we hung around until 3:00. In 15 minutes, at quarter after three – I had marching orders to develop an Economic Impact Statement study. And, he had written two line items for the state capital budget – one for \$10 million for trail construction and the other one for \$6 million for the Big Savage Tunnel. And, most of those 15 minutes were trying to come up with language. But, you know, what are we going to call this? Because we can't use the word "Pittsburgh" in the line item because of you know, Tom Murphy had been a representative, was now City of Pittsburgh mayor and he had done something that irritated you know... So, Rick said, you know, and I said, "Okay, we're going to call it the "C&O Canal Extension." So, that's what it was in the state capital budget line item – Big Savage Tunnel and C&O Canal Trail Extension. So, I had no idea what that meant. But, I was elated. I felt like Rick and I went to Harrisburg just, you know, just sort of, you know, meet with John and say, "What are the next steps?" Walked home with \$16 million in our pocket! Of course, these were just, you know, line items in a bill. The bill had to be passed which took some issues and we can talk about that later. But, then the bigger- many thousand times bigger issue was getting that money released from the governor from the Office of the Budget. So, that's a process, I think, I'll talk about in my separate interview. But, you know, fast forward, you know, some number of years – we started getting the money released for the preliminary engineering which AWK was hired to do. And then, you know, a project went out to bid. And, the low bid I think was some group from Tennessee that got eliminated for some reason and ACT – Advanced Construction Techniques – out of, well, Canada...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Calgary, I guess.

[Laughter]

Linda Boxx: No, no, not Calgary. You know, somewhere near Ontario – got the bid. And, I mean, you should take over soon because they proceeded to completely change the design for which they bid on, raised the price, brought in their own engineers which was Gannett Fleming who proved to be a blessing and bullied the heck out of us for the next two and a half years.

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Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes. The plans from the contractor, that engineering firm – one of the biggest things in it was that it called for non-American steel. And, ACT jumped right on that. I mean, they were good people, they knew what they were doing. And, they also knew that if you're doing a state-federal project, you can't use foreign steel. This whole project was designed with these big steel piers, going up on the tunnel, like, to hold the walls in and then a whole new thing poured in with them which would have actually cut down the tunnel and whatever. But, the whole thing was, it was that steel. So, in order to use American steel for that, it would have [cost] three times as much. So, it probably would have almost ran the bid up to where they were just to change and buy American steel. That was one of the big things. There was a couple other things that I'm not recalling, but the big thing was that—it was the steel.

Brett Hollern: They also stated that the design that was bid wasn't going to address the true problems of the tunnel: that we would continue to have issues because they weren't going to deal properly with the drainage and the freeze-thaw issue with the project as designed.

Linda Boxx: I was like ribs – they were designing these steel ribs that would be placed every so often like every...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, 25 feet or something, whatever it was.

Linda Boxx: Then a new tunnel built from those ribs.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right. And, the distance being 3,294.6 feet – that was a lot of ribs.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: Oh, my goodness.

Linda Boxx: So, ACT came in with an alternate plan.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes. It wasn't right away either. I mean, there was a lot arguing with it, whatever. But, you know, we'll just change the steel and whatever. So then, they went to Gannett Fleming – an engineer based in Harrisburg, maybe? Somewhere in

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Mechanicsburg or somewhere down there. And, they came in with a design build.

Avigail Oren: What was the major difference between the first and second design?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Night and day.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

[Laughter]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, those steel columns were going- they never even addressed, you know, any more of the steel columns in there.

Brett Hollern: So, what I think- if I had to paraphrase: the original plans were going to build a new structure within the old structure, the new plans were going to solidify what was there, existing, and deal with the issues of drainage and structural integrity without putting a new liner...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right.

Brett Hollern: ...without going inside the tunnel to create a new structure. It was using what was there.

Avigail Oren: And yet, that was more expensive?

Brett Hollern: Yes.

Linda Boxx: I don't remember what the original bids were – we'll call it around the, like, \$3-4 million. And, as ACT got into the project and they kept escalating the costs of the project, you know, it went up to six and went up to eight and went up to nine and went up to eleven.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right.

Linda Boxx: So...

Brett Hollern: \$4.7 was the original, I think.

Linda Boxx: Okay.

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- Brett Hollern:** \$4.7 was the Tennessee firm, they got thrown out because they didn't meet MBE/WBE [Minority-Owned Business/Woman-Owned Business].
- Linda Boxx:** Okay.
- Brett Hollern:** And then, ACT's bid was six. They were the second highest. They got the project for six if I'm recalling things correctly. And then, they also basically said they can walk after about a month in the project with about a million and a half dollars in their pocket. Contractually, they were...
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Oh, yeah.
- Brett Hollern:** ...able because the design was flawed and they laid it all out, right? They basically said, "Well, we can take the money and go or we can fix your tunnel. Here's how we can do it for \$11.2 million."
- Avigail Oren:** Am I correct – however, that eventually the cost was brought down to \$9.3 million?
- Linda Boxx:** No, no.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** No.
- Avigail Oren:** It always- it stayed at 11?
- Linda Boxx:** It grew to 11.
- Avigail Oren:** It grew to 11, okay.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** And, did it go to 12 or did it stay at...?
- Linda Boxx:** No, I think it was 11.8 or something.
- [Crosstalk]
- Brett Hollern:** It was either 9....
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** That's just one of my things...
- Brett Hollern:** I think 9.3 was the amount of money that we were able to get to, but then we had to independently raise the last \$2 million.

[Crosstalk]

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Linda Boxx: We used Land and Water Conservation funding. That was an interesting phenomenon that we did not have... Brett spoke of the issues with working with the PennDOT project. And, this was not PennDOT funded so, it did not meet any of the PennDOT, you know, specifications and so forth. So, as we were running short, you know, knocking on the, you know, the high end of the state capital budget money, we still needed millions more. And, John Oliver – I remember going down to Harrisburg, having a meeting with Brad Mallory, who was Secretary of Department of Transportation and John Oliver. And, they worked out a deal. And, Larry Williamson spoke of it in his interview whereby they had Land and Water Conservation funding that was earmarked for the Pine Creek Trail. But, it was already a PennDOT project. So, if, the secretary put a million and a half that he had into the Pine Creek project and pulled the \$2 million of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to Big Savage Tunnel- or I might have those numbers reversed, I'll check – we would have, we'll call it easy money with less strings, to spend without having to go through the PennDOT requirements. So, it was an internal shift, you know, moving of money that was just wonderful for us. It gave us that extra, you know, pushed us up over the amount that we needed. But, I do want to correct something. So, Rhody, you were hired by a contract with Somerset County, I think, and not ATA. But, DGS did have their own, you know, supervisors. You remember Oren...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: ...all those guys. But, he was, like, our guy there for...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oren Soomey.

Linda Boxx: Yeah.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: And, Jerry Connelly – but they didn't come in until way after the project started.

Linda Boxx: Right.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: You know, we were already going on the project when Connelly first came in. And then, Soomey, he replaced Connelly and then we took airplane rides.

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[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: So, I have a question just about the chronology, straightening out some of the chronology. So, ACT comes back, says, “we have come up with a better plan for you. It is also much, much more expensive.” Do you then say, “Hold, please,” and go off and find the money? Or do you say, “Okay, get started, we’ll figure it out with the funding?”

Linda Boxx: Well, they didn’t give us much time to do too much figuring out. And so, that would mean I would go back to Harrisburg, go back to some of my, like, you know, sort of secret weapon people who could get to the governor pretty quickly. And, we had a number of them. First of all, I think the governor’s office was interested, but they were not interested in paying all this extra too much money. But, to a point, they were very, very supportive. And, it was just towards the end that we just had to really put political pressure on in a number of different ways. And, Eileen Melvin, who was the Vice Chairman of the State Republican Party, happened also to be from Somerset County. And so, she was one of the key people. I’d call Eileen, I’d say, like, “You work your end and I’ll work my end.” And, she was terrific. Another board member of the ATA, Jim Linaberger, [his] daughter worked in the governor’s office. And so, when we needed an appointment with Mark Hollman, who was Chief of Staff—or the governor, but usually was the Chief of Staff, Mark Hollman—she would make that meeting happen. And, we didn’t have to meet- you don’t meet for more than 15 minutes to say, “Here’s what we need. Here’s why. You’ve got to do it now.” And so, there were these incremental releases of more money that happened, but it was always- I always felt like I had a gun to my head because ACT was putting a gun to our head. Like, “We need more money,” you know? And, there really was never too much delay in terms of that, you know, the network, getting that release and the governor being agreeable.

