

VIDEO INTERVIEW – JOSHUA C. WHETZEL

- Joshua C. Whetzel:** That's the machine in which we drove that – that...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** That railroad bed.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** ...that railroad bed in that rough condition.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** And then, John and I – pretty much on our own, decided the parking lot ought to be down at the far end towards Confluence. And, we told the state guys – I guess Larry or someone – said that'd be a great place for a parking lot. And, that's where it ended up.
- [Chuckle]
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, okay, yeah.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** It's down towards Confluence on the side away from the river. Is it still there?
- Paul G. Wiegman:** A couple. But, we should begin by just thanking you for taking this time to talk about the Western Maryland Railroad project. I should say Western Maryland Railway project. I found out that...
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** It's not a railroad; it's a railway.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** It's a railway. I corrected myself.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** [coughing] Excuse me.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** You were the president of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy at the time...
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Yeah, yeah.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** ...in the early '70s. And, the first thing that I found in the file was a letter about a meeting in Baltimore, Maryland between yourself, and John Oliver, and the Western Maryland management people that first opened up this whole question

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of the abandonment of the Western Maryland and it becoming a bicycle trail. Do you have recollections of that particular meeting?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Not the foggiest.

Paul G. Wiegman: Not the foggiest.

[Laughter]

Joshua C. Whetzel: But, I remember that – now that you’ve mentioned it and shown me a picture of **Big Alan [? 0:02:46.8]**, I do remember him as being an important factor in this whole transaction, because I guess he was – as you said the general counsel – or became general counsel.

Paul G. Wiegman: He was the general counsel. Yes. Right.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. But, I think he is the person that first thought that abandonment and a charitable gift to an organization such as ours was a credible- not only credible but a good idea because they could benefit from the gift, of course. That, I guess, was the very beginning. I remember going to Cleveland – not to Baltimore, though.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yes, there was some meetings in Cleveland with the C&O or the B&O as it moved through various railroad companies. I know that there were meetings in Cleveland also.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Did the- the Western Maryland became acquired by the C&O or the B&O?

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, the Chessie, the Chessie.

Joshua C. Whetzel: C&O – Chesapeake and Ohio. Okay.

Paul G. Wiegman: Chesapeake and Ohio. And then, ultimately, became part of the B&O and then part of Conrail and so forth.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. Right.

Paul G. Wiegman: You and I – being with the Conservancy in those years – that was nothing novel that somebody wanted to transfer land to conservation.

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Joshua C. Whetzel: Exactly.

Paul G. Wiegman: But, for a major railway – a major industrial company – thinking in terms of recreation and conservation, wasn't that a pretty unique idea at that time?

Joshua C. Whetzel: I guess it was. I don't know how the idea originated. It started with the Conservancy and it probably had to start with either John or me. But, I can't tell you who was the genius behind the whole thing.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: Well, I'll give that to you. I'll give it equally between you and John.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, same to you. The idea of a linear section of land was always appealing to us, though. Because, obviously, you know, it could become a trail and trails were important items in our lives because it gave access to lands. And, I showed Ed that such access was extremely important to all of us. To borrow a word from a Sierra Club book, "If you can see the wonders of the wild land, then you can be persuaded to help protect it. But, if you don't see it, you don't understand what's there. And hence, you have no idea why it might be worth the saving." So, I think that sort of concept lay behind some of the ideas that originated in our small brains.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: Do you remember what it was that you learned about the- how did you learn about the abandonment? Was it through the government or...?

Joshua C. Whetzel: It might have been from the people of Fallingwater.

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh.

Joshua C. Whetzel: I suspect that they're closer to it. And, of course, one of the roads led up from the Western Maryland right-of-way up into the part of the Bear Run Preserve.

Paul G. Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

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Joshua C. Whetzel: So, I rather think that's where it came from. Do you remember, in those days – or maybe you weren't there when Joe White was there.

Paul G. Wiegman: No, I wasn't. No, I was after Joe.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Joe White was a very active person – became somewhat involved in the affairs of the community. And, I'll bet it was that put us onto the possible abandonment.

Paul G. Wiegman: Now, when you went to the railroad, you didn't go just to buy a piece of land. You went with some bargains in your pocket.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, we- I think we were very persuasive as to the virtues of a charitable gift to an organization such as ours. And, we had very receptive ears...

Paul G. Wiegman: They were.

