

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

[Chatter/Setting Up Recorder]

**Avigail Oren:** So, this is Avigail Oren. It is Friday, April 12, 2019. We're at the home of Ed Deaton in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It is 1:30 p.m. and I'm here with Larry Williamson, Ed Deaton, and Linda Boxx. In this interview, we'll focus on how your work with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources contributed to the successful completion of The Great Allegheny Passage Rails-to-Trails project. After quickly discussing how you both came to work at the DCNR and what your particular roles were, we'll dive into the trails' beginning at Ohiopyle State Park and then move on to discuss how state funding granted by DCNR was fundamental to the development of sections of the trail as well as major infrastructure projects like bridges and tunnels. So, Ed and then Larry, I would love to hear your background. Tell me how did you come to work for the PA DCNR?

**Ed Deaton:** Well, I was a young landscape architect and I've been in private practice for two to three years. And, opportunity, an opening came available in the Bureau of State Parks for a landscape architect and that was late 1970, September or so of '70. And, I was in the Park Planning section at that time. And, as a matter of fact, it was still Forest and Waters under the great Dr. Marie Goddard. I had several parks in the state that I was responsible to do planning for in Ohiopyle – happened to be one that was assigned to me to do the planning. At that time, the park had pretty much been acquired based on the original Project 70, but with meetings and promotional brochures for the Project 70 and the expansion of the park system. However, the master plan was not fully developed. And then, I became the person in charge of getting the plan fully developed for the park. So, that's kind of how I got started in '70 and Ohiopyle really started to come of age as far as my planning efforts somewhere in '72, '73.

**Avigail Oren:** Okay. Larry, what about you?

**Larry Williamson:** I graduated from Penn State in '69 and immediately started looking for a job and just, fortunately, the old Department of

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

Commerce was creating a recreation unit division in their agency. And, there were several job openings in the Harrisburg main office in the regional office network that they had set up across the state. So, I applied for the one in Harrisburg and got the job. And then, shortly after that, Department of Commerce split off some of their functions into a newly-created agency called the "Department of Community Affairs." And, part of that department had a Bureau of Recreation and Conservation that I worked for just as a planner, grant administrator. I was primarily hired to help run the Land and Water Conservation Fund program which had just gone through an audit and they found a lot of audit complications and problems. And so, I was hired specifically to resolve those issues. Then DCA, former DCA got split up under the Ridge administration and they created, Ridge created the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. And, my bureau – I was a bureau director at the time – got transferred over to DCNR. And from there, our bureau basically handled a lot of the grant funding programs, especially with local governments and nonprofit groups. And, at some point, I think it was late '80s, early '90s – I kept hearing this "Linda Boxx," "Allegheny Trails Alliance," ...

[Laughter]

..." Great Allegheny Passage". And, we didn't have a whole lot of money at the time, at that early state. And, eventually, as I'll cover later on – when we got into Greenways and the Keystone Fund. And then, I started paying more attention to what was happening out on The Great Allegheny Passage. And, Linda and I just connected and from there, it's history in terms of the funding that I'll cover later.

**Avigail Oren:**

Great, okay. So, why don't we move back to Ed and come back the involvement with the master plan for Ohio pyle. So, you gave us some background on how you started working with Ohio pyle and on that project. Tell us how the trail, in particular, became part of your portfolio.

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

Ed Deaton:

Sure. In somewhere around '71, '72, as I stated before, we were developing a master plan for the park. And, we had retained the firm out of Pittsburgh and at that time, it was Simons and Simons, later became Environmental Planning Design. And, they were our consultants to actually formulate the plan. And, they developed a master plan. They restarted- I can't tell you when it was finished because it took forever. And, we were trying to understand, first of all, the two things about Ohiopyle. At that point, it was, like, 21,000 acres and that's approximately 30 square miles. So, you do a lot of hiking and you do a lot of walking...

[Chuckle]

...and driving. And, I can tell you what, I knew every curve of the turnpike between here and west.

[Chuckle]

But, in any event, during the scouting out or reconnaissance, the second part of what you have to learn- or I should say the first part of what you have to learn is not only [the] natural resource base you're working with but the functions and the activities that you need to accommodate, or should, or have the opportunity to accommodate. And, understanding what was happening at Ohiopyle, the history albeit as a tourist stop, and a little recreation area back when. It's something we learned about. What was currently happening at Ohiopyle which was quite a bit of whitewater rafting and kayaking were occurring on the Youghiogheny River. And, that becoming a commercialized venture with outfitters that were providing everything you need was just blossoming at that time. So, in the middle of all of that, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy who had been the acquisition agent for the Commonwealth was essentially wrapping up their acquisition when it was brought to our attention somewhere in '73 that a petition for abandonment was granted by the ICC – Interstate Commerce Commission – for the Western Maryland rail grade to be abandoned. And, we tried at that point in time to analyze the potential that abandoned grade would have for recreation within the park and beyond. And, that started to quickly dovetail

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

accommodating what potential trail users... started to dovetail very quickly with whitewater rafting because the situation on the Youghiogheny River through Ohiopyle State Park is that both sides of the river are parallel with rail grades, if you will, the northeastern side was the main line, B&O, and kind of the southwestern side is the abandoned Western Maryland grade.

So, we had a lot of meetings with the B&O officials. What was happening with the whitewater boating was the boaters were putting in below the falls in Ohiopyle and headed downriver five and a half, six miles to a little spot called "Stewarton," which is on the northeastern side of the river, and getting off the river at that point – hauling their rafts up the riverbank across mainline B&O tracks to a little bitty turnaround area for all the commercial outfitters, all the private boaters, and all kinds of problems with canoes being placed across the rails, switch in the signals for the railcar of trains. So, that whole problem was getting control, if you will, and providing for the whitewater boating opened up the opportunity for also providing facilities for trail users and we then tried to identify what kind of uses and so forth. So, within '73, early '74 is when we first started our first field reconnaissance of the Western Maryland rail grade with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy people and our master planning team.

We started down on the Maryland/Pennsylvania line and worked our way up to South Connellsville. It became readily apparent to us quite quickly that there were quite a few obstacles that were beyond park boundaries that were going to be big challenges. And, at this point in time, with the funding that we had available, we were trying to focus primarily on what was within Ohiopyle State Park. We agreed with the Secretary of the Department and powers-to-be. We would look at the stretch from Confluence to South Connellsville. And, in between there – there was a little spot called "Camp Carmel" which is about two-thirds of the way down the river from Ohiopyle to South Connellsville. And, we gave the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy the challenge of acquiring that land grade from B&O who then had

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

changed to Chessie system. And, they went about that business. Well then, there were some pieces above the park and below the park that were still in private ownership once we went through all of the deeds and restrictions and all the changes through all of those years because this was somewhere around 1919 – most of this was acquired. And, I had the responsibility at that point to go out and do negotiations with some landowners who were not particularly fond of our proposal. And, there was a couple of particular-one group that was supportive, but we did not know how to accommodate the trail at that point and that was just south of Confluence, across the river from the town of Confluence was the Turkeyfoot Game Club.

