

LARRY BROCK ORAL HISTORY

Larry Brock: All right.

Avigail Oren: So, it is Sunday, January 5th, 2019 at 1:12 p.m....

Larry Brock: It's January 2020, I'm sorry.

Avigail Oren: Oh, you are right. It is now 2020. I will be making that mistake until June.

[Laughter]

So, this is Avigail Oren and I am here with Larry Brock and Linda Boxx. We are connected via a telephone conference call. And today, we're to Larry because we want to learn how he became involved the GAP trail project. We also are going to have a conversation about the acquisition of the Moran family's property in Maryland and other important moments in the construction of the Maryland section of the trail, particularly how political support was secured for funding for constructing the trail. So, Larry, why don't we begin with sort of a very quick story of your life. Explain to me how you came to be in Cumberland working on the Great Allegheny Passage.

Larry Brock: All right. In 1956, as an 11-year-old, my father moved here from Coudersport, Pennsylvania. I actually thought Cumberland was a big city when I got here. They actually came because there's a Jewish congregation here, by the way, one of the main reasons. In 1959, as a budding teenage, a friend of mine and I tried to hike the C&O Canal, you know. We got as far as Paw Paw. In 1960, we then rode our bikes to D.C., which was kind of my intro into it and at that point, the C&O Canal was under a great deal of pressure to be turned into a parkway – very similar to Skyline Drive kind of program from Cumberland to D.C. Justice Douglas did his walk right just before that and it turned into the Park Service shortly thereafter. And, that was kind of my interest in the trail. I have biked, I have never hiked it. By the way, I have biked the C&O Canal about 40-some times...

Avigail Oren: Wow.

Larry Brock: ...and the GAP – a good 25 times. And, that kind of got me interested in it. I was in the scrap metal business when I got

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out of college and out of the Air Force. Went into the scrap metal business with my father and we tore up about 50 miles of the 150-mile trail. I know we tore up the Moran property, we went through the Savage Tunnel. We cleaned up the rail from Ohio pyle in that area. It was, you know, from my scrap business. And then, you know, when we did the Savage Tunnel, I was a runner and just starting to do some biking again because got a little older and muscles didn't run real well and I thought this would be a neat bike trail. I actually turned down, by the way, in the middle '80s, an opportunity to scrap the Salisbury Viaduct. I was offered by the B&O to buy it for \$10,000 and decided it wasn't worth all the paperwork I'd have to go through crossing a trout stream, a U.S. highway, and main then-AT&T lines. So, I actually turned down cutting that out and the Keystone Viaduct for the same reason. So, that's what kind of got my interest in it. And, I think it's '88 that we convinced the county to set up a board to look at building the trail and primarily from impetus came from Pennsylvania from the GAP. And, that is a real crux – was Pennsylvania pushed the trail through Maryland, period. I make no bones about that from my perspective. I was on that commission. I was also on the Scenic Railroad's board at the time. I had a big battle that finally won out with their bylaws included having the trail and the railroad together. Then – what was it – '96, Linda, when the ISTEA grant came through?

Linda Boxx:

That's '98.

Larry Brock:

'98, okay, '98 – when the first grant came through. And, I spoke with then-Speaker of the House, Cass Taylor. We wrote down- he's been a friend of mine from before he ran for political office. And, we wrote down to the dedication to the rail trail in Hancock together. And, I talked about the trail with him. At that point, we thought it was going to cost \$6.5 million. And, he said, "So, how are you going to fund it?" And, I said, "Look, we got a million dollars from Pennsylvania. If we can- we've got at least a start to get everything set up." And, he said, "If you've got the first million, I'll get you the other five." End of conversation. We did the dedication and from then on out, whenever I talked to Cass, he was on board with us. We even had a meeting in his office – Rich Harris was the paperwork

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guru, for lack of a better description, that helped set up all the information. And, we met with Porcari in Cass' office right around '99, 2000. And, he was very concerned about the Pennsylvania money because Maryland had a policy of 50/50 match. So, that county would have had to put up half the money against the state, whereas the grants were 80/20. And, I still remember Cass saying, "So, do you have any other state giving us money to use on a project in our state? Do we have an exemption for money that comes from other states?" And, it was the beauty of the politician that came up with that little hook. And, he looked at that and he said, "Well, the only time that would probably happen is the bridge we're doing and I don't think Virginia will do that." So, that was his agreement. Porcari agreed to take the project on, make it a key project for the state of Maryland.

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Tell us who Porcari is.

Larry Brock: John Porcari was deputy secretary of transportation for the state of Maryland who became secretary of transportation. And actually, I believe became a senior secretary in the Bush administration in Washington...

Avigail Oren: Uh-huh.

Larry Brock: ...for the state of Maryland. But, he stepped up to the plate. The railroad right-of-way – not the rail... I'm not sure about the rail on that one, to be honest with you. But, I know that the ties, the tracks, and the ground were all owned by the state of Maryland at that point. So, the railroad was being run. The state of Maryland was very adamant that Allegany County take ownership of the trail. They've had issues with the Western Maryland Rail Trail, they did not want to own a trail in Allegany County. They said, "When we build the trail, we'll build it for you, but the county as to take it over."

Avigail Oren: Oh.

Larry Brock: Vance Ishler...

Avigail Oren: Interesting.

