

## **David G. Brickley**

David G. Brickley was born in Albany, New York on February 18, 1944. Following graduation from high school in Rochester, New York, Brickley attended Pennsylvania State University, graduating with a degree in business. After spending four years in ROTC at the university he was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the United States Air Force. Brickley went on to serve in Turkey and Vietnam, where he was awarded the Bronze Star. He spent his remaining years in the Air Force as a Desk Officer for the Arabian Peninsula with the Defense Intelligence Agency, resigning in 1973. Brickley later went on to obtain his law degree from the George Mason University School of Law.

David Brickley first ran for the House of Delegates in 1973, losing that election by a narrow margin. He then served briefly as Assistant County Executive in Prince William County. In 1975, Brickley again ran and subsequently won the election for the Virginia House of Delegates along with fellow delegates Earl Bell and Floyd Bagley – often referred to as “the Three B’s.” Brickley went on to serve over two decades in the General Assembly. During his tenure he is credited with being the primary supporter of key pieces of legislation such as the creation of Leesylvania State Park and the establishment of the Virginia Railway Express.

Brickley left the General Assembly in 1998 and was appointed as the Director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, a role he served in until 2002. He continues to serve on multiple committees and boards, most notably the Prince William County Trails and Blueways Council and the Prince William County Historical Commission. He is widely acknowledged as a prominent advocate for the establishment and protection of numerous regional and local trails including the September 11<sup>th</sup> National Memorial Trail, the Neabsco Boardwalk, and the Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail.

David Brickley currently resides in Woodbridge, Virginia and has three children and four grandchildren.



Image 1: David Brickley, May 3, 2024

## Transcription of Oral History Interview with David Brickley (May 3, 2024)

**Interviewee:** David Brickley (DB), Former State Delegate

**Interviewer:** Lauren Maloy (LM), Prince William County Office of Historic Preservation

**Friday, May 3, 2024 at 11 am**

**Interview Location:** David Brickley's home in Woodbridge

\*Please keep in mind that this document is a verbatim transcription of the spoken word rather than a written document.

**LM:** Ok, so my name is Lauren Maloy. I work for Prince William County Office of Historic Preservation, and today I'm interviewing David Brickley at his home in Woodbridge on Friday, May 3rd, 2024. Can you please state your name and spell it for the recording?

**DB:** I'm David Brickley. Middle initial is G, B-R-I-C-K-L-E-Y.

**LM:** And when and where were you born?

**DB:** I was born in Albany, NY on February the 18th, 1944.

**LM:** What are the names of your parents?

**DB:** Parents are Nancy, Comrie was her maiden name, Brickley and Earl Melvin Brickley.

**LM:** And what did your parents do for a living?

**DB:** My mother worked for the state of New York. And uh my father worked originally - well, let me backtrack if I can. When he was a young boy, his father worked on the Pennsylvania Railroad in the railroad yards in Avis, Pennsylvania. A-V-I-S. And when my father was about 8 years old, his father, going between two cars, got caught between the couplings when they came together. And that was, you know, he was dead. Dead immediately. It was at, like, 5:00 in the morning with a fog, very sad. And back then, there was no safety net, so my father ended up basically dropping out of school and being the support with his mother for the other, for himself and his, uh, other three siblings, so he had a very rough childhood. He ended up working for the Pennsylvania Railroad, went up to, uh, New York and worked for the New York Central Railroad. And then he worked for the American Locomotive Company in Schenectady, New York, which is right next to Albany, New York, which is where I was born building locomotives during World War II. They were building tanks. And they continued building tanks as well as locomotives in the Korean War. But when the Korean War was over, uh, American Locomotive Company, or ALCO, as it was called, didn't catch up with the technology going from steam engines to, uh, diesel engines and the, the, the company finally shut down. So he ended up trying to figure out what to do and ended up in Rochester, New York working for the New York Thruway Authority. And so I was born in Albany. I went to Rochester, NY to start high school. And uh, and that's how I was there before I continued on with whatever I was going to do. I mentioned that only because, as you know, I've got a little interest in the Virginia Railway Express. And so I think I come by my railroad genes in --- position of, of some knowledge.

**LM:** Absolutely. I didn't know you had that kind of background.

**DB:** Yeah. (Laughs)

**LM:** Well, and that, I think you just explained my next question, which is talking a little bit about your childhood and if you lived in the same place growing up, um, other than past high school, what was your educational background, background?

**DB:** Uh. After high school in Rochester, I went to graduate from Monroe High School in Rochester, which, ironically, I look back and tell everyone here. Uh, I would tell my parents when they would ask me to come up and they were alive to visit them I'd see them in the one weekend in August when it wasn't snowing, and I mention that because I never had a day off for snow in four years of high school in Rochester, New York. Not one single day. And in Virginia, if it looks like there might be a snowflake, the, the school will shut down. So. So I said, well, I'm not going to live up in Rochester, it's a lovely city. But I did my undergraduate work at Penn State at Happy Valley in State College, Pennsylvania and had a fantastic time. And then at the end of my four years there, I was with ROTC back there because Penn State was a land grant university, it was mandatory for all male students then, and Ohio State and so many others to do your first two years - and Virginia Tech - you do your first two years of ROTC. And then you've got the option of continuing on. Well, I enjoyed it because I was an old Boy Scout and Eagle Scout and very much involved in scouting. Still am to this day and uh ended up doing the next two years. And so when I graduated, I graduated with a degree in business but was commissioned a second Lieutenant in the in the military, in the Air Force.

**LM:** Ok. And how did you meet your wife? And can you talk a little bit about your family?

**DM:** Sure, I met my first wife, her name was Linda, Linda Dell, lived in, she lived in Pennsylvania, in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, and we dated in college. So uh, and had a good time. Lovely, lovely gal. Ended up when I got my orders, uh, they were to Turkey and really funny story I tell all the time is I called up my mother and I said, "mom, I've got, I've got my orders. It's very far away." And she said. "Oh no. You're going to California, aren't you?" I said "no, mom, I'm, I'm going to Turkey." "Turkey where?" "Turkey. Turkey, the country." "Well, you're not going to take it, David, are you?" As if I had any choice in the military. So when I got my orders, we got married quickly thereafter and I was there and she was a teacher, elementary school teacher. And then she joined me. This would be in 1966 I graduated from college in '65 so the beginning of 66 I got assigned to to uh, to the US Air Force with the it's called the, the United States logistical mission with Turkey. And then she came over and spent two years in the military in Turkey and the rest of the Middle East, I, uh did a lot of work in intelligence. I enjoyed it and, uh, like the Middle East fascinated me, so had a great had a great time for two years there.

**LM:** Ok. And, but you married again, is that -

**DB:** I did, Linda and I came to, to Dale City, uh, we, we originally looked at a house in Lake Ridge. Got ready to sign the contract. And the realtor showing me an estimate of closing costs. And I said, well, what are these closing costs? Because now I'm, I'm I'm an officer, but not making a lot of money. And he said well these are the costs you have to pay. Well, I said, you know, that guy Hylton

down the, down the street there at the at Dale City, they pay all your closing costs.<sup>1</sup> Well, it doesn't work that way here. That was the limit of my knowledge of of, of closing costs real estate at the time. So I said, well, I don't have the money to pay the closing costs. So I went and bought a house on Evansdale Road in Dale City and that was our first house and uh Dale City was just really getting off the ground. It started in 1968. This would have been in 19, end of 1969, the very beginning of 1970. I can't remember why and we bought that first house in in Dale City and moved in and moved here.

**LM:** Ok and you have children as well?

**DB:** Right, I've got children and I had two kids by or with Linda, one - Terri. Terri Michelle is now married and lives in Haymarket. Terri Michelle Shulkin and, and then a son, David Junior, who lives in, in Vienna. And so I'm blessed there and, uh, lived for 13 years. Had a great time, but we kind of, just sometimes it happens unfortunately, and we kind of went on divergent paths. We've got a, had an excellent relationship. We just decided that it would be better if we separated, which which we did and she moved back up to Pennsylvania. She much preferred a small town to what was happening in Northern Virginia and uh, and so we left in good times and we still spoke highly of each other until she passed away several years ago.

**LM:** Ok. Um, so well, you answered this, I asked when you first moved to Prince William County and where in Prince William County he moved to, which is Dale City. Uh, can you explain a little bit more about what community was like when you first moved?

**DB:** Yes, I can. I mean, it all started with the construction of, of I-95. 95 was built in sections. The Northern Virginia section was separate from the rest of I-95 in Virginia. If you look at the uh, the VDOT maps.