Avigail Oren: Okay, so there was not really a point...

Linda Boxx: They never stopped work.

Avigail Oren: Yes, okay.

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Linda Boxx: That I remember.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: No, only for Christmas.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: We'll get to that part. So, on a day-to-day basis, who were the people you were working with on this project?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: You mean...?

Avigail Oren: Who was around you? Who was on the site?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oh, well we got to say the Viking, the seal hunter.

[Chuckle]

These people were from- most of them were from somewhere in Canada. And, this one guy just- I think his name was John. I never got one of their last names, all of them were French. The one that impressed me the most was... Well, this John, we called him the "Viking." And, he was like a Viking. He was a big guy and strong, loved to drink and fight, and whatever else. The other guy was a seal hunter. He lived in Labrador. And, the way he had to get home was just amazing. I mean, what he had to do – he got up, got in a plane, got in a boat, you know, went over – his parents hunted seals! And, as I said to Linda the other day, I don't know of anybody that hunts seals!

[Laughter]

So, the rest of them were all... Basically, there was a guy named Dave. He loved snakes and they're full of snakes out there. He'd walk up the south portal or from the south portal. I mean, it was straight up and he'd take a five-gallon bucket. He filled it full rattlesnakes and bring them down. Throw them on the ground, let everybody see him and play with them, put him back in the bucket. Take them back up, put them in the den.

[Chuckle]

So, yes, it was exciting.

Avigail Oren: I do not know what to say, there's lots to that!

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[Laughter]

So, it sounds like it...

Brett Hollern: OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] wasn't on the project.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: It sounds like it was a very vibrant worksite that, you know, that people were...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: It was a vibrant worksite that actually had a name. So, the project manager for ACT was a gentleman named Victor Chasin. And, we ended up calling- and they ended up bringing in two trailers to the site, built several buildings, you know, and had a big tented...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I brought the picture for you.

Linda Boxx: Okay. And, we ended up calling that place "Victorville."

Avigail Oren: Oh.

Linda Boxx: And, it actually looked like a community up there.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, it was. Probably, I mean, you could see it coming out of the curve on the south of the tunnel and it was probably 300 feet long or better maybe of buildings.

Avigail Oren: Wow.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: And like she said, tarps covering sand and cement and concrete and, yeah, it was quite an undertaking and I still...

[Crosstalk]

Brett Hollern: Helicopter pad.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Hmm?

Brett Hollern: Helicopter pad.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah. Yeah, they did have that. Yep, for emergencies. Now, think of where you are. If you can think of where you are.

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[Chuckle]

You're kind of back in the boonies and, you know, there's no way out or no good way out. So, because of all the contracting people that were there and the dangers of that tunnel – they did. They put it in that pad.

Avigail Oren: A concrete pad? Or, they just...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, concrete market, you know, with the big circle and the X and the whole bit. And, they put that right on the line- it was down on the Pennsylvania/Maryland line.

Avigail Oren: Wow.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Flat tires were big issues because of all the railroad spikes. They had ten flat tires a day on that job. Just something to make it a little more... And then, the road would get bad. And, they'd come in and they regrade it and they would bring all those railroad spikes up. So, they're running over 'em again.

Avigail Oren: Oh, my God, that's... I want to just quickly ask again about the Viking and the seal hunter.

[Chuckle]

What were their roles or what positions...?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: You know, I think they did anything they were told to do and most of them had the knowledge to do it. I'm going to say they were maybe in more general labor, but they did have specific people to do the drilling. And, the people that did the concrete pumping and that – they were more specialized. But, I think as a group, there wasn't too many of them that didn't know what the other guy was doing. I mean, they could pretty much- somebody could leave and somebody be able to take their place.

Avigail Oren: Oh, wow. So, how big was this team that the contractor brought in?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, I could get that picture of that. No, it isn't in here, but I'm going to say probably 30 people maybe.

Brett Hollern: I was going to say, 25-30 people.

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Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, because they had a board that they put up with names on it. And then, when you went in the tunnel, you had to put a ring on that board. So I'm guessing there was probably 30- 25 to 30 people that were listed on that board.

Avigail Oren: And, that's how few people it took to rehab an entire tunnel?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, you got to remember that there isn't a lot of room.

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: It took two years.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, we're talking major big machines and stuff that would be in there. Sometimes they'd be in, you couldn't get through. So, you'd have to go all the way around the other side which meant you're going on down to Maryland and coming all the way around from Frostburg and you know what I mean? So, it wasn't a totally easy thing.

Avigail Oren: Wow. Was there any local labor or did the contractor bring in all the labor from Canada?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I think it was all Canadian. Brett, what do you think? I don't remember. [They did hire some local labor but for specific jobs, e.g. supplying lumber, supplies, etc.]

[Crosstalk]

Brett Hollern: I don't think- some...

Linda Boxx: I mean, they had subs [sub-contractors], they had deliveries, you know...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oh, yeah.

Linda Boxx: There was no...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I mean, they're confident...

[Crosstalk]

Brett Hollern: And, they had- the electrical portion of the lighting system was done by a local, I believe...

Linda Boxx: Schultheis.

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- Brett Hollern:** Schultheis out of Latrobe, right.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** So, I mean, that stuff was all done. There was local people from a concrete company. They weren't mixing their own concrete. They came in and, you know, with the trucks and the pumps and whatever, whatever they needed to put it together.
- Linda Boxx:** But, in addition to the 25 or 30 and I don't think you included, Gannett Fleming had three people, at least, sitting there, like, you know...
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Collecting money.
- [Chuckle]
- Linda Boxx:** No, but they seemed to be working.
- [Laughter]
- I mean, they were doing things, they were doing their engineering work.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Exactly. Yeah, they were doing things that needed to be done, I'm sure. But, yeah, there was about three of them. I don't know that their name was ever on the board, but it might have been. [They made a disc of the ongoing projects but refused to give me a copy. A German engineer working for Gannett Fleming was willing to give me a copy but the ACT management refused to allow the disc to be turned over].
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** Where were these – I'm assuming all guys – living?
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** One girl.
- Avigail Oren:** One...
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** She was the main grouter. She did all the grouting of the cellufoam.
- Avigail Oren:** Amazing.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Yeah.
- Brett Hollern:** Frostburg.

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Avigail Oren: They were all living in Frostburg?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: Or Grantsville. Didn't they have a place in Grantsville? No, it was Frostburg.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, Frostburg. [Most of them].

Linda Boxx: Okay.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Grantsville – a little far away.

[Chuckle]

Linda Boxx: Okay. Just roll down the mountain, sure.

[Laughter]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I understand.

[Laughter/Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: That's where the car was.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: You know what, they could have, I mean, you know, I remember where Victor was staying – it was right in Frostburg down off of the [main] road. And, I'm guessing that most of them stayed in Frostburg or very close.

Brett Hollern: They ran- to answer your question – they ran shifts. They didn't always work.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oh, yeah. I mean, they were working...

Brett Hollern: Like, two shifts a day.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: At least two.

Avigail Oren: Oh, interesting, okay.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: And, they would just be on-site for long periods of time and I don't know what that period was. But then, they would go home. They would go home for, like...

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Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, a couple of weeks. It took almost a week to get there, I guess.

[Chuckle]

Yeah, I mean, that's the same old, you know, the military thing or whatever. And, you know, when they would leave to go home for a while for some R&R and then they'd bring them back in.

Avigail Oren: And, would the whole team leave or was it like a shift?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: No, just shifts.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah. They kept the other people working while they'd go and then, like I said, one thing they did do at Christmas – they shut down the entire operation for, I don't know, probably a month, I guess, at least. It doesn't matter, but they all respected Christmas though.

Avigail Oren: Brett, what was your participation in all of this?