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Larry Brock: Vance... Yeah. Vance Ishler was the county administrator. He had a firm philosophy that the county took on no additional liabilities, period. No way. Nada, period. It was a very difficult battle to get the county to take on. When we finally- I'm going to jump past Moran and then come back to Moran. Finally, under Glendening's administration, as he is about to leave, the secretary then – I forget his name, transportation – called the county and said, "You've got two choices, guys. Either you agree to take it, we finish our funding to build the trail, or you give Pennsylvania back the million dollars we've already spent. You've got to come up with it." The county finally said, "Yes, we'll take the trail." And, a month later, the paperwork was signed, the administration changed, the rest is semi-history.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Larry Brock: But, the... Okay. Anytime you want to ask questions, I'll gladly answer questions for you.

Avigail Oren: Yeah, I was just...

[Crosstalk]

Larry Brock: Back...

Linda Boxx: Larry, I didn't want to break your train of thought. But, way back in the beginning when the whole thing started, you said "we", you know, yourself and who were some of the early movers and shakers to get the trail, you know, sort of on the radar?

[Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: Yeah, and to add to that, can you nail this down in time a little bit more clearly? If not to the day and month, at least to the year.

Larry Brock: I think we're at 2000 when the administration changed with Glendening, it would be.

Linda Boxx: I think it was a little later because, you know, you've had three consecutive trail openings – 2004, '05, and '06. And, those were three of the four...

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- Larry Brock:** Yeah, you're right. You're right.
- Linda Boxx:** [inaudible 0:10:12.6] was '02, '03, '04, '05, '06. Yeah, '02 to '06, you know, Glendening was going out in '02 or '03.
- Avigail Oren:** He went out at the end of 2002 and or, like, comes in in 2003.
- Larry Brock:** That was right- I mean, literally, right at the change of administrations.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Larry Brock:** Because he was pushing to get it completed before he left office.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay. And then, just to come back to what Linda just asked – when would date the beginning of this story? Back to the late '80s?
- Larry Brock:** Yeah, I mean, '88 – and that date I saw in the notes for Mountain Rail and Trails – was when the county appointed the board of directors. And, I was on the railroad board at the time also. And, I was appointed to that first board. John Riley was on the board, Mike Fetchro – he and I were the ones that raised- we raised about \$160,000 or \$170,000 of private money in Allegany County to use to help match county funds on it. Ted Rozell was in the middle of it. I have to go back and look at my notes for who else was in there. Oh, Dick Hevner.
- Avigail Oren:** Did you have existing relationships with these people? Did you meet them when you joined this board? If you could just give a sense of who were these people and how did they themselves sort of get involved in this work?
- Larry Brock:** I'm not sure. I mean, they were appointed...
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Larry Brock:** ...by the county and I was one of the appointees. I remember asking Mike Fetchro if he would come on board because he knew how to ask for money.
- Avigail Oren:** Ah.

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Larry Brock: And, his expertise is in outdoor sports and adventure. He actually was one of the key people for the whitewater races up here in '86. So, he had a good feel for it. Most of the other people just kind of got put on it. And, I'm not sure of the reasons why. I'd have to really go back at my notes to look at who else was there. What was the guy's name in Frostburg, Linda?

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: What was his role?

Larry Brock: Say again?

Linda Boxx: What was his role?

Larry Brock: Oh, on the... I'm going to call it motel in Frostburg right at the depot, beyond the depot.

Linda Boxx: Was it, John Saylor?

Larry Brock: John Saylor, yeah. Yeah, John came in there when I left the scrap business. There were some of the people who were working on it. But, it was really a concept that was sold by the ATA in Pennsylvania through the state of Maryland that the county got forced into it. Bill Atkinson came on board about the time I was talking to Cass and then that's when transportation got involved- the state transportation. Sylvia Ramsey was a friend of Bill Atkinson's, I think professional. They worked together on funding kind of projects that got behind the trail from the state. And, I mean, literally, this was one of those things where the state pushed it down to the county. The county resisted it. Vance Ishler wanted the trail to go up through- there's another rail line that runs up parallel to 36. But, there were a couple hundred owners along the way. This one was easier because it was a Western Maryland Railroad and I'll change into Donny Moran. He turned out to be a real challenge to deal with. He was [inaudible 0:15:10.3]. I mean, he's a great guy. He is still a friend of mine and I'm glad he is still around though I haven't seen him for years. But, he and the state of Maryland did not have a stellar relationship. And, it was quite a challenge to get him to come to the table.

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Avigail Oren: Can you explain why?

Larry Brock: The reason why is, yeah, several. Number one, he had a piece of- well, number two. Number one, he was in the coal industry and he deals with environmental and coal inspectors on a, if not, an hourly basis, at least daily basis. And, you know, it wasn't exactly a friendly relationship. I don't know specific details on specific problems he had with the coal industry. I know he had issues with the development where Seven Sisters Golf courses. Now, he bought that and wanted to use water and they wouldn't give him water rights. That was one of the things- that was the key to getting him to agree to sell the property to the state was- they gave him water rights for his golf course on literally the other side of the mountain. But, he was just, you know, a large coal operator who didn't have a pleasant relationship with the state enforcement agencies. And, he saw an opportunity where the state wanted something and he wanted to take advantage of it. You know, it is kind of The American Way.

[Chuckle]

I'm not sure that's the way to describe it but, you know, that's kind of what happens every once in a while.

Avigail Oren: Right. So, he thought essentially that this would give him a little bit of leverage?

Larry Brock: Yeah, yeah.

Avigail Oren: Okay. One of the issues we've been having is trying to figure out exactly the extent of his property, like, where it was.

Larry Brock: Oh, that's easy.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Larry Brock: It was just west of the Frostburg trailhead. When you- if you know where the hump is in Frostburg, not quite to the 16-mile mark.

Linda Boxx: She doesn't, but I sure do.