**LM:** You can keep going, sorry. Just making sure this is still going.

**DB:** Oh and, uh, it was called Shirley Highway, still is called Shirley Highway. The section in Northern Virginia. And when I-95 opened up there was an influx of young people with young families moving in in this what had been farmland just a short time ago into, into a new subdivision and C.D. Hylton was obviously the major developer in in Prince William County did a number of other subdivisions before Dale City, but it was his first planned, uh, community. And it started with Ashdale, Birchdale, and Cloverdale. He just did alphabetically in order and, and then right after that, Darby Dale and Evansdale and we moved into, uh, into Evansdale around, again right at the end of 1969 or 19 beginning of 1970 and it was a vibrant, fun place to live. Again, most people, because of the way that Hylton did the financing with no money down and so many of us had our GI bill that we used with a GI loan for, for the house. So it was just populated by young people. Uh, the community had very little resources. And that was one of the frustrations, that that's what got me eventually into politics. Ah. The county was very much controlled by, out of Manassas, Manassas was the county seat. It was not a city then. It was still part of the county. And we had two

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<sup>1</sup> Cecil D. Hylton was an influential developer in Prince William County, building homes for many of its citizens. Lee Hockstader, "The Quiet Tycoon of Prince William County," *Washington Post*, April 1, 1984. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1984/04/02/the-quiet-tycoon-of-prince-william-county/d3d936f0-cca8-43ee-b7dc-e32e18da27ea/>

supervisors here, one in Dumfries and one up in the Woodbridge, uh, Neabsco area, but the power was definitely in Manassas and so if, if we wanted things like a fire department, or recreation, the answer was “sorry, we just don't do that. You know, we, this is a a rural county that is forced to be growing by leaps and bounds and we're not prepared for it.” And so, uh, the Dale City Volunteer Fire Department was formed. The Dale City Civic Association was formed first back in 1968, 69. And we had the Dale City Fire Department, a volunteer fire department, had the Dale City Arts and Crafts club, had the Dale City JC's. Ah, ah, the Little League. And these were all just community gatherings and everybody was young and there wasn't an old person in the group. Look at me now. But it was a fun place to to live because we're all kind of starting out the same level and, and working on that upward mobility and trying to enjoy and and raise a family. So everybody on the street, we'd have parties, you know, at each other's houses and barbecues on Sunday or Saturday. And it was a lot of life. But we didn't have a lot of resources and then because the county was growing so rapidly and our transportation system was not prepared to handle this traffic, tremendous backups would happen, especially on 95 in the morning and the afternoon. And we wouldn't have any recreation facilities. So the Dale City Civic Association really blossomed and for all purposes, it was the governing body for Dale City, because there wasn't anybody else to, to uh help and we became a very powerful organization. It was, in its heyday, I started out as a council member. We had three council members from each dale - Evansdale had three, Ashdale had three, et cetera. And then I became first vice president and then in 1971, I think, I became president of the Civic Association. We ended up having our own newspaper, the *Hillendale*. We had our own cable TV show. We had thousands of members and it was a political giant as far as advocating for the needs of, of, of Dale, of Dale City. Primarily transportation, but the other was, we needed more recreational facilities for all these kids and young people that are here. And so we couldn't get support from the county for that. So we ended up using sanitary district legislation that the state offered, which is really for building sewers and and water plants and things like that. But it could be used for other purposes. So we ended up having Dale City approve under referendum a bond to build the Dale City Rec Center. That's the only reason or how it got built was we took it upon ourselves and we had to add a couple of cents extra to our tax base and real estate bill that we got every year to, to build the, the Dale City Rec Center, which is now named for Sharon Baucom, who was a wonderful person.<sup>2</sup> She was chair of the of the authority, Sanitary District Authority, and was my, was my vice president, with, with DCCA.<sup>3</sup> DCCA was abbreviation for Dale City Civic Association and so that's how we did that. To get out of Dale City in the morning you had to have a stop - you had to go up at a stop light, take a right. It was just a zoo and then the same thing happened and I've got photographs which I can be glad to show you downstairs.

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<sup>2</sup> Sharon Baucom: <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/PWC-Parks-Hero---Sharron-Baucom.html?soid=1102532390842&aid=ZskUIOLD4hA>

<sup>3</sup> Dale City Civic Association: <http://www.dalecitycivic.org/>



Image 2: 1973 photograph of Dale City traffic. Courtesy of David Brickley.

**LM:** I'd love that. (overtalk)

**DB:** In fact, I will - remind me. Of the traffic just backed up. And so, we went and I said we've got to start doing a lobbying effort with our elected representatives. So we, uh, talked to our our, our, our state representatives and sent letters to Doug Fugate, who was the Commissioner of Transportation.<sup>4</sup> Back then he was a real power within, within Richmond. He - little bit different now than it was back then, but he really controlled things. And then with our national representatives, with US Senator Spong.<sup>5</sup> And Senator Harry Byrd Junior.<sup>6</sup> Uh, and that's what got me into politics. So in 1972 I resigned my commission, uh, from the military and where I was when I came back, uh, I served in Vietnam for a year. Came back from Vietnam. Uh, in '69 and that's when we moved to to, to, to Dale City and I spent from '69 through '73 as the desk officer for the Arabian Peninsula for the Defense Intelligence Agency, which went hand in hand with my previous work in the military in the Middle East. So I'd go to, all over the Middle East, it was a fascinating job

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas Fugate was Virginia's state highway commissioner from 1964-1968. Bart Barnes, "Douglas Fugate, Ex-Chief of Roads in Virginia, Dies," *Washington Post*, December 12, 1988.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1988/12/13/douglas-fugate-ex-chief-of-roads-in-virginia-dies/828f3e02-a8cb-4969-9082-410f13dead6e/>

<sup>5</sup> William Belser Jr. Spong, 1920-1977: <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/spong-william-belser-jr-1920-1997/>

<sup>6</sup> Harry Flood Byrd Jr., 1914-2013: <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/byrd-harry-flood-jr-1914-2013/>

and then continued when I was with the Defense Intelligence Agency, which was, which was up in Arlington at the time. And we had carpool #1 for the Defense Intelligence Agency, which was all my colleagues from, from Dale City. And we'd take turns being the driver and it worked out very well and had great great friendships, but I ended up, which I would never do now in 1000 years, but I ended up, after talking to Linda, I literally resigned my commission as an officer. Ah, took a second trust out on my house. House prices were going outrageously crazy back then. You could literally, if you knew what you were doing, and I didn't necessarily know what I was doing, but you could buy a house with an extended settlement because the house hadn't been built yet and then hold it and flip it over and be able to make a 10 or 15,000 dollar profit without ever even having to live in it. Ah, and so I did own a couple of different houses. I went from Evansdale to Kerrydale, uh, and had two different houses in Kerrydale, actually had a third that I never, never lived in because I did do that flip. But I took a second trust on my house. Ah, and for five months I campaigned for the, for the Virginia House of Delegates. And back then, you had the remnants of the Byrd regime, which were not national Democrats. And they were more closely aligned to the Republicans. And, uh, I was completely apolitical. Just completely. My wife had, my wife, my mother had a colleague, a very good friend of hers whose last name was Sears, that she worked with in Rochester, New York. And said well, I don't know why you're doing this, David. This sounds pretty, pretty scary to me. But let me have your talk with Carol, Carol Sears, let me talk with, you ought to talk with her son, who's involved with the Nixon administration.<sup>7</sup> So I said great. So his name was John Sears. I believe he was counselor to the president. Ah, his mother talked to him, and then when I called up, he talked and we talked for a good, a good half an hour. And he said his advice was well, you've gotta go to the local county Republican party and see if they would support you for, for your bid, for the House of Delegates. Now at the time again, it was multi-member district. It included all of Prince William and all of Loudoun County, Manassas, Manassas Park, which are just towns back then. So it was 100 miles from the, the Potomac River to the West Virginia border. And, again, not knowing anything about party politics, I called him up and we had a great conversation. But he said go talk to the Republican party. So I did. But because of the transition that was going on with the Democratic Party between the national Democrats, which is where so many people in Dale City were, were a part of and the old guard, which were Byrd Democrats, the last vestige of segregation. Ah, there was a real, a real split. And the guys that were the incumbents were part of that old guard, uh, governmental organization and they didn't support, whole lot of things like roads and and highways and, again Harry Byrd Senior was pay as you go you don't even float bonds for transportation. And so I went and talked with whoever the chairman of the Republican Party was here. I don't remember who it was at all, and he was very nice, but they had no interest in anybody running as a Democrat against these other guys because they may still be running as Democrats, but they're really not Democrats, they're really Republicans. So that was when I first got a glimpse of what politics was like with a, with an R and a D. And so. I went to the local Democrats and said, hey, guys here, I'm a, you know, a Captain. I had a got the Bronze star in Vietnam, you know, I got a pretty good record here. I, Dale City has just become a real powerhouse. Uh, what do you think? And they opened and said, "come on! We love you!" And so, so and and the Democrats held all the offices back then in

