

## VIDEO INTERVIEW – LARRY ADAMS

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- Paul G. Wiegman:** Thanks for coming today, Larry.
- Larry Adams:** Hey, no problem.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** I should introduce you as Larry Adams and you were the superintendent of Ohiopyle State Park when The Great Allegheny Passage was first started. Let's try to put this into perspective. I have a lot of questions for you. You came to the park in what year?
- Larry Adams:** January of – well over Christmas actually – of '76, and I really got going in January of '77.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, so the land was already in the hands of the Commonwealth at that time or was it still being negotiated?
- Larry Adams:** The railroad bid?
- Paul G. Wiegman:** The railroad bid.
- Larry Adams:** The railroad bid was still wide open as no man's land. People driving the vehicles up and down it, camping, partying, and generally creating a lot of trouble.
- [Chuckle]
- Paul G. Wiegman:** So, it was a problem as superintendent of the park?
- Larry Adams:** Yeah, it was a major problem in the park at that time, yes. That's one of the reasons we wanted to work to get it acquired so we could get control of it, and limit the access to it, and...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Were the rails still here?
- Larry Adams:** The rails weren't still here, but a lot of the ties were. They were still salvaging ties.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, and the railroad was still doing that? They were coming in and...

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**Larry Adams:** The railroad had sold them to other people, but as it turned out – we did some investigation – the times that they had to salvage this stuff had expired.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, really?

**Larry Adams:** And, we're not absolutely sure whether some of the people salvaging those ties at that time were actually legal, but we kind of put a stop to them. And then, we finished the job at salvaging the ties. So, everything had – once the land was turned over – everything there reverted to us, and we finished the job at salvaging the ties. And, there's railroad ties and parks all over this state.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** That came from Western Maryland?

**Larry Adams:** That came from here, yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** That would've been the summer of 1977?

**Larry Adams:** Probably '77, '78, yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** '77, '78?

**Larry Adams:** Mm-hmm.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** So, you were left with a narrow corridor – a 60-foot corridor – all the way through the park with ballast?

**Larry Adams:** Yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** What took place then? From what I understand, you really couldn't use the heavy ballast.

**Larry Adams:** Well, there were places where the ballast was two and three feet deep on the trail. And, that really wasn't that suitable for a trail. So, I think we're a step ahead though of actually what we're doing. Maybe just back up just a little bit.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Sure.

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**Larry Adams:** We didn't have full control of the trail at that point. It wasn't acquired to work with... And, John Oliver and I, we ran up and down the trail – and others – from Harrisburg and so on. Ed Deaton, and then our chief of planning, and so on until we got control of the trail. And, at that point, we put barriers on the access points of the trail, which created quite a bit of a problem. But, we needed to do that so we could actually keep the trail and the corridor along the trail from being trashed, and preserve it for the eventual plan of the bike trail. At that point, the bike trail plan was pretty far in the future.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Well, let's go back a little bit even further. What exactly were you looking at in terms of the land when you came? Was it from – well we're here at Ramcat Hollow – I should mention that. We're sitting here at the Ramcat Hollow access point. Was it Ramcat to where that was being considered owned by the park?

**Larry Adams:** Well, the park was basically concerned with the length of the park although there was a master plan for the park and it included this trail concept in it. I wasn't totally... defined on exactly what all it would be. But, the park was looking at the park through the Youghiogheny River Gorge. Basically, from Confluence to Connellsville.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Right.

**Larry Adams:** And, that's the first part that was acquired with, of course, with all the good work of the Conservancy – the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Looking at the files from the Conservancy, their acquisition from the Fayette County side of the Western Maryland Bridge over the Youghiogheny to Bruner Run. And then, there was an option to go all the way to Bowest Yards.

**Larry Adams:** Well, yeah, and then I guess was done in two parts, but that part was acquired relatively soon after, I think.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** But, the park was not surrounding all of that right-of-way?

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- Larry Adams:** That's true.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Where were the boundaries of the park at that point when you came in?
- Larry Adams:** The boundary of the park was- I'm not sure exactly what the mileage is – half a mile or so below Bruner Run. And then, it was game land. So, down along that corridor, plus there was some private timber companies that owned land along the river down there.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Right, how about on this end?
- Larry Adams:** This end, the boundary, the park was pretty much where it is now, which is the Ramcat Road out here.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, but there were some additional lands purchased right here at Ramcat from what I understand. There's a Metheny property that was purchased.
- Larry Adams:** Yeah, this is a piece up here where the parking lot is, I believe.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, okay.
- Larry Adams:** There was a piece picked up there so that there would be enough land for access. And, there was some oddball lots in here. We may have acquired – and it's hard to remember exactly – we may have acquired some of them. I think we did, and some others were acquired by private landowners more out towards the road and the river there. There's a cabin or two out there that resolved it from those acquisitions.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** That were still there?
- Larry Adams:** And, of course, we own the corridor on up the river, or up along the river, from Ramcat that we don't own any additional land on either side of it.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** No, that's just the railway.