Brett Hollern: The county, in order to use the funds, had to deed the property over to the state, but we were still- we were a project partner, I guess. [I don't know] what our official role was. But, I was the project manager on behalf of Somerset County.

Avigail Oren: And, was this project pulling you away from other trail work or...?

Brett Hollern: No, I mean, it was going on concurrently, but because we had Rhody on the job – certainly took off a huge burden because he was there every day, making sure things are going right.

Linda Boxx: And, let's talk about the things going right because Rhody had to use up probably every bit of his skill as a, you know, your...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Literally.

Linda Boxx: ...you know, as a project manager to keep everything moving forward and even in the end, they shortchanged us.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right

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Linda Boxx: But, you know, talk about some of the difficulty.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, one of the things – they didn't come out and actually say the complete design build because remember there was- in the original specs, there was 300 feet on each side of the tunnel to bring in stone and do it. And, I remember Jim Coburn just going to pull out his hair. I said, "You're going to do it, pull out all your hair, I don't care."

[Chuckle]

And, they did it. But really, didn't have to because it wasn't a part of the design build project. So, he was right about that. At that time, I mean, it was tough because, I mean, they were after everything they could. And, I mean, I think that they, you know, what they did they deserved it. I don't think you get many teams that could come in and do what they were doing.

Brett Hollern: They were paid – I don't know the number – but the contract said they'd provide doors or closure systems...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Closure systems, right.

Brett Hollern: ...for the tunnel for X amount of dollars and they ended up putting two I-beams on each side of the openings on the portals and slipping 4x4s...

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: It's like you go into a meat market. They have those heavy plastic hanging down – that's what they put with hay bales behind it.

Brett Hollern: Well then, at the end though, they just put the I-beams on with the 4x4s...

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right, yeah, nothing.

Brett Hollern: ... considerable sum of money on that because there was no specification for what the doors had, closure system had to be. Just that there would be something.

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Rhody Rhodomoyer: Do you think we should mention about the pay scale of the DGS like I talked to you about earlier?

Brett Hollern: Sure.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Okay. One thing that I wanted to mention about the Department of General Services – the contracts always call for paying the minimum wage so those guys are supposed to be getting \$30-\$35 an hour.

Linda Boxx: Prevailing wage.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Prevailing wage, yeah. And, they weren't paying it. So, I mean, I looked and said, "Now, wait a minute, you know, they have to be paying this." Now, maybe they were playing the game with the design build again and it was out of that. But, I mean, the state project, you pay the prevailing wage and that's it. So, I called DGS, and I said, you know, like, "What's going on here?" And, they said, "Well, who's complaining?" I said, "I am." He said, "Well, you know, it's not legal with what's going on." They said, "Until somebody complains from the contractor..." they don't care. I really felt that was bad.

[Chuckle]

That was a real kick.

Avigail Oren: And, did anyone ever complain?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: No.

Avigail Oren: Interesting.

Linda Boxx: Well, they made money other ways, at least...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oh, yeah.

Linda Boxx: You know, the company certainly made a lot of money.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Positively.

Linda Boxx: Yeah.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: But, you know, I mean, how they paid them or, you know, what they did at the time – I don't know. All I know is they weren't

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paying them the prevailing wage for the job. I mean, to me, that's illegal.

[Chuckle]

It's, you know, because everybody can hammer you for anything, but...

Linda Boxx: They were paying prevailing wage in Canada.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, yeah.

Avigail Oren: So, I want to hear more stories from the site, you know, from this build. Again, my idea of what happens on construction sites is, like, driving a backhoe around. Like, I don't understand. Help me understand what's going on in there day-to-day.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, because of the crew they had (and we were talking on the two shifts) – they were usually working on each end of the tunnel at some point. Because each end of the tunnel had the portals, [that] had to be taken down. And, Big Savage 1911 [which was carved into the stone above the portals] was saved, you know, from the portal itself and replaced. Now, the only thing is on the north portal, they had to add some stuff because they knocked it down, there was cracks in it and it just fell apart.

Avigail Oren: It couldn't be saved?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, right. But, it was only a small portion. I think the "e" on Savage and maybe the one on 11 – those two things were all that- that's in there [a binder of photos], Brett. Grouting – I guess probably the biggest thing was when they went through and they were putting the Swell-X anchors in.

Avigail Oren: What is a Swell-X anchor?

[Chuckle]

Brett Hollern: What is that?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I brought some props.

[Chuckle]

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Avigail Oren: Okay, so a Swell-X anchor looks like a...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Billy club.

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: Yeah, I mean, it's a piece a metal about two feet?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: No, they were eight foot. That's just a piece of it.

[Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: Okay, this is a piece of it, okay.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right.

Avigail Oren: So, eight feet long. It looks like the metal has been bent like when you curl your tongue into a U-shape.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes. Not many people can do that.

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: I can.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I can, too.

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: And, at the end is a cap.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, now on that- Linda in that box there's a metal square piece. There you go. That slid on that.

Avigail Oren: Okay, so this looks like the largest washer I've ever seen, but it's square-shaped.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah. But, that was that was holding up a tunnel.

Avigail Oren: Yes, right.

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: So, imagine a washer that is square-shaped but, you know, just a flat piece of metal with a hole and the- what is this called? The...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: It's called Swell-X anchor.

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- Avigail Oren:** A Swell-X anchor...
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** And, when they put it in, they drilled the hole and then they stuck it in.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** And, that was on the end of it. And then, they came with water pressure. And, when they hit that with water pressure, it opened that curled tongue you're talking about – it opened it up. And, that's what held it together. It was good for shears, anything when it went in and stretched. That was the way they totally designed the, you know, the infrastructure to stabilize it.
- Avigail Oren:** And then, they put the cap on after?
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** No. The cap went on first and they blew it up. And then, sometimes there was another piece that went on. I think that was the end that went in.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** And, I have another one that went in there, you know, I'd have to see it. But, it just has a thing that you could put the water pump on it.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah. I would love to see that, actually.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Okay.
- Brett Hollern:** Commonly referred to as a rock bolt.
- Avigail Oren:** A rock bolt.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Yeah, a rock bolt, right, exactly.
- Avigail Oren:** I see. So, I'm now holding the other end of the- tell me again, I'm sorry. The sinker?
- [Crosstalk]
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** It's called a rock anchor.
- Brett Hollern:** Rock...
- Avigail Oren:** Swell-X anchor, all right, sorry. I'll get it eventually.

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- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** That's okay.
- Avigail Oren:** And, this one has the same sort of cap at the end, but it's open. And, yeah, it looks like what you would use to blow glass.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Okay.
- Avigail Oren:** And, that is where they would put the water pressure hose.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Right.
- Avigail Oren:** And, effectively, then this would open up...
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** It would all swell and it was all contained inside.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** So, the water didn't come back out.
- Avigail Oren:** Essentially, it became round? Like...
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** As round as it could be.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** I mean, what it did is it pushed as hard as it could against the outside on the casing on that. And then, yeah, then pushed on out. And, it was very, very, very good. I mean, I think it worked wonders.
- Avigail Oren:** And, just so I understand the physics of it, which is probably never going to happen. But, maybe someone in the future will have a better grasp of it than I do. So, what that's effectively doing is holding the liner to the rock?
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Yeah, basically. It's holding the tunnel so that it doesn't collapse. And, you know, these were around – I have pictures of them. They had yellow marks on probably every three or four feet in the areas that were, you know, a little shaky. One thing they do when they would drill for them, they would find those voids up in the top. And, I'll just show you something here that might help you out. I don't even know where it is.

[Crosstalk]

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Linda Boxx: Brett has the number of how many rock bolts we used.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Six thousand we used of those. That's the way when the tunnel was originally built – it was probably, you know, done by the Chinese or whoever the biggest part was there.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Between the spring line and the top, they had to pack it with rocks.

Avigail Oren: Okay, so explain to me- so, this is where I would bike in, right?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes.

Avigail Oren: Like, this is the void.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: What is this material?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: This is the concrete tunnel.

Avigail Oren: So, this is concrete?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right. And then, this is the top where they blasted out to make the hole for the tunnel. But, you needed something to stabilize so that this part didn't fall.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: And, the sad thing is, is I mean, I can't even imagine.