The approach to a bridge that went from Confluence across the river to the Turkeyfoot ownership, where Turkeyfoot owned either side of the approach to the bridge and that rail grade then, for quite a distance through Turkeyfoot property, and approached the bridge with elevated high fill and it was not conceivable to us at that time that we could accommodate the trail because of the height of it and we were not interested in acquiring the bridge at Confluence. So, we moved downstream a little bit, downriver a little bit to a stream area called “Ramcat Run” and that’s where our first idea for visitor accommodations could be placed for not only the trail but for whitewater-only, what we called the “Middle Yough.” So, one of the allocations I had at that point was to develop a rapport with the Turkeyfoot Club members and try to work out a scheme whereby we could get the trail relocated off the grade and into a way to accommodate the club needs.

So, we went on downstream and we got into the borough of Ohiopyle and everything looked pretty good until we got to Ferncliff which is just across the river from the borough itself. And, there were restrictive covenants on land mass in the acquisition of Ferncliff that prevented development of recreational, hardcore recreational facilities. Plus, we had some landownership in there that B&O owned along with a rack of rail grade and we had to try to figure out what to do there. The big problem was solving this Stewarton problem

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

and trying to find a way to shift the whitewater boating and access to a point on the north and western side of the river which was a Western Maryland rail grade side of the river. At that point, we went up and down, every droll, every creek, everything you could imagine on the western side looking for a way to get people on and off that river without having to cross mainline B&O. And, we found that coming down Bruner Run – we surveyed that ourselves and found out that there was a township road that had been in there and that about half of that- the distance that we needed was Old Township Road, but we found out, “Well, it’s not quite so old. They’re still getting liquid fuel tax money for it.” And, the best you could do on that road was walk it. So, we had to work it with the township at that point on getting rides to that township road and striking a deal on that.

Then we went further down a little bit below that point was pretty much the end of the park and that was at kind of the Camp Carmel area. And then, we looked beyond that to see what might be accomplished down to South Connellsville. So, that’s the general scheme of things. And, the first challenge was can we get these access point agreed to with the outfitters and what we knew of the trail users at that point? And then, we had to define how many people are we going to accommodate, how many outfitters are we going to accommodate? We went into all kinds of studies on that – time motion studies on the river to look at types of crafts that are being used, when they go, where they come from. The major stumbling block in the borough of Ohiopyle was our parking. And, it continues to be a challenge. There’s no two ways about that. So, we did a major transportation study to look at all the traffic flow and then the expansion of visitor use and its impact on parking. And, we developed a scheme to build remote parking areas so that visitors could park there and then access the borough itself. So, we had several schemes or systems plugging into one another. And, once we found out that we could do some parking on Ferncliff and that Bruner Run access was going to be accomplishable, that’s when we started developing the trail from Ferncliff down to Bruner Run. So, that was the first section of the trail that was really open for official visitor use.

**Commented [A01]:** This word is difficult to interpret from the recording. Is it what you meant, Ed?

**Commented [O2]:** draw

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

**Linda Boxx:** Did you help design that trail? I mean, like, come up with the specifications?

**Ed Deaton:** Well, it was pretty much already designed. It was the corridor itself and the right-of-way had plenty of width. The only problem we had was the ballast was so deep and the stones were so big that it was not conducive. So, we talked about the Bruner Run township road and needing to get access. Larry Adams was the manager at that time. I'm not sure if it's legal, but he swung a deal where we traded the township ownership of that township road to us. That got transferred to us in exchange for as much ballast as they needed for their township projects.

[Laughter]

Now, that's the reality. I mean, you know, whether he's going to go to jail or not, you know, who knows. But anyway, that's how- and once you got that ballast out of there, you were already into what was pretty much a fine, nice surface. Now, it got top-dress and we knew we wanted to go 12 feet and we wanted shoulders and there was plenty of width on that rail grade to accomplish that. And, we had looked at every culvert from there down through to South Connellsville looking for structural integrity and so forth, all of which were in very good shape, fortunately at that point.

**Avigail Oren:** All right. Just because you brought up the ballast story – is it true that Larry Adams then- what did you call it? The overdressing, dressing over on that path? Top-dressing?

**Ed Deaton:** Yeah.

**Avigail Oren:** Top-dressing? Was he- pulled it from other projects and- you have no idea, okay. I heard something about it, okay. So...

**Linda Boxx:** I think in one of his- actually, I heard this story last year when we had our 40-year celebration.

**Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm.

**Linda Boxx:** I'll think of his name. But anyhow, there was leftover Project 500 money or 70, but I think it was 500.

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

- Ed Deaton:** It would have been 500. Seventy was acquisition, 500 was development.
- Linda Boxx:** Okay.
- Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm.
- Linda Boxx:** And, Yokum, Jerry Yokum...
- Ed Deaton:** Jerry Yokum, yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** Jerry Yokum called Larry and said, "Do you need any money because we have a little left over..."
- Ed Deaton:** Right.
- Linda Boxx:** "...We'll lose it if we don't..." And so, he bought stone for the top-dressing and stockpiled it there. But, I had never heard that story before from Larry. And so, Jerry made money-made resources available so that...
- Ed Deaton:** We were just set- and for instance, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy was spending the last Project 70 money, all right? And, as you suggested, the Project 500 funds were also tail-lining out. And then, we needed to get a high financier working for us here. And, that how Larry came about. But anyway...
- Avigail Oren:** Okay. So, just to return back to the chronological narrative. So, you've just taken us through '74. And, the surveying, the reconnaissance. You recognized that a trail can go through the entire park. Can you take me up to the point at which the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy formally transfers the railway grade to what was then the Department of Environmental Resources?
- Ed Deaton:** I don't know that we had a formal, if you will, transfer. I do not remember that. They stayed involved with us all the way through- and it was kind of an off and on involvement until we got down to the Bowest Yard area and funds were available at that point in time- or made available to us at that point in time to develop the trail from... [phone ringing] oops.
- Avigail Oren:** Just hold on one second...



## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

- Ed Deaton:** Yeah, just one more, should be over. From the Camp Carmel area which is at the end of the park down to South Connellsville and that the Department would take over administration, management, and ownership of that much more beyond the park. So, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy was challenged at that point to also acquire through there. And, again, we had some outstanding ownerships that we had to deal with. And, we also- we can talk about how the decision was made to run a spur before we get to South Connellsville and Bowest Yard to turn the thing and go also into Dunbar at the old Bowest Yard area. So, I then, again, had to go in and try to develop a rapport with those outstanding ownerships and then see if we can make some kind of arrangements to acquire access and passage for the trail.
- Avigail Oren:** And, was one of those the Curry property? Was the Curry property one of those outstanding acquisitions?
- Ed Deaton:** Well, Curry was in the original- the Curry land was just before you- between Bruner Run and Camp Carmel – the very tail end of the park area. And, that was Curry Lumber that we were dealing with at that time. And, that's a whole story in itself.
- [Chuckle]
- Linda Boxx:** This is the time.
- Avigail Oren:** This is the time, yeah.
- [Chuckle]
- Ed Deaton:** Curry owned some land on the uphill side of the Western Maryland grade just south of the park ownership. And, by acquiring the rail grade that went beyond the park ownership below what Curry owned to Camp Carmel, we found out that Curry had been crossing the Western Maryland grade to get to some of his timberlands and then in another area, he was paralleling actually on Western Maryland land upriver to get to his upland timber. And, with the development of the trail, that was going to preclude his access. And so, we go back through the deeds and there is no crossing ever granted and

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

he had no right to that to do what he was doing. Now, I'm not chastising these people because they did get along for years with the Western Maryland, there were no conflict and whatever. But, as far as we were concerned, that was not conveyed to us by Western Maryland with outstanding right-of-way at that point. Now, there was one for the Camp Curry people to cross the rail grade which we honored at that point. And so, we had several meetings out there with Mr. Curry, I believe was Donald Curry – it's either Charles or Donald Curry – at that point and worked on it. And, when you really sat down to look at it, he had access via other routes...