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**Larry Adams:** And, there was a land exchange for the corridor and between the Turkeyfoot Fish and Game Association up there. They had control of some land along the river. And, the trail went through their property and there were some shooting ranges and sort of some non-compatible uses that were right up against the trail. So, it took a number of years and an active legislature...

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, really?

**Larry Adams:** ...but they transferred a piece of the railroad bid to them, and picked up some land along the river, which the part that sat along the river now was a result of that land transfer. And, it saved using that bridge and so on. It saved some money all the way around. It kept the local fish and game club happy and it was better for users. Being out along the river – closer to the river – made it a better trial.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** It's a very attractive part of the...

**Larry Adams:** Yeah, and it made a better access for fisherman and everybody else, so.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And, that's following the Confluence to Oakland Railroad. So, that's a whole new other railroad section there.

**Larry Adams:** Yeah.

[Chuckle]

**Paul G. Wiegman:** So, now you're the superintendent of the park and you have this corridor through the park, and there are some plays you say?

**Larry Adams:** Yeah, there was a master plan for the park that had all kinds of things in it. Not everything was fully developed. Not everything people planned on. I mean, there was even a plan for remote parking and a monorail system that could be put in the park. But, that never came to pass.

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**Paul G. Wiegman:** I looked at a plan that had an aerial tramway from Bachman Rocks to Victoria Flats.

**Larry Adams:** Right.

[Chuckle]

**Paul G. Wiegman:** We'll get that next year. We'll get that built.

**Larry Adams:** But, my idea was first to get physical control of the corridor.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, and what did you need to do that?

**Larry Adams:** We built a lot of gates and rebuilt a lot of gates.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And, rebuilt a lot of gates?

**Larry Adams:** Oh, yeah, had people come down with hydraulic jacks and jack them right up out of the ground.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Really?

**Larry Adams:** And, finally, here at Ramcat, was the worst place. They actually brought a bulldozer down here and took one out after we had put it in rather strongly. Then we just really decided well, there was a lot of gas companies and stuff around. We got some really heavy pipe from them and brought the concrete trucks in and put three yards of concrete on both the main uprights of the gate. And, that one stayed.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Wow. That one stayed?

**Larry Adams:** It got damaged somewhat now and then but the locking mechanisms is on. But, the gate stayed, it didn't go away.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Do you have a feeling on why this was taking place?

**Larry Adams:** Well, the mood at that time was people wanted to drive up and down the railroad corridor because they would camp down there, they would hunt down there, they would fish in the river,

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and they wanted their vehicles down there with them. A lot of local people, they would've told you they wanted a roadway down through here. They didn't care about no bike trail.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Well, this would be the easier way to drive from Ohiopyle – from Confluence to Ohiopyle. This was the easiest way to go up over the mountain.

**Larry Adams:** People did it that way a lot.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And, they did it that way?

**Larry Adams:** But, they also dumped their garbage down there, and were camping without support facilities, and generally...

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And, they were in the park?

**Larry Adams:** Yeah, yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** They were within the Ohiopyle State Park?

**Larry Adams:** Yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** What was your next step?

**Larry Adams:** Well, once we got that part of the plan for the park was to develop a lot of trails. And, you know, we had this whitewater boating going on in the river all along this trail corridor. So, we wanted to – or the railroad bid corridor really at that time – we wanted to keep reasonable access there for emergency purposes to evacuate people from the river and so on. So, we routinely did some trimming and maintenance along the trail to make it so that we could get emergency vehicles and so on up and down it.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** So, from the very beginning you begin to maintain them?

**Larry Adams:** Yeah, right. And, there was within the park's plans there was still some- we had a trial crew leftover from Project 500 development funds for the original developments of the park.

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And, in fact, we had built probably close to – or even slightly more – 100 miles of trail throughout the park.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Wow.

**Larry Adams:** So, we were developing trails throughout the park concurrently with that. And, the railroad bid provided a lot of connecting links and made it really handy to tie trails together and so on. So, we were using the sections of the rail as connecting links on foot trails plus for emergency access with the idea that eventually we would have a bicycle trail there.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Some have said that wasn't the original plan that the bike trail was not high on the list. It was somewhere on the list, but it was not high on the list. Is that the case?