Joshua C. Whetzel: ...in the person of Mr. Alan, if no one else. No, I think they were. In fact, on the very first meeting, I think they caught onto the idea that this was a great idea because they've got a tax deduction, which would go against whatever profits they had. And, they could, you know, assign a substantial value. They're giving up a very large chunk of real estate. And so, I think that was the idea of a charitable gift was well received.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, that was taken to them right from the bat?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Right from the very beginning.

Paul G. Wiegman: Right from the very beginning.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: Now, they wanted to give you more than you were ready to...

[Chuckle]

Joshua C. Whetzel: Did they ever. They said, you know, they caught onto the idea very fast. And, in fact, they had in mind giving us a great deal more than ultimately we wanted. They wanted to give us the big... The thing that scared me the most was the big viaduct in – was in Frostburg, Maryland?

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- Paul G. Wiegman:** It was Salisbury.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Salisbury, Maryland.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah. Salisbury, Pennsylvania. The Salisbury Viaduct at Meyersdale.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** The Salisbury Viaduct – across a huge... I think it's about a half mile long.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, easily.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** And, all steel. And, at that point, I don't know what prompted me, but I called up someone – and I can't remember whom I called – to ask about, "What do you have to do to maintain a bridge or a viaduct – a steel viaduct?" And they said, in effect to, "You don't want any part of such a thing because to paint one of those things would absolutely bleed your organization absolutely into bankruptcy." They said, "You can't even think about that." So, we then, somewhat later, it turns out, tried to avoid accepting too much as a gift. And, I think ended up accepting only the one bridge that crossed the Youghiogheny River at Ohiopyle.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** At Ohiopyle.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** I think that's the only one we accepted as a gift.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Was the original plan to keep the right-of-way in the hands of the Conservancy and develop it, or was it a standard, "we would do it and then find a good home for it"?
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** No, I think the foreshortened version – that you have referred to here that developed about 1975 excluded a lot of the right-of-way and excluded the tunnels. Was there one or two tunnels? I don't know what...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Two tunnels.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Two tunnels
- Paul G. Wiegman:** the Pinkerton Tunnel and the Big Savage Tunnel.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** It's clear to the tunnels and the viaduct and whatever other bridges they had in mind giving us. So, we pulled the project –

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foreshortened the project quite substantially. And, they still went for it.

Paul G. Wiegman: They did?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: What was it that you think that you did, or said, or offered them that kept them interested and allowed the project to continue?

Joshua C. Whetzel: I think, over the passage of the years, and I think you've indicated that initial contact was in '73 and the all-in proposal was made in '75. But, I think in those intervening two years, they became very accustomed to the idea of making a charitable gift.

Paul G. Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

Joshua C. Whetzel: And, I think they increasingly liked the idea and found it acceptable in the corporate headquarters. I can't think of any other...

Paul G. Wiegman: That was a very visionary corporate headquarters then.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, yeah. I would think that they were. And, I think that the Western Maryland, at that point, was in the process, I think, of being acquired by a larger railroad – the C&O or the B&O, or somebody.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yes. Mm-hmm.

Joshua C. Whetzel: And, I don't think they were a particularly profitable railroad. Although, I don't know that – what their situation was. But, I think they were probably pleased to get out of having to cope with that particular part of the right-of-way.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, there was the right-of-way on the other side of the river.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah, right.

Paul G. Wiegman: So, it was a duplication of efforts that was going on.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Sure.

Paul G. Wiegman: I don't know if you knew this, but the final ICC decision which came down – I don't have the date right off here – but, actually

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mentions the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the fact that when this railroad would be abandoned, it would become a rail trail.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, really?

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah. It was a paragraph in the final judge's decision that the Western Maryland would be contributing this to the Conservancy and for a rail trail.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, everybody got on board. Those were the days when you could do things like that.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: Why were those the days when we could things like that?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, conservation was not a bad word like it is today with the present group in Washington holding sway.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: Mm-hmm. Now, early in 1975, we move up two years – the ICC did grant the permission.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: Said to the Western Maryland, "Go ahead. You can abandon, you have capacity on the other side of the railroad. All your trains can run over there." And, that was the end of the Western Maryland – not completely. But, you had an idea to get people interested – get foundations, and local people, and the state, and whoever, in this railroad bed. So, we took a train ride.

[Chuckle]

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. Yep. I do – I remember that, my goodness. What – we started in Pittsburgh and went all the way to Frostburg, didn't we?

