

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

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CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND**

POLITICAL CAREER

INTERVIEWED BY

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Early Religious Commitment	2
Senator Charles Mac Mathias	4
Early Activism	7
Chesapeake Bay Commission	8
Dredge Spoil Controversy	10
Program Open Space	11
Blue Crab Issues	12
Phosphate Ban Controversy	14
Role of Bay Science	17
Marriage	17
Waste Water Treatment Plant Controversies	18
Environmental Education	20
Effects of Population Growth	21
River Stories	22
Chesapeake Bay Agreements	24
The EPA Bay Program	29
Campaign for Lieutenant Governor	31
Values and Family Life	33
Staying Healthy	37
Childhood Memories	38

Ann Swanson: I think before we even get into this interview I should just ask a very basic question which is. Is there something you want to share before we even begin? Some observation?

Bernie Fowler: Yes. I think it would be careless not to take the opportunity to do that. I guess life is a big bowl and sometimes you can reach in that bowl and get pretty much whatever you want out of it if you work hard enough for it. I never had a lightning strike idea. It was never anything like that. It's always been kind of subtle and somewhat still coming along. But once I engaged, it's full speed ahead. So much of the things that I've been involved in have been because of the wonderful people that I have had to associate with me in my life.

Back from my early childhood to date, I have been blessed to be able to connect with people that were brilliant. That were honest. They were helpful and they were good counselors for me that enabled me to move forward. Let's call them a village of people that had the tools and equipment to work with and was extremely helpful in guiding me.

EARLY RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT

I must tell you this story. I'll tell you now because I just celebrated my 90th birthday, March 30th of this year which I'm very happy to brag about. I began to think about a lot of the things that some of us had been involved in that have been so important just not to Calvert County, just not to southern Maryland, but really some things have had a very definite state, kind of national focus and even an international focus in some instances. I have to tell this story because I think some of this may be relevant to a lot of people. I think there's some historical aspects that need to be preserved in posterity, forever and always. There's no better time than right now to do that. I've been blessed to have the coherency that I've always prayed for. If I'm to live to be an old age, I hope that the mental department will work in concert with the physical department. Thus far, it has been a magnificent journey for me and for that I'm very grateful.

I must tell you this without sounding too sanctimonious. It all didn't begin recently. It happened at the tender age of 14. I well remember. I was a sophomore in high school. We had no middle or junior schools in those, junior high schools in those days so, you only went to eleven grades. I started when I was 5. Graduated at the age of 16. During that period in high school at the age of 14 in 1938, I went to my home church. They had a revival meeting which was very common. Every year they had a revival meeting. They brought in visiting evangelists and people very artful. They

were singers. They played music and all. That was without television and radio and all the other attractions you have today. That was a very natural thing for people to congregate at those revivals. I attended one.

One evening during that period of time, the sermon that the evangelist whose name was Reverend P.F. Elliott preached that night. It was very touching. It was very revealing and it was an opportunity for me to really connect with the spiritual side of my life. I did so. I knelt at the altar that night and asked God to be my compass. I want to do what's right in this life. I don't want to be a king or a president. I just want to do things that are good in general for mankind and those things will be pleasing to you. Forgive my past and forgive the things that will happen in the future that I'll never be too proud of because there are temptations. We're all in a way let's say are sinners. We make mistakes at times unconsciously.

I really believe that commitment that I made that night in 1938, that's been a long time ago, has served as a rule and guide of my faith. It's been my direction. It's been my beacon. It's been my benchmark. Though I've strayed from time to time to the left or right, I've never lost sight of the fact that there is a creator of this magnificent universe. He has a job for me to do. If I'm going to do that job right, I can only do it with his help. Having said that, I guess that is the beginning of whatever accomplishments I've been fortunate to make with the village of folks I've worked with over the years. It's been a real, real wonderful experience.

A journey quite frankly that took me a long ways to Washington DC. The first time I ever went to Washington DC, I went there at the age of 16 to live and to go to school. Not too long after that, I was fortunate enough to be 1 of 3 brothers that served in World War II. I lost my oldest brother in the European theater of war. The other 2 of us were unharmed. Some experiences I wouldn't want to go through again. But I wouldn't take the world for the fact that ... I wouldn't trade that experience and that time in my life for anything I know of because this is the greatest nation in the world. No question about it. It was worth fighting for. It's disconcerting that we fight wars and we find out in the final analysis that wars really don't accomplish a great deal. It does in a tentative sense, but it doesn't for the long haul. How many wars have we had since World War II? And it goes on and on and on.

Let's get down to the objective or the goals that we have for this program that we're going to try to put together today and days that follow. We know that you have a starting point in life. I was no different than anyone else. I spent a lot of my young life in the business at Broomes Island, the place that I grew up on and worked and played. Enjoyed every moment

of it. The lifestyle was so different then. The culture was so different then. You didn't have any fear for any of the ugliness that's happening in this country of ours now. We're good and we'll always be good because I think God has blessed us. I think He knows enough righteous people in this country that are going to do right that we've been able to be victorious. We'll continue to be the world leader.

There's an opportunity for us to really make a change. We have got to work towards a more cooperative situation. We've got to understand that fighting is not the answer. It's a matter of trying to coexist with people in a peaceful atmosphere. That would suffice all that we ever need if that could occur.

Ann Swanson: Let me ask you some questions about ...

Bernie Fowler: Get me going because I ...

Ann Swanson: Your moral compass. In that ...

SENATOR CHARLES MAC MATHIAS

Ann Swanson: Let me ask you a question about this. Mac Mathias is living, he's got a house in your neck of the woods, somewhere on the Patuxent? Right? I think so. He began to see that the watermen were having trouble. They were talking about dirty water. He decided to do a boat trip all around the Chesapeake Bay. Different people joined that boat trip. That's when you joined the boat trip.

Bernie Fowler: Yes.

Ann Swanson: You floated with the Congressman and others. Tell me about that. Tell me about what happened because that event really kicked off the whole EPA Chesapeake Bay study. He chaired that committee. That was the first huge study of its kind. What happened on that boat?

Bernie Fowler: I think even before the boat our court suit was out in front.

Ann Swanson: He knew you were ...

Bernie Fowler: He knew. He knew that we were already going to court. We had hired environmental attorneys. We were waiting for them to come up with a procedure that made sense.

Ann Swanson: Where did you get the money for the attorneys?

Bernie Fowler: The money came from the taxpaying public in Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's county.

Ann Swanson: Wow.

Bernie Fowler: We didn't seek any grant. It's our river.

Ann Swanson: And he's heard about this.

Bernie Fowler: He heard about that and he heeded that. Out of that when I was talking with him that day, he lit up. He was just a wonderful man to talk with. A mover and shaker. This was not a political move for him. I think it was coming from his heart. He was like me: he had an affection for this great resource. He wanted to see something done about it. He went to the top and recommended and ultimately got legislation that approved a 29 million dollar study ...

Ann Swanson: Right.

Bernie Fowler: Of the entire Chesapeake Bay to find out what was wrong. We don't have to repeat all of that. We suspected then what was wrong because of the scientists at Chesapeake Biological Lab. They were saying it's enrichment of nitrogen and phosphorous and too much sedimentation and toxicity going into the river. It's foreign to the river. It can't handle it. We need to change that. His study was unquestionably one of the chains, one of the links in the chains that helped to bring things together and get us some focus.

Ann Swanson: His study really served as a catalyst to get a lot of the academic institutions, a lot of the labs talking to one another. Were you aware of like VIMS (Virginia Institute of Marine Science) and Penn State and all of these different academic institutions all focused on Chesapeake Bay?