**Larry Adams:** There were some interest that did not want a bike trail much, or they didn't... Some people thought it would detract from the whitewater boating on the river. Others – commercial businesses and so on – thought that bikers were cheapskates and wouldn't bring any real economic value to the park. They'd come up here and bring their own stuff, and their own gear, and basically not leave any of their money in the local economy.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** I see, okay.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** So, yeah, there was those kinds of folks. But yet, on the other hand, there were an awful lot of users that the concept of that bike trail – the knowledge of it – was our **intend [? 0:13:08.4]** people – especially people from the Pittsburgh area – knew about it, and a cell of local people knew about it, too. And, they were really looking forward to it.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And, that was partly from the train ride in 1975 where it was built as a bike trail from Connellsville to Cumberland, Maryland?

**Larry Adams:** Right.



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**Paul G. Wiegman:** So, you're superintendent, you have a strip of land through the park?

**Larry Adams:** And, I have a trail crew.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And, you have a trail crew.

**Larry Adams:** And, I have one of our landscape architects in Harrisburg who was in charge of our trail program. He would come out and help lay out trails and things like that – Jerry Yocum. And, there was a pot of money left over from the 500-bond issue that built most of the facilities in the park originally.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay.

**Larry Adams:** There was some money left from that, but it was winding down towards the end. And, the way the trail actually got started is that in working with Jerry in Harrisburg – I got him to give us some money to stockpile some stone – the fine stone that we used to build the trail with. We eventually accumulated a stockpile of 10,000 tons of fine stone. And, we had a trail crew operating, and we also had what's called a – at that time – would be the [inaudible 0:14:39.6] of AmeriCorps now. It was the Young Adult Conservation Corps then.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, okay.

**Larry Adams:** We had a crew of those folks that were building trail and since it was a kind of sensitive issue we decided, "Well, we'll just build a little piece of trail in a less popular – not in Ohiopyle – but away from there and just see. We were tying it into other trails that we had and just see what happens, so..."

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Now, when you say it's a sensitive issue, who was it a sensitive issue with?

**Larry Adams:** The Outfitters. The one, in particular, was sort of leading the charge. They didn't want hordes of bicyclists coming down the railroad bed and coming down to the main rapids on the river in

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and being obnoxious spectators is what they were worried about.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And, that happens all the time?

**Larry Adams:** That happens anyway.

[Chuckle]

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah, right.

**Larry Adams:** And, it wasn't going on then. The folks that had the most power – so to speak – they had...

**Paul G. Wiegman:** These were the raft companies in Ohio? Yeah.

**Larry Adams:** Right, the guided raft people basically. They were used to working with the political system and so on. And, they had concerns that it would degrade the experience of whitewater boating to have all these people going up and down the river all the time. So, they're opposed, and, of course, some of the local people were opposed to it being anything other than a roadway.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, okay.

**Larry Adams:** They wanted to have easier access for hunting, and fishing, and camping, and stuff along the river. So, those folks made the issue kind of sensitive and there wasn't any big project, "Well, let's go build that trail."

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Right.

**Larry Adams:** There wasn't that kind of thing, but we were building trails, and we had trail crew, and we were authorized to do that, and we just built initially starting at Ramcat on the Confluence ended the trail. We built a three-mile section with the fine stone and tied it into some other trails down that paralleled the railroad bed further down. And...

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**Paul G. Wiegman:** So, quietly you began right here?

**Larry Adams:** Yes.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Is...

**Larry Adams:** Right, where we're sitting, is where we began.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Right where we're sitting?

**Larry Adams:** Yes.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Do you remember when that was? Was that...

**Larry Adams:** Well, you know, I think this first section was finished in '83.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Was finished in '83?

**Larry Adams:** It was two years before the rest of it.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, so it began in '83 and finished in...

**Larry Adams:** Yeah, I think it only took us several months to do that short section.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** So, we are sitting at the beginning of The Great Allegheny Passage?

**Larry Adams:** Right.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And, you built three miles?

**Larry Adams:** Three miles down to what we call the "Old Stone Quarry."

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah, I call it "Eli's Glen" from the local name that I've heard here. I think it's also Bidwell on the map.

**Larry Adams:** Right, I think Bidwell – there was a little development there. Actually, people don't realize, but there were several little towns throughout this gorge. They were little.

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**Paul G. Wiegman:** They were tiny, yeah.