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: What it's like putting those in.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, I mean, you know, as soon as you get one up or move ahead or something, they'd be back up pushing them back in again.

Avigail Oren: How do you pour concrete underneath the hole? You just blast it?

Linda Boxx: Forms.

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Avigail Oren: They would build forms and they would just pour it?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes.

[Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: I mean...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I don't have tape or- but I do pull out a three-and-a-half-inch floppy.

[Laughter]

Brett Hollern: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: A floppy disk?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: We finally figured that out. But, yeah, I mean, I had some in there. They were called Atlas FCO forms and the whole thing was pushed in and it was formed. I mean, the whole thing and there was a big piece that went in at the top. Actually, the bottom of the, of the pour.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: And then, you know, they came in with shot, after everything was set up and braced and braced, double and double. Then they came in with shot – concrete pumped from a truck – and they just went up there with a hose. And, these forms came down and where it came down – it was tied into the existing hole.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: So, you had the entire thing and then when they just pumped it, it would just fill the hole, the whole thing.

Avigail Oren: And, this gap between where the concrete, I mean, the dynamite, like, blasted the hole. And, like, essentially this is where they stopped pouring the concrete and left a gap?

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, right.

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Avigail Oren: Okay. And so, human beings pushed these pieces of rock into this along the entire length of the tunnel?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes.

[Crosstalk]

Brett Hollern: And, the original construction.

Avigail Oren: Right, in the early 20th century, right?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, that's why I say that's original.

Brett Hollern: Right.

Avigail Oren: Right. Okay. So, am I to understand that what you were doing was essentially shoring up this 100-year-old piece of concrete?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, once, you know, there was a lot more to go before that. Once those rock anchors were going in and the guy was drilling to put them in, they will hit those voids.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: So then, it became a part of- the only woman working there came in with this cellufoam grout – very light. And, they would just go up and they'd pump it. Now, with this stuff is the way it was – it started out almost like regular insulation where, I mean, the spray, the foam when you put it in.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: And then, it got hard and that's exactly what happened. So, when they pumped it in here, that foam would penetrate most of this. I mean, I don't know if it would penetrate it all, but it wouldn't go through most of it. And then, that would swell and it would bring everything up against the top.

Avigail Oren: Okay. And then, when it hardens, that meant that it was, like, adding even more concrete making it even stronger?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

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Avigail Oren: Except that this wasn't as prone to the freeze and thaw, those issues? Or, I'm not understanding, like, water and freeze and thaw problems are happening.

Brett Hollern: So, Big Savage Mountain is a huge aquifer, right? And, water is finding its way down through the mountain and- groundwater. And, when it got to the tunnel area, it would find its way into those voids and then also in the cracks in the concrete, right, like water finds- it's lazy, it finds its easiest route.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Brett Hollern: And then, when the temperatures dropped below freezing, the water that was in there, it would freeze and expand and cause you this freeze-thaw.

Avigail Oren: So, was it both the concrete and what was above the concrete you were having these issues?

[Crosstalk]

Brett Hollern: Yes. Behind the liner, in the liner, wherever it could find its way – it was causing problems.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: There's just a shot of some of the water that they were dealing with. And, I have another shot in here of where that whole thing caved in.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: And, I mean, you could go 50 feet in and look right straight out to the sky.

Avigail Oren: Really?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: Well, that's terrifying.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: We had a meeting in there one time. I don't know who all was included but probably Somerset, Brett. We walked through, you know, looking at some of the projects with the contractor

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and when we came back, there was a pile of rocks half the size of this table that had fallen. They hadn't been in grouting yet. I mean, you know, that section was not filled.

Linda Boxx: It's a good thing you wore a hard hat.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I never wore one.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: Yes. We will not let OSHA get a hold of this transcript. So, did they start from the edges and work their way into the center?

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Pretty much. I mean, you know, one guy would be in there doing the demolitions. I mean, here were some of the pictures of the demos. And, yeah, there's the one that I was just telling you about, how this whole thing had caved in.

Avigail Oren: So, they had to pull out any, like, it's...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right. That whole thing had to almost get out of there. And then, they put that big form in and they tied into the back with the form and they poured the whole thing.

Avigail Oren: I see, okay. So, they were bracing what was salvageable? And then, they were pouring new...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right.

[Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: What was so unsalvageable it no longer existed.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: And, most of the stuff there where I was telling you, where the wall came up and the form came down. Most of that was all re-poured, that wall, because, you know, the other stuff was crumbling. But, what was funny – the one guy went into the north portal and he said, "I'll have this thing out of here in three hours." He wasn't out of there in four days.

Avigail Oren: Really?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: And, you know, there was no steel in it. All it was is what I like to call "river biscuits," just little round stones. And, that's all it

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was. And, he could not get through that. They ended up bringing a big- off of one of these like this thing here with a jackhammer on it to actually finish it. I guess, they figured four or five days was too long.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: Yeah, that's pretty incredible. I have reached the limit of what I understand in construction. Are there other things that were essential to finishing this project?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Mostly arguing with the contractor, I guess.

Linda Boxx: Yeah, I think that's sort of what made the project so difficult is that we were always at odds with the contractor. Usually, once the contract starts, you know, there's the honeymoon. And then, there's the fistfights and then you resolve it you sort of, you know, lock arms, "Let's get this done." We never locked arms with them.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: No.

Linda Boxx: it was a fight to the end – every step of the way. And, Rhody was the man day-to-day who had to...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, it was something. But, I do want to say this. I love my work and I always did. I'm very devoted to it. So many nights, I walked out of that tunnel at midnight because they were still working and finished up.

Avigail Oren: Well, actually, I think that's a good point to transition to the question of – how did you feel when it was done?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Thank God.

[Laughter]

You know, truthfully, it never really got out of my head. When you were involved, that's it. I mean, to even see it done was great, but when I look at the tunnel, I think of all that went on inside it. It's hard to get out of my head.

Avigail Oren: It becomes a relationship, it sounds like.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oh, positively.

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Linda Boxx: A nightmare.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Sorry to say that.

Linda Boxx: I mean, they were always- I mean, I felt, and Brett, you probably have your own stories about this. But, you know, I used the phrase “gun to the head.” I can remember one incident where DGS wasn't processing their payments quickly enough and they weren't getting their payments. And, it was up to me and I would call our local senator who had some good, you know, seniority in the State Senate and we would get it. Then you'd get a call from DGS, like, “Tell the senators to stay home,” you know?

[Chuckle]

But, one time – I remember, “If you can get us our payment within, you know, ten days or whatever the magic number was, we will clear out this vista for you.”

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right.

Linda Boxx: And, he said, “This is beautiful and it's all covered with trees. And, if we can clear this vista for you, you'll love it.”

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right.

Linda Boxx: And, “But, we'll only do it if we get our payment.” So, I called, you know, Senator Allen Kukovich and said, “Okay, I need to beat on DGS and get their payment.” And then, so they started cutting, and it was all these old locust trees.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Locust and elm.

Linda Boxx: Oh.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, and they were...

Linda Boxx: They regretted the offer.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, one cut and they had to go sharpen their saws which a good lumberman can do it in a couple minutes. But, it only

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took three cuts till the chain was no good. So, they, yeah, they weren't happy. They weren't happy about doing that job at all.

Linda Boxx: But, that overlook is now one of the iconic moments of doing the whole Great Allegheny Passage. And, really, you know, in Somerset County- I mean, I would have never thought to do it. Somerset County probably would have never had the, you know, the manpower to manage that. And so, it was really- that was the only, I'll say, gift that we received from them.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right.

Linda Boxx: This was a magnificent effort.

Brett Hollern: Well, that and they left the concrete patch from Victorville and we utilized those to put pavilions and picnic tables on.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oh, yeah. That's right.

Avigail Oren: Oh.

Brett Hollern: The one sort of- the unofficial Big Savage campground area...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Victorville camp.

Brett Hollern: ...has remnants of reuse of that. And actually, the one patch just sits there kind of...

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Waiting for the next.

Brett Hollern: Yeah, waiting for something.

Avigail Oren: Tell me... Actually, let me stop and ask about the doors. The tunnel construction is all finished and then the doors become sort of the final, final project. And obviously, filling in trail [in] the tunnel. What is the story with the doors? You mentioned that they left a less than suitable cover...