Bernie Fowler: I had very little knowledge of all the different components out there and the organizations.

Ann Swanson: This is really ...

Bernie Fowler: This action because of the attention that's being focused now on the severity of the problem. It was becoming dramatized. It began to different organization's focus. All of a sudden, here comes the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, for instance. They interviewed me. "What do you think about this court suit?" I told them, "I think it's the only hope we have."

Ann Swanson: What year was that?

Bernie Fowler: That was started in 1973. We finally went in court, I think in, I believe it was '76. I'd have to look at my notes to find ...

Ann Swanson: You've got a timeline of the court in the early '70s. Then, 1976-77, you've got the EPA big program study commencing.

Bernie Fowler: Yes.

Ann Swanson: That study is going to then deliver its findings and recommendations in 1983. When did you run for Senate?

Bernie Fowler: I ran for Senate in 1982 and was sworn in office in January of 1983. Was able to attend the first conference they had at George Mason University.

Ann Swanson: Describe that scene.

Bernie Fowler: It was fantastic. I was shocked because the Chesapeake Bay Foundation had put together a film of Broomes Island and Reedville, Virginia and the contrast. Because Reedville was still pretty wholesome then and the area around Broomes Island and Patuxent River was kind of suffocating because of the early things that I mentioned, the nitrogen phosphorous over induction of that.

Ann Swanson: At the conference, they showed this film.

Bernie Fowler: They showed the film which is called the Chesapeake Horizon. They showed it. I'd liked to flip out of my seat when they showed it. It's on this huge screen.

Ann Swanson: You were shocked.

Bernie Fowler: Yes.

Ann Swanson: I remember.

Bernie Fowler: We had a number. Marilyn Reeves and we had a lady from Reedville, Virginia and they were all super good. It really today ... In fact, it won a big award for the best commentary on the environment for that year.

Ann Swanson: Now, there is a big conference under way and there were dozens and dozens of legislators at that conference. I remember there was almost a thousand people. Now, you went back to the General Assembly. Did you

know when you ran for office that you would be such a strong environmental advocate or did you grow into that? How did that happen that you became such an environmental legislator?

EARLY ACTIVISM

Bernie Fowler: Growing up as a child on Broomes Island, I watched a river that was so gracious and so good to us. I watched the demise of that river. You have that river water in your blood. It's in your heart. It's in your mind and you don't want to see something that has provided people with the sustenance they needed in life at a time during the Great Depression when that's about all you had to eat was what you raised and what you could get out of the water. That Patuxent River was more than gracious to us.

When you see something that important and such an integral part of our, even our human health, to see that begin to leave and slip away, you want to do something about it. That was one of the major reasons that I ran for county commissioner because of the demise of the river. Secondly, I ran for county commissioner because I was tired of seeing closed government. I wanted open government. I called it table top government. The third thing was that we had an educational system, the poorest subdivision in the state of Maryland. We had an educational system that was equal to that and I wanted better than that.

We had an opportunity to do that because we had the Baltimore Gas Electric Company was coming on which was going to provide some funds. It all came from drive from my heart, the love I had for the river and the hope and the expectations that we could get that river cleaned up in a hurry if we did the right kinds of things. That's really where the drive came from. When I went to Annapolis as a bona fide Senator and I was so grateful to be there. It was a wonderful experience. We had some great people up there, great leaders up there. We had Gerald Winegrad, Senator Winegrad. We had Mrs. Garrett. These people when they told you something, they weren't playing games. They had an affection also for the environment, not just the Patuxent River but the bay, the air, all there was to make life pleasant more pleasant for people. That is what really caused us to dig our heels in. From that moment on, there's always been the nurturing I've had from the divine intervention that I spoke of earlier that keeps my motor running.

Ann Swanson: Now, you are a new legislator and your first term is going to be 1984, which is right when they sign the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. Now, you got to get to work and work on legislation. That's also the year you were

asked or be appointed to the Chesapeake Bay Commission. How did that happen?

Bernie Fowler: We had been talking environment ever since I got up there. There was a group of us that met each year, a small group that met with the president of the Senate, President Mike Miller. He was always very receptive to our thoughts. Things that we wanted to do legislatively, we'd run by him hoping to garner up his support. For the most part, the big stuff, he was always on board with us to make it happen. Environmental education, the phosphorus ban, the critical areas, the rock fish moratorium. The list grows on and on and on.

Let's not leave one very important person out of this. I speak from the heart. It was Governor Harry Hughes, who was never considered to be an environmentalist. In fact, it's in a national magazine. I have a copy of it where John Griffin was being interviewed and he said, "Harry Hughes was never an environmentalist until Bernie Fowler got a hold of him." I can tell you Governor Harry Hughes was one of the greatest friends I ever had and one of the strongest supporters I ever had. Had it not been for the constitution restricting him serving another 4 years or 8 years, we would have had that Patuxent River glistening by now. When he left, the program got short changed. That's what we did every year. We got together with the president of the Senate, went over the things we thought were important and for the most part, we got some big stuff through. Because of the people that I mentioned earlier: you had the Winegrads. You had Mrs. Garrett. Some of the names slip my mind right now but ...

Ann Swanson: Dorman.

Bernie Fowler: Arthur Dorman, super guy. He's the one that actually legislated the Patuxent River Commission.

CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION

Ann Swanson: Tell me about the commission. What was it like when you were finally ... Now you're appointed to this interstate Chesapeake Bay Commission. A new Senator. You're going to be serving with House and Senate members. When you were first appointed to the Commission in '84, Pennsylvania wasn't even a member yet of the commission. They came in on '85. What's your recall of the early years?

Bernie Fowler: The early years were very interesting years because this was a time of formation, a time of learning. We had some strong individuals on that.

They were not playing games. They were dead serious about doing something to help clean up this Chesapeake Bay. What better organization, what better forum or platform could you have than the Chesapeake Bay Commission. When you have 15 elected officials on board and citizen representatives and staff to support you and plenty of advisors through the regulatory agencies and all. It was an exciting time for me quite frankly because I saw a real opportunity here to move forward on some projects that would make a difference in bringing some life back to the Chesapeake Bay. While we had some disappointments obviously, because we aren't there yet. I don't know why I had a vision that we would have the Patuxent River cleaned up in 10 or 15 years and today, it would only take another 15 years. That hasn't happened.

Because of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, their tenacity, the determination and we have been fortunate to have a great staff working and leading that organization. That has caused us to bond together in a tri-state manner. At first, it was bi-state. It was Virginia and Maryland. Now, it becomes tri-state. As we speak now, we've got all 6 of the states and the District of Columbia that have a voice in the Chesapeake Bay Commission. The plan that they have on board is a good plan. It doesn't meet all of the things I'd like to see in it. If you become complacent and too happy, you don't gain anything. You've always got to be reaching for the moon and if you miss the moon, you're right up there with the stars anyways. The Chesapeake Bay Commission has been a very important part of my life.

DREDGE SPOIL CONTROVERSY: SITE 104

Ann Swanson: Talk to me about this. Periodically through my time with you I have seen where you disagreed with other people. You disagreed with other House and Senate members who you actually had a very decent rapport with. I'm thinking about things like Site 104 where they wanted to put the dredge material in the heart of Chesapeake Bay. Or over the years where we were setting limits for sewage treatment plants. Or things like that where you said, "No. We need to go further." Where do you get the courage to buck these other people who don't want to go as far?