**Larry Adams:** But, that's the way things had operated in those days. There were homesteads solid away in the mountains everywhere.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Sure.

**Larry Adams:** And, they even had that whole exchange – mail exchange thing – that ran across the river on cables. The little cable cars would go from train. They'd change them from train to train in these little towns between Victoria Flats and this side – Bidwell.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** There's still one of those.

**Larry Adams:** Yeah, I think there's still one there, yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah, what was the reaction of the first three miles?

**Larry Adams:** Well, you know, it caught on rather quickly.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** It did?

**Larry Adams:** Yes, people really liked the trail. And, they formed a little lobbying group and they were constantly bombarding us, "Well, when are you going to finish that trail?"

[Chuckle]

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Who was that? Were they local people or regional people?

**Larry Adams:** Yeah, the ones that were big supporters of it were from up in Confluence. A few people from Confluence at that time and they wrote. One of them is – his name escapes me right now – but boy, I should really know it. He used to be the football coach and stuff at Turkeyfoot. And, he's been a trail supporter for forever.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, I'll have to look that up.

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- Larry Adams:** Yeah, I could find out what his name is but I...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Is he still the football guy?
- Larry Adams:** No, he's retired, but he's still around the last I knew.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** I can find out who that is. So, the three miles are built and people are beginning to use it. One thing that I should mention to you – when I talked to Hank Parke – he was one of the persons, one of the people that came down, and used it, and said, "Wow, this is great."
- Larry Adams:** Yes.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And, that spurred the whole Somerset County end of it.
- Larry Adams:** So, even one of the outfitters took to riding the trail real regularly and really liked it, too. And, that helped. What that little three miles of trails did – and it wasn't just that. You know, we also, I think, got some support out of it, too. Part of the trail building process, we had all this excess ballast on here that we didn't want. And, of course, we didn't have hardly any equipment. We had a front-end loader, a drag that smoothed the trail out that we made ourselves.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Is that the one that sat down towards Ohiopyle for the longest time beside the trail?
- Larry Adams:** Yeah.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** It was a steel mesh kind of thing.
- Larry Adams:** It was a big steel triangle. Oh, that mesh thing. No, that was somebody else later.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, so that's a more modern piece of equipment.
- Larry Adams:** Well, if it's the one that had that coil-y mesh stuff in it.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah.

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**Paul G. Wiegman:** That one caused some trouble because what would happen that mesh would wear, and it would leave little pieces of sharp metal in the trail and cause flat tires.

[Chuckle]

The one we had had a loader blade on it, and it was angle iron, heavy angle iron, and it worked fine. The loader blade was across the middle of it. It would cut a little bit of gravel, which would gather against the back of it, and it would spill over that evenly, and fill in anything along the way, and just smooth it out. It was like about six-foot-wide, and I made a couple passes.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** You made these all yourself?

**Larry Adams:** Yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And, you were mentioning before that the dump trucks were borrowed, and...

**Larry Adams:** Well, we had a lot of things – to start with – we had as much as three and four feet of excess ballast on a trail, which we didn't want.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Right.

**Larry Adams:** And, we didn't have any of the equipment or any means to deal with that. But so, I sort of made a deal with the township that owns all kinds of access roads in the park. All of these dirt roads and so on all which needed work.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Right.

**Larry Adams:** And, they had a grater and a bigger truck, and the bigger-loaded, and so on. And, we made a deal with them that if they would skim off the excess ballast to our specification and in grade to trail surface – the ballast part – and make it ready to put the fine stone on for us, we would give them that stone as long as they used it on the roads that served the park.

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**Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, okay.

**Larry Adams:** So, that was giving them some really good quality stone to upgrade their roads. It was doing everybody...

**Paul G. Wiegman:** A service?

**Larry Adams:** ...a service.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Sure.

**Larry Adams:** The township got cheap stone and they helped to get the road ready. The visitors to the park including the hunters and stuff – using a lot of these remote roads. They got a lot of better roads to deal with, and it was just a win-win type of situation all the way around. That got us to a point where we had this stockpile of stone that we had managed to get the money for thanks to Jerry Yocum of our central office staff. And, we had the people to do it from the Adult Conservation Corps and so on. And, we started scrounging around. At the time, all we had was a loader and a flatbed dump truck which really wasn't suitable to spread stone.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah.

**Larry Adams:** But, we managed to get an old two-and-a-half-ton truck transferred from another park, and we got ahold of just a little two-bit roller that was like a little lawn tractor – barely big enough to sit on. But, it worked.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, boy. It worked.