Paul G. Wiegman: Hancock.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Hancock?

Paul G. Wiegman: Hancock, Maryland.

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Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, heavenly days.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah, yeah.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Was that a one-way trip?

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: One-way trip. We came back on bus. We came back on buses.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, really?

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: We came back on. We got some busses at Hancock and came back. Do you remember...

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, do I. I sure remember it.

Paul G. Wiegman: What do you remember about it?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, I remember it's the culmination of – it really started out and ended up – but it's just a fascinating project.

Paul G. Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

Joshua C. Whetzel: And, the people on board included some of our best donors, some press people, and a lot of our friends. It was altogether a very exciting and enjoyable trip. I think I recall – I think I was interviewed by a local TV station or somebody like that. Somebody stuck a camera and a microphone in our face. And, I said something. I can't recall what – but appropriate to the occasion, I guess. And, altogether it was- I think it was very fitting and an appropriate conclusion to a really quite exciting project.

Paul G. Wiegman: We left the B&O station in Pittsburgh and I'm not sure which railroad we used, but we got to Connellsville, and that's where we stopped. And, you gave a presentation on the project at that point.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, really?

Paul G. Wiegman: I have some photographs of you standing there with your pointer and a...

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Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, really?

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: ...and boards, and the cars. There were two cars.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh,

Paul G. Wiegman: There was an original Western Maryland passenger car and an Amtrak car. By then, we were into Amtrak and it was an Amtrak Domeliner car with a dome on the top.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, wow. Okay.

Paul G. Wiegman: Bright, silver, beautiful modern car, and then this vintage-Western Maryland and one engine. And, you stopped and we explained the whole project to all of the people that were there.

Joshua C. Whetzel: In Connellsville?

Paul G. Wiegman: In the Bowest Yards in Connellsville.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, I have some photograph and we're going to have to look into this, but there's a man dressed up in an engineer's outfit.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: I don't know where he came from, but...

Joshua C. Whetzel: Could he be the engineer on the train?

Paul G. Wiegman: No, he wasn't the engineer on the train. He was an older gentleman and I imagine he had been a Western Maryland engineer at one time. So, he was there.

[Chuckle]

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, what fun.

Paul G. Wiegman: If you remember Mr. Scaife, Richard Scaife, had a special edition of the *Tribune-Review* printed that day.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, how wonderful.

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Paul G. Wiegman: And, he had his staff dressed in what they called “butcher boy” outfits that handed out this commemorative newspaper that got carried on the train. And, the front page of that newspaper was the Johnstown Flood.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, for heaven’s...

Paul G. Wiegman: It was announcing the Johnstown flood.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, for heaven’s sakes. What fun. How exciting.

Paul G. Wiegman: And then, we left Connellsville and we stopped before we got to the High Bridge in Ohio and whoever wanted to get off the train and we walked across the high bridge and then watched the train come across.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, gosh.

Paul G. Wiegman: But, at that point, we got onto the B&O because there was already a gap in the Western Maryland. But then, we got back onto the train – onto the Western Maryland in Confluence – and went on through all the little towns in the Casselman Valley and onto Hancock.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, gosh.

Paul G. Wiegman: I remember at the beginning of the train, everybody was in both cars. It was a warm day. It was in May – almost 30 years ago in a week. But, the Western Maryland car wasn’t air-conditioned. So, by the time we got to Hancock, everybody was in the Amtrak car.

[Laughter]

Joshua C. Whetzel: In the new car.

Paul G. Wiegman: In the new car. Whose idea was the train?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, probably mine. I don’t know. I don’t know, Paul, gosh. It was either John’s or mine, I’m sure. Because I don’t think anyone else on the staff was... Maybe it was your idea?

Paul G. Wiegman: No, it wasn’t mine.

[Chuckle]

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Paul G. Wiegman: It was certainly enjoyable. Was it a success? Do you think it was a success – the ride?

Joshua C. Whetzel: The train ride?

Paul G. Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, yeah. I think it did. I wish we could find a copy of that special edition.

Paul G. Wiegman: I'll keep looking.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, golly.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah. I'll keep looking. But, people seemed to be excited about the idea.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: About building a rail trail from...

Joshua C. Whetzel: Sure.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, at that time, we were still talking Connellsville to Frostburg and/or the state line.

Joshua C. Whetzel: [sneeze] Excuse me. I have to sneeze.

Paul G. Wiegman: Gesundheit. After that, of course, the hard work kind of began...