Brett Hollern: Well, so, what was determined during the intent, and correct me if I'm wrong here, was that [the tunnel] was going to be a year-round facility and designed for use year-round. But, what ACT learned and Rhody learned up to on Big Savage Mountain was there was no way that you would ever be able

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to keep the tunnel above freezing without closing it during the winter months.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Brett Hollern: So then, we had to make a decision operationally. Are we willing to essentially close down this Pittsburgh to Cumberland trail for, you know... I mean, it's all still usable, you just can't do the through trip because you can't get through the tunnel.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Brett Hollern: Arguably, the time of year when not many right-minded people are going to make the through trip.

[Chuckle]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I have some snow pictures – you want to see them?

[Laughter]

Brett Hollern: There could be a few feet of snow on Big Savage Mountain.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Brett Hollern: So, to protect the integrity of the investment and protect the investment and the integrity of the tunnel, then we needed the doors to close off the tunnel.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right.

Linda Boxx: And, there really wasn't much pushback because it was like, "Well, who wants to raise another \$12 million and redo it?"

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: Right, every X number of years. Every hundred years, right. Tell me how these doors work. Are they on there year-round and they're thrown open? Are they sort of- is it, you know...?

Brett Hollern: Barn doors.

Avigail Oren: They're what? They are barn doors?

Brett Hollern: They're basically like barn doors, right? They flip up, they open and they flip down.

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- Linda Boxx:** The arch part.
- Brett Hollern:** The arch part flips down and then they tuck away on each side of the tunnel. They were designed by Weimer's Blacksmith – which is a local blacksmith in Somerset – installed by Fisher Home Building, which is a local contractor. So, it is one area where we didn't utilize locals to do it, but they came down, made a template of each portal and custom built the doors to fit the portals.
- Avigail Oren:** And, is there some ceremonial aspect of the opening and closing of the doors each year? Did this- is it just an unintended consequence of...?
- Brett Hollern:** Opening is much more ceremonial than the closing.
- [Laughter]
- There's usually somebody on one side or the other that wants to be the first person through every year on a bike. So, this year there was a gentleman there waiting, you know, rode through. Sometimes there was a guy that came up from Maryland and he'd be waiting for us to open the doors and hurry up and scurry through or ride or pedal through. But, it's certainly, it's a very communal thing. When we open it and sometimes when we close it, we gather at Butch Stahl's garage who's the vice president of the Rails-to-Trails Association and maybe celebrate with a few adult beverages because it's, you know, it's kind of like that. When you close it, it's kind of like, phew, done with the tunnel for the year. When you open it, it's like, "Yeah, we're getting started again."
- Avigail Oren:** Excellent. So, who of you were at the ceremonial first ride through the tunnel?
- Linda Boxx:** Probably all... I think we all were.
- Brett Hollern:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** You know, because that was the big opening and so forth, yeah.
- Brett Hollern:** Was that the fundraising first ride?

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Linda Boxx: Yes, yes.

Brett Hollern: Okay. So, interesting story at the time – it was done for George Cooke, right? And, his grandson was the first one to ride through the tunnel, Zaciah. When we moved to State College, Hank Parke, who married into the Cooke...

Linda Boxx: She had to been married to a Cooke.

Brett Hollern: She was married to a Cooke. And, I said about being the babysitter and Hank said, "Oh, Linda's grandkids live up there, I bet they could do it." It turns out, Zaciah ended up babysitting my kids till they were old enough to be on their own.

[Laughter]

And, they loved Zaciah.

Avigail Oren: Small world.

Brett Hollern: He's like, "I was the first one to ride through the tunnel." And, I was like, "Oh my goodness, like, that's full circle," right?

Avigail Oren: Yeah. I'd love to hear your memories from that day. Was it...?

Linda Boxx: Well, I'll tell you one thing about it. So, we had been scheduled... So, the tunnel was finished in 2002 and we had scheduled a big ceremony for September of 2003 to open up the tunnel. And, that's when Hurricane Isabel or somebody came through. And, it was supposed to be, you know, either the eye of the hurricane was going to be right over Big Savage Tunnel at the exact moment... And, we had printed invitations done, had a whole group of speakers all set up. And, the day before- and actually it was Mike DiBerardinis, you know, secretary of DCNR who said, "Just so you know, I'm not coming." You know, like, "I don't care if it's not canceled, I'm not coming."

[Laughter]

So, we hurried up and called everybody. One person actually ended up showing up, you know, because they never got the message. But, everybody else, you know, got the message. So, what we decided to do was just because Brett still had the

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construction of the mile to the state line and the two-point-whatever to Sand Patch to do – we just said, “Let's just wait until these pieces of trail are all done and we'll open up the tunnel when you can actually ride through.” Because there was always a lot of confusion. People saying like, “Well, I thought it was open? Why can I get there? When is it going to be done?” So, we just sort of said, “Okay, well, this is a sign that we're not going to open it. Officially, it's open. [If] people want to get there and bike through, they can.” So then, that was postponed. That's why I brought those newsletters for the dates. So, we finally did have a ceremony, you know, opened up the railroad gates and had, you know, all the people, Rhody, Jim Eppley and Secretary DiBerardinis, and our PennDOT friends, and DCNR friends, County Commissioner Marker, you know, opening up the ceremonial gate. But, of course, you know, hundreds of people had gone through the tunnel...

[Laughter]

...before that.

Avigail Oren: Right. So this was March 2006.

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Here's the view, right?

Linda Boxx: Yeah. Pardon?

Avigail Oren: March 2006 is when this initially happened.

Linda Boxx: Yes, yeah.

Avigail Oren: And, yeah, I guess I want to get a sense for what it would have been like to be there that day.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, let me tell you something. I know you love snakes. I noticed when I told you that.

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: I actually don't mind them. I just hope that is a crazy thing to do.

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Rhody Rhodomoyer: The three of us at one of these – I don't know if it was this one or not. It could have been. We were standing there talking. And then, I think Brett and I were talking and Linda came over and we were talking. I guess they were ready to start. So, we, you know, walked 15-20 feet away and a rattlesnake went right across the road right over our tracks.

[Chuckle]

It went over, laid under a pipe. So, they said, "Well..." Just, there was a lot of them around. I mean, that guy used a five-gallon bucket. He didn't bring them all down.

Avigail Oren: Right. I mean, it just gives the sense for what it's like to be on the trail, like the nature that's around.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oh, yeah. Right.

Avigail Oren: You really are in the middle of the wilderness.

Linda Boxx: There were maybe 150 people there. You know, it was a big crowd of people that showed up. You know, it's hard. I don't know, maybe not 150. But, a good crowd that came in March. It wasn't nice weather or great weather, you know. [They] found their way to the tunnel for that ceremony because they were so excited. And, there were people who were just cyclists that just wanted to be part of it. I mean, not even part of the inner, like, trail building circle. But, it was great. It was nice to see the good support...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: You better believe it.

Linda Boxx: It was a wonderful time to thank Rhody and his colleague at DCNR, Jim Eppley, for their – really constant attention to the project, keeping it moving.

Avigail Oren: Rhody, was there a bittersweetness to it being done or were you just really relieved at that point?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I did what I had to do.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

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Rhody Rhodomoyer: If she wanted something done, I did it. If you wanted something done, I did it. I didn't care what it was, just do it. The devotion was that so...

Linda Boxx: And, we did invite the Canadians for the event, but they declined.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: Okay. Is there anything else about the tunnel or should we move to the bridge?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I have a little list made up. Let me just make sure we hit all that we were talking about.