**Larry Adams:** And, we started spreading the stone and we would drag it with the drag that we made, and tried to roll it down a little bit. And, we had a fair number of these young adult Conservation Corps. Because, they would trim the sides, and we made little overlooks along the way to make it nice. We maintained – there were some old homesteads where there were apple trees and stuff along the way. We would trim those up, and mow the fields, and so on to make it into a nice little habitat

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where people were likely to see deer, and turkeys, and things like that.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And, that's where there's a meadow? I listed it as Five Mile Meadow, but now it's a different mile marker, but that's where that is?

**Larry Adams:** Yes.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Where the pipeline crosses.

**Larry Adams:** Yes.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And then, there's another meadow further towards Ohiopyle.

**Larry Adams:** Right.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And, that was from an old homestead, and you just kept that open?

**Larry Adams:** Right, yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Improvisation – the stars were coming together at that point.

**Larry Adams:** And, the more we did, the more people liked it. And, all the stone was sitting down on the double part of the trail down towards Ohiopyle. And, people knew we had the stone. It was like, "Hey, when are you bringing it the rest of the way down here?"

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Bring it down.

**Larry Adams:** And, that was part of the reason we put it up here. We put it up here – we put it up here where it would get attention slowly and would be mostly positive. And then, we thought that if it caught on which some of us were certain that it would – and the pressure would bring it the rest of the way down. And, we would be happy to do that.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** When did that happen?



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- Larry Adams:** I think about '85 it was done to Ohiopyle and...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** So, we have Ramcat to Ohiopyle finished by 1985?
- Larry Adams:** Yeah, and...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And, that takes it to the old train station?
- Larry Adams:** Yeah, right. That was nine miles from where we started at which was just right within 100 feet of where we're sitting.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay.
- Larry Adams:** And, that would take you right to Ohiopyle.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** What about the other end? From the Ohiopyle end and then where do we go?
- Larry Adams:** That took a lot longer. The first problem we had on the back of the Fern Cliff there was what was known as the High Bridge.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Right.
- Larry Adams:** And, that High Bridge was another nightmare for the park manager because all the people in the campground were just right up over the hill from there. They had all these people wanting to go down the gorge, and they were going across that old railroad bridge. We put barriers on it, but those barriers – most of them – floated down the river in a day. There was nothing you could do. You could not stop people from going across that bridge all the time.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Right, there were no railings on it.
- Larry Adams:** There was no railings...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And, there was no decking on it.

[Chuckle]

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- Larry Adams:** No, there was a little walkway along the side for the railway guys.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** On the side, yeah.
- Larry Adams:** And, you weren't sure that those boards were safe.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Ah, right.
- Larry Adams:** It was just a real scary situation that I wanted to get rid of. So, the first thing that we were able to do is convince the folks in Harrisburg that we needed to deck that bridge and make it into at least a walkway that it should also be done well enough that it would allow emergency vehicles to get across to pick up injuries off the river and stuff.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, okay.
- Larry Adams:** So, we got a project, and we did it with our own staff. And, we got the High Bridge secured.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** So, it originally was built for a walkway and emergency vehicles, but now you...
- Larry Adams:** Well, we built it with the idea it would carry bike traffic eventually once the rest of the trail got developed. But, we had used up our stockpile of stone. We didn't have stone anymore, and now it was going to cost money to do the rest. And, for a while – I'm not sure – let me see. If I think – for a while, this part of the trail was being used very hard and everybody was really happy with it.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** When you say this part, the Ramcat part?
- Larry Adams:** Yeah, the Confluence to Ohiopyle part. We extended the part clear into Confluence so it would pick up the Corps of Engineers...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** The campground?

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- Larry Adams:** ...campground. But, we did it in two parts. We were held up by this land exchange thing which had to go through the legislature and that took years. In fact, that part didn't even get finished until I left here. But, we built up to there where it comes out on the...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Ramcat Road?
- Larry Adams:** ...Ramcat Road.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, okay.
- Larry Adams:** We built up to that point. So, it would facilitate people using the Corps of Engineer's campground to be able to be on the trail. And, people who wanted to go up to Confluence to ride up there and have lunch, or go up to the ice cream place and have an ice cream cone and come back.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** So, that was the second part of the trail that was built was that portion from Ramcat to Confluence?
- Larry Adams:** Actually, the High Bridge would've been the second part. That was after that.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** The High Bridge was the second part and then from Ramcat to Ramcat Road, the Youghiogheny was the third part, okay.
- Larry Adams:** Yeah, Mm-hmm.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** I didn't realize that. And, you did that right to Ramcat Road, and then from Ramcat Road and then from Ramcat Road, it goes through the Turkeyfoot, the club?
- Larry Adams:** Yeah.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, so now we've got Confluence to the High Bridge.
- Larry Adams:** Well, it stayed at that point for a while. We kept maintaining and improving the road down below. We kept using our arrangement with the township to get that closer to being

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ready to do a completed trail. But, money and initially there wasn't that much pressure, but then pressure started building from Connellsville. Dave Tremba down there – I think the Chamber of Commerce guy – he was Hank Parke's equivalent down in Confluence.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay.