[Chuckle]

...to his land and to his timbering. And so, that ironed itself out although it was a lot of discussion. Now, we never came to loggerheads with any of these landowners. It was a matter of talking through what our plans were and why we needed what we needed. So, that's the Curry one. We had a similar problem just before you get to Bowest Yard with Nicholson Lumber Company. And, according to Mr. Nicholson, Ed Nicholson – they had owned a one-third interest in their rail grade. And, he was diametrically opposed to the rail trail. And so, I met with him and his son, Scott, and we spent several meetings together. And, one meeting – it's cold, we were down on the rail grade with a bunch of vehicles and Ed and I are sitting – Mr. Nicholson and I were sitting in the front of the state truck and Scott and the other team had walked up the rail grade. And, we're talking about it and at that point, he was still diametrically opposed to the rail trail project because people we going to camp on his land, there was going to be trash, there was going to be fires, you know, the whole that kind of stuff. So, we talked and talked and talked and finally, I said, "Ed, I need to step out here and have a smoke break." He said, "Oh, you smoke?" I said, "Yeah," and he said, "What do you smoke?" I said- at that point it was Salems. "Oh, that's what I used to smoke!" All right. And, he had scars on both sides of his neck from corroded artery operations, all right? So, I get out and light up a cigarette and he said, "Give me one of those!"

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

[Chuckle]

You're a grown man. If you want one, you can have one. So, I did, he smoked one. We got back in the car. And, just before we were getting back in the car, here comes his son and the team back down. I see his son shaking his head, all right? I said, "Oh, no, I did something wrong." Scott said, "Hey, he's a big boy, he knows better." You know. So anyway, he couldn't have been within a month or so and Mr. Nicholson called me and he said, "Ed," he said, "I've talked around and I said, 'You know what,'" he said, "I think I'm going to go with this rail trail project."

**Larry Williamson:**

Wow.

**Ed Deaton:**

"I'll donate my interest in the rail grade to the Commonwealth." Well, through our deed research, his interest had already been purchased by the Conservancy. So, we worked out a deal and he said, "I need a letter from the Commonwealth," you know? I said, "Well, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll give you a letter from the Commonwealth. I don't care who – get the governor to sign it. We'll get it signed for you and I'll send it to you." What it said was "We accept the donation of whatever interest you have in such piece of land."

[Laughter]

That satisfied them, we went off and we had worked really well. So, that was another kind of funny one.

**Avigail Oren:**

Did the state ever have to condemn any property?

**Ed Deaton:**

Not that- you know, you did ask me that in the email. I do not remember any condemnation. We had one public meeting when we proposed the land trade with Turkeyfoot. That was a department requirement that we hold the public meetings for the land trades and we did accomplish that. We only had one person show up...

[Laughter]

Everybody already knew about it and they were all in favor of it, you know.

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

**Linda Boxx:** And, I put that question in because I recalled, and I guess I recalled erroneously about you talking about trying to settle one parcel of property and the story that I remember you saying is that you talked to this gentleman and you said, "I'm getting ready to retire and you're going to die. Let's get this settled." And, that doesn't ring a bell? Okay, so...

**Ed Deaton:** Hmm. No.

**Linda Boxx:** Okay.

**Ed Deaton:** I know one piece of land in Ohiopyle, but it was not on the rail grade where that occurred.

**Linda Boxx:** Okay. Maybe that's- I got my stories conflated.

**Ed Deaton:** Out of the 21,000 acres, we found after going back through and doublechecking everything, there was one parcel of 22 acres that had not been acquired and the reason it was at that time the Department of Welfare held title on lands and properties that were where the owners were welfare recipients, all right? And therefore, we could not acquire it. Well, I worked with that lady for close to 20 years until she decided to leave and finally then she did call us and we acquired that property. But, that- it had a beautiful view of the river and the rail grade, but it was- no, I don't. I don't remember that.

**Avigail Oren:** Okay, so in just sort of bringing the story from '78 through the [19]80s – tell me what you were doing in the '80s. What were you doing to sort of prepare the opening of the Ramcat Hollow to the Bidwell Station segment and then later the Bidwell Station to Ohiopyle and Ohiopyle to Bruner Run [segments]?

**Ed Deaton:** Well, I was, again, the planner that came up with the systems, the schemes, to make these things function. With the whitewater boating, it was developing and growing exponentially and we did all the studies that we could think of on whitewater boating, again, trying to develop and understand what the limitations and capacity potentials were. And, it was all based on which set of rapids on the river could handle what type of craft and what length of time. At

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

Bruner Run, at Ohiopyle, at- well, at Ramcat, Ohiopyle, Bruner Run – the user volumes that we could accommodate on river were then translated into buses and automobiles and people per hour and how much beach area we needed. And, at that point, we then were also guessing – and this was a guess – on how many people would be using the trail because rail trails were just coming of age and trying to make projections were difficult. So, these became very important areas. And, my challenge at each of those areas was to define for the detailed designers the capacities and the functions that we needed to accommodate and to show them in bubble diagram form how the sites were to be laid out.

And then, that was handed to the engineering design teams to go ahead and detail the work. In addition to those main areas, the outfitters at that time for whitewater boating were operating outside of the park from their own establishments and busing into the park. And, we tried then to see if we could move all of those buses off of the roadways in Ohiopyle and accommodate them, their businesses, and their patrons in Ohiopyle itself to limit the traffic. We knew traffic was over- it was already overwhelming, and we were getting rafts being blown up in the middle of the roadway, kayaks laying out with PFDs [Personal Flotation Devices] and traffic trying to flow and it was just untenable. So, we developed an outfitter orientation area up Metal Run near the park office where four outfitters could meet their patrons, have comfort and change facilities, and then bus to the put-in point. Conversely, they could bus from Bruner Run back to the reception area so thereby relieving Ohiopyle of a major portion of the traffic to loading. And also, these same areas could serve the Ohiopyle community.

How would we accomplish accommodating hike/bikers and Metal Run which is not downtown near the trail? And, we needed private boater control, kayak teams that show up in clubs and so forth. So, we got with the guy that ran most of the school buses in that area – Wally Colburn. And, I worked a deal with Wally Colburn to run shuttle services in the park and we defined for him where and when. And so, we

Commented [A03]: Is this correct?

Commented [O4]: YES

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

developed a whole program of shuttle services – not only for whitewater private boaters but for trail users. You can ride from Ohiopyle to Bruner Run and catch a bus back, okay? So, he was willing to accommodate us. He had all of the required permits for busing, commercial venture, and he was most willing to go along with it and set up a pilot program to see what was going to work. That was one of the keys, was Metal Run and the capacities at each of the areas. And, that was my job to figure all that nonsense out and hand—this is what we need to do, and where we need to do it, and these are the numbers we need to accommodate—to the detail designers.