[Silence 1:03:03.4 until 1:03:29.2]

Linda Boxx: Well, while Rhody is... This is sort of something that's very interesting that I learned as a very important lesson. And, Brett, you alluded to it and it's thanking the elected officials. And, you know, Mike DiBerardinis acknowledged that he didn't have anything to do with it, but he was the secretary at the time. You know, and it was, Governor Ridge who allowed the money to get released, released, released. He wasn't there to be thanked, but the following administration sort of got to take the bows for it. But, you thank everybody and nobody minds that. And, that's really the important part of, like, if you see an elected official in the audience, even if they didn't do something for that particular project but some other project, you know, they want to be- you know, they should be thanked, they should be thanked.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: The only thing that I had on there was on the drainage system – both portals, but the north one [especially] – they tied in with the walls with a drainage system so that when the water came down, because you're not going to stop the water. So, that would go down and they had a drainage system underneath on each side of the tunnel that went out and went down to a stream- or not legally was a stream, but it was a little run there that it went into. And, I mean, it runs a lot. The south end – they took what they did there and they built a cistern, I guess

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you could call it that. It was just a big tank. And, they were using that water to do a lot of work with because there wasn't any available water at that point. My problem is that should have been potable water and it wasn't. So, they didn't care.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: So, this drainage – I'm understanding it like gutters on the floor, essentially...

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right, yeah, exactly.

Avigail Oren: ...and they're directing the water away...

Brett Hollern: Subterranean.

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah. And then, when that came down...

Brett Hollern: It starts raining and... Right.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: You know, it went down under and then tied right into those pipes.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: And, I mean, I guess, you go out there anytime and it is running, running heavy.

Brett Hollern: Yep.

Avigail Oren: That does seem like a very important part.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah. Well, I was trying to get rid of it, right. I guess there's still some drainage coming in.

Brett Hollern: Yeah. Paul Lewis came down with another guy from Gannett Fleming. We found one of the clean-outs that was- where it was really wet and they did one there.

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oh, okay.

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- Brett Hollern:** Opened that back up. It was challenging.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** When was that done, Brett?
- Brett Hollern:** During the Pinkerton project.
- Linda Boxx:** Okay.
- Brett Hollern:** Right, probably early when they were around for Pinkerton. They spent a day over there doing that – on the south end- or eastern end of the tunnel. The drainage now feeds- a guy built a cabin right down below there and has a pond that basically is Big Savage's drainage.
- [Crosstalk]
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Exactly right, yeah.
- Brett Hollern:** It's a pretty decent-sized pond, too. But yeah, you're right. We opened the tunnel while they were there, made sure it's draining properly and tell the story you had to water test it and it's cleaning up the drain.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Yeah.
- Brett Hollern:** We're thirsty and need water, I stopped there, fill up.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Hey, they'd always had cups hanging there. So, even if it was not legally potable...
- Linda Boxx:** Tested, it wasn't tested.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** It wasn't tested, right. But, everybody was directly to the- so...
- Linda Boxx:** So, before we move on to Bollman – Brett mentioned the name Paul Lewis, from Gannett Fleming, and when we were ready to look at Pinkerton, he actually had given us a proposal shortly after Big Savage to do the Pinkerton Tunnel. And, their approach was going to be basically the same thing – rock bolting and a drainage system and so forth, shotcrete. And, he said, "Well, it's a third of the distance, it's the third the cost." And, we said, "Well, \$4 million – we're not doing that as long as we have a bypass." And then, later when we were actually

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ready to do it, and he said, "I wish we had done this, the Pinkerton technique at Big Savage Tunnel. It would have saved a lot of money and a lot of headaches," which was the corrugated liner. But, I think the aesthetics of Big Savage are relatively nice versus the corrugated liner and so forth. He was thinking about it as an engineer, you know, and the funding of it. But, that ended up costing just, *just*, \$2 million, you know?

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: Right.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, you know, I didn't realize it for that, but, I mean, that's...

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Or, you know, around those numbers.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: ...when we were originally talking about that. Those numbers were a lot higher than that. So, that was good. [Points to photographs]. There's some of the drilling, the rigs that are in there that are drilling the end of the crown and the walls.

Avigail Oren: This machinery is massive.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: I mean, you can really get a sense. So, just to describe it, it looks like the cab you'd see on any piece of construction equipment, but instead of a backhoe arm, it looks almost like a grenade launcher.

[Chuckle]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, you're right. That's about what it is.

Avigail Oren: And so, it is sort of forming a 90-degree angle, not off of the cab, but there's a drill coming off the wall and then the arm holding the drill is coming at a 90-degree angle and connecting to the cab.

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, that drill, I mean, they could do- like we're saying, could do anything. You'd do the crown and then they had these dots

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on it – it would go all the way down and hit each and every one. And, as they were doing that, they would find other problems – some of them other voids. And so, most of it just had the cellular fill in them.

Avigail Oren: Okay. And, yeah, you can see that the size of the tunnel – you get a good sense for how small it is because this is filling up the entire thing.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Did we ever save those man-...? What did we used to call them? The tunnel was 12 foot wide. So, when the train would come, they had...

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Oh, manways?

Brett Hollern: No.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Manways.

Linda Boxx: No. They were all covered up.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I mean, we were trying, but I just got to the point where... So, when you were in a tunnel and a train came, they had these things and you better be able to run 100 feet because they were 100 feet apart on each side of the tunnel. So, yeah.

Avigail Oren: Yeah. I've seen those in the New York City subway.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: So, in the end, those were sealed over?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right. Yeah, we tried to save some but because of breaking the walls up, you know, to try to match the top and all, they just couldn't do it.

Avigail Oren: Yeah. So, tiny bit of history was lost, but we've saved it here.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, exactly.

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Avigail Oren: Okay. So, the Bollman Bridge. Are we ready? Let's talk about, for starters, how this bridge even becomes an option, becomes available.

Brett Hollern: So, this bridge was access to a farm, to the Petenbrink Farm over CSX's grade. Eventually, the integrity of the bridge became an issue. The railroad was concerned about it above its grade. And, Pete Brink said, "We're going to lose access to the farm if this bridge went away." And, there were costs associated with that. Who's responsible for the bridge? So, it went to a PUC hearing to determine who was responsible for the bridge with the three parties being- well, four, probably h. Was it the township's or was it the county's, was it the railroad, or did PennDOT have a stake in it? That was all hashed out and there was a ruling made by the PUC of who... It was doled out. Nobody took full responsibility for it. But basically, there was a settlement made. Peter Brinks was going to be in reimbursed the loss of their land, access to land. Someone had to pay to have it removed. Had to go through historical recordation because it was on the National Register because of the Wendel Bollman design. It was a historic structure. And, that's sort of where it was going to end. But...

[Chuckle]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: That bridge was moved from somewhere way down... I think they went with double track and...

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Wills Creek in Bedford County.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Okay.

Brett Hollern: Hyndman or somewhere.

Linda Boxx: Yeah...

[Crosstalk]

Brett Hollern: In Bedford County, you're right, yeah.

Linda Boxx: Right.

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Rhody Rhodomoyer: So, it was moved from there up to here because of the-changing the tracks. They were going with a double track and, of course, that bridge wouldn't take it. So then, they moved it on up there. And, it was there for, what, a long time, I guess.

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: Yeah, so to be clear, it was moved many, many, many years before it was moved again for the [GAP trail].

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes.

Avigail Oren: And so, it comes to this PUC hearing and everyone is trying to figure out who it's going to belong to—or who's going to take responsibility for it, rather. When does the trail get an inkling that the bridge might be part of their plan?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Oh, I think maybe because of there was- how many trail road crossings that we needed? And, any time there was a meeting going on, they had to get, you know, people had to direct traffic. All the bikes went through. So, I mean, each time there was – at least according to what I was hearing from them – is that we needed some ways to stop that. Single passages...

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Well, I was going to mention, like, Jonathan Daily at PennDOT. He was their cultural or historic resources officer for the district or region or whatever [Architectural Historian, PennDOT Districts 9-0 and 10-0]. And, he really called- I mean, you know, Brett, we each have our knowledge of the story, but he was really the one who was sort of carrying the flag for preserving this bridge and not letting it just be scrapped. Because I think that was sort of where PUC and CSX were- or CSX certainly, they just wanted to scrap the bridge. They wanted to just get rid of it and be done with it. But, it was Jonathan Daily, who sort of strapped himself to the bridge and said, "Don't destroy this bridge."