[Chuckle]

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- Avigail Oren:** Yeah.
- Larry Brock:** That was actually the first part of trail built in Maryland because it was part of the state highway and they were not going to put a trail in there. And, Rich Harrison and I convinced the state highway on behalf of the city of Frostburg to put a trail in there. Put the 4% hump in there. That was kind of a last-minute fill-in. The Moran's property was just west of that. You go through- or just upstream of that. You go through a cut in the mountains and his property line started right there and ended at the Mason-Dixon line.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay. And, did it include the Big Savage Tunnel or just the property up to and, like, leading up to, and after it?
- Larry Brock:** To the best of my knowledge, he did not own property north of the Mason-Dixon line, but I cannot...
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Linda Boxx:** You are correct.
- Larry Brock:** Okay.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Larry Brock:** Now...
- Avigail Oren:** Please say that again, sorry.
- Larry Brock:** Oh, no, nothing.
- Avigail Oren:** So, did the governor play a role eventually in convincing Moran to sell?
- Larry Brock:** There was a meeting with the governor, yes. I was not privy to that at that time. But, yes, I would assume they settled the deal there.
- Linda Boxx:** But, it really was at the 11th hour of his administration.
- Larry Brock:** Yes. It was very near the end of his administration. And, the final crux of the deal was the county had to take it over. I think they had signed a deal with... They had initial to deal with the state, but with Moran but had not signed it and it was all part of

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the package they were up against with the county. And, Bill was more privy to that than I was.

Linda Boxx: I don't know if he talked much about this but, you know, like I mentioned in the email – the woman who was Glendening's, you know, environmental chief of staff. I don't know what her title was.

Larry Brock: Sylvia Ramsey?

Linda Boxx: Pardon?

Larry Brock: Sylvia Ramsey.

Linda Boxx: No, no, no. In the governor's office.

Larry Brock: Okay.

Avigail Oren: Crawford?

Linda Boxx: Larry, you have to...

Larry Brock: I don't- that name does not ring a bell for me. I was not intricately involved at that point.

Linda Boxx: Okay.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Linda Boxx: So, the interest- to add a little sidebar here – on the board of the ATA was a young man named Gates Watson...

Larry Brock: Oh, yeah.

Linda Boxx: ...who was working for the Conservation Fund. And, I met Pat Noonan, who was the head of the Conservation Fund and Gates – what is it called, Woodmont, near [inaudible 0:21:25.6]?

[Crosstalk]

Larry Brock: Mm-hmm. Woodmont, yes.

Linda Boxx: Had a meeting in it's wonderful, you know, launch room there because I was trying to- we were turning over every stone we could to try to get the Moran deal done.

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Larry Brock: Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx: And, you know, we laid it out for Pat and he was, of course, very, very supportive and went down into, you know, onto the towpath and walked a little bit of it. And, I gave him a couple books to read and he was really fascinated with the whole thing. But, he later called me and said, "Well, I was with the governor..." And, this was Glendening...

Larry Brock: Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx: ...you know, dinner, that he was being honored, whatever. He was sitting right beside Governor Glendening. And, he said, "I was whispering in his ear the whole night that this needs to be one of his legacies if he gets it done in his administration, that this would be a very important legacy." Now, whether that had any impact, but certainly, Pat Noonan was with the state – well-regarded and influential gentleman. But, I think bottom line, Larry, you're probably right. It was- until the county agreed to take it over, you know, the whole thing was sort of at a stalemate, perhaps.

Larry Brock: Mm-hmm. Because at that point, you guys were pretty well nailed down to the Mason-Dixon line and we didn't want to leave a big gap in the middle. Okay, can you hear me okay because my phone just changed.

Avigail Oren: Yeah, no, that was my fault. I'm sorry.

Larry Brock: Okay, okay. I'm sorry. Yeah, they just didn't want it- and convince him. And today, I will say candidly it is reverse of that. The county could barely be more receptive. They've been very cooperative in working on the trail.

Avigail Oren: And, what do you attribute that to?

Larry Brock: Several things. One of them was the businesses see the impact of the trail, you know? Cyclists have credit cards that work well and they like to use them.

[Chuckle]

I mean, I led in- '06 – I led the first trip up this, you know, GAP for adventure cycling out of Missoula and we had 60 people

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between the two trips. In '07, I led it and we had two reporters from *USA Today* on the staff- on the trip. There was a complimentary trip and they did a nice write-up on it. And then, people started spending money. And, when the businesses tell you that, "Hey, you know, the trail contributes 10%-15% of my income. It is important to me." And, the hotels are saying, "Look, you know, they dropped..." and that's the impact- the economic impact studies. The county started to listen. The other thing is [inaudible 0:25:04.3] has property next to the trail and really likes using it. Jay Califriz who- Jake Shade, sorry, who is the president of the county commissioners. Have you met him, Linda?

Linda Boxx:

No, I have not.

Larry Brock:

I think he's 26 now, very energetic, young Republican. But, he runs the trail and has Airbnb that over half of his customers use the trail. So, he has a very legitimate, direct financial income from the trail. But, I think the biggest thing is – I just seen how well it gets used. How to say this... How much OPM – other people's money – that the trail brings in.

Avigail Oren:

Mm-hmm.

Larry Brock:

You know, I mean, you guys know as well as I do – annually, it's every state in the union and 50 to 60 countries from around the world that use the trail year in and year out. I still have a day that I remember where one afternoon, I met a couple at the Savage Tunnel from Berlin, Germany and then the next morning, met two guys from Seoul, South Korea.

Avigail Oren:

Wow.

Larry Brock:

So, from both ends of the word in 24 hours.