- Avigail Oren:** So, you're sort of the bird's-eye view looking [down] and doing the planning?
- Ed Deaton:** Right.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay. So, did you want to ask anything before I change...
- Linda Boxx:** Well, do you want to talk anything about the train ride in 1975?
- Ed Deaton:** I don't remember much about it.
- Linda Boxx:** Okay.
- Ed Deaton:** I really don't.
- Linda Boxx:** Well, maybe you weren't- it was sort of a media event. So...
- Ed Deaton:** Yeah, I don't remember much about it. And, I fought about it a lot.
- [Chuckle]
- Linda Boxx:** Okay.
- Ed Deaton:** That was a lot of years ago, you know?
- [Laughter]
- We're talking 45 years ago. And, I worked on that trail, well, from '70 till 2005.
- Avigail Oren:** That's pretty incredible.

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

**Ed Deaton:** When we talk about planning, you know, we're not- it's a long-range proposition, especially if you're going to develop 22,000 acres. And plus, I had 118 other parks to mess with.

[Chuckle]

You know, Now, I covered the whole state towards the end instead of just my region. I had moved up to the point where I was planning for the whole state. But, you're right. Coming up with a game plan – that was the job. Having a vision, trying to see how we can make it work. And, we had a lot of good advice and help along the way from private boating clubs, from outfitters, from the mayor of Ohio, to Wally Colburn, the bus guy, you know, doing a deal with the township. I'm going to tell you one sidebar. Back to the ballast/township question. The township – two guys, township fathers were Judbert and Audbert Leonard – they were opposed to us taking over that piece of township road because of the liquid fuel tax they were getting, which, it was a little, but it was important to the township. So, we had to meet with the county commissioners to mediate this negotiation or whatever. So, we presented our case, they present, the township guys present their case, and one boxer-type guy and he had a pair of boxing gloves on his business card...

[Chuckle]

Anyway, he said, "Would you all excuse us? We'd like to discuss this." So, we went outside the meeting room and it was Larry Adams and I, and the township guys stayed in there. And, what was funny about it is outside was a [partition] wall about eight-foot high between us and the meeting room.

[Laughter]

So, you could hear every squeak and every word. And, this boxer commissioner, boxer guy – I don't remember his name. He said to Judbert and Audbert, "You can't blackmail the state. You're going to turn that township road over to them." "Yes, sir."

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

[Chuckle]

So, they call Larry and I back in.

[Chuckle]

That's the truth. That's exactly how it happened.

[Laughter]

**Larry Williamson:** [inaudible 0:44:47.4] the gloves.

**Ed Deaton:** The only reason I know about the boxing gloves. He had them in his car. He said, "Here, make sure Dr. Goddard gets this." "Well, fine, I'll do that."

[Chuckle]

**Avigail Oren:** That's terrific. All right. So, that's taking us through the '80s. Let's get up to the '90s. So, Larry, set the stage – you're heading into the 1990s – what are the challenges and obstacles to trail building and what are the major motivators and assets that get these projects really sailing?

**Larry Williamson:** For me, the 90s was probably the best decade of my work life. The planets just all seemed to align in the 90s. And, most of it evolved around the Greenways program and in the funding programs which I think really elevated a lot of the trail building and trail development and including long-distance trails like The Great Allegheny Passage. In the very early 90s, I don't remember the date because I was half drunk.

[Chuckle]

We had what I call the "napkin meeting." Ed McMahon from the Conservation Fund and Anna Brynick who was working for PEC at time, and Joanne Denworth who was working in the governor's policy office, asked me to meet with him after work in this local tavern in downtown Harrisburg – that they wanted to talk to me about something. And, it was about Greenways. Ed McMahon was a national leader in Greenways programs and basically gave- they gave a pitch that they thought Pennsylvania was a golden opportunity

**Commented [A05]:** Larry—I listened to this ten times and the best I can figure is that you said, "he showed them the gloves." Does that resonate? We can always remove this and insert [Crosstalk].

**Commented [O6]:** Please delete

**Commented [O7]:** Breinich



## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

here – right timing to start a Greenways program. And so, I took Ed back and started running it by people like Dick Sprenkle who was my boss. And, it just started simmering. And, I think a key event was Ridge- Governor Ridge being elected because Ridge had two Cabinet secretaries – John Oliver and Brad Mallory. And, both of them were really gung-ho on trails in general and they could see the link between this Greenways concept that we were trying to present. John and Brad established what they called a “partnership initiative” which was mostly a collection of state agency representatives that would be a sounding board to run this concept by. And, that took hold and we had a governor's conference on Greenways and trails in '97 and out of that conference which was really- to me, it was an eye-opener, the amount of attendance that we had at that conference and the amount of interest in Greenways.

Out of that conference came a Governor's Greenways Commission that was created by executive order from Governor Ridge and 22 members – both the state agencies, the local governments, nonprofit, trail groups. We even had- remember Keith Klinger was on there who was- he was a property rights exponent and probably out of the 22 members, he was the only one that was really anti-Greenways. But, we eventually won him over. And, from that Greenways Commission, we developed the Greenways Action Plan in 2001 which is the guiding document for what is currently going on today. It was a vision until 2020 and the vision was basically to establish what we called a “hubs and spokes” system of Greenways that connect. The goal was to connect and develop a statewide system of Greenways by 2020. And, the reason that I mention this is that on all of those – the initiative, the conference, the Commission – there was this young lady from out west who was sort of The Great Allegheny Passage ambassador, the queen of The Great Allegheny Passage and Greenways and trails in general. And, that was enhanced by the fact that, you know, she had won me over so I was supporting it from the ground level. And, obviously, John Oliver and her were in the same framework. And so, it was relatively easy.

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

**Avigail Oren:** Well, what was her name?

[Chuckle]

Because...

**Larry Williamson:** Yeah. Linda Boxx.

**Avigail Oren:** Thank you for the record.

[Laughter]

**Larry Williamson:** And, again, going back to the Greenways plan itself, there were 12 major goals. And, my disappointment in the Greenways action plan to date is that- and I pushed really heavily for this because I understood the value of funding. Not only just in accomplishing projects but when a program has state funding tied to it, it has merit. And, the legislature recognizes it and if it's outside the general appropriations fund, it has standing. And, the only goal that we have not hit so far is that I wanted to develop an actual dedicated funding program just for Greenways. Never got off the ground within DCNR because at that time then, again, in the '90s – we had Keystone passing in '93, K93 Fund, and, ISTEAs, PennDOT funding. ISTEAs covered '91 to '97 and TEA 21 which was the successor to the ISTEAs program came into effect in '98. Between that availability of funding and, again, this momentum that was created by all the Greenways planning and meetings and the action plan – we started really rolling into funding of Greenways in our application processes and our competitive grants program. That sort of set the stage, I think, then the foundation then for what happened with Big Savage [Tunnel].

**Linda Boxx:** But also, as part of the Greenways plan, this term of “mega Greenways” came out. And, I think that's really set The Great Allegheny Passage as well as other trails up because instead of just being, like, a two-mile trail that connects the city park to the downtown, these were connecting communities and counties.

**Larry Williamson:** Yeah. And, I think that was one of the hardest parts in the beginning of trying to define what a Greenway was because

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

there was a valid and energetic Rails-to-Trails program going on with a leader of that program in Pennsylvania that was sort of hesitant to call these trails Greenways. He did not understand that the Greenways concept is much more than just a trail. And, in fact, I was just reading something the other day that DCNR continues to do a lot of surveys and promotions of Greenways and they did a survey on the value of Greenways. And, the number one value that came out that to my surprise was protection of natural areas and conservation quarters. So...