Bernie Fowler: It has to begin with a conviction that it is the right thing to do. That is number 1. It has got to be the right thing to do. In this case, for the Chesapeake Bay and the people who live around it. Once you are convinced of that, then there's no turning back. The courage is there because you know you're right in what you're doing. Losing a battle once in a while doesn't necessarily mean you're going to lose the war. You can't afford to compromise too greatly. The democracy as a whole is a

the art of compromise and we recognize that, but you can't compromise those things that you know are going to lead you in the wrong direction. It's been for that reason that I have always been able to muster up the courage that I needed in a very forceful way to be sure that the ship stayed on course, box the compass and keep the ship on course. That's what we tried very hard to do.

I think in some instances it's paid off. The dredging of the spoils in the Baltimore Harbor I think would have been a catastrophe that we would have been a long time overcoming had we gone ahead with the plan to dump all of those spoils in a deep trough in the channel of the Chesapeake Bay. There's a lot of movement down there with current and all. That movement would have certainly scattered that stuff all over the bay. I don't think anyone could predict in their wildest imagination the damage that could have done had that occurred.

Ann Swanson: Regardless of the fact that you had lots of legislative colleagues and governors and others supporting that Site 104, it was just the fact that you knew it was right that just kept you going.

Bernie Fowler: Exactly right. You know that was the wrong thing to do. Dumping those spoils was wrong. For that reason, there's just no room to compromise. You do everything you possibly can within reason to convince. If you can't convince then, you have to stand like the rock of Gibraltar. You can't budge. You have got to fight it until you either lose the battle or the battle is won. When you win like that, it's always a win for the Chesapeake Bay which happens to be in my judgment one of the greatest estuaries in this whole world.

Ann Swanson: You're right about that. Talk to me about this. You were talking about wins and I can't help but look at you and think about Program Open Space. Program Open Space is revered nationwide as an outstanding land conservation program. Over the years, I saw time and time again where they try to raid the dedicated funds of Program Open Space and you were always there questioning that authority, questioning that judgment. Tell us about Program Open Space and at least how you think it should have functioned. What you did for it?

PROGRAM OPEN SPACE

Bernie Fowler: Program Open Space was a very, very important piece of legislation. The intent of that legislation, and in fact the guts of that legislation, was simply 1/2 of 1% of the ... What fee was that?

Ann Swanson: Of the transfer tax.

Bernie Fowler: Transfer tax. 1/2 of 1% of the transfer tax was to go into a dedicated fund and that fund was to be used to purchase open space. Also, it could be used to enhance the purchases of the open space that you'd purchased. I think just about every governor during my service raided that fund and it was the wrong thing to do. This legislation was passed with the hope of providing the much needed forested land and recreational areas we need for generations that follow us. To see this raided and to slow that program down was somewhat hypocritical. Sure, there are times when the budget constraints forces you to do some things you don't necessarily want to do, but that was bad judgment in using that to do that.

Ann Swanson: Because Program Open Space was designed to keep pace with development. The concept ... Explain the concept.

Bernie Fowler: Open Space was exactly that: to keep open space so that we wouldn't end up with bricks and mortars over the entire area.

Ann Swanson: Because every time somebody bought a parcel, bought a house, a parcel of land, they paid a transfer tax. Then that transfer tax was supposed to mitigate that impact by having open space someplace else. Preserved. Right?

Bernie Fowler: Absolutely. When you have that fund, it needs to be used for the purpose intended. Let me repeat. The purpose of that was to buy open space to keep pace with all of the other rooftops that were showing up, taking away the natural receptacle for our drainage problems and all. To diminish that program, I thought was unmistakably wrong. I let every governor know that I worked around that it was not the right thing to do. And finally, sponsored legislation to raise the cap because they had a cap on it.

To raise the cap. And Governor William Donald Schaefer was in office at the time. Rest his soul. He and I had a very long conversation in his office about it and he said, "Well, where am I going to get the money if I raise the cap and that money goes back? Where am I going to get the money?" I said, "I'm not sure where you go to get it, but where you're getting it from is the wrong place." When the legislation is passed and the public perception is that you're going to use this money for X, Y and Z, that

ought to occur. To do less than that I think is somewhat hypocritical. I never changed my mind on that. We were successful in getting that cap raised and getting the Open Space Program moving back the way it was originally intended.

Ann Swanson: What about blue crabs? Whenever I think about Bernie's boats, I always think about a business that thrived from people who wanted to come out for the day. They wanted to go fishing. They wanted to go crabbing. They knew that if they rented one of your little boats they could go out and fill their bushel baskets. You've seen a lot of changes with blue crabs, good and bad. You were involved with lots of work on the commission related to blue crabs. Tell us about that.

BLUE CRAB ISSUES

Bernie Fowler: After returning from World War II, I had dreams and visions of opening up a rent-a-boat rental business at Broomes Island. I had worked in one, the first one that was ever in that part of the country. I worked during my high school years. And decided that this would be a good way, a very good way to enjoy life and make a living at the same time. I did just that. I was able to get started on it. In those days, this is back in the 50s. The blue crab was so abundant, so abundant in the Patuxent River that when the buy boats would come in from the Eastern Shore because they had a lot of crab picking houses over there. They'd come in and buy the crabs out of the Patuxent River.

They were nice fat crabs. The water was good and healthy then. Take them back to the Eastern Shore and fix them up for steamed crabs, crab cakes and what have you. They were so plentiful they actually put a limit on the number of crabs you could catch in a day. We didn't have crab pots then. I'm talking about a trotline where you dip them 1 by 1. The limit on the number of crabs that you could catch in the early 1950s in the Patuxent River was 15 barrels, sugar barrels of crabs. That's a lot of crabs.

Ann Swanson: Use your hands. How big is a sugar barrel?

Bernie Fowler: About 3 1/2 bushels, I think. It was ... They were just so abundant that's the way it was. That was our way of life. We saw, . . . not too long after that when the river began to fail and the bay began to fail, we began to see a real reduction. Today, we sold many ...

Ann Swanson: When did you start perceiving the reduction?

Bernie Fowler:

We started seeing it about in 1969. About the time when the grasses started disappearing, everything began to slow down a little bit. The water got cloudy. The transparency of the water was getting very poor. We had a lady at Broomes Island, Dixie Buck. She was the champion soft shell crabber. She caught 25 dozen soft shell crabs in 1 day. This is in the 50s. She sold them at that time for 12 cents a dozen, 1 penny a piece for soft shell crabs.

I remember one time she made a remark to me because she knew that I was upset. We were trying to stir up some excitement over the demise of the river. We wanted people to understand that there was something dramatic happening out there. We really had to take stock of what we were doing and put the brakes on. She told me, "You know. You're right, Bernie." She said, "The water's really getting cloudy. I can't see the bottom hardly anymore. Can't see it at all in Nans Cove," which was full of crabs. They crabbed by the mud streak. Just the movement of the crab would stir up the sediment and they'd dip in front of the sediment and that's how they'd catch the crabs.

The blue crab industry was blessed by having the Chesapeake Bay Commission to establish a blue crab committee. Those two chairmen of that committee, delegate (Robert) Bloxom and delegate John Wood that headed that committee up. They did a fantastic job on that. It was very successful. It ultimately led -- after years and years of nurturing and cajoling -- it led to legislation that really, or regulations, I should say, that led to the reduction and taking of the female crabs we commonly call sooks. Because as I told the governor one time if you don't have mamas out there, you aren't going to have any babies. It's just that simple. That was the right thing to do. This particular year that we're in now, 2014 has not been a bonanza for the crabbers. We're uncertain just what's causing it, but we saw a real rebound in the crabbing industry once they began to prohibit taking of a lot of the female crabs.