**Larry Adams:** And, he started pushing to get the trail down there. We worked at that a while, and it took some time because there were some problems down there. There's a big bridge down there at Kimmel's Junk Yard. But, it's down in...

**Paul G. Wiegman:** I guess that's where Dunbar Creek comes in.

**Larry Adams:** Yeah, down in there. There was some problems down there with that and down around the water plant and all down there. And, of course, some of that land acquisition for a trailhead down there. That took place later, and I can't really tell you any more on what the timeframe was on that, but I remember going down there with John Oliver from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and surveying that stuff and in the planning process. And, that was all acquired over the timeframe that I was here. And, we kept the trail in pretty good shape in terms of keeping the vegetation trimmed back, and keeping it grated at least for emergency traffic anyway. And, but as far as building with putting the finishing touches on it as a bike trail down there – we had it tied into some of our other trails – the Jonathan Run Trail, the Beach Trail, Grey Gorge Trail – and it was easy to walk on and so on. But, that ballast wasn't ideal for bikes although lots of mountain bikers did ride down through there but not like you would see here.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** I road it once to do some plant surveys around Jonathan and Sugar Run on the rocks. I think that's double hydraulic rapid down there.

**Larry Adams:** Yeah.

## VIDEO INTERVIEW – LARRY ADAMS

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**Paul G. Wiegman:** And then, road down and road back. By the time I got back, I didn't want to see another mountain bike for a very long time. That was pretty rough.

[Chuckle]

**Larry Adams:** Well, you know, some mountain bikers are tougher than others.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Well, they're certainly tougher than I am.

**Larry Adams:** That hardcore mountain biker thing is not for me. That's sort of...

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Now, you went to Bruner Run at one point because that's the takeout for the rafters and you were able to- if someone took a bike down there, were they able to take a bike out at that point with the ride with the buses or did people just ride down and ride back?

**Larry Adams:** You know, that part of the trail was actually completed after I left here in '89.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** After you left?

**Larry Adams:** Yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** And so, that would've been completed when Doug was...

**Larry Adams:** When Doug Hoehn was here, yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** When Doug Hoehn was here, okay.

**Larry Adams:** It was ready to put down the fine stone and finish the trail, but taking bicycles out at Bruner Run was a logistical problem of some consequence. We didn't really want to do that.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** When did you leave the park?

**Larry Adams:** '89, the fall of '89.

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- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, so let's get a couple dates. We began here at Ramcat at '80...
- Larry Adams:** Three.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** '83.
- Larry Adams:** And, I worked at Ohiopyle, I think, was completed in '85.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Was '85?
- Larry Adams:** As best I can remember anyway. I don't have the records and stuff anymore, but I think that's...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And, the bridge must've been done in '85.
- Larry Adams:** It was done in about that time, yeah.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Because I just did some research on some of the plant surveys that I did back on the Youghiogheny River, and they were done in '85, and I know I rode across the High Bridge at that point. So, that must've been done in '85.
- Larry Adams:** It was done there and raked about that same time, I think, yeah.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** So, when you left the rest of it from the High Bridge to Bruner Run was ready to finish but it was not finished?
- Larry Adams:** Right.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, so we go on from there. And, it was finished to the Turkeyfoot Club and take the road from there.
- Larry Adams:** Right.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** You obviously persevered through this. I mean, you just didn't sit back and say, "Well, it can't, nobody is really interested." Why?

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**Larry Adams:** That's my nature. I like to see things get done. As far as the park, if there's things that are to be done sometime in the park – okay, let's do them. Plus, I like biking myself. I've always liked biking. I like biking, hiking, anything in the out of doors, in fact. So, putting in this launch area here so it would facilitate canoeing, those kinds of things. That's the kind of stuff I'd want to do and to me, that's what parks are all about. Parks are for people. People want to do things and all. A park as opposed to like a state forest or something where it's a lower density kind of use, and less development, and all that. When people come to a park, they expect some amenities, they expect a certain level of safety, and so on.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Right.