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<sup>7</sup> Note: Carol Sears was John Sear's wife, not mother. Sear's mother was Helen Mary (Fitzgerald) Sears. "John P. Sears, a Republican political strategist who worked for Richard M. Nixon and Ronald Reagan and was fired by both, died on Thursday in Miami." Kathryn Q. Seelye, "John Sears, Strategist for Nixon and Reagan, Dies at 79," *New York Times*, March 27, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/27/us/politics/john-sears-dead.html>



the county, but again, you had that transitional split, that crossing the border that was just at an amazing time in Virginia politics. And so I ran and I knocked on doors. My slogan was, I was at a reception last night or reminded somebody that my slogan was, "Now it's your turn." And, uh, couldn't find a Democrat to run with me in Loudoun County. They're only three seats. But I was the only Democrat. You know and I'm from eastern Prince William. And by the way, back then, there was a real, which side of the tracks are you on? Are you on eastern Prince William or western Prince William or lower Prince William and Prince William? There was a real, a real interesting thing to happen, and so I knocked on doors. For literally five months straight. When I, when I, it's a funny story, when I had sent in my application to, to run, you've got to pay your filing fee with a with a clerk of the court. And so I paid my filing fee. Uh. And then I get this call the day before the deadline for filing from the clerk of the court, from the Loudoun County and Loudoun was very much in the old Byrd regime back then. Very much so. And he said we're not, we're not accepting your filing fees because you didn't pay it here. So, I said, well, you know, I paid the darn thing and I got the receipt here from Prince William County, it's got the whole amount, didn't say anything about that. And he was adamant. And so I talked to, to one of the attorneys that I, that I knew as I was campaigning here, I knew more and more people in the, especially with the Democratic party. And he didn't think that was right. And so I finally called up - we're going back and forth and not making any progress - so finally that day, the deadline. The deadline. I say "fine. I'm taking you to court and I'm going to get more publicity out of this than you can possibly imagine." He calls me back five minutes later, or actually probably later because that, because it was after 5:00 now. So the 5:00 deadline had expired and he said. "Okay, you get it to me by midnight tonight. And I'll accept it." So five of us piled into this old station wagon that I had, one guy in the back seat was smoking a cigar. Uh. He lost his cigar. We are traveling as fast as we can to get to Leesburg or to find out where his house is. We didn't, he wouldn't tell us where his house was, but we found out where his house was, it was in a, outside of Leesburg proper. And, guy dropped his cigar, there was smoke in the back of my car, the funniest darn thing. I mean we're, we're laughing, but we're racing there, we get to where his street is. We see once, and now it is literally 11:50, 11:55 at night. We see one set of houses that have lights on it. And so didn't think it was right, but we knocked on the door and we asked where his house was. And he said, oh, he lives two doors down, dark as could be. I mean, there wasn't a light on in the place and we go and we rush up there, knock on the door, "here's your check." And I felt like, you know, Cinderella at 12:00. And it was the funniest darn thing. So we made it on the ballot, uh, great campaign. Uh. I went in to, there was a group called the Young Americans for Freedom.<sup>8</sup> By the way, am I talking too much or not?

**LM:** You're not. No, this is perfect.

**DB:** Uh, there was a - the Young Americans Freedom, for Freedom - I don't even know whether they, if they still exist or not, but were having at one of the hotels in Manassas a candidates night for Republicans for the House of Delegates, and I wasn't invited. We said, well, the hell with it, you know? So I just found out when it was and I went. And they had to let me in and I got to talk. And

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<sup>8</sup> "On September 11, 1960, a group of conservatives gathered at the home of William F. Buckley, Jr. in Sharon, Connecticut, to form what would become the Conservative Movement's most influential group of activists: Young Americans for Freedom." The group continues to operate as a project under Young America's Foundation: <https://yaf.org/news/young-americans-for-freedom-celebrates-60-years/>

and and did that and because I was in the military, I mean, I had better military credentials than anybody did there and pro well, et cetera, et cetera. So I mean I felt qualified to speak before them and the, this is the youth entity of the Republican Party back then. And so I thought I had a pretty good a pretty good reception. Bu the funny thing was, was that the *Journal Messenger* newspaper, because we had two newspapers back then, the *Journal Messenger* of Manassas, the *Potomac News* out of Woodbridge. The *Journal Messenger* newspaper couldn't cover that event. She was in the area, but she was covering something else, so she left her, her recording machine on and said to them "look, I'm just gonna leave this here so I can get the whole debate and we'll I'll pick it up later." Fine. The group next to her, I guess that's where she was, the next setting, and I, I don't know to this day what, what group it was. But they had a speaker. And when the speaker was over, they all clapped loudly for applause. So it happened to coincide with when I concluded my talk. And when she listened, when, it was the female reporter, a great gal, too, she really was. Uh, when she turned it back, her byline was, the story was, "Brickley speech was interrupted by applause," (laughing)

**LM:** (Laughing) Oh no.

**DB:** That made the *Journal*, you know, that made the *Journal Messenger*. What a great, great thing. But it was, you know, I was dumb as a, whatever back then to mortgage in my house and and not even have a job for five, for five months. But it was a wonderful, wonderful experience. Ended up the election came, had a 2000 vote majority out of Prince William County. Uh, the the newspaper stations were saying that Brickley has upset the, uh, I believe one of the members, whoever would have been of the, of the current General Assembly out of Virginia, of the three members from Prince William and Loudoun. But then, when Loudoun County did hand ballots, when it came back again, they got this young kid from, from eastern Prince William, not part of the Byrd regime, going against our boys, I lost by a couple hundred votes at the end.<sup>9</sup> So, I, I uh, I thought it was a great experience. Uh, I did several things. And uh, and, and enjoyed it. But Don Turner, who was one of the members of the Board of Supervisors, and that was back when we had what's called the Four Horsemen.<sup>10</sup> And you're familiar with that or not?

**LM:** I am, but you know, please go into it. Right, we'd love...

**DB:** Ok well, we had, the Four Horsemen, were, we had a 7 member board, so they controlled what was happening out at Manassas and they were part of the old guard. They didn't want to spend any money. They were more on, well, I liked it when it was really rural, and let's try to keep it that way. And so a new subdivision like Dale City was just something that they were sorry ever started to begin with and so because we're all young, upwardly mobile people asking for things that we think that any community ought to be provided. And so the press, somebody named the, the Four Horsemen. Ah. And it was very contentious, very contentious. Ah, and so this would be in, 74 now,

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<sup>9</sup> Brickley lost the 1973 election by less than 1,000 votes.

<https://historical.elections.virginia.gov/candidates/view/David-G-Brickley>

<sup>10</sup> Four supervisors on the Prince William County Board from 1972-1976 (Supervisor Winfield – Coles, Supervisor Turner – Neabsco, Supervisor Mauller – Brentsville, and Supervisor Doggett – Manassas) were known as "The Four Horsemen" for voting as a block and making massive changes to PWC government. Phillip Smith, "Riding Herd in Prince William County," *Washington Post*, January 29, 1984.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1984/01/29/riding-herd-in-prince-william-county/f8e03565-df30-41e1-9991-1df30c36e9bc/>

I think I'm looking at it, so basically this is after I lost in November of '73. Uh, Don Turner, who was the most, and he represented the Neabsco - but he was the most understanding of the four, because the other three were really had strong strong views on on what Prince William should be. They knew they had to improve their public relations, because their public relations were really down the dump. And he calls me up, he says, "David. We need, we've decided to get an Assistant County Executive. We've got one County Executive. And we'd like to have you be that person." And, I thought, my gosh, you know it's government and I, I I like government. So, that's why I ran, different way, it's on the administrative side rather the elective side, but it sounds good. So I ended up taking it and and enjoyed it. My office was where the old courthouse is, right next to where the old courthouse is right now in Manassas. And, and enjoyed it, the County Executive was named J.J. Salavara. He was a nice guy, but he had some problems, and, or issues or whatever. And the Board was not happy with him. So I think that was the other reason they brought me in because they just weren't happy with what was going on. So I ended up being the Deputy County Executive, was called Assistant County Executive, was the formal name. And thoroughly enjoyed it. I got to meet different groups and organizations, especially outside of, of the Dale City area. And I think they appreciated this young Assistant County Executive who's willing to sit down and talk with them and see how we can resolve the problem that they may be having. And then that was what what I'd like to do, uh, so, uh. I had a great time. I worked. We had Hurricane Agnes happening around that time, which just devastated the county. And, it especially, well the Town of Occoquan – my, my first campaign manager. This would be in '73, our '73 campaign. Was the manager of the funeral home in Occoquan. And as people are familiar with Occoquan, you've got your, on the Main Street, you've got your frontage for the stores and then it drops down to the riverbank below. So that literally you've got a basement which goes out to the floodplain level, basically to the river. And during Hurricane Agnes, the, it got so bad it went into the the funeral parlor and there were pictures in the *Potomac News* and others of the caskets from the funeral parlor floating down the Occoquan River. Just amazing. Destroyed the bridge. And also devastated the Cherry Hill area.