Ann Swanson:

Talk to me about the phosphate detergent ban and what was going on back then in just the environmental community and the business community and others just coming together on that issue.

PHOSPHATE BAN CONTROVERSY

Bernie Fowler: The phosphate ban went on I believe for several years. It got defeated because the phosphate ban was absolutely essential. It was a big part of reducing the phosphorus going into the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. The lobbyists were so determined to defeat that bill because they saw this taking money away from them. They even used excuses like, "You know. Your shirts will never be white again. If you take the phosphate out of the detergent, you won't have any more white shirts. It's just impossible to clean a shirt, get it nice and white, without the phosphate in it." It turned to be, pardon me, hogwash. That wasn't the case. That was just an excuse to keep a little more money in their coffers. After several years, the lead sponsor of that bill was Senator Gerald Winegrad. I was cosponsor of the bill with him, one of the many sponsors of the bill with him. We fought hard for it and we finally got it through. We got it passed. We know the benefits there. It's untold and we found out ...

Ann Swanson: 41% of the phosphorus reduction is attributed to the phosphate detergent ban.

Bernie Fowler: The question is "What good did the phosphate ban did?" I tell you what it did it reduced the phosphorus going into the headwaters of the bay and its tributaries by 41%. That's a pretty dynamic figure. You know, if you think back the successes that we've had thus far on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries has not been through the voluntary process. Although collaborative volunteerism is a great thing, but it won't work on the bay. The successes we've enjoyed has been through mandatory legislation and court suits. That has been the driving force that has recorded the successes that we know have taken place on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Ann Swanson: Of course, one of the things is -- talk to us about as a legislator if you do want to legislate, you need to know that the people are behind you. The people need to be helping you do that heavy lift. Isn't that right? How does that work?

Bernie Fowler: Yeah. You know any legislation that you introduce in Annapolis. Before you put it in the hopper, you want to talk with people. You want to talk with organizations. You want to make sure the Chesapeake Bay Commission is in agreement with you. You want to make sure the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is on board and they're in favor. You want the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay to Save Our Streams. We're all together in this working for the common cause of cleaning up the most precious environmental resource in my judgment in the whole world.

If that Chesapeake Bay was cleansed once again like it was back as a child when I knew it, we could feed the world. We now import billions of dollars in seafood into the watershed. That's so unnecessary if we could bring that wonderful resource back where it was. We could actually feed the world. Let's continue to be strong about it. Don't be discouraged. You'll be disappointed time and time again. I have, but I never let myself be discouraged. I can tell you to realize that there's a real prize at the end. The prize is not a worthless one. You're fighting for a real cause. Aside from the gracious and delicious food that you get out of the Chesapeake Bay, there's a serious matter of human health involved in this. All in all, we need to pull the stops out and continue to fight and continue to have that stick-to-it-ness. That tenacity not to give up, but to keep on. As Winston Churchill once said in a speech he made, eight words, "Never give up. Never. Never. Never give up." Nor should we ever.

Ann Swanson: Bernie, how important has it been for you to know people in the neighboring states that are affecting Chesapeake Bay? You now know lots of people in Virginia, lots of people in Pennsylvania. How important has that been to you?

Bernie Fowler: Speaking about the Chesapeake Bay Commission, one of the great assets that is available to all of us is the fact that you get to know each other. After a while, you begin to bond. It becomes like a family. It isn't just people you're dealing with. These are people that have a perspective in their mind and they've got an objective in their heart. It's easy to work with, but it's been so helpful to have this: a lot of numbers now. The commission changes membership every so often when the political leadership changes in the states sometimes. They make new appointments. That's the system. We accept that. We find and in short time once they're on that commission, they are ... Once acclimated, they began to realize the treasure that we have there. The absolute essential necessity in doing all we can within economic reasonability to make a change.

The friendship that you build with these people. I still talk with people that have been off the commission for 10 years. I still consider them as dear friends. That friendship would not have occurred nor would I have the benefit of their knowledge and their resource, their intellect to help us. Life is not a one-man show. Life is everybody trying to work together for a common cause that is good and right for society as a whole. That's what we're here for.

That's God's plan for us here. We got to take care of that. John Fitz Kennedy once said ... President Kennedy once said, "That surely God's

work on earth is ours." And that is so true. We have the ability to do it. We have the knowledge to do it. What we need is the courage and the tenacity and the resources. There's a lot of complaining about the flush tax and the rain tax. Nobody likes taxes. I haven't found anyone yet really loves taxes. But we messed this thing up. With the friends we're talking about with the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the other organizations and friends in general that we talk with all the time, we need them to bond with us to make sure that we don't lose sight. We don't lose the purpose of why we exist and that's surely to do God's work here on earth.

This was a pretty unique situation back in John Smith's day. We'll never get it back to that, but I'm convinced that we can do a lot better than what we're doing and we should. It's because of the friends you make with the different organizations, particularly the Chesapeake Bay Commission, that makes their job a little easier and gives you the enthusiasm to continue to move forward.

ROLE OF BAY SCIENCE

Ann Swanson: Tell me about this. You've always struck me as a legislator that has very strong ties to the science community. How did that come about and why are they important to you?

Bernie Fowler: I've always had a great, I'll call it love, a great love and respect and admiration for one particular scientific organization. That's the Chesapeake Biological Lab, not the only one, but the one I'm most familiar with. They were my counsel. They were the people. I didn't even know how to spell eutrophication until I met them, much less know what it meant. It was the well-trained minds and also the determination, the exactness that they were looking for in their science that has helped to cultivate me and to give me the bank of knowledge that I need to stand for what I want to do.

The Chesapeake Bay Laboratory at Solomons, Maryland, that's a branch of the University of Maryland, one of the best universities in the United States incidentally. Have really been the God send to educating people. Scientists are very bright people. They're kind of strange because you say, "What is the problem?" "Well, we're looking at it." They won't tell you what the problem is until they're 99 and 99 to 100% sure they're right. The science they give you is an exact science. You can take it to the bank and that's what I've done all of my life. All the time I spent working with the different organizations, I listened careful to them. Then, I take their advice and run with it. It has never failed me yet.

Ann Swanson: How many years have you been a member of the Chesapeake Bay Commission?

Bernie Fowler: I think it's about 30 years. I went on I believe in 1984, I think. I was appointed to the Chesapeake Bay Commission. It's been a highlight of my public life. Even out of office as a citizen representative, I still enjoy trudging off to those meetings because you always come home a lot richer in knowledge and bonding with the people on the commission than you did before that meeting.

MARRIAGE

Ann Swanson: Tell me about this. Rarely have I ever seen you travel to one of those meetings without your wife, Betty. I can't help but think that the partnership there has helped you to become a leader. Tell me about Betty's role in your leadership.

Bernie Fowler: I've often said one of the greatest decisions. In fact, I'll say the greatest decision I ever made was when I was 14 years old in 1938 when I decided I was going to use the divinity as a part of my life. The second best decision I think I ever made, I know I ever made, was falling in love with a beautiful young lady down at Bernie's Boats at Broomes Island. Her mother introduced me to her. They were 2 of my best customers. Her mother and father were 2 of my best customers. They brought this beautiful young lady with them one day. I could look at her and tell she wasn't a fisherman. She was beautiful. There was a good chemistry. I think it was sort of love at first sight.