Brett Hollern: Yeah, I think- I'm going back now that you mentioned Jonathan's name – one of the first bits of outreach was at the time, they were getting ready to design the 219 extension and they had to do some mitigation. And, they said, "We may have

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some money as part of the 219 mitigation to do something. Maybe we could put it towards moving this bridge.” And then, that sort of was a short like, “Oh, wait, no, we don't.” But, then, you know, there was- I probably went to a Rails-to-Trails Association meeting and said, “Hey, PennDOT might have some money for this bridge.” And, someone on our Rails-to-Trails board was in Meyersdale and found out this, [and said] “Oh, well, we can't let that bridge get destroyed. We need...” You know, we happened to have to take another structure out on the GAP because of another PUC order – Scratch Hill Road which was a subway – a one lane, beep your horn culvert that we were going to be creating an at-grade crossing that we didn't have prior to that. And, they said, “Well, maybe we could use the Bollman there.” I mean, I don't know the specifics and can't quite remember how that came to be.

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: A lot of stuff.

[Chuckle]

Linda Boxx: Well, if you remember, I think Hank Parke wanted to use it at Rockwood.

Brett Hollern: Right, yeah. There was a discussion there.

Linda Boxx: Right. And, it would have been a really great feature at Rockwood but it just wasn't suitable, it wasn't long enough.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right.

Linda Boxx: And, it just...

Brett Hollern: And, it was over a PennDOT road.

Linda Boxx: Right.

Brett Hollern: Which would have been a whole other set of issues.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, that made a problem as I remember.

Brett Hollern: Yeah.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: And, wasn't CSX supposed to give \$25 grand to get rid of it?

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- Brett Hollern:** They did.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Oh, they did give it?
- Brett Hollern:** Yeah, it went to the project. I wish I prepped, I can open my laptop up and look at the numbers, but I had the accounting of who was assigned what and what we got paid for the project.
- Rhody Rhodomoyer:** Okay.
- Brett Hollern:** But, at some point, and then what had to happen was – we went back to the PUC and said we wanted to use it on the trail. Could we change that? And, they said, “The township [Summit Township] has to agree to let you put it over the road.” And, it was kind of like this township, you know? These guys were roadmasters and kind of rough guys that hadn't necessarily embraced the trail and we thought, “Oh, they are never going to agree to this.” And, they were like, “No, that’s great!” Well, you can use it after, you know, 25 or 30 Meyersdale and Summit Township residents went to their meeting and said, “Yeah, we think this is a great idea.” And, they were willing partners to the project. I don't think we had much pushback from the township at all.
- Linda Boxx:** No, that was a great meeting. But, you know, to back up a little bit, and this is what I was asking Rhody about – you know, no decision really had been made on the disposition of the bridge yet. And, it wasn't clear whether Somerset County was even going to be able to use it. You know, the Scratch Hill situation wasn't really firmed up and so forth. And, you had gone to- We, all three, were at a conference and you had, like, little flyers printed up.
- Brett Hollern:** Oh, right.
- Linda Boxx:** You know, like, “Who wants a bridge?” And, you know, luckily there were no takers at the conference. And, was that some... Think about that.
- Brett Hollern:** Yeah, I'll think about it.
- Linda Boxx:** But anyhow, so, I remember, you know, pulling Rhody aside because you were just fresh off a Big Savage and had enough of a vacation. I said, “Look, why don't we do this? You can be

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the project manager, we can pay you again to, you know, get this thing done and you can help us get this at Scratch Hill.”

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes.

Linda Boxx: And, after, you know...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: However long.

[Laughter]

Linda Boxx: However many.

[Laughter]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, I guess.

Linda Boxx: Yeah. I was trying to remember what- it was, like... Was it at State College or was it at that Cranberry place...

Brett Hollern: It may have been at Cranberry. Maybe I can figure that out.

Linda Boxx: Yeah.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I'm sure you will.

Linda Boxx: Yeah.

[Chuckle]

Brett Hollern: Go through my old files.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: The one big problem with the bridge, the Bollman Bridge, was it was made of iron – wrought and cast iron. And, later on in the years, after Bollman did a lot of the designs with the wrought and cast iron – some of them collapsed which is why there's only two left – that one and there's one in- it's a big one somewhere down in Maryland someplace. This one was not a true Bollman design, I mean, even though he put it together, but he used another, I think, it was called the Weiser [Warren] design. And, that wasn't his design. And, Bollman was a guy that started out as a flagman and worked his way up to be the bridge engineer for...

Avigail Oren: B&O.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

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Avigail Oren: And, that's what makes this a historic bridge...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes.

Avigail Oren: ...is that it is one of the earlier representations of his larger portfolio.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: But, when we were lifting that bridge, it was like...

[Chuckle]

...you know, you can only get it on the four corners and...

Avigail Oren: Oh, right.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah. So, they came in with a big crane and we got it down and they start- and I saw the bridge just flex and said, "oh my God." Especially if it went on the tracks. That's what I was really scared about. But, they pulled it over and set it up and fine ever since.

Linda Boxx: Well, it sat in a field nearby.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes. Right where it was. They just put it in that field. That's all they were going to do is pull it off the railroad right away and then put it in the field. And then, Earl Miller from Bedford – he's a house mover. And, I got a hold of a bunch of people, I try and get somebody that would bite on it. Nobody would bite on moving it. And, I said to Earl Miller, "You're the only guy that can do this." "Well, do you think so?" I said, "I know so. You're the only guy can do it." So, he did it. But, I was telling Linda and Brett – they came in and had to disassemble it to a certain degree. Left the ends of it intact. And, I said, "Well, we have to get a permit to move this." You know, it's too big for any road, whatever. So, he was loading it up. And, I said, "Well, I'll go check on it," you know. I was going to Mary Neimiller because she was kind of in the know. So, I'm going down the road and I look back and here, he's coming down the road. This bridge had the complete- I mean, I was wondering, you know, like, if another car- well, if anybody came, they would have stopped, believe me.

[Chuckle]

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But, we were just at that underpass and there was a road going up on the side. We had already had our route planned and they went up there and, you know, till they got out and reassembled it back on Scratch Hill, on that side of the trail.

Avigail Oren: I just want to be clear that it was put onto a flatbed, right? Like, the guy you found...

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, flatbed and a dump truck and anything else to bring the whole thing down. Yes.

Avigail Oren: And so, then it was reassembled adjacent to the trail? And, a crane was used to...?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, it was on the trail, right at Scratch Hill is where we assembled it. And then, when that was done and we had to put piling in for and rather than pouring big abutments which would have been many, many deals – we had a place in state parks in region- I don't know what that region- nine, I guess that is – that they used to get steel from the military. And, they had more steel than the military did. And, they were giving it to us. So, I got, Earl Miller is one guy, and we took off and went out and brought all the piling back to drive it for the... So, the piling were driven into the ground and then there was a cap beam put on it. And then, that's where the bridge sat.

Avigail Oren: Wow. So, you did not have to pay for this?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Not for the steel.

Avigail Oren: You just had to pay for the gas to go get it and come back?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: No.

[Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: Not even...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Just whatever. I think, yeah, probably just an hourly thing. I don't even know what they charge. I had some of the bills and all, but I just get them and send them to Brett.

[Laughter]

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Avigail Oren: I mean, effectively, this was a project that was... quite the opposite of Big Savage Tunnel because it came in under what anyone would have expected.

[Laughter/Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, we were lucky on some. I don't know what the total cost was.

Brett Hollern: Two hundred sixty-three thousand dollars. I'm looking at the invoice.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Two sixty-three?

Brett Hollern: Two sixty-three was the final cost. That's, you know, everything.

Linda Boxx: Well, you needed its driver...

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, that must have been on, yeah. We had to have a pile driver come in and do the beams.

Brett Hollern: That was Sheesley.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes.

Linda Boxx: And, what was that cost?

Brett Hollern: Seventy-three thousand dollars.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: So, there was eight piles that needed to be driven and they had to be driven in the right spot. And, the rocky stuff and they'd move them and we'd have to pull them out and drive behind it, let that get down in line.

Brett Hollern: We really didn't have a budget for this project. It was sort of like...

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: No, there was nothing that I remember.

Brett Hollern: We just started doing stuff and then figured out how much it would cost the next day and figured it out.

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[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I do remember the 25 grand from the railroad. That's all I remember.

Brett Hollern: Figure out what the next step was and how we could get the money to do that next step. And, we were writing grants to, I believe, the Community Foundation of the Alleghenies at one point during the process, you know, during the project.