**Avigail Oren:** Is that because you felt like you built these as recreational spaces or as community spaces? Explain why that was surprising to you.

**Larry Williamson:** Surprising to me that it didn't come out that most people thought of Greenways as real trail corridors.

**Avigail Oren:** Got it.

**Larry Williamson:** I think that was actually like one more story on the list of opportunities here. The mega trails that Linda mentioned – I think there were- I think we had a map of potential mega trails and there were only, like, six of them, I think. And, you know, because of Linda's leadership in continuing to develop The Great Allegheny Passage project and program, they were the number one mega trail in terms of development and still are. Although, you are getting some competition from the Delaware and Lehigh...

[Chuckle]

Anyhow, that's sort of leads me into the Big Savage because I think in terms of a turning point in the mindset of our grants, people within the Bureau, and even the leadership within DCNR – the Big Savage Tunnel project was really outside the box, I mean, just in terms of scope, what the project was about, and the financial cost of it.

**Avigail Oren:** Before we get to Big Savage, can we back up a little bit? So, in December of 1990, the Rails-to-Trails Act passes and that's what establishes the Rails-to-Trails program within DCNR, correct? [Larry nods]. Okay. And then, this funding

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

between 1991 and 1993 at the federal and state level becomes available. But, what are the first projects that you started working on that applied that funding to the construction of the Gap Trail?

**Larry Williamson:** I think, again, even in the 80s and in this early period in the 90s, we were funding projects on a very microcosm level. So, there were a lot of projects like, named "Montour Trail" ...

**Linda Boxx:** Little pieces of the Yough.

**Larry Williamson:** Little Spokes.

**Avigail Oren:** Like Wheeler Bottom, Bowest Junction – were those among them?

**Ed Deaton:** Well, what happened about the same time that Larry was working with micro-groups, if you will, we were given the task in addition to our state park work of developing a rail trail program statewide. So, one of the things we did was inventoried all of their rail abandonments that the ICC had from 1960 to somewhere in the 80s.

**Larry Williamson:** Yeah.

**Ed Deaton:** And then, we set up a geographic information system so that clubs and not-for-profits and whatever could go in and look at each one of these abandonments and vacated rail grades parcel by parcel of land ownership and identify. By doing that, then we were able to link these micro-projects in a broader regional and statewide context to see how these might dovetail with the Greenways corridors that Larry was working on. So, they became more- these areas and reaches became more than just a single-faceted activity or purpose. So, we were kind of working hand and fist here. We're gathering information and we had Western Pennsylvania or the Rails to Trails Conservancy folks that were out there working from the public side, if you will, trying to develop trail groups to support or to take on our projects. And, the example that they would use was our friend Linda, who was championing rail trails in Western Pennsylvania – one particular one – and using that as an example statewide.

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

So, that geographic information database that we developed was phenomenal. It took a lot of effort and you could see it all mapped and then go in and find all the information. What was hysterical about that one – I enjoy these funny parts. The people that approve an abandonment for a rail company – you file a petition. And, they grant that petition or deny it. Well, we're going to plot all of those from 1960 forward. Call the ICC down in Washington, "Do you have those?" "Yes, we have them. You may come down look and look at them, you may come down to look at them." So, we go down and they open up this room that is filled ceiling to floor with boxes of petitions with no order whatsoever. Sorting through all of that information and paperwork to plot what might be an eighth of a mile trail spur.

**Larry Williamson:**

Yeah.

**Ed Deaton:**

I mean, that was phenomenal effort, okay? But, it served a very good purpose to help understand these broad statewide and region-wide concepts and corridors connectivity.

**Avigail Oren:**

That's really, I think, important context to understand how, you know, the building of the trail, right? That it's part of a broader statewide effort. I guess what I'm wondering, listening to your back and forth, is – what way did you two begin to see this vision for this- connecting to from the state line to Ohio to Pittsburgh? I mean, I know that Linda had the vision and the people were talking about it. But, it also seems like it's happening in such little parts.

**Linda Boxx:**

Let me just- it certainly was not my vision.

**Avigail Oren:**

Okay.

**Linda Boxx:**

I came in- well, it was started- my role was to get it finished.

**Ed Deaton:**

Yeah.

**Avigail Oren:**

Okay.

**Linda Boxx:**

Certainly, the state and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy were there a decade before I was involved. So, I never claimed vision.

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

- Avigail Oren:** I understand. Understood.
- Ed Deaton:** And, state parks' involvement beyond the park itself – we were working with officials in South Connellsville, Connellsville, Dunbar, up at Confluence to see how we could develop connectivity from what we were developing and doing nothing to preclude further rail trail development either to the south or to the north. And, if we had the opportunity to go out and speak with a club or help promote somebody organizing to put those pieces together – we were doing that way beyond our involvement with state parks. I can't tell you the number of nights I've spent working with clubs and trying to promote that. Now, I'm not taking credit for the idea – I'm just saying you have to do it piece by piece because these [were] abandonments and they were parcel by parcel.
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Ed Deaton:** And, you could have one piece of land in the middle of what you think is a great opportunity and until you secure your way through that and have a plan – if you have a plan, it is a lot easier to secure that missing link because people start to understand. The other thing that happened is while all of these piece by piece and slowly we were working our way through it, rail trails started to be identified by many more of our citizens as a great opportunity and willingness of people to join a club, to help build, to help maintain, grew, it developed right while we were working and funding them.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah. Take me back to the funding side.
- Larry Williamson:** Well, just following up on that – again, I think, you know, she's obviously not taking enough credit for what she did. But, we have a lot of situations where this rail trail movement created maybe a two or three-mile trail corridor but within a community's boundary.
- Ed Deaton:** Right.
- Larry Williamson:** Because with their application requirements and grant requirements, you know, the communities would have to get the grant and they could only acquire the rail trail corridor within their jurisdiction. There are a lot of these still out there

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

that need to be connected to the next community's portion of that rail trail and then maybe to a bigger mega rail trail, mega Greenway. It took somebody, a bulldog...

[Chuckle]

...that kind of effort and we didn't have the staff to do that. So, we, again, we're operating until we got into The Great Allegheny Passage funding of projects and Big Savage. We were just funding these by a grant-by-grant, project-by-project basis. Now, we had the vision that we want to connect all this stuff, but, you know, we just didn't have the staff through our regional offices to go out and continually bulldog and lobby and support like Linda did in The Great Allegheny Passage. And, I think that was the value of having Linda and the value of getting The Great Allegheny Passage to where it is.

**Ed Deaton:** Well, it is the face-to-face personal attention that gets these links put together – landowner by landowner, developing a rapport with those people, allowing them to develop an understanding of the opportunities that are for their communities. And, that- Larry, you're right, it takes time.

**Larry Williamson:** It takes a lot of time.

**Ed Deaton:** So yeah, it's piece by piece, but it's well worth the effort.

[Chuckle]

And, it's a long-term venture. I mean, rail trails are going to be- still going to be working on them 50 years from now. I'll guarantee you.