Linda Boxx:

Larry, I think another factor was, you know, I'm not sure when Allegany County enacted the, you know, the bed tax, the tourism tax.

Larry Brock:

Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx:

That certainly gave Allegany County a pot of money for maintenance which would have been critical in Allegheny County and Somerset County, other places to a lesser extent.

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Larry Brock: The county has always been very confidential on the expenditures of that money. But, yes, they have generally spent about \$100,000 to \$150,000 a year, mostly for trail ranger and some basic equipment to maintain the trail. In the last three years when they changed trail rangers, there's a side story for this a minute. There was a big battle between the Sheriff of Allegany County and the county commissioners. And, the county commissioners basically pulled the Sheriff's Department out and put in the Homeland Security, leaving the Sheriff with two people. That administration changed. They put one of the people was the Mack who was the trail ranger was in that department. When they changed administrations about three years ago, they eliminated that position and put the trail responsibility back to the Sheriff's Department under their prisoner work-release group, which Jimmy Bowen heads up with- I think he's got three staff and then he has access to prison labor. And, we've got four facilities here in Allegany County. I know he draws from the state and the county. I'm not sure he draws from the fed. I know the Canal does or they did to help do maintenance. And, it's done- I'm going to tell you a stellar job with the rain we had the year before last.

Linda Boxx: Larry, you as a long-term, and I presume you're still on the board at Mountain Maryland Trails.

[Crosstalk]

Larry Brock: I am now the president of the board of Mountain Maryland Trails.

Linda Boxx: Oh, okay. So, you certainly know that- I think it's pretty interesting to note that you all are probably ambassadors more so than maintainers.

[Crosstalk]

Larry Brock: Yes, we...

Linda Boxx: And, you know... [inaudible 0:29:24.4] tractors to mow the grass or chainsaws to take out trees. I mean, I'm not sure. You'd have to...

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Larry Brock: Okay. We are... At this point, from conversations I've had with other trail groups, we're kind of in the reverse. Our county does 97% of- 90% of the maintenance on the trail. A couple of volunteers – one of the guys has a big tractor that likes to work on the trail and is good friends with Jimmy Bowen. So, we started to increase the use of volunteers back to the old county administration, Vance Ishler era. They didn't like volunteers out because they were afraid of the liability issue, which is also the same reason with the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. They are afraid a cyclist is going to run in front of the train or a cyclist is going to fall and get hurt or a worker will get hurt. And, they've not been real forthcoming in volunteers. We've actually added to our trail group agenda this year to significantly increase the volunteer activity on the trail in coordination with the county. And, Jimmy and Andy seem pretty amenable to working on that. So, we're actually trying to work up to getting more volunteers on the trail and less county versus the other way around.

Linda Boxx: Right. Larry, you know, Somerset County is exactly the same as Allegany County, Maryland. You know, there's basically no volunteers. I mean, they might serve as ambassadors...

Larry Brock: Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx: ...they do a couple things because they see that they need to be done. But basically, the county takes care of the trail for Somerset County, too.

Larry Brock: Mm-hmm. Okay. And, I thought the volunteers did a little more than that on startup, but that makes about right sense. I mean, I've been up with a bunch of volunteers when we closed the Savage Tunnel. That's the most of my experience with them.

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Yeah, I mean, that's a party once a year.

Larry Brock: Yeah, yeah. I mean, that's most of my perspective of it. We patrol – if that's the right word – the downhill section from the Savage Tunnel in the wintertime. You know, I'll ride my bike up if the weather and the trail permit and we'll ski up that way. I'm not going to tell you I've been able to cross-country ski

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from Frostburg and Savage Tunnel, on top of that level. But, we do go up once in a while. But, I know this winter, we've had massive numbers of trees to clear up. And, that's something we've done with Andy. I've done it a couple of times now. So, that's a little bit of the volunteer increase that we're adding. But, again, it's at least 90% county work. Are we still together?

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: Yeah.

Larry Brock: Okay, I'm sorry.

Avigail Oren: No, I...

Linda Boxx: Well, here- if you're not sure where to go. Talk about the relationship between the trail and the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Larry Brock: All right. I would prefer this quote not being used, okay? So, I will say it, but please don't use it. "I still, to this day, think we'd be better off if I scrapped that railroad." But, please don't use that, please.

Linda Boxx: No, no.

Larry Brock: They have found- they still find to- as of October of this year, the trail is a pain in their butt – despite the fact that we contributed \$500,000 to fix a landslide two years ago. The lands of three years ago now. I don't know if you're familiar – just above Woodcock Hollow, there was a big landslide. They stopped the train the year before last from going up there because it was unsafe. Very much to the county's credit – from 18 months from the time they discovered the problem until it was completed and they'd spent a little over \$1.5 million dollars. Thank you very much, Adam Patterson. And, I could get through it. And, of that \$468,000 was the very last of that first TEA-21 enhancement money, Linda...

Linda Boxx: [inaudible 0:34:23.7]

Larry Brock: ...that had not been spent and they used that fund fixing the trail. But, the railroad just- I'm not going to say they ignored us,

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but that's real close. An example – in October, Hutch called me and Hutch has his own problem. The railroad was damaging his bikes significantly by loading them in the car. And, he actually went up and blew up with him and I had to cement over it. But, they were just taking people's bikes and throwing them in a gondola and taking them up the train- up the trail. They weren't stacking them nicely. They didn't know how to pick up a bike. We had given them packing blankets. They weren't use packing blankets. They were treating cyclists, their bicycles, not real nice. I've since had a couple of people complain to me about it. And we, on Mountain Maryland Trails, who I know half a dozen times, tried to convince them that, you know, it's real easy. You've got restored boxcars. Hang your bikes on a boxcar and they're real easy to hang. You won't hurt them and they will go up and down and people will be happy about it. But, they don't want to hear about it. They haul 1,500-2,000 bikes a year up the mountain but do very little to promote it. And, people aren't real happy about you got to pay full fare plus and extra \$5.00 to take bikes up. We do have the 3M Bike Challenge with them, which it's the third year coming up this year, where we race the train. And, they've agreed to do that as long as we don't get in their way. We're neighbors that hardly speak to each other. It's the best description that I can give you.