Joshua C. Whetzel: Mm-hmm.

Paul G. Wiegman: ...in making it going from a dream – a vision – to the reality of an actual trail.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah, yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: Can you talk a little bit about what that meant at that time?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, I think one characteristic of that particular roadbed was that it was all of one piece. And, it could revert or we could treat it as a continuous strip of real estate without a lot of railroad roadbeds – which we ran into before and after this particular project – had reverted clauses in there that if the railroad were abandoned, that particular hunk of it would revert to the adjoining property owner through which the property ran

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because it was only a right-of-way, not a conveyance under a deed.

Paul G. Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

Joshua C. Whetzel: But, this particular strip of land was almost unique in that respect because it had no reverter clauses. Later on, we ran into those kinds of problems.

Paul G. Wiegman: On the Western Maryland?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. As we tried to extend the right-of-way into Connellsville – remember the Bruner Run situation? Tony will tell you all about that.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah, I don't remember – that's a part that's kind of unclear to me.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, no, those people had the section that was a fair section that was about a quarter mile or so in the vicinity of Bruner Run – reverted to the owners of the adjoining property. And, we had to approach them and they made it very tough for us because they knew what they held. They held the key to a continuous strip. And, they made Tony dance through hoops to get it. We had to pay a lot of money, too.

Paul G. Wiegman: So, that portion had to be acquired – repurchased...

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: ...to put the trail through. So, once we got to 1975 and we actually in 1978, we bought 25 miles. The Conservancy bought 25 miles. And, that was the 25 miles from Confluence to Bruner Run. And, that was within the state park. So, that was an easy part that was done.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, I may have Bruner Run – I may have misnamed that.

Paul G. Wiegman: No, no. You're absolutely right. Now, I guess we can talk about figures – after all these years, I don't think anybody will mind – but it's \$50,000.

Joshua C. Whetzel: For what?

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Paul G. Wiegman: That we paid for the Western Maryland right-of-way. And, maybe you want to explain how we got such a magnificent piece of land for such a seemingly small amount of money.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, I guess it was what you call a bargain sale. In other words, the \$50,000 was the small end of the deal. There would have been an enormous part of the transaction which would have been in the form of a charitable gift in addition to the \$50,000. The \$50,000 probably covered the legal expenses that the railroad entailed in conveying it. I imagine that's what it was.

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh. Mm-hmm, okay.

Joshua C. Whetzel: But, I don't know whether you understand the concept of a bargain sale. But, it's a part purchase, part gift deal. As in this case, I suspect that the larger part was the gift part.

Paul G. Wiegman: Was the gift part...

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: ...by the Western. I understand, but some people that are going to be watching this someday and may not understand because we did it all the time at the Conservancy. But, the larger part is a gift to a nonprofit charitable organization.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. Right, right.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, that was one of the selling points of the whole project.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. Even though the large corporation – like the C&O, the B&O, whatever – they could claim a deduction off of their, you know, the income taxes – everybody's required to pay, including them.

Paul G. Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

Joshua C. Whetzel: ...in the form of a charitable gift. And, I think that was the real incentive that got the project going in the first place.

Paul G. Wiegman: Hmm.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah.

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Paul G. Wiegman: You mentioned to me, as we were talking before, and I didn't know this – that you and John would go out joyriding on the railroad every so often.

[Laughter]

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, we...

Paul G. Wiegman: No, I often wondered where you were.

[Chuckle]

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, we went down it once in its rough condition, when only the ties and the- I'm not so sure the ties had been taken up. I think it was only the rails. So, we bumped along from Ohiopyle up to Confluence inspecting what we got.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: What you got. And, what did you find?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, at the other end we found what seemed to us as an appropriate place for a parking lot. And, I don't know whether the parking lot ended up there or not. But, it seemed to be rather level – or at least gently sloping kind of a thing.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, there was a stream right there?

Joshua C. Whetzel: I guess so.

Paul G. Wiegman: A little mountain spring and then a road – then a township road. And, that's Ramcat Hollow.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh.

Paul G. Wiegman: Okay. So, it was you and John that discovered the delights of Ramcat Hollow.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, I guess so. I remember prowling around on the hillsides there looking for ginseng.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: I thought you were inspecting the railroad.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, we stopped along the way. And, John and I had never seen – honest to goodness ginseng. But, we kind of knew that

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this was an appropriate place to find it. So, I think we did find a couple of plants, or so.