**Larry Adams:** And so, that's my basic philosophy on it – I've been an outdoorsman since I was a tiny kid. And, I think the better experience people have when they come to a park, the more they enjoy themselves, the more they'll support preserving open space, and outdoor activities and pursuits for everybody. Many people that come to the park, they may only do this kind of thing once or twice a year. I'm doing it every week, every day, and so are lots of other dedicated outdoors people. And, I can operate in completely on developed land and be perfectly happy.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Mm-hmm.

**Larry Adams:** But, a lot of people, you put them completely undeveloped land, and the bugs get them, the snakes get them, the bears get them, they're lost immediately. And, the parks are the place to get those people out of the doors and be able to have a little bit of support in structure to their activities so they can enjoy themselves. And, a trail like this is just great for everybody – old, young, families. Even folks that aren't in full command of their faculties, facilities and are physical. You can get little three-wheeler bikes, and little reclining bikes, and all kinds of stuff.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Right.

## VIDEO INTERVIEW – LARRY ADAMS

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- Larry Adams:** People in wheelchairs can get up and down a trail like this without any problem. That's everybody and they enjoy the out of doors.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Now, since you've retired from the parks, you've become involved in the trail again?
- Larry Adams:** Yes. Yeah, I've went to a couple other parks where I did trail work and built bike trails in Pinchot and maintained bike trails at Moraine which was already there when I get there and I improved it. And so, before I came here, I was involved with bike trails also. I had two of them in – when I was down along Susquehanna River at Shikellamy – I had one paved and one gravel. And so, it's not anything new to me.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** That leads another question. What was the first bike trail in the state park? Oil Creek was or was this one?
- Larry Adams:** I wouldn't think – no. I wouldn't think so.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Because you ...
- Larry Adams:** I had two bike trails in state parks before I came here at Shikellamy and Milton Island along the Susquehanna River.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Were they rail trails?
- Larry Adams:** Neither were rail trails. No, they were just one was a gravel trail like this that went around the parameter in Milton Island and an island that Susquehanna River near West Milton. And, the other was a paved trail that went around Shikellamy Moraine State Park. It just followed the area.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Was Oil Creek the first rail trail?
- Larry Adams:** I don't know that I could say what the first rail trails. There were trails in some of the eastern parks before that, but I'm not that familiar with the eastern parks.



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- Paul G. Wiegman:** I'll have to look into that. One other thing we should mention, and some of the sound that we hear in the back is – finally after 22 years – or I shouldn't say finally. You built a trail with improvised equipment that lasted 22 years.
- Larry Adams:** And, they're doing some repairs and adding some additional stone, and ...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** For the first time in 22 years.
- Larry Adams:** Yeah, well we occasionally- there were natural events – bad storms and things – that caused little problems. We fixed them as we went. We didn't just let it go.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** But, this is the first complete resurfacing that takes place?
- Larry Adams:** Yeah, for sure.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** You didn't do a very bad job. Pretty good for a 22-year-old trail for...
- Larry Adams:** I'm happy with it.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** For a rookie building trail.
- [Chuckle]
- Larry Adams:** Right. At that time, I didn't really have any experience building this kind of trail very much. I had a little experience of rebuilding the ones at Milton Island that was similar to this trail. It was built by a contractor, but the Susquehanna River is a pretty nasty river, and it flooded that island a lot of times. So, when it did this trail went away.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, really?
- Larry Adams:** Oh, yeah, you rebuild it completely pretty much afterwards.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Now, let's go back to – now you're involved in the trail again?

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**Larry Adams:** Yeah, sure. Well, when I retired in '99, we always wanted either... we had two goals. We liked this area of Pennsylvania. We'd been out here a good many years between Ohiopyle and Moraine. We liked the outdoors, liked the environment here, liked the idea of the bike trail. So, we looked for a house either in southern Somerset County near the trail, and also our criteria had to be near some other public lands that would be available, or we were also looking in Tioga County up in the north central part of the state along Pine Creek.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Along Pine Creek?

**Larry Adams:** Where there's also bike trail. And, I went up there and done a program about our trail here trying to convince those people up there that was a good idea because they didn't think it was a good idea up there either, initially.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** That seems to be the case at the beginning for all bike trails.

**Larry Adams:** It's a pretty nice idea now. But, it just turned out that we found the place that [inaudible 0:41:13.4] here. And, up Pine Creek – this is really my home stomping grounds, really, because I had grew up not far from there.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** So, you came back to Somerset County and got involved with the Somerset County...