Avigail Oren:

Hmm.

Larry Brock:

And, I mean, with the issue with Hutch – and this really doesn't need to get into the narrative – I got a call from Hutch and he was all upset because he had blown up, I mean, literally used the F-bomb half a dozen times in front of a full train of loading people with- in the height of the season in the middle of October, to railroad employees. And, when I called John Garner, who's donated things to the railroad, "I've got a railroad car, I donated it." I called him and he was ready to call the FRA and file federal charges against Hutch because of the way they were handling bikes. And, I told John, I said- I was going to Mexico at that time, I said, "I'll be back from Mexico. I'll show you guys how to load bikes." I said, "It needs a little care." And, he said, "Fine. But, keep Hutch away." And, I talked to him- since then, I've called John four times and

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emailed him four times to talk about how to hang bikes up in the cars. And, we'll buy the bike racks for him to hang it up in. There's, like, \$250 worth of bike racks he needs. And, they don't want to hear about it. That's my side of the story. They may have a different side.

Avigail Oren: And, has...

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: And, I also got the sense from the beginning that they were not in favor of the trail because they felt that it was taking money that could have been coming to the railroad and putting it into the trail.

Larry Brock: Oh, I would say that that's part of it. Though I'm not sure "public" is quite the correct term, but the active point they used was safety. They were afraid of steam from the steam engine because you got to remember this is before they didn't have a steam engine. That would scare bikers and bikers would get hurt, cyclists would get hurt because the train was going by or somebody would run in front of the railroad tracks. It was a very- they were concerned about the safety issue. That was the one they pushed predominantly. From a money issue, they've had trouble selling their product downstate, and in the county, and the two cities. They still- let's say this – draw more money than they put in.

Avigail Oren: Hmm.

Larry Brock: You know, I think... I don't know the number so I don't want to give them to you, but I know they're still getting significant contributions from the two cities and the county for running the railroad. And, I think had a very good Polar Express train going up the trail was kind of neat and they had a lot of ridership that may have helped pull their fat out of the fire this year. But, they're consistently running 30,000 people a year – 28,000 to 30,000. And, I'd say two-thirds of them are out-of-towners. The trail I think, Linda, we're going to see 100,000 users in Maryland this year?

Linda Boxx: I'm sure.

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- Larry Brock:** You know, and that's 30,000 out-of-towners coming to town and 30% of them are- and I keep using the phrase and get a laugh at it, but it's OPM – other people's money.
- Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm.
- Larry Brock:** And, I even hand out a business card all over the world that has a free ice cream cone in it- on it if you come to the Queen City Creamery. I buy- I've got to email her. She owes me a bill. But, I'll spend about \$350-\$400 a year buying ice cream cones for people. And, if I see locals, I say, "Here, stop by there and get a free ice cream cone and thanks for OPM – other people's money – and spend it in my town." And, most people will look at me and say, "Yeah, we like it here." You know, it's just- it's I ride a bike, I love riding a bike. I love talking to cyclists about where they're from. And, riding a bike in my neck of the woods and what do you expect if you're going to- you know, where do you get by in Hancock or where do you get by in Meyersdale kind of thing. Anyway, I'm sorry.
- Avigail Oren:** Well, I want to come back to some the story about the funding.
- Larry Brock:** Okay.
- Avigail Oren:** We already touched a little bit about- on the \$1 million in TEA-21 funding that was directed from Pennsylvania to Maryland.
- Larry Brock:** Mm-hmm.
- Avigail Oren:** I just wanted to ask if you wanted to go into more detail about that – if you had additional recollections about the transfer got done. Why it was necessary? What it accomplished. I know you mentioned earlier that it got Cass Taylor sort of invested, but were there other outcomes from that transfer?
- Larry Brock:** That was the kindling wood that set the fire. It was, again, it was a \$6.5 million project that ended up being \$11.5 million of which the county had less than \$500,000 in it.
- Avigail Oren:** Hmm.
- Larry Brock:** The Sarbanes came up with another \$2 million in feds and, Linda, I'm sorry, I forgot the congressman's name from Pennsylvania.

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[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Congressman Murtha.

Larry Brock: Murtha, Murtha came up with another \$2 million in Pennsylvania money that came back to Maryland under that same deal, you know, under the original deal that Cass Taylor put together. And then, the others ones were- the governor put his alternate transportation money to the trail. And...

Linda Boxx: This is Governor Ehrlich now, right?

Larry Brock: Well, Ehrlich, and Glendening, and Mandel was in it at the very beginning. But, it's been a consistent support of both the Democrats and the Republican governors supporting the trail with, I would almost say, equal enthusiasm to get it done.

Linda Boxx: We had a program, Project Open Space, or something that you were able to get money from, you know...

Larry Brock: Oh, yeah. I don't think we got a whole lot of POS money. The specifics on money – I would say Bill has a significantly better handle on that because he was the taskmaster on that, if that's the right term. He really handled and pushed all the paperwork through with his job with the Office of Planning. So, I would, you know, I mean, I know the initial \$150,000 that Mike Fetchro and I raised – \$50,000 of it came from Columbia Gas and a Cass Taylor... Oh, why can't I think of the name of the jazz festival we used to have here? The Country and Western...