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, okay.

Joshua C. Whetzel: We didn't root it up. We just identified the plants because it was interesting – the multi-part leaf.

Paul G. Wiegman: Which brings to my mind the other aspect of the whole – what we call The Great Allegheny Passage now. It's more than simply a trail that can take you from Point A to Point B.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: But, goes back to your original statement that here you are in the depths of the Laurel Ridge water gap. There's no one around. And, you begin to appreciate the wilderness and the solitary feelings that you can get in those kinds of places. And, this trail is perfect for this.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Couldn't have said it better myself.

Paul G. Wiegman: It's not an urban railroad that takes you from McKeesport to Pittsburgh, but it takes you right to the middle of the Allegheny Mountains.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Indeed.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, I don't know that people were seeing much of that before this railroad – this Great Allegheny Passage opened.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, certainly not at slow speed kind of a, you know, intimate encounter with the land that through which they were passing. Not at all. Because they were lickity-split on a railroad going along and you're usually doing something else sitting in a railroad car, and you wouldn't pay attention to what you were seeing.

Paul G. Wiegman: I can only imagine, though, that that the people – passengers – riding the Western Maryland when it did carry passengers back in the '40s and '50s, were certainly astounded by the beauty of that- the gorge, and that area. What was the public reaction – once this was announced in 1975 that the

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Conservancy was taking a train ride and thinking about a rail trail? What was the public reaction?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Well, I think nothing but favorable reaction can I recall. I would assume – we'd got some favorable editorials. Good ol' Clark Thomas was on the editorial desk at that time.

Paul G. Wiegman: Good friend.

Joshua C. Whetzel: That's a good friend. He knew us from way back when. And, I suspect he probably wrote some pretty nice stuff about it. Have you been able to find any editorials or clippings?

Paul G. Wiegman: I have a number. There was an article in *The New York Times* about the train ride.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, good.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, I'm trying to track down – there was an editorial that came from the editor of a Tulsa, Oklahoma newspaper...

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh!

Paul G. Wiegman: ...that Clark turned around and published in the *Post-Gazette*.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Wow. Tulsa?

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah. How they ever found out or what it was – or why they, you know, were very highly complimentary of the activity.

Joshua C. Whetzel: The whole effort.

Paul G. Wiegman: The whole effort, yeah.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Isn't that interesting, Paul.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, of course, the hiking and conservation organizations were...

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, sure.

Paul G. Wiegman: If you remember people like Cliff Hammond and AYH was very high on it, and the Sierra Club, and so forth.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Mm-hmm.

Paul G. Wiegman: What was the feeling with the foundation community?

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Joshua C. Whetzel: Again, I think very positive. We had good relations with the Scaife people in those days, and, of course, always with the Mellon Foundation. And, that endured through this project and, in fact, there were different people running things in those early days. But, I think some of those folks were on not only the Scaife was on the train, but I think some of the other people from the foundations.

Paul G. Wiegman: I think so.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. You've had a membership of the people who were on it?

Paul G. Wiegman: I have a list of people that were invited. And, we had on our board the editor of the Connellsville...

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah, right. Driscoll. Driscoll was his name.

Paul G. Wiegman: Driscoll. Because, from what I got from the files, he was somewhere else, and he insisted to you that the train ride... We had set a date for the train ride and he couldn't be there and the insisted that it be changed so he could be there. And, he was.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, yeah? We did change it?

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah, we did change it. But, he was a very strong supporter. I understand, with the Conservancy.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, was very pleased with this whole idea.

Joshua C. Whetzel: And, he would have had some political influence in that area, too, of course, being the editor of the paper down there.

Paul G. Wiegman: Mm-hmm. Just two last things. First of all, I was told that one of the reasons that this came to your mind as a trail was that when...

[Chuckle]

...you can tell me whether this is true or not – that you were with the Conservation Foundation in Washington and would

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walk the C&O Canal trail. And, it was that experience that led you to think, “Well, here’s a new opportunity.”

Joshua C. Whetzel: You know, I think you’re right, Paul. I’d forgotten that Farley and I used to walk along the C&O. Doggone it, you’re right. It went along the Potomac and it was an abandoned- a railroad right-of-way. My gosh. Why didn’t I think of that?

Paul G. Wiegman: Well, back in ’73, you did.

[Chuckle]

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, my goodness. Isn’t that interesting? Because I’d totally forgotten that we spent a lot of time on that C&O. My gosh, that’s very interesting. And, it brings back great memories, too.