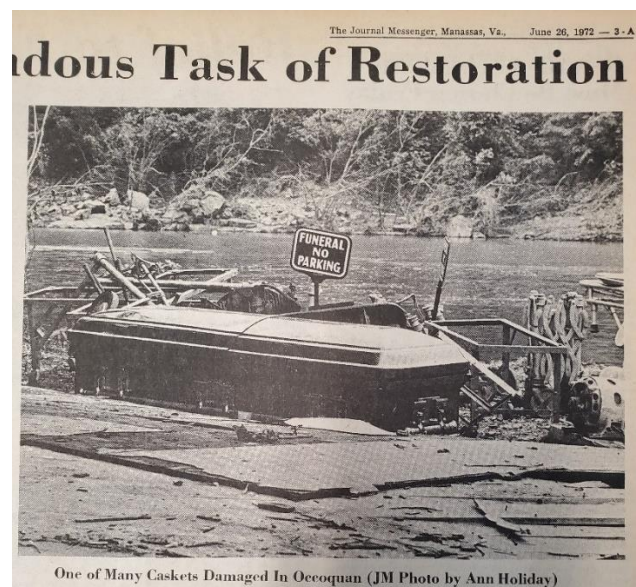


Image 3: One of the photos referenced in the interview of the floating caskets in the aftermath of Hurricane Agnes. *Journal Messenger*, June 26, 1972.

And this is where Paul Ebert, if he didn't tell you much about Cherry Hill, OK, well, he left out an important part of this part of the story. Paul Ebert not only being a great commonwealth attorney, was a good old boy in many, many ways, and Cherry Hill had the reputation which is where Potomac Shores is right now, had the reputation of, of being a place you didn't go to at night.<sup>11</sup> Because the Dents and others, the families were all intermarried, uh, had stills down there. And they made their living from either liquor or, primarily, fishing. And they they'd catch eels and bring them to France. I mean, they'd be shipped to France and all their nets and everything were just destroyed. And so one of the things that I had to do was I was in charge of the federal interface with working on trying to help our community with the, the, the, the devastation that Hurricane Agnes took. And so I met with them and there was certainly a wariness to begin with, probably on both sides. But, and, I told them that this isn't welfare. This is to help economic development. It gets you guys back on your feet so that you can raise taxes to pay and have an income, and everything, so with that understanding, they came in and we had a great relationship. And so I could go down to Cherry Hill at all times and never, and never think a second thing about it, which most people other than probably Paul Ebert - whose --- name is Chuck or Butch – could, could do. And it was just, it was just great. So. So that was fun. And we had a great a great relationship we had a member of the family that became a supervisor, as you know, for the Woodbridge District and she did a great job, married to a Dent, and had a great relationship there.<sup>12</sup> So I did that and two years later, since the House of Delegates is, are, elected every two years, I ran, I ran again. I resigned from the board as soon as I ran. But it was a much easier, easier campaign. And this time, ah, we had five members running in the Democratic primary rather than zero the last time. And it ended up being after the primary Brickley, Earl Bell from Loudoun County, who owned a Chrysler Plymouth dealership in, in Leesburg, and Floyd Bagley, who was a retired attorney out of, out of Dumfries and I think he may have been the town attorney back then.<sup>13</sup> I can't remember. Uh, and so we ran as a team and it was called “the Three B’s.” Brickley, Bagley, and Bell.<sup>14</sup> And, I was at a reception last night, and somebody yelled out “the three B’s!”

**LM:** (Laughs)

**DB:** And, and it was a kind of clicked, you know, it was kind of cute and so I, the election came and Stanley Owens, who was the chairman of the House Finance Committee and the President of Piedmont Federal Savings and Loan, which no longer is existing out of Manassas, ah, decided not to run.<sup>15</sup> He was a nice guy, older again, a senior member of the of the state legislature, but he could see the handwriting on the wall and he decided not to run. The other two did and they got defeated. And so the three of us were were elected in in November. And I can remember driving down the capital, all three of us and. We were, we were received with, with welcome arms. When the speaker

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Ebert was Commonwealth’s Attorney for Prince William County from 1967-2019.

<sup>12</sup> Hilda Barg served on the Prince William Board of County Supervisors as a representative for the Woodbridge District from 1987-2007.

<sup>13</sup> Earl Bell was elected to the House of Delegates in both 1975 and 1979 as a Democrat:

<https://historical.elections.virginia.gov/candidates/view/Earl-E-Bell>;

<sup>14</sup> Floyd Bagley “was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1974. As a delegate and one of the 'Three B’s' from the 23rd House District, he worked for the residents of Prince William County on a variety of citizen issues until 1985.” <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/legacyremembers/floyd-bagley-obituary?id=29668659>

<sup>15</sup> Stanley Owens served in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1960-1975.

<https://history.house.virginia.gov/members/9682>

of the House, uh, John Warren Cooke, whose father was a Confederate general in the Civil War, shows you how things can go.<sup>16</sup>

**LM:** Mmm hmm.

**DB:** You know, history's still there. When he read out the committees for, for membership by the by the delegates, he put me on the House Finance Committee, uh, which was a pretty unique thing to do for this freshman, that just never happened, but I think he did it in, in recognition of Stanley Owens, who was a very nice guy, by the way, very, very - they all were very personal. So you got to separate politics from, from personalities. So I just so I got on as a freshman in the House Finance Committee, which was -

**LM:** And what year was this?

**DM:** That would be 1975 was when I was elected, so it would be the 1976 legislature. And I served in the legislature for 22 years, 1976 first year and through 1998.

**LM:** Long time.

**DB:** Long time, 22 years. In fact, I am the longest serving continuous house member from Prince William County -

**LM:** Really?

**DB:** Since the House of Burgesses, actually before the House of Burgesses. I mean.

**LM:** Ok.

**DB:** Yeah. So one of the rare things to my name and I, I thoroughly enjoyed the, the House of Delegates, I enjoyed working with people. I like people. I like working on projects and I can remember, I was on a, one of the committees I was on was the Interstate Commerce Committee, which was kind of a fun committee because what you did was you worked with other states. And they'd always have nice places to go. I mean, you wouldn't have a convention where it wasn't nice, so it'd be nice places. And I ran into my counterpart because I was making, my first year, I was making \$5,400 a year. I think it had \$100 in expenses and everything else was on my own. I mean, pretty - Thomas Jefferson believed in a citizen legislature and that's where this came from. Ah, even to right now. If you look at what the current salary is of the, of the House of Delegates or the state Senate, compared to what the Board of Supervisors gets as an example -

**LM:** Really? (overtalk)

**DB:** There's a huge difference. And again, back then I was representing, representing the entire county of Prince William, the entire county of, of Loudoun County and then, then the cities, which just came into being at the same time, of Manassas and Manassas Park. So I'm starting out at little over \$5000, I'm running into my counterpart. This is a couple of years later. I guess maybe my salary was about \$8000 by then. Ah. My counterpart, who's the chairman of the assembly in New York

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<sup>16</sup> John Warren Cooke was in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1942-1979, his father was Giles Buckner Cooke, who served on the staff of Robert E. Lee. <https://history.house.virginia.gov/members/9319>

state as the chair of the health committee, my counterpart. And we just talk and I said by the way, how much do you make? He makes him like \$100,000 a year for a base salary, 15,000 because he was chairman of the, of a major committee. And he had a full complement of office staff and everything else. And I said, you know, I love you, Thomas Jefferson, but what's wrong with this picture? So just crazy. So you you had to always work another job unless you were independently wealthy, which I certainly was, was not. So I had during my 18, during my 22 years, I had a fantastic, fantastic time. I passed what I believe was some very significant legislation, which we can go into if you want, but elected school boards, which was, repudiation of what was still and the reason we never had elected school boards was because they wanted to keep the school segregated back in the 1947, when they yanked Arlington County's ability to have an elected school board, when they decide to integrate the schools. And it took me a long time to get that passed. Ah. And it was a definitely as that many years took to get it passed, it was a reflection of how Virginia was changing because getting south of, of Fredericksburg on down, actually south of Stafford probably back then, down. You had strong remnants of the Byrd regime and controlling by the courthouse of, of each of these localities, and they had no desire in the world to be opening up their schools even at this time, even though we had federal legislation and the Supreme Court and, and Eisenhower bringing in the troops and everything else, that was not part of their plan. And so I really was proud of of being able to have local option for elected school boards. And now I think all but one county allows, has elected school boards in their, as part of their ability, because we made it a local option to, to get it passed right then. Then the Virginia Railway Express, ah, we had a heck of time on that, it was the perils of Pauline. I put legislation in to, to study Northern Virginia commuter rail, and I happened to be on the the Washington Board of Trade as a legislative member, which happened to be a nice fit. So they supported that because obviously we don't have metro down, metro rail down here and it took a long time. And CSX and Norfolk Southern had no interest whatsoever in allowing us to use their trains for or use their track for, for trains, train service, regardless of what a good reason it was. And it took many, many years. I put all the legislation in, I was the chairman of the subcommittee in the General Assembly on it, and then I became chairman of the Virginia Railway Express and then in 1992 we finally had the opening, had the opening at the, the railroad station, near the, near the airport and Governor Wilder was the, the governor at the time. And I, I as chair presented him a a plaque and some other things, and in my remarks I said., "This is just a wonderful, wonderful day for our commuters. But I really won't be happy until the day happens when it is bidirectional so that people can go back and forth at multiple times because that, that's what really needs to happen." And here it is now. That was 1992, it's 2024 and we still don't have bidirectional and of course COVID shut things down and made it really hard on, on the, on all of our mass transits because of of people working at home rather than in their offices.