**All:** Yeah.

**Ed Deaton:** And, same way with the Greenway corridors.

**Larry Williamson:** Yeah, there's no way we're going to hit this mark by 2020.

**Avigail Oren:** [It] still was worth doing.

[Chuckle/Crosstalk]

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

**Larry Williamson:** Oh, yeah, yeah. I mean, it gives the agency something to shoot for.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Avigail Oren:** So, can you tell me about the funding swaps you did with the Land and Water Fund?

**Larry Williamson:** Boy, it's complicated and I don't even know whether half of it is legal.

[Laughter]

My best recollection is that through [the] Bureau[s] [of] State Parks [and] Forestry, and at this point in time, I think a key factor was that my boss had left – he was a deputy secretary – and Mike DiBerardinis, the secretary, made me the deputy for- it was called “Conservation and Technical Services.” The key thing there was that the Bureau [of] Facility Design and Construction which does all the state park design and construction work was in my Bureau or was in my deputate. And, the director of that Bureau [of] Facility Design and Construction was Gene Comoss and he had a guy working for him named Jim Epply. And, I just lay that as a background because I don't know who initiated it – might even [have] been Ed, state parks, but because of my involvement with Gene, I started dabbling in the capital budget process and somewhere along the line, somebody had submitted an application to the Department of General Services for a sizable [grant], I think it was \$9 million or something.

**Linda Boxx:** Well, I'll set the- because I know this part of it.

**Larry Williamson:** Okay.

**Linda Boxx:** So, I went to see John Oliver one day and I think it was about 1997 – I had the date. And, John said to me, “You've got to meet Rick Geist, you've got to go meet Rick Geist.” And, I go, “Well, we'll set up an appointment next...” “No, go see him right now.” You know, you just don't barge into a legislator's office. So, we got an appointment with him at, I'll say, 2:00 in the afternoon or 3:00. Fifteen minutes later, we



## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

had two line items in the state capital budget – one for \$10 million for trail construction and we weren't allowed to say that we were in Pittsburgh because Tom Murphy had sort of dirtied the water somehow, you know, some dealing as a former legislator. And so, we called it the "C&O Canal Extension Trail." And so, that's how it was listed in the state capital budget. And then, he said, "What else do you need?" And, I said, "Well, we have this tunnel..." "Will \$6 million do?" So, we walked out of there with \$10 million and \$6 million in the state capital budget. I thought that was real money. I had no idea that what it really was. But, Rick had put it into the state capital budget as a DCNR project, you know, under the... I forget these names. But, it was the, you know, Commonwealth projects, you know, on your side of the table and also as a community project. So, this is 100% funded if it's under the Commonwealth project. This is 50% funded. Somebody going through the legislation saw the duplication and knocked out the community one and kept it in the DCNR side. So, when the bill passed, it was a DCNR project. So, we had a \$10 and a \$6 million, two line items. Then I discovered, you know, you have to get it released.

**Larry Williamson:**

Yes.

**Linda Boxx:**

And so, that's a whole process.

[Chuckle]

**Ed Deaton:**

That's the big step.

**Linda Boxx:**

Yeah, that's the big step. But, Governor Ridge was very supportive. Luckily, he's a Republican and the Vice Chairman of the state Republican Party was Eileen Barbara Melvin from Somerset County – beautiful situation. Because she was very helpful in terms of, "Well, I'll work on the governor while we're running around the state and it's going to help my county." The money was released in...

[Chuckle]

...Sorry, \$2 million, I'm going to call it "small waves."

[Chuckle]

**Commented [A08]:** Linda can you clarify this?

**Commented [O9]:** If funded as a community redevelopment grant

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

But, it got things started. And, we had to keep going back to the governor, you know, through Eileen and Christine Toretti, who was chairman at the time – two great allies. Going back and back and back and the price of the tunnel just kept rising, just kept going up. So finally, we were sort of nudging on the upper end of the authority in the state capital budget. And, you know, I don't know. So, John Oliver met with Brad Mallory and I was at this meeting and I said, "Well, we need this extra money. We're still needing money to get this done." And, Secretary Mallory said, "I could put some TEA funding into it." And, I said, "We really don't want any ISTEATEA funding." Because we're not engineering for a TEA project. And then, somebody – and this is where I'm sort of crediting, you know, Larry's understanding – and this was said after the meeting because we didn't have a solution at that meeting. But, the idea was that you were developing Pine Creek with TEA funding, but you also had landowner conservation funding into that. And, if Mallory would transfer a million and a half of TEA funding to Pine Creek, you would take a million and a half- or \$2 million out of landowner conservation and put it towards the tunnel. It was probably your understanding that...

**Larry Williamson:** I got to give Dana Curdy a lot of credit, too.

**Linda Boxx:** Okay.

**Larry Williamson:** Dana had several meetings trying to work this out.

**Linda Boxx:** PennDOT.

**Larry Williamson:** And, we came up with that solution. But, the reason I mention Gene and the capital budget funds was that- and this was a real experience and just knowledge-building for me. But, Gene was the expert on running across the street to DGS and making our case for these projects and, tough cookie – DGS – especially at the time. I can't remember the guy's name that was in charge, but Gene and I – we were over there probably once a month just trying to break free a lot of this money. But, yeah, there was a lot of juggling of the money. I don't think... to guard ourselves – I don't think we ever went to the lawyers to get an opinion on it.

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

[Laughter]

We figured, you know, what the hell, just do it. So, that's basically how we got \$9.9 million-some, \$10 million in capital budget money and \$2 million in Land and Water.

**Linda Boxx:**

And also, because a million and a half went to Pine Creek and \$2 million came to the Big Savage Tunnel – we made a pledge to DCNR for \$500,000 to put into the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation Fund. So, we paid the state, you know, money, cash into... Because we raised private money and we were swapping that because... And, I remember Larry, you were sort of very surprised that we paid our debt to you.

**Larry Williamson:**

Yes, yes. Normally, the people don't.

[Chuckle]

**Avigail Oren:**

So, let's take it now to Big Savage Tunnel.

**Larry Williamson:**

Well, again, you know, the mindset of the worker bees in the agencies, especially in the agencies dealing with communities and nonprofit groups, was very microscopic. This was big, this was huge. Not only with The Great Allegheny Passage, a huge concept, but this project per se was huge. And, I had the damndest time trying to sell this concept and this project to my people. And fortunately, you know, again, I had developed a great working relationship with Gene and Jim. And so, we had the support from state parks and Facility Design and Construction. But, the other obstacle which eventually became a plus from a negative, lemonade from a lemon, was that the administrations had changed, Rendell came on. Rendell's big environmental initiative was the Growing Greener II program, which was a bond issue program. So, the money was there, I mean, it was a tremendous surge of money in the agencies to spend on these grants. The hardest part, I think, was convincing Mike DiBerardinis that this was the kind of project that we wanted to be involved in. And, I don't think I- I know I remember mentioning to you that we had to meet with Mike. I don't know if you...