Paul G. Wiegman: What did you enjoy about it?

Joshua C. Whetzel: The fact that a trail existed through that busy little part of Washington called Georgetown that had historical significance and adjoined – went along the Potomac. Which, incidentally, one time – not part of this particular story. But, one winter when we were in Washington, the Potomac froze. And, we were able to skate across the Potomac. I skated across with Aileen Train, Russell Train’s wife.

[Laughter]

She and I skated across and back. The scary thing is, you know...

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: Why?

Joshua C. Whetzel: I was, you know, did crazy things in those days.

Paul G. Wiegman: Sort of Hans Brinker and the silver skates on the Potomac.

Joshua C. Whetzel: You know, the Potomac didn’t freeze there often and it could have been thin spots. And, we didn’t know – but we just did it anyway. So, at any rate...

Paul G. Wiegman: Well, we’re glad you made it back, back across. What does this give you now? What feelings does it give you now to see

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that this September, The Great Allegheny Passage will be completing the last two little links?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, really? I didn't know that.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, you'll be able to ride from Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C. – to Georgetown.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, my goodness. Well, I mean, Linda's had more to do with it than I did. Oh, my goodness. Well, Linda's, you know, with her great abilities has been able to put that thing together. And, it's just more with what she's done. I compliment her on...

Paul G. Wiegman: But, that must make you feel pretty proud to have been the first person to put this together – to get this started. Somebody had to start it.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, come on, do you think it began with this?

Paul G. Wiegman: Where else did it begin?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Really?

Paul G. Wiegman: Sure.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, Paul, come on. You think so?

[Chuckle]

Well, that's good to know and good to recognize. You know, Linda, bless her heart, has taken on that big viaduct and taking on those other bridges.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, the tunnel.

Joshua C. Whetzel: She's out of her mind, I think.

Paul G. Wiegman: But, we had to start with the first 25 miles. And, if that first 25 miles hadn't have been done, who knows what would have happened.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. Oh, really, Paul – you think so? You think this is the beginning? That's amazing.

Paul G. Wiegman: Absolutely.

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- Joshua C. Whetzel:** It really is. Well, I'm pleased to have been part of it. I really am.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Thank you.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** All right. Thank you for taking the time to come out and talk about it.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** It brings back some old memories, doesn't it?
[Chuckle]
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Sure does, gosh sakes. You're going to talk to Tony.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Going to talk to Tony. And, get some of the details, some of the – I know he has.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Well, he has it in his head. Tony will remember things more than I will.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Well, and Tony – in his candidness – will talk about the Curry property and some of those beyond Bruner Run because they were tough
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Was that the one that we're talking about – Curry?
- Paul G. Wiegman:** That was Curry. I want to say Grant, but that was the architect. But, it was a Curry property.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Oh.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And, what's now called Johnson Run, but Bruner Run is where the rafts take off. And, to get from there to Bowest was a lot of work.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Yeah.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Because it wasn't until 1991 that the last 121 acres were transferred to DER. And see, that would have been the Bowest end.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Oh, wow. Bowest is in Connellsville?
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Is in Connellsville – yeah.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Oh, I see.

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Paul G. Wiegman: And then, I have to get all the dates down for, like, the Somerset- because it wasn't until 2001 that it opened from Meyersdale to Confluence. That was the big linkage. So, we had a Meyersdale to Connellsville, but at Connellsville, then, this whole northern with the Larry Ridenour and those people working on the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie. And, that I haven't looked into yet. And, I want to find out exactly how that happened.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Right.

Paul G. Wiegman: So, that was the extension of it. I think that was done before that. So, Linda is planning, in September, sort of a grand opening.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, wonderful. Oh, won't that be marvelous?

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah, because the Big Savage Tunnel is finished.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. Yeah, I talked to her about that.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah. They were going to have a grand opening two years ago and one of the hurricanes came in and it washed the whole thing out.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, really? Oh, wow.

Paul G. Wiegman: But, the trail is done from the state line to Frostburg. And then, from Frostburg to Cumberland, there's still an engine running – there's still a Western Railroad running.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, really?

Paul G. Wiegman: A steam engine – a tourist engine, it just takes tourist trains.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Would that be – but the trail parallels the active railroad – does it?

Paul G. Wiegman: There were two lines. They had enough right-of-way for two tracks.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, I see.