**LM:** Mm hm.

**DB:** But at some point in time, we'll, we'll have it. I did the major, first in the country, welfare reform legislation, which was copied all over the country. From there, I worked very closely with Don Beyer, who was lieutenant governor at the time, George Allen was, was governor.<sup>17</sup> Oh and he and I, well, he and Don and I weren't, weren't getting along that that well. Though he was a nice guy

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<sup>17</sup> Don Beyer served as lieutenant governor of Virginia from 1990 to 1998. [https://ballotpedia.org/Don\\_Beyer](https://ballotpedia.org/Don_Beyer)

and, ah, I can remember Don and I talking in the, in the capital, I said we're just getting down these negotiations. Look, Don, let's just call up the governor right now. So literally grabbed the phone at the capital and called up the governor, and we finally reached an agreement and got it passed and made the front page of the *Washington Post*. And it was significant piece of of legislation. Uh. The Leesylvania story that I, do we do that on tape or was that -

**LM:** We didn't, so I, I was hoping that you would. (overtalk)

**DB:** This is, yeah, this is a fun story.

**LM:** Make sure this is on. You can keep talking so,

**DB:** When, when I got elected to the General Assembly I elected, I came with our senator was campaigning with in 1975 with Chuck Colgan, Chuck Colgan was a member of the Board of Supervisors, owned Colgan Airways, and he was part of the three not part of the Four Horsemen and so. And he was from Manassas. What an honorable and, and wonderful person, I mean I, his ethics were as, as just as, just wonderful and a great guy to work with. I considered him my best friend in the General Assembly by far and one of my best friends overall because we just worked out really well.<sup>18</sup> He was 18 years older than I was, so he was kind of a mentor and of course I was working for him when I was Assistant County Executive, so we just got, really got along very well. And Chuck and I, Charles Colgan was Chuck, as he was called, was asked by Don, Don Curtis. Who lived in Woodbridge and Don was a descendant of the Lee family. Lee family's got a couple of different branches, but, Leesylvania was the home of one strong branch of the Lee family, and that's where Harry Lighthorse Lee lived, and his son was Robert E. Lee. But the property was acquired in 1634, I think it was, went up through the family. It's an interesting story. It really is. In fact, I'm writing a book on it right now. Fascinating. But it was just vacant land back then. So Don contacts us and says, "we've got this land here that really special, I'd like you to take a look at it." And so Chuck and I said, "yeah, sure, we'd like to do it." And even though I knew all about Cherry Hill, which was on the south side of Powells Creek, the north side, this peninsula is Leesylvania, which is divided between Powell's Creek on the south and the Neabsco Creek on the north, going into the into the Potomac River. I really wasn't – it was just vacant land. But there was talk about it being developed. And it could have been developed. And so he took us down there and Chuck and I just fell in love with it. Said, my gosh, this would be a great place for a state park, it was about 500 acres. So I write a letter to the then Commissioner of State Parks. And said "hey, we've got this land here in Prince William County. We don't have a whole lot of state parks in Northern Virginia as you know, and, what do you think? Wouldn't it be good for state park?" And he writes back. He writes back to us that, basically says thanks but no thanks. It's only got 500 acres, says it's too small for a state, state park. And again, as I've said, I think if I had five acres for a state park be fine for me in Northern Virginia and it's got this railroad running through the middle of it, the RFP, which is now the CSX. So thanks, but no thanks. So I thought, well, my gosh, you know, I'm a member of the

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Colgan served in the Virginia Senate for 40 years, from 1975 through 2015. Emily Langer, "Charles J. Colgan, longest-serving member of the Virginia Senate, dies at 90," *Washington Post*, January 3, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/charles-j-colgan-longest-serving-member-of-the-virginia-senate-dies-at-90/2017/01/03/cb94651a-cf68-11e6-a87f-b917067331bb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/charles-j-colgan-longest-serving-member-of-the-virginia-senate-dies-at-90/2017/01/03/cb94651a-cf68-11e6-a87f-b917067331bb_story.html)

House of Delegates. Well, I'm here to make things happen, so I put a bill in to make it a state park. And as we're working through this, it's owned by a gentleman, it's owned by the American Hawaiian Steamship company which is one of fifteen companies, approximately fifteen, owned by a gentleman named Daniel K. Ludwig. And so now we're talking about 1977, '78 period. At the time, Mr. Ludwig was the richest man in the world. He kept an extremely low profile, uh, press had no idea what he even looked like. Ah, but he was the richest man in the world, and it's a fascinating story to see how he made his first, how he grew up and made his first billion. It really is fascinating, but not part of this, this, this interview. And he would, when he had a project, he would hire the best people he knew to work on whatever that project happened to be, whether it be develop casinos in the Caribbean or or buying two million acres of land in Brazil to develop a plant to build paper because he thought there'd be a paper shortage. And I give a lot of credit to those really behind the scenes to one of the people that he hired, and I'm drawing a blank on his name right now, uh, was the former - George Hartzog was the former director of the National Park Service under Lyndon Johnson. And he is just esteemed and thought of in the highest regards by anybody in the National Park Service if you talk to them. I mean, other than the founder, he's the next guy on the totem pole as far as how they revere his, his legacy. So, but he retired from that and contacted George. And he liked the idea. And so he talked to Ludwig and Ludwig agreed with the idea, whatever that idea of how the acquisition would take place. And so we ended up doing legislation and this is how legislation is done, where we ended up acquiring it and paying 50% of it in cash and 50% of it as a donation for tax purposes for him, which he could offset for a number of his other investments. So it literally meant a dollar for dollar for him because he could use every, every donation he had, every tax credit, tax credit, not donation, tax credit. And we got the legislation passed. Uh. No one knew what he looked like. We had a, invited, he was invited to come down to Richmond, to the Capitol, the governor's office, for a bill signing ceremony then we'd have a luncheon at the Commonwealth Club afterwards. The Commonwealth Club heretofore had been an all-white Richmond men's club, where Doug Wilder served as a black waiter, which is so fantastic, you know? And now he's governor. But he was a member of the state Senate back then. And his secretary, he lived up in New York, he was in his late 70s by then, his secretary sent me a photograph of what he looked like. And he flew down commercially, economy class, from New York City down to the Richmond Airport. Now again, understand he could have owned the airport or the airline and the airport, but he - His electric razor in his penthouse in New York broke that morning. So when he came and when I met him, you saw this small, thin elderly man with a growth of beard. The press is down there, but they didn't know what he looked like and they didn't know I was down there. So I met him and he says to me, I introduce myself, he says, "David. Do you mind if I go and get a shave?" This is back when airports had barber shops.

**LM:** (Laughs)

**DB:** You know, not for me to tell him no? I said sure, go ahead because he told me the story about how his electric razor broke. So he goes and he gets a shave, I said. I'll just wait right here. And afterwards, when the press found out that he had done that, they went back and interviewed the



barber and they said “what was it like, shaving the richest man in the world?” And the Barber came back and said, “well, he sure didn't tip very well.”<sup>19</sup>

**LM:** Oh. (Laughs)

**DB:** So I drove him in my car, just he and I. No state police, no, nobody to the Capitol, went to the the, uh, the governor's office on the third floor and, and I'm drawing a blank, I, God. Who was the governor? I've served so many governors. I, I can picture, I just can't say a name right now, I will.<sup>20</sup> And we signed the bill. And press had a big thing and that was great. And then we had a luncheon afterwards at the Commonwealth Club and then we had had about 45 minutes dead time before I had to drive him back to the airport, Richmond Airport. So I said, would you like to see, I'll give you a tour of the Capitol, because this is Thomas Jefferson's design and it's the oldest Capitol in, in America, pretty good. He said, “I'd love to.” So I'm just giving around a a very personal tour to places that normally aren't open to the public, and we're talking everything else and he says to me: “David. I've been pretty fortunate in my life. I've done a lot of things. But I would give anything if I could live back in the time of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry and the American Revolutionary War.” I thought my God, what a, what a statement and it's just always stuck with me. That's - . So I drove him back and then he sent me a nice note afterwards and when I got back and uh, this was in '78 I guess?



Image 4: Washington Post newspaper clipping, March 31, 1978.

<sup>19</sup> “Ludwig, escorted by Virginia Del. David G. Brickey (D-Prince William) and former National Park Service director Hartzog, then headed for the governor's office where Dalton signed a bill accepting a gift from Ludwig of half the value of a 485-acre tract in Prince William County as a state park. The park, which contains the site of the birthplace of “Light Horse Harry” Lee, Robert E. Lee's father, will be free to the state under a federal matching formula.” Wilson Morris, “Last Billionaire Makes Rare Public Appearance,” *Washington Post*, March 31, 1978.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1978/03/31/last-billionaire-makes-rare-public-appearance/5d99760c-03c2-447a-939e-47920d83c9dc/>

<sup>20</sup> The governor in March 1978 was Gov. John Nichols Dalton: <https://www.nga.org/former-governors/virginia/>

It wasn't till '92 - Virginia works in slow ways sometimes, that we actually had the formal dedication with Governor Jerry Baliles, who Jerry and I were elected together.<sup>21</sup> Jerry was a Assistant Commonwealth Attorney or Assistant Attorney General and he ran for the office. So we both were elected in 1975 together. A good, good friend of mine. He's unfortunately passed away now. Uh, but he was governor and at the dedication, if you've ever seen any pictures of the, of the dedication with the - and everything. Well you, you've got, gotta have it. It's in the museum in there and we had the dedication. And it's just a beautiful state park. Third most populated now and I just love going down there and sitting by the the banks or taking a hike up on the bluff and, and it's a great, it's a great asset for Prince William County and then, later on, as you know, I've been involved with the Trails and Blueways Council for the county. Ah. And I love trails and greenways. I'll speak across the country on them and just love them. I own a trail down at King George County called the which is a story unto itself, if you've got time. Sad story, well, kind of, but it's a 16-mile abandoned railroad corridor that now I own personally, which is not something I had planned. And if we got time, I'll tell you about that.