**Larry Adams:** Somerset County Parks and Recreation Board, and our main job is to maintain the Laurel Highlands Trail or the Somerset County portion of The Great Allegheny Passage.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Great Allegheny Passage, right. How much of that was built when you got onto the board?

**Larry Adams:** It was built from – the part from Rockwood to Garrett was done about down to Markleton there. I think they were working on the Fort Hill part maybe and up near Meyersdale. It's not totally, totally finished yet but it's very close. And, we only live about probably a mile from it.

## VIDEO INTERVIEW – LARRY ADAMS

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**Paul G. Wiegman:** So, you will see an opening of next year of that portion all the way to the state line, and on towards Cumberland, and...

**Larry Adams:** Yeah, it's really a good feeling to see the whole concept done basically.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** That's my question. How does that feel...

**Larry Adams:** I think it's great. I think it's just great. I mean, I don't think people just like the trail here initially. I don't think people realize what the potential would be. I don't think the people realize the potential of this completed trail, particularly once it has a good unified maintenance plan in support facilities along the way. I don't think people realize what the potential of this trail will be in the future. It'll be outstanding.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** You see it?

**Larry Adams:** Yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Where do you see the potential?

**Larry Adams:** I see a lot more people on it than you see now, lots of tourism, lots of bed and breakfasts, lots of restaurants and things along the trail, some primitive camping areas for Boy Scout groups, and church groups, and things like that, and youth groups. And, but not only that, it's a great resource for all the local residents as well. And, it's not targeted to any one group of people or any one level. I mean, you can ride the trail rich or poor. You can ride the trail little or big. It's something for everybody and that was one of my guiding things the whole time I was at Ohiopyle was that whitewater boating was the big attraction, but it's very limited in the people that it can reach whereas this trail would give something to everybody and make the park a lot more important to all the local folks could make a use out of it rather than just to whitewater boaters.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Good. Thank you very much. Do you have anything else you'd like to...?

## VIDEO INTERVIEW – LARRY ADAMS

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**Larry Adams:** Hey, just...

**Paul G. Wiegman:** How about a- what's been the high point?

**Larry Adams:** The high point?

**Paul G. Wiegman:** What's really the highest point of this?

**Larry Adams:** Well, for me, I don't know if I could point to any one thing. I'm not usually one to pick out one particular thing. But, just getting this trail in the ground and seeing people accept it and really want it. And, that was good enough for me. That's the only thing that I've ever tried to gear my activities as a park manager to is make the folks come out to the park, enjoy the facility and be supportive of it and be happy in the way that it's being managed – rather than sometimes you get these controversies where things are too restrictive. And, people can't- it doesn't meet the needs of the whole community. And, I think this park became a lot more of a community-type park. A lot more of a family-oriented park with the addition of the trail. So, you know?

**Paul G. Wiegman:** What was the toughest part?

**Larry Adams:** The toughest part? The toughest part was being in high-profile parks, which is this one, and Moraine State Park is another, and back east when I was in Pinchot – it's that way. The toughest part is always dealing with all the conflict among different users and the political influence, and you've got- then, of course, you have a whole group of technical people, and consultants, and stuff working in Harrisburg.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, sure. Every- yeah.

**Larry Adams:** Everybody that...

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Which you didn't have when you began.

[Chuckle]

## VIDEO INTERVIEW – LARRY ADAMS

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**Larry Adams:** No, in fact, that High Bridge down there. You would think, “Oh, engineers would have to design that.” Yeah, well my maintenance supervisor, and we designed it. We built it in 20-foot segments because that’s what the size of steel came in. We built a couple of nodules so to speak and put them on there. I contacted Harrisburg and I said, “Hey, this thing is too big a project for us to just do this by ourselves. Send an engineer out here and have them tell us whether what we’re doing is going to be safe and meet the needs of what we are.”

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Sure.

**Larry Adams:** But, and he came out and took a look at it and said, “Hey, it looks great. Finish it up.” So, we built that trail for, I think, something like \$72- or \$77,777, or built that bridge decking for \$72- or \$77,000.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Wow.

**Larry Adams:** Yeah, if you have a contractor do it, you would be looking at a million-dollar contract.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Easily, easily, easily.

**Larry Adams:** Yeah.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** Very good, thank you.

**Larry Adams:** You’re welcome.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** That’s exactly what people are going to want to hear in 100 years from now.

[Chuckle]

**Larry Adams:** I hope. I’m not sure what the value of it will be then, but the trail, I think, will still be a great value to the people.

**Paul G. Wiegman:** I’m sure it will.

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**Larry Adams:**            Yeah.

[End 0:48:28.0]

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