We have recently celebrated our 65th wedding anniversary, September the 9th, which I think is commendable. It's been a beautiful journey. There's been some rocky spots in that journey because of the economy and what have , . . . but the one thing that I've had that has been my best friend. She's my best friend, but she was always been there to console me. When I felt down, she was always there to build me up.

When you get these disappointments for something you're working hard, a failed piece of legislation or something goes amuck or wrong that you knew was right and it upset you, she was always there to nurture me along and to share that tender loving care she had for me. She's been a wonderful wife. She's been a wonderful mother. She's been a helpmate that's unmatched I think in this world. The way she looked out for me when I was in public office when she had to stay with the kids and I'm off doing my thing that I was convicted to do. I just wanted to take this

moment to thank her and to thank our Heavenly Father that this match was made. I truly believe it was made in heaven. It's been wonderful.

CONTROVERSIES OVER WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS

Ann Swanson: Going back to another less emotional question. I have the recall of you working on a very, very important piece of legislation that had to do with the sewage treatment plants, the large sewage treatment plants. Can you tell us about that because at the time I remember thinking, he knows to do this because of his experience on the Patuxent. That was a sweeping piece of legislation. Can you remind me about that?

Bernie Fowler: I recall the decision that we made, the Tri-County made back in the early 70s. It was a unanimous decision. Every county commissioner, every legislator from that geographic part of the state, good old Southern Maryland, voted to hire an environmental attorney and to go to court and to fight this thing in court. We did just that. After the court's decision, the federal court in District of Columbia, the judge's decision -- I was sitting in the court the day he rendered the decision was -- simply the plan that the state of Maryland has turned in to clean up the Patuxent River is more of a plan for growth. It does not address the amenities that need to be addressed. Therefore, I am going to order you to come up with a plan to clean the Patuxent River up. Also to let you know that we're going to withhold all federal funds for domestic water supply and waste water treatment plans until you have that plan in place.

That plan was a good plan. It called for the retrofit of 10 major waste water treatment plants. We have greater than 35, but they're much smaller plants. Some of them aren't but a couple hundred thousand gallon a day.

Ann Swanson: It's a huge amount of flow given how populated Maryland is.

Bernie Fowler: At that particular time, the flow rate was about 30 million gallons. Today as we speak, it's in excess of 60 million gallons a day that was coming out of the waste treatment plants. In order to garner the kind of support I needed for that piece of legislation, it was Senate Bill 531, I believe. What it did, it mandated that the major waste water treatment plants in the Patuxent River watershed, which was 10 of them, meet the maximum standards of 3 mg a liter, per 3 mg of nitrogen per liter of water and not greater than 1 mg of phosphorus per liter of water. If they failed to do it by certain dates, those dates were in the bill. The fine would kick in on them. They had to pay by the poundage. The amount of fine was in the

bill. It was a tough bill. It was kind of a mean bill. That bill represented exactly what the plan had called for back in 1982.

Ann Swanson: It was cutting edge. There were few plants nationwide that were receiving that level of nutrient reduction.

Bernie Fowler: Yep. We got it through the Senate. We did a lot of talking and we buttonholed a lot of people. Fortunately, we had the president of the Senate at that time who was Senator Mike Miller who was in my corner on that. Because he was also at one time served as a member of the Tri-County Council. In fact, I think he does today also. He was very helpful with that. Where the snafu came in is, once we got the bill through both houses, after a lot of talking and discussing and arguing, we got it through both houses.

Then, I got word from Governor Donald Schaefer that he was not going to sign the bill because it was a mean bill. He didn't like the bill. He wasn't going to sign it. I made an appointment and went over and I talked with the governor at that time. He and I were very good friends. I had great respect for him. He was a great governor. He was very good to me. I explained to him the importance of this bill. "Why can't you do it without doing this?" I said, "We've tried. We've tried now for almost a decade. It just isn't happening and the only way we're going to get it done is to make it mandatory so they have to do it." He put his hands behind his head sort of like this which was a habit of his. He said, "I'm going to get cursed a million times for this because I've already said I wasn't going to sign the bill, but I'm going to sign the bill for you." He signed it in with a lot of fanfare. It was a lot of people at that bill signing. That to me was a very historical piece of legislation.

Immediately, once they met the standards, that river began to show all kind of different life. The submerged aquatic vegetation was coming back. At the Wade In, the kids were pulling the grass up, making wigs out of it. We hadn't seen grass for years there. The transparency of the water got so much better. It looked like we had turned a corner. The problem that we had was that the bill did all it was supposed to do, but it didn't go far enough. Because with the growth the way it was, our volume of effluent going into the river at that time almost tripled in a short period of time. While we made great strides and the river was coming back, the magnitude of the growth soon backed that up. Had I had the vision to treat that legislation a little differently, to where they could not exceed certain volumes, I think we'd have a clean river today. It made a big difference. The waste water treatment plants today are not doing all they could do, but they're doing a much better job.

It's a real sense of comfort to know like Blue Plains (wastewater treatment plan for Washington DC metro area) which is hundreds of millions of gallons a day and they're cleaning that up. They're making big strides to clean up the storm water in Washington DC. Huge amounts of money, billions of dollars being spent to do that. Things like that -- while our disappointments will always come -- it continues to give us hope because we see changes happening to give us cause for enthusiasm.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Ann Swanson: Through the grace of God, your grandchildren and my children hopefully will outlive you. If they do, what advice would you give them as the next generation of leaders? What should they do for Chesapeake Bay?

Bernie Fowler: I believe one thing that we have to do and that's to improve the environmental education that we have in the school systems. Not just in Maryland, but in the entire bay watershed. I say that selfishly because we're focused on that 64,000 square miles of jewel right now. That's our number 1. We really need to improve that because our children have got to receive the education that we failed to get. When we were in school, we learned everything we've learned through the hard knocks by watching the rivers die, by watching the crabs diminish, by watching the fish get lesions on them, by watching all kinds of things happen that's not good for the bay. We've got to do all we can to make sure that our children avoid the experiences that we've had.

I want them to have the joy that I had when I was a child growing up. What a magnificent time of my life and it is not impossible. It is not an impossibility. It's like pushing a medicine ball up Mount Everest sometimes. That doesn't stop you. You just fight a little harder for it. These young people deserve better and they're going to be the stewards. They're going to have to make it better. We are not going to live long enough. None of us in this room I think are going to live long enough to see a cleansed Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. I think that we can do it by taking 1 river and concentrating on that. That of course the best laboratory would be the Patuxent River, of course, but I just don't think there's any way we're going to see the changes come about fast enough to cleanse that river that will make our children happy immediately.

It's their future. Our young people have got to ... They have got to step up. They've got to take the reins, but they've got to have the educational tools to do that. We've got to dramatize so they know this is not a fun thing. That this is serious business. Not only is it going to eradicate the

wholesome seafood we had, but it's also going to be a very detrimental situation for human health as we now understand it.

Ann Swanson: Do you think that you can have economic vitality in this region without environmental health? You've seen a lot. You've seen it when it's been really environmentally vibrant. You've also seen the bay region in some of its strongest periods of growth. You've done some development work yourself. How do you find the balance? What is the balance?

EFFECTS OF POPULATION GROWTH

Bernie Fowler: I guess one of the biggest problems we have -- and this isn't a secret, it isn't classified, I think we all know it -- is growth. This is the United States of America. It's very difficult to stop growth. Even if people wanted to do it, it'd be hard to stop. Growth is the reason the problem exists because the way we interact. The elements that we need to sustain life, our waste water treatment plants and fertilization of our lawns and all the other things, storm water runoff. It's all caused frankly by people. We're growing probably a quarter of a million people a year. Aren't we not, in the Chesapeake Bay watershed? Can we have that kind of growth and still maintain an environment that would be conducive to the aquatic life and also to the human life that exists around it? My answer is yes. I think we can, but it would not be an easy thing to accomplish.