**LM:** It's, it's on my questions, because I -

**DB:** Is it, okay? Well, we'll go into that then, because it's crazy.

**LM:** I recently ran a, a race on that trail.

**DB:** Well did you? Good!

**LM:** And it was beautiful. Yeah.

**DB:** Great, great. Well, I got to tell you about that then. So.

**LM:** Okay.

**DB:** And then I, I've been involved and I was involved with East Coast Greenway, which runs through Prince William County, was on the the governing board. And, and then I started up a group called the September 11th National Memorial Trail, which was signed by in the federal legislation by President Biden in 2021, which is just going gangbuster. So it's a 1500 mile trail connecting the three 9/11 sites and the idea is to never forget those heroes of 9/11 and, and also those heroes before and after that had to do with our freedom and uh, in what America should be all about. So we're, we're we've got a great partnership with the National Park Service and, and it's great. So, so I love trails and greenways and I'm meandering kind of a little bit here, right now.

**LM:** You're running very well through my question, so it's great.

**DB:** But, ok, so I've also hiked the Appalachian Trail -

**LM:** Oh great.

**DB:** Ok so. And I hiked part of the Don Beyer, our congressman, and in fact, Don is going to finish the Appalachian Trail this summer. And so I'm hoping to hike with him.

**LM:** Have you done the thru-hike?

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<sup>21</sup> Gov. Gerald Baliles, 1986-1990: <https://www.nga.org/governor/gerald-l-baliles/>

**DB:** That's. Yeah, I did well, but I didn't. I did in sections. I never had time to do, to take five - I took five months out of my life, running for office. I'd never take five months of my life doing doing the trail. I think it probably bored to death because I love the ambiance of, of getting off and going to B&B's. And you know, it's it's really, it's really fun. But I love the, I I love hiking and have have hiked all over the world so. What are we talking about now, so we're talking about, oh, so, so I enjoy the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. I, I signed legislation or signed MOU's on that. Ah, when I ended up working with with the Department of Conservation and Recreation and maybe I would have just go into that first.

**LM:** Yeah. What, um, can you tell me about your decision to accept that position?

**DB:** Yeah, I sure can. Uh, yes,

**LM:** And what year that was in?

**DB:** That that would have been in 1998. We had an election for governor and for the House of Delegates, I'd won again. And Jim Gilmore was a former Attorney General of Virginia, ran and won for governor as a Republican.<sup>22</sup> This was a stressful time in my life. Now I had since, my first wife, Linda, who we talked about, we separated in, gosh - late '70s. Ah, and then in 1982 if I get it right, terrible if I don't, uh I'm installing the officers of the Dale City Civic Association at the Dale City Fire Hall at Hillendale. And the supervisor who's sitting next to me...oh my gosh. I've got to think who that is. Or I'd tell you. This this terrible - still alive. He lives in Nellie's, Nellie's Fork or Nellie's, something like that. Off 81. Uh. Ohh my gosh, I will tell you before we finish, okay? I'll look up my Christmas list if nothing else. I see this cute gal probably about 15 rows back in in the, the dining room tables that they had set up. And I said, hey, who's that cute gal over there? They said, well, that's Lori, you're you're going to be installing her as an officer of Civic Association. And he yells out, "hey, Lori!" I mean, everybody looks up. "Come here!" And, and I met, I met her. We danced that night. I don't think we've ever danced since, because she hated the way I danced. But we danced that night.<sup>23</sup> And it was a love affair. And I'm going to tell you, in between, later on I did I got my law degree, figured since I was making the laws, I'll figure out what to do with them and I did matrimonial work, domestic relations, for probably 10 years. I practiced law for over 30. And, I finally, after 10 years, said I'm not doing that stuff anymore. They're all crazy, you know, I'll take a criminal who I know exactly where they are or in business or state work, things like that. But you know these things all end up bad. And I tell everyone when I do it, I'd be at the table, not this table, my table in my office. And I'd say, "Look. You guys can go from you're going to go from A to B, you can decide if you're going to go in a straight line or if you're going to go criss cross and back forth and everything else and all it's going to do is make the attorneys rich, and I'd give them a copy of the movie War of the Roses, War of the Roses, which you may have seen. It's a great movie where they start out nicely, and they end up killing themselves. And I said, "You don't want that. You're really don't." So, but I because it was so unique, had a love relationship, that, we were sweethearts and lovers from the day we met that night til the day she died in 19 or I mean 2021 of of

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<sup>22</sup> Gov. James S. Gilmore, 1998-2002: <https://www.nga.org/governor/james-s-gilmore/>

<sup>23</sup> According to Lori L. Brickley's obituary, the supervisor was Terry Spellane. "Lori L. Brickley," *Potomac Local News*, August 24, 2020. <https://www.potomaclocal.com/2020/08/24/lori-l-brickley/>

pancreatic cancer. So it was just something that doesn't happen. So rarely, it really was so. So I just, I have to get that in there.

**LM:** I'm glad you did.

**DB:** Yeah so, we ended up in and and and in marrying her. And what the heck was his name? So I I'm just drawing a blank. I'll think of it. So I'm really, going back and kind of meandering back and forth here, we're talking about the Neabsco, the - I'm, I'm involved with the East Coast Greenway. That's one of the ones I'm involved with. And it goes through Prince William County. And we're trying to decide where it should go, where Neabsco Creek is. And the staff back then wanted to kind of go down and, and follow the Potomac River through the two National Wildlife refuges because it starts up in from Fairfax, it starts crossing into the Occoquan in the town of Occoquan and the old, the old wooden bridge and then and then kind of going through Belmont and, and following down the riparian land going down there. And then their idea was to go and have it follow Neabsco Creek on the north, going west to Route 1, crossover Route 1 at the bridge there where the 7-11 is and then follow back down on the south side of Neabsco Creek to get back to someplace in the Potomac River. I said that is the dumbest thing in, in the world, and I'd remembered and showed pictures of what was called the Pochuck Boardwalk out of New Jersey and you had mentioned about when I had mentioned earlier about the Appalachian Trail, I remembered that, I said "what a great idea for Prince William County." So I brought it up to the Trails and Blueways council. They didn't like that one, they didn't, it passed by a vote of one. A majority of one. Go ahead and pursue it. And then I got a hold of Frank Principi, who was the Woodbridge supervisor, and Brendon and Frank first and talked to him and said, I want you to take a look at this.<sup>24</sup> Is it time to go?

**LM:** Nope just got a notification.

**DB:** Ok ok. Got Brendon Hanafin and we went went down and showed some people said "look, this is where it could be. We could do a boardwalk here. And it took some meandering and some twisting of arms, but everybody ended up agreeing, and it started, it took 10 years to build.

**LM:** Really. So can you tell me around what time, what time frame was this in?

**DB:** Well, we had the - it was probably opened - I can go back and look and I can follow up with you. Probably opened in in 19 or mean in 2021.

**LM:** Ok ok.

**DB:** Well, my wife, my wife died probably, no, probably 2020, I think. And so it would have been 10 years before that. It took that long to to to build. But it's, and then we hooked it up with Rippon. And it's become, I think, a stellar and major amenity for Prince William County and for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, which goes from 771 miles from Pittsburgh, PA, down to the Chesapeake Bay, Virginia's Chesapeake Bay, it is one of the finest boardwalks in the country, as far as I'm concerned. So we tie that in with Leesylvania. And now, and now I am meandering, we're working on the Powell's Creek crossing. And so, but that's, that's now. So, I did Leesylvania State

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<sup>24</sup> Frank Principi was the Woodbridge representative on the Prince William Board of County Supervisors between 2008-2019. Brendon Hanafin was the Division Manager for Prince William County Historic Preservation from 2001 – 2018.