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

- Linda Boxx:** I took him out to dinner very early in this...
- Larry Williamson:** And so, through her charm and through my constant beating at Mike that, "Look, this is..." My selling point to Mike was, "This is going to be a major, major project that's going to get national attention. And, you want to make a name for DCNR and Rendell and you," you know? "You got to go along with this project." And, he eventually just said, "Okay, you work out the details and just keep me posted." And, I remember how damn happy he was when we had the bike ride and opened up the tunnel. He was just real- he didn't understand the concept and how big it was. So...
- Ed Deaton:** Well, to pick up on what Larry was saying is that even with the City of Pittsburgh – and we had Point State Park and still do, which is the focal point of that city – involved in getting a new master plan or rehabilitation plan for the Point put together. And, trying to get even those folks to understand that we should do nothing to preclude the development of the trail to Point State Park. Well, how's it going to get through this piece? How's it going to get from there over to here? How about Station Square? How about the Hot Metal Bridge? I don't have all of those answers. But, we must provide to accommodate for the trail. And, getting that just into the City of Pittsburgh, which is progressive – compared to these small communities throughout Pennsylvania – was a difficult task. We never had a drawn plan within Point State Park that showed the rail trail, but we try to do nothing to stop or to be in the way of it. They were difficult tasks. But, you have to- again, way back to where you were – we have to do it piece by piece by piece by piece. Once the City of Pittsburgh started to understand this thing is going to happen, it's going to come true in Pittsburgh, and it's going to end at the Point – things started to really happen in Pittsburgh and thanks to our friends sitting here today, too.
- Linda Boxx:** Well, you know, I made a strategic decision and I kept it a little bit private because I didn't want to upset the good working relationship among the organizations of The Great Allegheny Passage. But, it became very clear to me that I had to get connection to Maryland done and to the C&O

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

Canal Towpath before I could tackle the real mess through the Mon Valley.

**Ed Deaton:** Right.

**Linda Boxx:** Because that was just incredibly difficult. We didn't own property, you know, we'd thought we'd be on roads and sidewalks and so forth. And, I said, "I am putting that piece aside. If I don't connect through Big Savage Tunnel and get to Maryland, then our trail is just going to be 100 miles to McKeesport to Meyersdale and that's going to be it." If I don't get that done, we're not going to get to that higher level of, you know...

**Ed Deaton:** Well, more basic was we didn't have a way around the Big Savage Tunnel, a convenient- there weren't road systems that could support the rail trail or a bike trail, hiking trail. You could not go over Big Savage mountain. That tunnel became very pivotal in the success of The Great Allegheny Passage. And initially, it was one of the obstacles why Josh Whetzel and the Conservancy and so forth did not tackle that particular reach because of Big Savage. But, getting through that mountain...

**Linda Boxx:** They were scared.

[Chuckle]

**Larry Williamson:** It was scary. Especially if you saw it before.

[Laughter]

**Ed Deaton:** I've got some very dark photos if you want them.

[Laughter]

**Linda Boxx:** By the time we started the rehabilitation, I can remember going out there with John Oliver, you know, the whole Western Portal was basically disintegrated like a big pile of debris, you know, right about...

**Ed Deaton:** And, it was flooded and water dripping. Also, as this thing started to roll, just to demonstrate how things pick up in these small communities within, the Conservancy was given

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

the task from Camp Carmel up to Bowest Yard to South Connellsville. I think it was Senator Linc- I believe he was a senator at the time, Lincoln – called us over the Capitol Building and we met him in one of the center conference rooms because it's Capital project that Linda just talked about, had that appropriated. And, we sat down and he said, "Well, tell me about what you're going to do with this money," and said, "It's going to go from yadda, yadda, this Camp Carmel place down to where?" I said, "Well, we're going to take it down to Bowest Yard, across the tunnel, into South Connellsville." Now, understand the setting. The conference room table is like a donut. And, we're sitting and I'm with DGS, General Services Acquisition people, there's six or eight or ten of us on the outside of this donut. He comes in and flips up part of the table, puts it down, gets on the inside of the donut in a chair and he's looking right nose-to-nose with me. And so, I started explaining what the plan was. And, he slammed his fist on the table that I know the DGS guy next to me passed out.

[Laughter]

**Ed Deaton:**

He was scared out of his mind. And, he said, "The trail is going to go to Dunbar." He said, "We're going to have a spur into Dunbar." It had to get to his community. He knew we were going to go into South Connellsville. So, that means we had to have a spur turn that heads southwest just before we got to the Bowest Yard and head into Dunbar to the station area there to serve that little community. It had become that important – the travel tourism, the revenues, and the service to his community had become that important. And then, he also- I think the civic was involved somewhere along the line there, too, with South Connellsville trying to handle problems associated with a trail because most of South Connellsville was elevated trestles on very high piers that were not developed as a trail. So, we had to work with streets and so forth. But, again, it was case-by-case, piece-by-piece. And, its support developed, it grew.

**Avigail Oren:**

Well, that's the perfect transition because DCNR secretary John Oliver has come up multitudinous times in this

Commented [A010]: Civic government?

Commented [O11]: city

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

conversation. One question that I have for you is – clearly, he was very supportive of the Gap Trail, but did you ever wonder if DCNR was going to get blowback or criticism for giving so much money to this one trail system?

**Ed Deaton:**

No.

**Larry Williamson:**

I got blowback from my employees, my staff. But, you know, that didn't matter. I mean, you know, the big picture was there and we were going for it.

**Avigail Oren:**

Yeah.

**Larry Williamson:**

And now, we're all hot-to-trot on it so it changed their minds.

**Avigail Oren:**

Okay. So, before I ask my concluding questions, is there anything that I didn't ask about that you want to fill in to the picture?

**Larry Williamson:**

Let's make a sidebar that Senator Lincoln was one of our legislative champions on K93, Keystone from the Past.

**Ed Deaton:**

Well, two things that we did not touch on, I think, were pivotal as far as the Ohio pyle portion – 381 Highway crossed the Yough river right in Ohio pyle and it was an old bridge, not wide enough. We had not rehabilitated the Western Maryland Rail Bridge at that time over 381. Working with PennDOT when they replaced the 381 Bridge to include walkways on each side and allow for the trail to go from the train station in Ohio pyle over to Ferncliff—it served as a very important interim alignment until the rail trail bridge was redeveloped or repurposed.

**Linda Boxx:**

Completely reconstructed, really. The piers were really, yeah.

[Crosstalk]

**Ed Deaton:**

Right. Reconstructed, you're right. The same thing occurred at Confluence when 281, [a] small bridge crossing the Yough river [was] to be replaced slightly downriver of- or upriver of the old bridge and PennDOT – we worked with them very hard to accommodate us with bikes and bike and walkways across that bridge to help make a completion to the plans

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

which were the south of us, if you will. So, those are two things working with the Department of Transportation on those two bridges to accommodate the, at least on an interim basis, the trail, was very important. And, we found willingness on their part.

**Linda Boxx:** Well, Mike DeFalla who had been district engineer at District 12 was a great aid to us – just like you were saying – Brad Mallory and John Oliver worked so well together, you know, some of our district engineers – Mike DeFalla, in particular, at 12 really was a fantastic partner for us.

**Ed Deaton:** Yeah.

**Larry Williamson:** Yeah, I think that's, again, another advantage and I don't know if it's carrying on right now. I haven't been in contact with my staff or PennDOT's staff. But, the partnership between PennDOT and DCNR was just, man, it was overwhelming. And, a lot of it had to [do] with Brad Mallory – was a bike rider and he loved the Pine Creek Trail, which is how we end up making that swap. And, the- I don't think there's that kind of a partnership now, but again, it was the planets aligning because the partnership along with the ISTEAs, the tremendous amount of ISTEAs and TEA 21 money came in and made a lot of this possible.