People just ... We all have selfish instincts. When you have to put out the money you need to retrofit what we've got now, storm water alone which is 50% of the problem. That's including agricultural runoff. Is going to cost billions and billions and billions of dollars. Are we willing to relinquish that kind of money in order to sustain the health of the Chesapeake Bay and improve it? The answer is: that it's growth, growth is the culprit. We've got to find a way to do that. Not suggesting stopping it. If you're going to grow, then waste water treatment plants are going to have to do a better job. Either that or we're going to have to become much more innovative and find some way to accommodate human waste except by constantly dumping it into our streams, our rivers, our creeks and our bay.

It isn't just that. It's the runoff we spoke of earlier. It's air deposition that's coming from places as far away as Ohio and climate change. Things right now that are taking place. Regardless of how much money we have, we're going to have probably a 2 foot sea level rise within this century we're living in right now, this 21st century. Even if we were able to get international agreement to do everything we needed to do today, certain things cannot be stopped. They're going to happen. It's a tough job. It's a

tough job and to say yes it can be done. Let's qualify that yes by saying yes, but it's going to be very, very difficult to do. It's only until we get the hearts and minds of people less greedy and more determined to provide clean air and clean water or we're going to see a return to the kind of healthy environment that we had in my younger days. I want to see that so badly for the children and grandchildren and great grandchildren and many generations that will follow us. I would love to see that happen.

RIVER STORIES

Ann Swanson: Tell me about the time that you brought the goose home. There was an injured bird of some kind. You became beholden to it.

Bernie Fowler: I recall one time and this is a little bit of levity which is necessary to keep your sanity. I recall one time there was a pair of geese that lived at Dares Beach. One was named Romeo and the other was named Juliet. We don't know why, but we think some mean trick was played on one of them and it was injured. I used to go down to the bay every morning before I'd leave to go to work. I'd go down to the bay which was only a hundred yards walk from my house. I'd sit on the bulkhead down there. I'd always take a little corn with me and these 2 geese would come swimming over. They'd get up on it. They were pretty mean natured and you had to get to know them. You had to kind of cultivate them a little bit and spoil them a little bit. Then, they'd love you for it. They'd follow me home.

We were able with that wounded goose to nurture it back to health, just tender loving care. It's little things like that that you never forget. You never forget. Not really a funny story as such, but one that it takes your mind off the seriousness of the problem that we're confronting.

Ann Swanson: What about at Bernie's Boats? Was there ever something that was just really funny? Somebody who came and tried to rent a boat or something that really makes you laugh when you think back on it.

Bernie Fowler: Yeah. We had things that happened when I had the boat rental place at Broomes Island that was kind of amusing. I recall one time when I had been trying to get them to install a gas pump down there so that my customers could get gas when they came down if they ran out of gas. It was in a flood plain area and they put the tank underground. We had a hurricane a little later on that year. I believe it was Hazel. The rising water, the tank was so buoyant it popped right out of the ground with the tank and the gasoline. When the petroleum company that was supplying it came over, it was all laid over on its side. That's not really a funny story, but it was kind of amusing to me at the time.

Ann Swanson: Yeah. It seems like a disaster actually. All right.

Bernie Fowler: One of the things we used to do on the Patuxent River that was always enjoyable. When you had a full moon, we would get in my cousin's boat. It was real fast and we'd ride the moon streak. Weren't going there. You'd just ride the moon streak. You'd get the bow of the boat heading in that moon streak and you'd get it wide open because you could see very clear any obstacles in front of you. That was something we always enjoyed was riding the moon streak whenever you'd get a good full moon.

Ann Swanson: What about phosphorescence? When you were younger did you see that a lot? You know the phosphorescence when the water is glowing.

Bernie Fowler: Yeah. Off the camera, what happened to that?

Ann Swanson: It's still around.

Bernie Fowler: It is? I don't see it.

Ann Swanson: You just don't see it as often, but when you do it's magical.

Bernie Fowler: I recall back. I used to row a boat a lot. I still to this day enjoy rowing a boat. At night time in particular when you'd row that boat when you'd turn the paddle, the oars, you could see this light, light up at both oars. It was really intriguing to see that. I haven't seen much of that lately. Maybe it's because I don't row as much. Maybe something's happened that has caused ...

Ann Swanson: It's only a few days in the summer when you do see it. Only once in my life did I see it. I saw it shore to shore on the Chester River. Shore to shore and it was amazing.

Bernie Fowler: It is amazing.

Ann Swanson: Yeah. What else do we need to know about, Michael?

Michael: You mentioned all these issues that you got involved in with the Chesapeake Bay Commission in terms of various legislative battles and victories. I'm sort of curious what are the major defeats when you look back on the political part of the environmental movement.

CHESAPEAKE BAY AGREEMENTS

Bernie Fowler: When you're working as a legislator, whoever you are, there are times when you have gross disappointments. You have to get accustomed to that. You can't win them all. There have been times working with the Chesapeake Bay Commission that I didn't walk away. This particular year, I didn't walk away totally happy with the plan. They just upgraded the plan. If you look at it, it has some very positive things in there. Some real positive targets can make a big difference. There's one part of the plan ...

Ann Swanson: Are you talking about the Bay Agreement and the Bay Programs Bay Agreement? That's what you're talking about.

Bernie Fowler: Yeah. Really talking about the Chesapeake Bay Agreement and the program that they put together that's in place now, that's been signed off by the signatories, all the members of the executive committee. There was one part of the plan that we fought pretty hard on. In fact, we wrote a letter and tried to enumerate some of the things that we disagreed with. Some of them were changed. The one that I hoped would be changed, that it wouldn't be an optional thing for the signatories. As I understand the plan now, if there's ... Let's use TMDL, just at random for instance. If New York State decides that they don't want to be in it, it's my understanding in the plan that they can opt out of that. My contention is unless you have unanimity of agreement and damn the torpedoes full speed ahead -- all together, we'll win it together, we'll lose it together -- progress is going to come a lot slower than we had anticipated.

I really think we ought to reexamine that. I think we ought to have each one of the members of the commission that are part of that reexamine their minds. The signatories that have signed off on this I think they ought to think again. It's never too late to change your mind. Wise men do on occasions and sometimes it's been very beneficial to do that. That's my disappointment this year.

There've been others, not easy to recall right now. There have been other times when I haven't been totally satisfied. We've won some big victories. We mentioned earlier about the spoils going into deep channel. We won that. That would have not been won had it not been for the tenacity, courage and the just determination, sheer determination of members of that commission to stand tall and fight. A lot of them were fighting against it, but it was enough of us that fought for it. The Corps of Engineers finally came out with some facts that agreed pretty generally with what we had been saying for years.

Ann Swanson: Talk to Michael about in terms of wins or losses. The Chesapeake Bay Commission made a decision to focus in on congressional spending and how we could improve congressional support, given the fact that we signed these Bay Agreements in 2000. We knew it was going to be a lot of money. We began looking at federal opportunities and one of them was the farm bill. We saw that there were like 84,000 farms in the watershed and what could we do to increase that support. Ultimately, I guess what we worked 6 years to try to get a special Chesapeake Bay provision in the farm bill. Talk to Michael about that role, the role of making a decision that farmers were worth investing in, and then trying to get the money.