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: [inaudible 0:45:38.6]

Larry Brock: Rocky, no Rocky Gap. Rocky Gap Music Festival. And, Cass Taylor had a reception and Columbia Gas was there and Cass introduced me to the lady and said, "She's been looking where she can help in the county and I told her the trail would help." And, we got \$50,000 from Columbia Gas. And then, I got several local businesses to contribute \$5,000 a year and we raised just about \$160,000, which we then worked a lot with where the county had to match things. We helped the county match it. And, we've still been doing that right up to lighting of

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the board and tunnel right now. We've got an \$80,000 [inaudible 0:46:30.5] trail grant and it's a projected \$100,000 project and Mountain Maryland Trails puts up \$10,000 and the county puts up \$10,000. And, that's been our impetus. We've been able to raise sums of money to help fund- help match the county's funds for projects, which is also one of the reasons that helps sell it. The general funding – I would bow much more to Bill on that.

Avigail Oren:

Okay. And, you know, I'd like to talk a little bit more about building political support. So, you told sort of at the beginning, getting Cass Taylor on board and how then Governor Glendening and then Ehrlich became involved. But, how did you- or not how. Were you doing a lot of managing of relationships with local or regional, or state politicians in order to meet certain goals or challenges?

Larry Brock:

I had a friendly, personal relationship being in the scrap business. We found it almost a necessity to have a good relationship with our political representatives to help deal with state regulators at times – our state regulations. And, as a result, had a good working relationship with delegate, then-delegate, now Senator George Edwards, and with Senator Hafer, and Debbie Workman, who was a delegate, was my next-door neighbor growing up as a kid. So, we had a, you know, an aunt/nephew almost kind of relationship. And, they very quickly and easily saw the vision and- I'm backing up to this one again – is we would talk about things getting done in Pennsylvania. They would appreciate the impact it was going to have on us.

Avigail Oren:

Mm-hmm.

Larry Brock:

So, they, you know, I'm not going to say- to this day, every time I see it, we talk about the trail, whichever delegate I'm talking to except for Mike McKay when I woke up, passing out at a meeting one day. But, you know, they see it and fortunately, I've got to say, at least from my perspective, pretty well, universally for the elected officials in our community. Now, they appreciate the asset that they have.

Avigail Oren:

Okay. So, it's no longer a sale you're having to... Yeah.

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- Larry Brock:** It's a specific project sale that we need to pitch.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Larry Brock:** We're pitching it to a willing customer...
- Avigail Oren:** Got it.
- Larry Brock:** ...if that's the right description.
- Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm.
- Larry Brock:** Perhaps a better description is an understanding parent. Sure but, yeah, they see it. I mean, it's, yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** So, I want to come back to something you just said, actually, about your sort of professional life meeting with this, you know, volunteer civic life. Because I've seen this over and over amongst the trail builders, right, that they brought either technical knowledge from their career or relationships from their career that were really valuable in building the trail. And so, I wanted to ask you to elaborate on that a little bit. Do you think it was those relationships you just described that were so valuable? Were there other things you brought from your either professional or personal life that you feel like really contributed to the trailing building you were working on?
- Larry Brock:** Yeah. Perhaps the best description I can give you in the relationships – I initially built them working for wallet – put money in my pocket. And then, I started spreading them from my heart because I wanted to promote a project that I really liked. I mean, I have- I'm going to tell you no financial interest from the outcome of what goes on the trail other than I think I once rented a space for a month to somebody that rode the trail. So, I got, like \$50 worth of income out of it. But, I see it as something that supports my community and I feel that's important. I've got to admit – my daughter kind of took over on it, too. She's now a paid lobbyist in Annapolis. I think it's the way our society works. You need to develop relationships with people to get things done – be it in politics, be it in history. I mean, you know, selling the history that goes along this trail – I often use the route that the line that it's basically the route George Washington planned to go west because he had a lot

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of land in the West that he bought off Revolutionary War soldiers that he wanted to get to. So, it's all relationships and a good idea, and a good concept.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm. And, do you feel like relationships with politicians were the ones that were most essential to getting this done or were there other relationships with other, say, community groups or individuals that were as or also very important to the success of building the Maryland sections?

Larry Brock: I think it was a broad spectrum. I mean, the politicians are where the money is.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Larry Brock: So, that's a significant portion of it. But, it's also the community. And, I'm sure Linda's heard this. You know, I've had friends that I was talking to them about this in the early '90s who now come up and say, "You know, Larry, I thought you were crazy. This project really didn't have anything. It's not going to go. And, I was so wrong because it really is perhaps one of the best assets we have in our community."

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Larry Brock: And, it's, you know, and I still hear that once a month from somebody. So, it's, you know, it's having a good idea and being able to sell it.

Avigail Oren: Got it.

Larry Brock: And it's, you know, from the teacher at Allegany High School who goes out and rides all the time to the restaurant in downtown Cumberland or the waitresses really appreciate the bike trail when you talk to the waitresses at some of those places.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Larry Brock: So, and it's just building those relationships and selling that good idea.

Avigail Oren: We talked about Moran – were there other people or places where you found it especially challenging to continue, or who were intransigent, or really opposed to the trail, or was really

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the funding the biggest challenge and from there on, it was just smooth sailing?

Larry Brock: The biggest challenge was selling the county commissioners on it. By the way, funding was second biggest.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Larry Brock: We had to deal with- there was CSX on a couple of pieces of property and I used to deal with them on a daily basis in the scrap business and I had a saying that the only thing harder than a railroader's head is the rail he rides on.