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- Paul G. Wiegman:** And, I think they were willing to allow hiking, but there's a tunnel. And, you can imagine being in the tunnel when a steam engine goes through. You couldn't do that.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Yeah. No fun.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** It'd be no fun at all.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** It's a long tunnel? Do you know?
- Paul G. Wiegman:** It's not very long, but it's just long enough.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Oh, boy.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** But, that railroad, that tourist train is being phased out. It was heavily, heavily, heavily subsidized. And Maryland, I think, is phasing that out. So, the trail will be open. They just put mile markers in starting in Cumberland – that's the zero. And, the mile markers go up and will go all the way – come to Pittsburgh.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Oh.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** They plan on the end being at the Point.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Wow. Oh, isn't that marvelous?
- Paul G. Wiegman:** So, it'll come in along the South Side. And, there's trail from the South Side to Hays. And then, they're working around Kennywood and Sandcastle and those areas. Then on up into McKeesport. And, then across the Hot Metal Bridge.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Oh, wow.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** That'll be refurbished. There's the roadway on one side and there's an old...
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Huh. The Hot Metal Bridge – that's great.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah. And then, it'll get onto the Eliza Furnace Trail and then go on into the city.
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** Wonderful.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, it's just...
- Joshua C. Whetzel:** That's great.

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Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah. And, there's so many people that have just taken up the idea and gone with it.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, they're estimating right now, 400,000 day uses a year.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Wow.

Paul G. Wiegman: Now, that's not users, you know.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. It's day use.

Paul G. Wiegman: Because, for instance, I'm on it maybe 100 times a year every three days, so I'm one of those. I'm not just one of those 400,000 – I'm 100 of those 400,000. But, that's a lot. And, it's not uncommon now, in Confluence, to run across somebody from Arizona, Massachusetts...

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, for heaven's sake.

Paul G. Wiegman: France.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh!

Paul G. Wiegman: People are coming from all over the world to ride that train- to ride that trail.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Isn't that marvelous, Paul, gosh sakes. How did we ever start anything like that? Can't believe it.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: How could we ever expect that it would happen that way?

Joshua C. Whetzel: I can't believe it.

[Break]

Joshua C. Whetzel: [inaudible 0:45:41.6]

Paul G. Wiegman: From...

Joshua C. Whetzel: It was from *The New York Times*.

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Paul G. Wiegman: Yes. Right. I remember. It rained a little bit at first, but then it was just a beautiful evening – just a marvelous evening. That was a memorable trip.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. It really was. Well, we fed everybody in the new Vista Center.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yes, yes. Got them all in there. And, I remember, getting ready, we had tarps and heaters. As Bill Randall usually did, he had, you know, a back-up situation...

[Crosstalk]

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah. Well, Bill was very thorough.

Paul G. Wiegman: I remember the dedication of Mountain Streams.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, we had two barrels of cider because if the tap broke on one, we'd have...

[Laughter]

Paul G. Wiegman: ...we'd have the extra.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, that's great.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah. Do you remember that day?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Sure. I remember that one. Yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: When it snowed?

Joshua C. Whetzel: Did it snow?

Paul G. Wiegman: It snowed the day before.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh. Wow. Well, I remember we were all cold. No, actually it was just a brisk spring morning, fall morning.

Paul G. Wiegman: Fall morning – right. But, you wanted fall leaves for a table decoration.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh?

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Paul G. Wiegman: And, I went up to the top of the ridge and there were no leaves and I had to drive back down into the valley to find fall leaves because it already lost – gone off. And, our friend from Oil City was there – from Oil Creek was there.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, yeah. I remember her, that strange lady.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah.

Joshua C. Whetzel: She was objecting to God. She had a big sign and was walking around.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

Joshua C. Whetzel: I do remember that one.

Paul G. Wiegman: Exactly. Yeah, yeah. That was quite a time. That was, probably, the first or the second year that I was with the Conservancy.

Joshua C. Whetzel: Oh, really?

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah. That was in the '70s. That was early in the '70s.

Joshua C. Whetzel: '74, I think.

Paul G. Wiegman: '74 or something like that.

[Phone Rings]

Joshua C. Whetzel: Okay. I've got to get that phone.

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, okay. You got it?

Joshua C. Whetzel: [inaudible 0:48:16.6].

Paul G. Wiegman: I'll just look. Mm-hmm. Okay?

[End 0:49:09.8]

jvh-t/cr-p

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