Bernie Fowler: We've listened to a lot of criticism about the agricultural community. In some instances, it's not undeserved. We know pockets of problems that have not been straightened out and changes should culminate sooner than it's going to, I'm afraid. The agricultural community is such an integral part of what's good for this country. The food they raise and the fiber they raise that sustain our way of life. There was a time had it not been for the Chesapeake Bay Commission I question whether the farm bill and all the goodness that it brings forth for the farm community would have been able to survive the storm. There wasn't that much sympathy on Capitol Hill for it.

Again, the Chesapeake Bay Commission and their endless effort to make the right connections and convince the right people that this was not a show and tell game. This was a serious matter. Money had to be appropriated to help assist, and assisting the farmers would mean an abatement of some of the problems that we have. That's a real credit to the Chesapeake Bay Commission and a real credit to Congress: that after 6 long years, they finally saw the light and was able to understand -- not on their own volition -- but because they had professionals nurturing them, lobbying them, talking to them and convincing them that this was the United States of America and America needed that particular legislation.

Ann Swanson: Needed the environmental provisions of it. Yeah.

Michael: I'm so curious. A number of years ago you participated in this event up at Washington College where they brought together Harry Hughes and ...

Ann Swanson: Remember that?

Bernie Fowler: Yeah. I do.

Ann Swanson: The old sages.

Michael: Right.

Ann Swanson: That's when you were young.

Bernie Fowler: I was younger. Yeah, my goodness.

Michael: One of the key discussions of that meeting had to do with getting the Chesapeake Bay program going. Getting the original agreement and the argument was made at the time that it wouldn't ... Unless it was voluntary, it would never have gotten going. Some of the things you've said today makes you wonder does the voluntary approach work? We see now with TMDLs and the federal government exercising more direction to be moving a little bit away from relying upon the voluntary participation of all these different states and state agencies. Is that a major turning point? What's your take on that?

Bernie Fowler: I could say this: that from the bottom of a grateful heart I've great respect for all those who volunteer. There are many people, hundreds and thousands of people that volunteer to do what they can to plant trees, to plant submerged aquatic vegetation, to take the old junk that people carelessly and ruthlessly throw into the rivers and the bays and all. I have not underestimating at all the goodness that the volunteers do. The bottom line of being able to accommodate the big picture. I just don't think that the volunteer system ... It can play a role, but it can never accomplish it on its own. It has got to have the teeth. It has got to have the mandatory element whether it be the legislator, whether it be through the courts or what it be.

EPA has taken the role they should have taken when the law was passed, the Clean Water Act was passed in 1972. EPA was on recess for the most part for a long, long time. I have dear friends in the EPA. I've worked with them over the years. I know some of them. We've had one of the administrators, Carol Browner, who came to the (Patuxent River) Wade In and declared Bernie Fowler Day from the EPA standpoint. I was very honored to have her. She was a very productive lady and very sincere with what she was doing.

The problem that I have with EPA is: about the time you get someone acclimated and they understand the problem fully, they're off to Timbuktu somewhere and you got somebody new on. I think right now though we have somebody that is not new to the situation at all. I think he can be a blessing in disguise because he doesn't have to learn. He knows. He knows when he was a Marylander. He knows when he was secretary of one of our regulatory agencies.

Ann Swanson: Bob Perciasepe, he's the deputy.

Bernie Fowler: Absolutely. Bob Perciasepe can be a great help at a time when we sorely need it.

Ann Swanson: Of course, now he's retiring. He's retiring. Yep.

Bernie Fowler: [inaudible] All of my young doctors retired. They're young ...

Ann Swanson: One of the things that I think Michael was getting at and you might want to talk about is participation in the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Bay Agreements and participation in the Chesapeake Bay Commission is voluntary. Then as members of those organizations either as a signatory to the Bay Agreements or as a member of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, then you go back to your own jurisdiction and implement. That's where the mandates come in. This kind of voluntary component where you all come together and learn and promise. Then, you go back into your own jurisdictions and work it. That's where you make a choice where some things are voluntary. Some things are mandatory. I don't know. That's complex.

Michael: Yes. You're getting at it.

Ann Swanson: You see when you're signing the agreement. For example earlier what I think you were trying to get at is this latest agreement everyone signed on the dotted line and that meant that you were all in it together. That's what that always meant. We're in it together. We'll go back to our own jurisdictions and do what we can. This time around -- even if you signed on the dotted line -- you still had an option where you didn't have to try. I think what somehow, what you were saying at that voluntary level everyone has to at least be willing to try. Later on you go into your own jurisdiction and decide what you're going to mandate. For you, some of the things that you decided to work to mandate have been your biggest gains. I don't know how to say that succinctly, but ...

Bernie Fowler: Yeah. The Chesapeake Bay Commission is voluntary. We all know that. When you're voluntary and you don't have the power to implement, it doesn't make it negative because you do have the influence of talking with folks back home at your local jurisdictions which can help to make it happen. With EPA using their strong leverage now and giving them deadlines and all, they have to come up with plans to meet certain standards at certain times. It makes it a different picture altogether.

My point in saying what I said earlier about the opting in and opting out. While we're a voluntary organization, that voluntary organization ought to be in concert and unanimity. It shouldn't be splintered off and given the option of saying we're not going to do it in New York or we're not going to do it in West Virginia. We're not going to do it in Delaware. That then takes away the only real control you have to work with the local people where it's going to happen, to work with them to bring about the vital change that all of us know is absolutely necessary, but many of us are not willing to, not many of us are willing to really put the shoulder to the wheel and do the things we ought to do.

THE ROLE OF EPA BAY PROGRAM

- Michael Fincham: It makes you wonder. If EPA had taken an aggressive position right from the start based on the Clean Water Act, could they in essence short circuited or made irrelevant the need to have the states get together for Chesapeake Bay Program?
- Bernie Fowler: I don't think that it would necessarily short circuited too much. It could have helped it tremendously. Yes ...
- Ann Swanson: Only the water though ...
- Bernie Fowler: I'm sorry.
- Ann Swanson: Remember the ...
- Bernie Fowler: The Clean Water Act ...
- Ann Swanson: The EPA is about water.
- Bernie Fowler: Yeah.
- Ann Swanson: The Bay Program is about fish and crabs and forests.
- Michael Fincham: Living resources. Right.
- Ann Swanson: Make that point.
- Bernie Fowler: Go back right to your question again.
- Ann Swanson: Ask your question again.

Michael Fincham: I was just reacting to what you were saying about the EPA having a lot of leverage and it made me wonder if EPA ... Okay, maybe EPA and Fish and Wildlife, if the federal agencies had gotten together years ago and said you have to do these things, you have to meet these water quality levels and these fish protection actions, would that have made unnecessary the Chesapeake Bay Agreements? Where the states get together and say, we voluntarily agree we will try to do this. Maybe I'm asking a ... It's a counter-factual look at history, but you've mentioned that it's lawsuits that have been some of the major drivers. Those lawsuits go back to federal law.

Bernie Fowler: Looking back over the space of time and the history of the activities that happened, I really believe that much of the problem we have today could have been short-circuited or maybe even avoided completely, if the regulatory agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency had really stepped to the plate and done their job. They didn't do it because I am unconvinced today as I was years ago. I don't think there was enough conviction. I don't think they grasped the severity or the gravity of the problem. Therefore, they were inactive about it until the hammer comes down hard and wakes them up.