Park and I look at it as a bigger picture than just the park. The park's great, but how does it fit in with the overall scheme of Prince William County, Virginia, cause I think Virginia's got, Prince William County's got the assets that from the Potomac River to the Blue Ridge Mountains that these other great counties don't have and we've just got to take advantage of it and that's why I love being on the Trails and Blueways Council and so Frank appointed me to begin with on that and then Margaret appointed me again and then just appointed me a second time.<sup>25</sup> So I like, I like working. I like working on projects I like. When I look back, I see that. And so. So during my years on the General Assembly - 22 years, I had to have an outside job it paid so poorly and I wasn't rich, so I worked as a, as a bond dealer to begin with, with Hornblower & Weeks - Hemphill out on Connecticut, on Connecticut Ave. which was an old Wall Street banking firm. Which was great if you had your screen in front of you between 10:00 and 4:00, but the problem is I have to start going down to Richmond for meetings. And so this wasn't working out at all. So I said, what can I do to make a living, and, because my real passion is the General Assembly, it's not working, working. I just got to find a job to pay for this, this experience. And so I ended up getting a job with a mortgage company. I remember the guy saying, do you have any, do you have any experience? I said no, I don't have any experience, but you know I've got a mortgage on my house and I did do bonds, so I understand the financial and now of my, my learning curve had excelled pretty, pretty well, and so I ended up doing that and I ended up becoming vice president very shortly of that small company. And then I started my own company and very successful in the mortgage banking field and that allowed me to to spend my time with my real avocation and vocation, which was the legislature. And so, so I did that. But the problem happened and here's where it got so so - in 1987, I'm just getting burnt out. Just physically burnt out. I'm spent. I am working 80 hours a week. This is crazy. And I decide to sell my mortgage company. And as it happened, not because I'm smart, but because sometimes luck runs in your favor, ah, I sold it. And three months later, the real estate market crashed. So I would have made 10 cents on the dollar if I even could have sold it, you know, let alone gone bankrupt. And so, I mean, just on of the great ironies, kind of that and my talk about the *Journal Messenger* tape recorder, I think some some things are going to happen –

**LM:** Serendipitous.

**DB:** Very serendipitous. You know and I said, you know, I enjoy making the laws, so maybe I'll go to law school and learn what that's all about. And I I knew that, but you know, so I went and applied to George Mason, and I ended up going to night school by and large. And although I kind of switched back between the day program and night program, depending on where the General Assembly was. And I got my law degree, I graduated in 1984, I think, from law school, from George Mason and I practiced law. I practiced law with the former chairman of the Board of Supervisors, G. Richard Pfitzner, who died unexpectedly of a heart attack in his bed at the age of around 44.<sup>26</sup> Very sad. And I do some, I've got some investments that I work on and it was working good and I

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<sup>25</sup> The members of the Trails and Blueways Council are appointed by the Prince William Board of County Supervisors. Brickley was originally appointed by Frank Principi (Woodbridge) and has continued his appointment under Supervisor Margaret Angela Franklin (Woodbridge).

<sup>26</sup> "G. Richard Pfitzner Dies at 48," *Washington Post*, June 3, 1994.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1994/06/04/g-richard-pfitzner-dies-at-48/fa6d9153-81fb-4008-86eb-0632ecfcb0af/>

enjoyed practicing law, you know, for a lot of years. But the problem that would happen is that I would have to keep on - because in Virginia, going back to that chairman of the House Health committee out of New York State. You're supposed to be in a citizen, part-time legislature, but it's not. And so I would be down every day, close to it, because I chaired the Health Committee, I was vice chairman of the House Finance Committee, served on commissions and everything else, and I'm down to Richmond – God, sometimes four days a week, just couldn't physically do it, I said. This is, God, and I've got a growing family. Lori and I had a had a a, a son together whose name is Justin Brickley and he's a teacher in Prince William County School system now, great guy. And he lives in Manassas. So I've got all three of my kids right now, wasn't always that way, living in in the area, which is just super, just really is so it's great.

**LM:** Very unusual, yeah.

**DB:** Ohh, I said, I just can't keep this up. This is as bad as it was before. Even worse because of my seniority. I've got no time at all. OK. And as it happens, I get a call from the governor's office saying the Governor is forming his new team and he'd like you to come on board. Well, that just struck me out of the blue. I think part of it he's doing it because he's trying to see whether he can switch the General Assembly, the House of Delegates and the Senate from Democratic to Republican. So, you know, there's more than one reason for these type of things. I thought my God. Yeah, I thought about it, I said, so I, went back to that person and kind of said, "look, you know the only thing I would do, the only way to do it would be if I could head up the Department of Conservation and Recreation because I am an old Boy Scout. I have been since I was a kid. I was an Eagle Scout. I was chairman of the explorer organization with Explorer Scouts for the Greater Rochester, NY area. I've been a camp counselor. I've been assistant scout master for years. I literally up until last year was the assistant scout master of an All Girls Boy Scout troop.

**LM:** Really?

**DB:** Yeah, and I was on the Executive Board for the, for the National Capital Area Council Board. So I really, I think it's a great program. I think Girl Scouts is a great program, too. I think those type of programs that our youth need to have rather than TikTok and everything else. So and the, what had happened, again, serendipitous. The *Washington Post*, the *Washington Post* had a story that literally the day before I called, that showed how the Department was being skewered by the joint legislative and audit commission for mismanagement.<sup>27</sup> I said, "you know, this is a beautiful country, or state we live in. Why can't they get their act right?" And so, I said, "I'll think about that." She said, "would you like meet the Governor, Governor-elect again this morning? Yeah, said sure. So I came down to Richmond, came down and met with him. I didn't know him that well. Ah, and he was a staunch Republican. I said to him, "Governor-elect, I'll make a deal with you. I'll accept the position as heading up the Department of Conservation and Recreation. That's the only one I want. Don't want health or, because I chaired the health committee, and I was on the conservation and natural resources committee in the, in the House. But this is my love. But because you're a Republican, I'm a Democrat. You need to leave me alone. And if I screw up, fire me." This is the exact conversation.

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<sup>27</sup> Ellen Nakashima and Spencer S. Hsu, "State Failed to Spend Half of Park Money Approved by Voters," *Washington Post*, December 19, 1997. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1997/12/19/state-failed-to-spend-half-of-park-money-approved-by-voters/0bbf3b5d-c5a1-4f42-bf86-51e9d010d6ef/>

He was right there, I'm here. "Otherwise, let me do my job." He says, "that sounds like a fair deal to me." So I did it. Went down, had a meeting with the, had an all hands on deck, with all of the staff. And I said, "what organization do you work for?" And I got: oh, I work for soil and water. I work for parks. I work for natural resources. I work for planning. No. You work for one entity, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and you're all going to work together because they wouldn't work together. It was a just total mismanagement. And and I I got this one guy, Leon App, who also graduated with a degree in forestry from Penn State, so they called us the Penn State mafia. And I got him to be my assistant director.

--1:26:00 Break in audio.

1:27:08

**DB:** So I ran it very much as a business and and I think that my love of parks and open space had something to do with it, because it really is my true, my true love. And when we left, when I left, and by the way, it it didn't change the majority of the Democrats in the House of Delegates, so I felt good about that.

**LM:** Mhmm.

**DB:** They tried to get somebody else and it didn't, it didn't happen. But when we left we received the national award for the best state park system in America, which I thought was a pretty good tribute and he came up to me one day, said "David. I shouldn't be telling you this. You're the best damn administrator I've got." So, and he knew nothing about kayaks or canoes, or this was not his bag, you know? But he was good to work with. So whenever I needed something to done, I'd go up to him and he would, would agree. Some of his staff on the executive branch right in the governor's office, didn't like that. They were, this one guy was very, very, very Republican, uh, and it was a shame. But as far as DCR go, when he it worked out great. So I left and then, that was from 1998 to 2002, and since 2002, I practiced law for 10 or 15 more years, I guess. And then, then turned in my my license to practice law, probably, I guess four years ago now. And since then I've just been working on - I've got some properties I work on, but, Trails and Greenways, Trails and Blueways, Council, which I love. It's fun to do and I'm on the Historic Commission, which is enjoyable also, but I do a lot of traveling around the world and I do a lot of hiking around the world. I'm taking my kids to uh - in England or not, England in Italy? In June, uh oh, my gosh. Terre -

**LM:** Cinque Terre?

**DB:** Cinque Terre. We're going to go hiking there. So I'm just, I'm so I'm you know. So other than losing the love of my life I've been very blessed. And it's just been a great, it's been a great, great life. And I can tell you stories all all day long, but I think that kind of tells you where I'm at, I think.