[Chuckle]

You know, and Linda can attest to it as well as I can – getting through to the railroad took the right person in the right buyer. But, you know, the Wharf Branch in Cumberland was part of the problem, you know, we had issues there. There were issues in- around the Western Maryland Station to getting ironed out, you know, getting the property from Western Maryland to the state of Maryland.

Avigail Oren: Can you describe a little bit, the Wharf Branch and the- what was the second one you mentioned? I'm sorry, I just drew a blank.

Larry Brock: Well, the original acquisition for the B&O Railroad by the state of Maryland of the primary right-of-way.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Larry Brock: The Wharf Branch... How familiar are you with Cumberland are you?

Avigail Oren: I've been on Google Maps quite a bit.

[Chuckle]

Larry Brock: Okay.

[Laughter]

All right. At about the half-mile mark, just before you cross **[inaudible 0:57:07.0]** Valley Street, the B&O Railroad... I'm

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sorry, yes. The B&O Railroad and the Western Maryland joined.

Avigail Oren:

Okay.

Larry Brock:

That was called the Wharf Branch.

Avigail Oren:

I see.

Larry Brock:

There is a curve that goes around and crosses Valley Street, which was the initial route for the trail because they did not want to go underneath Valley Street. They used the Wharf Branch. They had to deal with CSX to get the property acquired from them and it was long and arduous. And, it was one of those- and I don't remember which governor stepped in, basically made it a deal with the railroad.

Avigail Oren:

Interesting. It took that much muscle or [inaudible 0:58:05.8]?

[Crosstalk]

Larry Brock:

Yes, yes.

Avigail Oren:

Okay.

Larry Brock:

I mean, Linda, you probably got as many war stories or more than I do with dealing with CSX or the railroads because you had the Union Railroad and P&LE up there.

Linda Boxx:

And, we had a lot of dealings with B&O and CSX.

Larry Brock:

Yeah. So, I mean, and it runs down to the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. I'm back to my comment about their head's harder than the rail. The railroads still think they're the 800-pound gorilla in the room and, "You do what I say or get out. If I want to deal with you, that's fine and if not, I don't need you."

Avigail Oren:

Right. So, was the governor needed to bring CSX to the table or was there a particular sticking point that the might of the governor was needed to resolve?

Larry Brock:

My recollection on the Wharf Branch – I think Cass was still in office at that point. And, he got the governor to step in and get CSX to come to the negotiating table.

Avigail Oren:

Okay.

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- Larry Brock:** Whether it was Cass or John Porcari that brought them to the table – I can't answer that.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay. So, it was really that they were uninterested in taking your calls until the governor got involved?
- Larry Brock:** Yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay. Linda, anything you want to follow...?
- Linda Boxx:** No, that's the same kind of thing, you know, when we were trying to get the alignment to the gas along the Mon River, as we tried to talk to Norfolk Southern and they would just, you know, basically ignore us. It was a thousand one-way conversations and it wasn't until U.S. Steel stepped in and said, "We'd like to talk to these people and see if you can resolve things." And then, they started listening.
- Larry Brock:** Exactly. It takes somebody to get their attention.
- Linda Boxx:** Larry, I had mentioned- I couldn't remember it when I read the email this morning. But, those taste receptions that Allegany County used to host...
- Larry Brock:** Mm-hmm.
- Linda Boxx:** I mean, I was just remembering, too, as we were talking about Governor Glendening – you and I had our picture taken by Glendening at one of those receptions.
- Larry Brock:** We had one with Francine and one with Kennedy Townsend.
- Linda Boxx:** Right, right. Right. But, you know, those were a whole host of issues relating to Allegany County, but I thought it was always amazing and admirable that you all were there with industry and so forth – glad handling the politicians and trying to get your case, you know, out there, your story out there.
- Larry Brock:** Mm-hmm. Well, in retrospect, I think this is the 41st-42nd year. When things started closing, a group of community leaders...
- Linda Boxx:** [inaudible 1:02:14.5]
- Larry Brock:** Okay. A group of community leaders got together and said, "We got to do something." And, they came up with this positive

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attitude that's changed everything as part of an economic development strategy and we're still using it. And, it's basically, we have a two-day reception and an [inaudible 1:02:34.2] evening and a morning reception at the beginning of legislature each year. And, local community groups of industry basically put together a display table to sell a product and I'm calling the trail a product.

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Job fair.

[Chuckle]

Larry Brock: And, I think it helped us promote. We still hand out chocolate to everybody. We have a policy that the day before the reception, we go around to each legislative office and hand out a goodie bag. There's a prize for the legislator and a little goodie bag for the staff. And, they always have a piece of chocolate in it with the GAP logo on it. So, to this day, we still push it with them. And, it helps sell an idea to the legislators that aren't from here that here's a cool idea that we, hopefully, you can find to support. And, I think it helps sell the area. And, as much as anything – it gives the local community a good feeling about themselves is my personal opinion.

Avigail Oren: Linda...

Larry Brock: I've also... Go ahead, go ahead, I'm sorry.

Avigail Oren: Linda, anything else that you wanted to ask about from this list that you sent? We didn't really dive into much about Sylvia Ramsey. Do you want to loop back to that?

Larry Brock: I would bow primarily to Bill Atkinson on Sylvia. My almost entire relationship with her was through him.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Larry Brock: I mean, I like the lady. She did a good job. Thank you very much.

Avigail Oren: Right.