**Linda Boxx:** And, Larry, I don't know if you know this – you mentioned Dana Curdy's name – and I think this is probably a good time to tell this piece of the story. But, after the funding for Big Savage Tunnel was completed, there was a pot of, you know, basically \$10 million of state funding that was sitting there. And, we were trying to do the Hot Metal Bridge in Pittsburgh. And, there was federal money, but they didn't have the state match. They didn't have the non-federal match.

**Ed Deaton:** Right.

**Linda Boxx:** And, Dan said, "Well, this is all one project, really. This is no different than an interstate." And, an interstate doesn't have to have every little piece 80/20, 80/20, 80/20 as long as you're whole by the end of the day is 80/20. And so, we



## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

created this thing called the “global match” and we used Big Savage Tunnel state funding to be the local, non-federal match to rehabilitate the Hot Metal Bridge. And, we used that in Somerset County, you know, with some of the TEA 21 projects because they didn’t have- I mean, DCNR might give them maybe half of what they needed for the federal match, but we used the global match for the rest of it. And, I would have never been able to think of that because that’s not what I would have known. Dan created this thing – we had this wonderful spreadsheet where we kept track of the global match because he said, “You’re going to be audited, you’re going to be audited. You better keep every little thing.” So, we had this folder. We were never audited. But, we kept very tight control of that. But, it was Dana Curdy’s creativity and wanting to get this trail completed that came up with that wonderful mechanism that got so much of our later trail developed.

**Larry Williamson:** And, Dana Curdy and I were the best of friends because he worked in DCA with me.

**Linda Boxx:** Oh.

[Crosstalk]

**Larry Williamson:** And...

**Linda Boxx:** And, Dana Curdy and I went to high school together.

**Larry Williamson:** ...played in a softball team.

[Chuckle]

You know, unfortunately, it’s those kinds of relationships that makes some of this stuff fly.

**Ed Deaton:** Well, another example is with the Department of General Services. The guy I worked with was Gerald’s cousin – same age. I’d call him on the phone, “Tommy, we need such and such.” And, it always dealt with money, okay?

**Larry Williamson:** Yeah.

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

**Ed Deaton:** "I'll see what I can do." About 10 minutes later, "Okay, how much you need?" Squared away. But, it takes years to develop those – or a marriage.

[Laughter]

**Avigail Oren:** We can't all go to high school together, right? Well, I think this is a good point at which to transition my final question for both of you, which is: what does the Gap Trail and this project mean to you, in both your careers and also your lives?

**Ed Deaton:** Well, to me, the success of the trail through all of this time and its continued prominence and the rail trail expansion of the rail trail program across the Commonwealth is quite rewarding having been in on the very beginning of both. So, I take a lot of personal pride in that. I don't go out and shout through the treetops about it, but just as far as rewarding, very rewarding. At lunch, we were talking about the federal highway award for the Ohiopyle Bridge. It's also the little things that happen. Our bridge engineer brought his plans for the rehabilitation to us for review. And, it was nothing but steel girders standing up tall and they were square beams with crosses on them. And, it was not attractive.

So, I took his plan and started sketching these arced webbings that are in the stanchions for that particular bridge. And, just to make- and then, I talked with some of my guys, "What do you think about doing something like this?" So, we came up with the idea that I put these webbings in that bridge. And, we presented it back to the bridge engineer Sheldalski and structurally it would actually help the bridge structurally and in my eyes, it really made it look a lot nicer. And then, having federal recognition for the design of that bridge, there's a personally rewarding little piece. Having outfitters and private boaters and trail clubs enjoy what the heck we did all those years ago is a great reward. Now, I was involved in the Pine Creek Trail. I'm involved in the Delaware Lehigh Trail through the parks there. All to me are quite rewarding, personally. I don't need anybody to pat them all on the back, that's not even what it's about. I say to myself, "We did good," you know, we didn't mess up.

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

- Avigail Oren:** What about you, Larry?
- Larry Williamson:** Sort of the same. It also, for me, it validated that- you need to keep up with what's happening. You need to get outside the box in terms of administering, you know, my people and the Bureau and stuff like that and even as the deputy. And, it just made my life and the work so much more energetic and creative and exciting than just dealing with this, you know, mound of paperwork to come across your desk and how many times you sign your signature for these little grants and stuff. It was sort of like my vacation, you know? It was really- and, again, she [Linda] sold me on it from the very beginning. But, it was something that, you know, again, I can sort of hang my hat on that, you know, I was part of this.
- Ed Deaton:** You know, like Secretary Goddard used to say, "We were the white hat guys. We didn't wear the black hats," because we were out there doing work on things that people enjoyed. And, the community that we served were 99.999% good, friendly, down-to-earth people, who get things accomplished. Not everybody was downtown, but they were few and far between. And, that's rewarding to be working on something that people enjoy and use. I agree with Larry 100%.
- Larry Williamson:** We used to get, obviously, for the grants program, we used to get tons of applications and, you know, we had to rank and review them with this system that we had set up with numbers and come up with scores and stuff. And, I would get bombarded by the staff with- especially if a legislator would call, say, John Oliver or Mike DiBerardinis and say, you know, "Hey I got this grant, my community has this grant application in there," and, you know, "What can you do?" And then, they would come down to me and say, you know, "Hey, you got to fund this because this is part of a bigger picture. We need this guy to give us some money for a state park or project or something." And, the staff would, of course, come to me crying because I would say, "Hey, look, we got to fund this." And, they would come, "We just can't. This is the most terrible project I've ever seen."

[Laughter]

## DEATON AND WILLIAMSON

---

My comeback would always be, "There is no project that's terrible. There is not a terrible project. The application may be terrible, but the project itself is good as long as the community is behind it." And, it was sort of some of the same stuff I got with the Big Savage stuff and some of the other projects out there, the connector projects. "We just don't understand this," you know? So, I think just the idea that- and I've tried to instill that in the staff and I don't know what the hell's going on now with the staff. Like I was telling Ed, you know, when I walk in the Bureau today, I only recognize three people.

[Laughter]

But, you know, these applications that come in, these projects that come in just aren't paper, you know? It's just not a paper thing there.

**Ed Deaton:** Right.

**Larry Williamson:** It's a project. It's out there in the community, people have worked hard on this. People fought about this. Let's make it work.

**Avigail Oren:** It's a really beautiful legacy.

**Ed Deaton:** My particular position allowed me to be out of doors whenever I wanted. And later on, I could be anywhere in the state with a project. And, I enjoyed having the opportunity for such a diverse workload and every project was interesting. It's not like- I first started college and majored for two years in chemical engineering. I did really well, but I could not see myself sitting in a laboratory in a white jacket for the rest of my life. That just was not me. And, before I started with the Commonwealth, I was in private practice. And, to me, that was not where I wanted to be, working nights and going to township board meetings and school board meetings. And, they're just not where I wanted to be. And, I'll tell you what – Forest and Water, Bureau of State Parks, and went on to become DER and then DCNR – to me, was a very, very interesting, rewarding, wholesome career. I enjoyed it and I still do.

## **DEATON AND WILLIAMSON**

---

[Chuckle]

**Avigail Oren:** Well, thank you so much to you both. We really appreciate you sharing your memories and your appreciations for the project.

**Ed Deaton:** Our pleasure.

[End 1:41:26.1]

cr-t/p

**[www.AroundTheClockTranscription.com](http://www.AroundTheClockTranscription.com)  
412-853-3299**