Avigail Oren: Okay. And so, was it mostly private money that...

Linda Boxx: Well, the ATA put some money into it, certainly.

Brett Hollern: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: No, but you were...

Brett Hollern: I got here that the ATA put \$100,000 in, SCRTA put \$60,000 into the project. Now, where those monies came from out of there – the SCRTA funding probably was Community Foundation.

Linda Boxx: Community Foundation, yeah.

Brett Hollern: Yeah, so...

Rhody Rhodomoyer: What did we pay Miller? Do you have that in there?

Brett Hollern: Yeah, \$11,000.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: That was pretty cheap.

[Chuckle]

Linda Boxx: Is that for...? That's the removal and then the moving to the...

[Crosstalk]

Brett Hollern: I'm sorry, \$18,000. The \$11,000 invoice and a \$7,100 invoice.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Brett Hollern: Didn't say what exactly.

Linda Boxx: Oh, 11 for the first move and 7 for the second move?

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Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, because we needed the big cranes, I mean, a crane that was heavy enough to lift that bridge, too.

Brett Hollern: The second crane – that was Sealer...

[Crosstalk]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right.

Brett Hollern: ...the ones that showed up late – they were supposed to be there for a day.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yes.

Brett Hollern: They were supposed to come at 8:00 a.m. and didn't show up until noon and so they ended up paying for overnight.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Maybe afternoon.

[Chuckle]

Brett Hollern: Yeah, we lost that one.

Linda Boxx: But, to put a bridge in over a road crossing for a quarter million dollars is so cheap, it's almost unheard of.

Brett Hollern: Exactly. And then, plus the bridge...

Linda Boxx: Well, yeah.

Brett Hollern: ...with the historic part of the bridge. I mean, it just wasn't complete quotes.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Brett Hollern: We did... And then, the decking and the railings and everything was done as a volunteer project there, too.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right.

Brett Hollern: I was on crutches at the time.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Didn't we get the whole- on the pilings, of course, they're open. So then, we needed to put wood, I guess that was the cheapest thing we got at the time, behind to hold the dirt from going out into the road. Now, Brett said that rotted. We got that from the Amish, I think.

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Brett Hollern: Yeah.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: We had big wood.

Brett Hollern: No, the cribbing.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah.

Brett Hollern: It started to rot and Fisher went and put- they welded metal over the face. I think he just used I-beams maybe – welded I-beams to the piling.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, we had those I-beams left over. I don't know whatever did happen to them.

Brett Hollern: They are probably still sitting in the weeds along the trail.

[Laughter/Crosstalk]

Somebody did come. We did give some of them away, I think.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I know you did. I remember you saying they still were- some of them were still there.

Brett Hollern: They still were.

Avigail Oren: So, are there any last remembrances about the Bollman Bridge project that you want to share?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: The only thing I could say is- to get it started, and I can't tell you today how long that was. I can tell you how long the tunnel was. And, I must have measured that thing 50 times. And, I had to take and figure the weight, you know, with the steel and those cross sections. I couldn't do that now, but I did it then. And, when they lifted it, I was off, like, 100 pounds. Yeah, that made me feel good.

[Laughter]

Because I had no idea. I mean, I was using the formula right out of the book.

Linda Boxx: Thirty ton.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Is that what it was?

Linda Boxx: That's what this says.

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Rhody Rhodomoyer: Okay.

Linda Boxx: But, you probably had it calculated to some more precise number.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Well, no. I think what we needed to know is what size crane we needed.

Linda Boxx: Right.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: And, if the 30, you know, if it was 29 1/2 or something, then you would need a bigger crane. So, the 30 ton, it probably went with a 50-ton crane to lift it.

Avigail Oren: So, let's finish up by talking about what the GAP Trail means in the broader context of your life and career. So, Brett, you already sort of touched on this in your interview. But, Rhody, I mean, you talked about the tunnel as a relationship you had.

[Chuckle]

What does it mean to you to have worked on this trail?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: It meant everything in the world. I loved the job. I loved doing it. I loved fighting with the people. I mean, you got to do what you got to do. So, no, I was very proud to do it and very proud when it ended up. Because it ended up good. You know, the amount of work – it's like Linda said, you look at the book and it's like, it gives you the fits.

[Chuckle]

No, so that's it for me. I mean, I don't think I can say it any better than that and get to know the people and work with them. That was great, too.

Linda Boxx: Do you want to say anything about Jim Eppley? Anything good about Jim Eppley?

[Chuckle]

Rhody Rhodomoyer: I can't. No, Jim Eppley was in charge of design in DCNR. And, he and Linda got together originally and every time I saw Jim Eppley, he'd say to me, "Linda, wants that tunnel done." You know, and I mean, to me, I'm working on a trail somewhere

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and it's like, "Okay, she wants it done." But, I didn't know Linda and I didn't know the trail he was talking about. You know, it was completely out of mind. But, he kept- every time he'd come, he'd did say it. He'd just say, "Hey, Linda, wants that connection between Pittsburgh and Washington." And, you know, I mean, he was really fired up over it. And then, he finally fired me up over. I mean, it just got very interesting as to what was going to happen. You know, a missing link and I'm a part of going to make it happen. A few things in life make you feel good.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren:

Ain't that the truth? So, this is the time at which I sort of open the floor and give you an opportunity to say anything that I didn't think to ask about, tell stories that you love about the trail or the projects or...

Brett Hollern:

You know, I guess it just can't be like- the trail was a herculean effort on so many people's parts. But, just to think about, like, Big Savage and what went into it and what value there is getting this taken down because I think now people, you know, ride through it. And, it's an awesome structure. I know everybody has, you know, that goes through it will always remember it. But, to be able to, like, put in perspective, like what it took to get it done so people can someday learn about that, I think there's a huge amount of value to that. But, you know, the dedication level – people like Rhody – to get it done. You know, it wouldn't have gotten done without the right people involved.

Rhody Rhodomoyer:

Well, and you two were the main people involved. I mean, the money part of that, you know, you must have pulled your hair out.

[Laughter]

I mean, just keep on going. But, I remember days of, we need \$2 million, well, you know, I'll give you 10 bucks, but \$2 million is tough. And, she'd get it, she'd find it.

Linda Boxx:

I remember and it was wintertime because I remember driving back down towards Frostburg through the snow-covered trail.

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And, they just dropped another bomb on us. And, it maybe it was like a \$2 million bomb. We need two more million dollars. And, I remember just being so discouraged. I thought, "How am I going... I just got the governor to give us some more money. Now, they want more." And, I thought, "I can't keep doing this. I just can't keep doing this." But, by the time I got to Frostburg, I said, "Okay, I'm going to Harrisburg tomorrow."

[Laughter]

You know, it was like, "Oh!"

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Yeah, one of the things that I was thinking about, too, which doesn't have a whole lot to do, but I went out – it was January or February. And, I went out and I wanted to see what was going on with the tunnel. At that time, it was still being built. There weren't doors on it or anything. And, I did put a hard hat on because I was alone. There wasn't anybody around except George Reeder...

Linda Boxx: He wasn't going to help you.

Rhody Rhodomoyer: Right. So, I put the hat on and I got out and I started... There was about three or four inches of snow. And, the next thing I was looking at sky. My feet went out from under me and I smashed down and I laid there for a while to see if I was all right. And, I looked back, my hard hat was 50 feet from where I hit. And, I get up and brushed it off and I said, "The hell with it."

[Laughter]

But, it was, I mean, you know, it was like a shuffleboard once you had that snow on that. And, it was constantly ice running out on the path. It was, you know, you could ice skate on it. And, it was funny because, you know, everything felt all right but zingo...

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: Yeah, those moments tend to stick with us, don't they?

Rhody Rhodomoyer: You lay there and waited until I saw everything was moving.
[One incident that happened when we were setting the bridge

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on the pile abutments was for days the public would say that bridge will never fit: "it's too long, it's too short, it's too wide etc." So I made some circles on the cap and the bridge landed on it to perfection. I heard no more comments regarding the bridge.]

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: All right, thank you so much for sharing all of these remembrances and let's end here.

[End 1:34:49.5]

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