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- Larry Brock:** But, she was the Maryland mother of the trail. But, Bill did most of that.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Linda Boxx:** I mean, you know, you said it at the very beginning. But, I think the role of all the organizations coming together and forming ATA really created more of an imperative, I think, for everybody to take action and stop talking and, you know, just "Let's get this done." You want to talk anything more about the importance of ATA?
- Larry Brock:** I can't overemphasize it, Linda. I mean, your financial support to get the ATA rolling and, you know, when we got it sold to- I believe it was Bud Schuster who put the initial TEA-21-ISTEA money in and that's what made it work. I mean, the trail got built because Pennsylvania was coming and you either did it or you're going to leave a big gap in the middle and they didn't want to do that. The C&O was there. It was pretty much its own thing. It'll be interesting to see what happens with the new director. But, you know, the overall concept was the link between D.C. and Pittsburgh. And that, from my perspective, was what made a deal worth presenting. I can unequivocally say, without an ounce of doubt, the trail would not have been built in Maryland if Pennsylvania wasn't coming. I would make no reservation about that statement.
- Linda Boxx:** I would say the same thing is true for the last mile into Pittsburgh. If there hadn't been, you know, 200 miles behind it knocking on the city of Pittsburgh's door, there would have been no political will, there'd be no reason to have built the trail to the Mon Valley from McKeesport to, you know... You know, that was, like, "Why would you build a trail there? If that was just the only trail you were building, you would have never built that trail. But, because it was the connection to get Pittsburgh connected to D.C., it was important.
- Larry Brock:** Mm-hmm. And, it's still neat to say, you know, and I love to tell people that you're following the plan that George Washington put together. And, that is something that resonates with everybody, all the Americans that come through.

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Avigail Oren: Yeah, I think this probably the first time I've really thought about why were people were excited about the idea Pittsburgh to D.C. I think I had kind of been working on the assumption that, you know, it's two relatively nearby cities, but you're pointing out the historical aspect. Was there a demand for longer trails? Were bikers really clamoring for these kinds of alignment?

Larry Brock: I would speak from the trips I started leading with Adventure Cycling. In '06, the first time they ran the trip – and I'm going to say "they" because I took over leadership in December and led the trip in May, which was- let's just say it was a heck of an experience.

[Chuckle]

They had nearly full trips for 10 years.

Avigail Oren: Wow.

Larry Brock: They started to slack off the last year or two, but we were getting 50 and 60 people on trips. The one we did for Pittsburgh 250 – we had over 100 people on the trip. So, I think the bike touring industry, particularly the trail use industry, likes the long trails. There's something neat about doing that. I mean, look at what's going on with the [inaudible 1:09:55.5] in Canada or the EuroVelo routes that they have. I mean, you can ride now from Amsterdam to the Black Sea on a bike trail in Europe. You know, I mean, that's- I'm going to do it next year, I think. Not the [inaudible 1:10:21.4], I'm going to do the Danube again. But, it's a wonderful area of outdoor recreation that multiple generations of people can do together.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Larry Brock: And, it's also... I mean, there is the other side that I keep getting admonished for not pushing. There's the 70% of us locally that go out and increase and improve our quality of life through exercise.

Avigail Oren: Right.

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Larry Brock: You know, from walking the trail, to running the trail, to biking the trail. You know, that's not one that gets measured as well financially, but I think is an equally if not more important asset.

Avigail Oren: Indeed, indeed. So, unless, Linda, you have any other questions, I always like to ask the trail builders we interview – what has working on the GAP meant to you personally?

Larry Brock: It gives me a fun and worthwhile cause to support my community. And, it is great to be in a relationship with it.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Larry Brock: It's something that, you know, just about everybody likes, you know.

Avigail Oren: Yeah. That's a nice legacy.

Larry Brock: Yeah. I mean, I could talk to people all day long about my grandkids, but nobody wants to hear it.

[Chuckle]

But, I can talk about the trail and I like to listen to it.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Larry Brock: I was doing a bike ride on the Danube River in August of this year with a group of ten people – six Germans, and three other Americans, and myself. And, I brought up the Great Allegheny Passage and the C&O Canal – the trail from Pittsburgh to D.C. And, half of the group – three Americans and three Germans had all heard of the trail and asked for information. And, I had one old trail guide with me, on me at that point. And, the next day gave one of the other Germans the trail guide to come see it. I mean, it's neat to talk about my hometown, Cumberland, nobody's ever heard of, Maryland. But, when I talked to cyclists about the C&O Canal, Great Allegheny Passage in Austria, they've heard of it.

Avigail Oren: Yeah. That's very cool

Larry Brock: So, that's... I'm sorry.

Avigail Oren: No, I just wanted to check with Linda.

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Linda Boxx: I'm fine. I think Larry really covered things tonight.

Avigail Oren: Great. So, I always like to end by, you know, opening up the space for you if you have any last thoughts or memories that you want to commit to posterity.

Larry Brock: Yeah, the first time I did the bike ride down the C&O Canal – had a guy chase me off his property with a shotgun that scared the living victims out of me because they were debating who owned the right-of-way with the federal government. They didn't like people on their property. And, the government won.

[Laughter]

And, I didn't get... And, I'm 15 at the time so I'm sure the guy shot in the air, but I swear to God, I felt the bullets go right by me.

Avigail Oren: Yeah. That's... Yeah. How far we've come, right?

Larry Brock: Yeah, yeah.

Avigail Oren: All right. Well...

Linda Boxx: Larry, thanks for taking the time. We really appreciate it.

Larry Brock: Thanks for including me in it. And, I can't wait to hear what the- and see the final product.

[End 1:15:01.0]

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