**LM:** I, I that's fantastic. And like I said, you ran through my questions without prompting and I guess my my one last question before we end is, um, you were mentioned quite a bit in Kathleen Seefeldt's interview and just talking about your working relationship with Kathleen and -

**DB:** Hmm. Kathleen was, I'm glad you mentioned that because, Kathleen was a schoolteacher out at Lake Ridge. When I ran in '95 for the House of Delegates, which I was elected. I believe I've got major responsibility in getting her to agree. I don't know if she said that or not -

**LM:** She did. Yep. Yeah, she did.

**DB:** To run, to run for the Board because she's such a nice a nice person and involved with the Lake Ridge Civic Association and I, I should have, I should have done that without you prompting me, and I literally apologize for that. I'll apologize to her. Uh, because she, she brought a sense of purpose, a sense of professionalism, a sense of courtesy. A sense of vision, and I think the one thing that I've tried to instill in other people and instill in myself is you've got to have a sense of vision. What is that vision? If you don't have a vision, I've seen so many people, especially in government, because it matters there because whatever they do is going to affect everybody else, not have that vision. And I tell these young people, uh, don't be afraid to go up to your supervisor and say, hey, I think this oughta, we oughta be doing that. I see so many people at the young, at the, at the basic level of where they are - to be afraid. I see it really in VDOT. And it's don't - God, do it, you know. They're either going to say no or they're going to respect you for having your idea and having that vision. So if if they say no too many times it really means you ought to go and find a better manager to work with. But Kathleen came in, she was just such a great supervisor. We really had, we really had a team together. It was, it was the - somebody said, I was at a function for the, I got an award, uh, for the Boy Scouts last year, I guess it was. And somebody mentioned that it was a time when government really worked well. And, it was the, what word did they use of, just not the apex but the - it was really the time we really worked well and we got things done. And it was congenial and it had nothing to do with partisanship. I used to always tell everybody, thank God the Virginia Legislature is not like those guys up in New York, or I mean, up in Washington and you know, it's almost as bad now in Virginia as it is up in DC and in Congress and, but we all got together and worked and got so much so much done. Put the legislation in on, got the funding for the 234 bypass and, and all kinds of - I love transportation, did a lot of transportation legislation, because that's what my folks needed here and so. Ah, ah. But she was a real instrument - she's such a lovely person. (Break in audio) But I could go on about Kathy Seefeldt.

**LM:** Ok.

**DB:** Because she really was. you know, was the epitome of what, an epitome of what a local government person should be and thank God they named the Parkway after her and, and she's still around.<sup>28</sup> We'll have lunch every once in a while. I have lunch with her and with Ernestine Jenkins. I liked John. John did a great job, John and Ernestine were very much a couple and they were joined at the hip and he did a great job and she did a great job but the two of them together with her 24 hour working on supporting her husband worked out great.<sup>29</sup> We got him to run, he was the - Jimmy

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<sup>28</sup> "The four-lane divided highway replaced a narrow two-lane road. It spurred development in the county's relatively empty middle section and rural western end. And Prince William residents take a special pride in the road's creation: It was paved by county workers and paid for by county taxpayers. Yesterday, county leaders paid tribute to the woman whose vision brought the parkway to life, former Board of County Supervisors chairman Kathleen K. Seefeldt. The 14-mile road was designated the Kathleen K. Seefeldt Parkway." Lisa Rein, "Pr. William Parkway Designated to Honor Seefeldt," *Washington Post*, April 10, 2001.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2001/04/11/pr-william-parkway-designated-to-honor-seefeldt/9cce2434-5681-4e5d-b424-8b5dc39925f5/>

<sup>29</sup> John Jenkins was the Neabsco representative on the Prince William Board of County Supervisors for over 36 years beginning in 1982. Jenkins died in 2019. His wife Ernestine Jenkins is still an active leader in the community. "Leadership Prince William to recognize John and Ernestine Jenkins with Vision Award," *Inside Nova*, May 30, 2018.



McCourt was a retired major in the, in the Marine Corps - good friend of mine and, ah, he was a supervisor. And then he had to quit because of his heart, I think is what it was, and then died eventually of a heart attack.<sup>30</sup> I don't think it was the same time. And so he didn't run. So we we a couple of us - Rick Pfitzner and I primarily, Rick was G. Richard Pfitzner, and he was the chairman of board at the time - recruited John to run and John is just a legend in, certainly in Dale City so. It was a good move. So I had, I just had a marvelous career. I love Prince William County. I love Virginia. I can say that it's coming from Pennsylvania or school in Pennsylvania, living in New York State. You couldn't find a better, we've got great educational outlets for, especially for higher education. Our school system is pretty good, and I don't know where this county is going, the county goes from no growth to a lot of growth and, between you and I, I'm I'm a little worried that they are going a little fast here right now without thinking what it's - you've got a new board. And we'll see what happens. But yeah. Give some word of caution, I think so, you've got all these apartments. And...we'll see.

**LM:** We'll see.

**DB:** Yeah. So quite, quite different from the rural county that I started out in where we didn't even have a rec center because we had the the only way was to float our own bond issue to pay for the darn thing. So.

**LM:** Okay. Well, I'll go ahead and stop this now. Okay. Thank you so much.

**DB:** Unless you can think of anything else.

**LM:** I, I know. I'm sure I'll kick myself but like I said you you ran through my questions.

**DB:** Ok, good.

**(At the conclusion of the interview Brickley began discussing Disney's America, and the interviewer began the recording again to discuss this topic)**

**DB:** We're just talking about Disney America when Prince William, western Prince William, had first of all gone through a real battle on what's called the "Third Battle of Manassas," and Annie Snyder lived on Pageland Lane. Very strong preservationist, although she never put her land under historic or conservation easement, which is kind of an irony, but uh, she led the fight along with the battlefield preservation groups to stop a development coming through, federal government intervened and actually paid a lot of money and, and did a a very nice addition to to the national battlefield at Manassas. So then years later, along comes Disney, and Disney has the idea of doing a project theme park called Disney America. And it's going to have a, a Revolutionary and Civil War motif to it. And they acquired secretly all these options on land in western Prince William, west of

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[https://www.insidenova.com/news/prince\\_william/local/dale\\_city/leadership-prince-william-to-recognize-john-and-ernestine-jenkins-with-vision-award/article\\_f9fe3ee6-642f-11e8-9199-5fb59229ad7a.html](https://www.insidenova.com/news/prince_william/local/dale_city/leadership-prince-william-to-recognize-john-and-ernestine-jenkins-with-vision-award/article_f9fe3ee6-642f-11e8-9199-5fb59229ad7a.html)

<sup>30</sup> James McCoart was the Neabsco District Supervisor for two terms from 1975-1982, resigning from office due to health problems. He died of a heart attack three years after his retirement in 1985. Rick Allen, "A Portrait of Honor: Civic Leader Remembered," *Washington Post*, May 5, 1993.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1993/05/06/a-portrait-of-honor-civic-leader-remembered/3c52bdea-a114-4d4b-884a-0b70b73cc78f/>

the battlefield. And near the Haymarket area, and they only actually purchased one piece of land. And they came to Chuck Hogan and I, the state senator and house, and we talked about it for a long time. And, where I came down in favor, and where the county came down the favor of - the land was already zoned for development. And I say that because it's important because when the word got out and the publicity and everything else, I got a call from my aunt in New Jersey, saying, "David, what are you doing? Doing this project, I mean, that's that's farmland, and it's historic and it's got all these trees." And I said, "Paula, the problem is it's already been zoned and it's either going to be housing and shopping centers or this. And if we ever want to get Metro Rail to Prince William County, this is going to be our only way to get it." And so that was the the position that Chuck Hogan and I, and I think Kathleen Seefeldt and the board, and the board took. So we sponsored the legislation. A lot of opposition to it, but it passed the General Assembly. And it passed the Board of Supervisors and it was all set to go. Except what had happened in, and I've got to go back and and let you guys figure out that the timing on it, but Eisner was the chairman of the board of Disney Corporation, his number two guy, I think, died of a heart attack. His number three guy didn't become the number two guy in the Disney organization and he left the company. Disney was making all kinds of money with The Lion King movie. They were losing money at Disney Paris. And so even though now they had all the approvals they decided from an economic perspective that it just wasn't worth it. And I must say a lot of opposition from the battlefield groups across the country. No question over that, that's why my my aunt called me up. A lot, lot of opposition, but it could have all gone through. I've often thought to this day what would have happened, cause I know one, we would have had metro rail. Now, uh and you've got all kinds of subdivisions and and development there right now of all different kinds now especially and that would have been a real economic driver for us as well as whatever – the - but it didn't happen. But the wonderful irony is, I guess there is any irony is that I was on the National Capital Area Council for the Boy Scouts of America. And because I was, myself and Chuck Hogan put in this legislation, I had some entrees that that that others had not and we got the Disney people to basically, donate at a really good deal, the tract of land, the one tract of land that they owned.

**LM:** Ok.

**DB:** And let all the other options dissolve. And that became the Boy Scout camp in western Prince William.

**LM:** Oh really?

**DB:** Yeah. So it's a great, it's a great - and I love to go over there and it's Snyder, Snyder Camp and it's used for Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts and everything else. So there was a a good end to it in the end.

**LM:** Ok I'm glad you mentioned that. (Overtalk) I should have. I should have, mentioned that.

**DB:** I meant to mention that. But the board, everybody supported, I mean all the legal authorities made it, but a lot of opposition and a lot of opposition now with the data centers and everything else. So I've got to meet, I've got a meeting with – I'm on the federal C&O Canal Commission. So I've got a meeting on that, I think on Monday, but on Tuesday I've got a meeting on Gerry Connolly's environmental committee that he serves. And my question to him is: "Where's all the electricity going to come from? How are you going to generate that between the data centers?"

Which do the cloud and everything else, so no one's - that's not going to change. You're never going to get rid of the cloud. That's only going to go one way and, electric vehicles. How are we ever going to generate the electricity? Because it takes it takes a decade, you know, to build a new plant. I really don't know the answer of that. I hope the somebody starts looking at it.

**END OF RECORDING**