I can give you comparison back and I won't mention any governor's name. The first governor that I talked with, you'll probably figure out who it was, patted me on the shoulder and said, "There's nothing wrong with the Chesapeake Bay. There's nothing wrong with the Patuxent River. Bernie, you're going to drive tourists away. They won't want to come to the bay to go fishing and all. It's wrong. You shouldn't do that." He's quoted in the newspaper saying that. I think I still have a copy of the print. That's what I'm saying about the lack of hands-on knowledge and experience -- when you watch the grass die and you watch the water get cloudy and you watch the muck and you see the silt where it used to be nice sandy beaches, no more the nice green sea aquatic vegetation, we always called it seaweed, then, you know something's wrong. It isn't cyclical. I think they failed really to do their job quite frankly. That's a harsh statement.

Ann Swanson: The other thing though I would imagine because of your work with the Patuxent at the local level, the county commissioners with the state general assembly and with the federal level. You begin to realize that nobody alone has the power and that there's power at different levels. The challenge becomes now that we have all these people how do we get all those decision points in synchrony. Even if the federal government had exerted their strength, they don't control decisions in Calvert County.

Michael: Yeah.

Ann Swanson: Talk about that. All these different layers. What you would do differently or your observations because you've now been a leader at multiple levels? You ought to run for Congress. You might win.

Michael Fincham: I voted for you for Lieutenant Governor.

Bernie Fowler: Did you really?

Michael Fincham: Yes, I did.

Bernie Fowler: Thank you. That's one more vote I know I got. We could have made a difference. That team would have made a difference.

CAMPAIGN FOR LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Michael Fincham: Yeah, I was all in ...

Bernie Fowler: I would have brought bright minds in to take care of all the ...

Ann Swanson: Who were you running with?

Michael Fincham: "American Joe" Miedusiewski ...

Bernie Fowler: "American Joe" Miedusiewski. He was a good man, too.

Michael: Yeah.

Bernie Fowler: He made a public commitment that ...

Ann Swanson: That was like in the late 80s. When was that?

Bernie Fowler: That was ... I retired in that was ... No, wait a minute. I retired in '94 so it was '94.

Ann Swanson: Right. I forgot about that.

Bernie Fowler: We were at the bottom of the pack when we started because we were the last ones to get started. The happy part about it is we finished up in 2nd place. My county carried us solid.

Ann Swanson: That's great.

Bernie Fowler: The only county we carried in Maryland was Calvert County which I thought was very flattering. I really did.

Ann Swanson: Yes, it is. They're the ones that know you best.

Bernie Fowler: Yeah. I think so.

Ann Swanson: If you were voted down by your local people, hm?

Bernie Fowler: See, my plan has always been in everything that I've done -- like the Calvert Alliance, again, we're digressing here. The Calvert Alliance Against Substance Abuse. I was chairing a delegation in Annapolis and we had the secretary had put on the agenda for the next meeting that the sheriff's department and the state police from the 3 southern Maryland counties would like to come and meet with the delegation. Absolutely. She put them on the agenda and they come up.

They began to tell ... Now, you have to remember I was naïve. I never knew what it was, drugs. I never knew what drugs was. Maybe an aspirin tablet if you had a headache or something. Never knew what it was. I was sitting there very nonchalant and naïve. This one state policeman spoke up and said we busted a crack house in Dares Beach last week. My ears shot up and I ... What's going on here? Am I living in a different world? Why didn't I know this? It was happening right under my nose and I didn't know it.

What I did then was to do what I've always done. "Who's in charge?" "Go to the governor." Let him know there's a serious problem in southern Maryland, serious problem in the state. You're no different than we are in southern Maryland. "Governor Schaefer, we need to do something. We need to get something going down there. I don't know what it is." "Do you have any ideas of what you want to do?" I said, "Well, we really need to coordinate the educators, public officials, judiciary. Bring everybody together that has any stake in this at all." I'll tell you. That afternoon the office was full of people. Set that thing up and it worked good.

Once we got it going, I chaired it just long enough to pick people that I knew would carry the ball. Harold Kahl who was president of Calvert Bank at the time. It's PNC now. Very dear friend, very bright. Very organized mind. I went to him and told him. "Harold, I don't have time to do this any longer. The need is there but it needs someone like you that's well organized. I've got my fingers in a dozen different things. I just don't want to embarrass myself. Will you take the chairmanship of that and get it going and get it on the road?" He did a whale of job. It's probably one of

the most powerful groups in the state right now in terms of deterring it. Now, they've not cured it. Don't get me wrong. It's still going on and bad.

What I'd do if I'd been elected governor, lieutenant governor of the state of Maryland, he already told me you're taking Natural Resources, you're taking Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Environment. Then, they're going to report to me. Of course, I guess under law they have to report to him. They're going to report to you. They're going to report to you and not me. That's a promise I'll make. I would have brought people in. I'd brought brainy people that understood all of the details to have run it. I wouldn't have traded what was right to make some Eastern Shore man richer than he was. I wouldn't have made that trade off. That wouldn't have happened. I guess that's one reason we didn't make it.

Pat Sajak had a big party for us up at his house in Baltimore County. Nice guy and at the very end after we both made our speeches, [inaudible] he come up and put his arm around us. I've got pictures of all of this that they took. Put his arm around us, he said, "You know one thing. I hate to say this. I really hate to. These guys are not going to get elected. You know why? They're too damn honest. People don't elect honest politicians that's why we're in it." He said it right out. "We're in now. If we had people like this, things would be different in the state of Maryland. But we're not going to get it. I wish them the best and I'm going to give them a heavy donation. I can tell you that. I'm here today to support them. I want all you to support them."

VALUES AND FAMILY LIFE

Ann Swanson: If frequently you've functioned as almost the moral compass for others, is that tiring or inspiring?

Bernie Fowler: Inspiring. Inspiring because when I go to bed at night sometimes I reflect on what happened during the day and it makes me feel good to know that I didn't do anything to hurt anybody. That I didn't do anything derogative or anything immoral that would make my family ashamed of me. I've got a wonderful family. Just don't come any better.

Ann Swanson: Yeah.

Bernie Fowler: Preachers. They lead the ... Got a musical director. I got one now that's going to turn out to be a jewel. She's the latest graduate we had. Both of them are going to do real good. They're both girls.

Ann Swanson: How many kids and how many grandkids?

Bernie Fowler: 4 children and 8 grandkids and 7 great grandchildren. My youngest great grandchild was 1 year old April the 13th of this year. Who would be able to revive these younger minds? Give them the incentive. Give them the conviction. Give them the desire. Give them that determination to move forward to try and rescue this 64,000 miles of gem that we have.

Ann Swanson: People like you. People who care. There will always be people who care.

Bernie Fowler: Yeah.

Ann Swanson: Yep.

Bernie Fowler: That's my hope, my prayer, my desire: that there will be people that will remember some of the things we've said. Some of the things that you and I and others have recorded for various reasons. That can serve as a base or that can serve as a benchmark or a nucleus for the renewal, the renaissance of the enthusiasm and desire to do it. We've got to get rid of one word, 5 letter word. That word is greed. That has got to be stimulated downward. You can't continue to go on and look at that almighty dollar as the only thing that's important to you.

Ann Swanson: To the environment ...

Bernie Fowler: It's not wrong to be rich. I love to see people get rich. I once was rich myself. I'm not going to get rich at the risk of taking the bread and the air and everything else out of my children's mouths and grandchildren and the generations that will follow surely if the world stands.

Ann Swanson: I have to tell you. I was recently paddling on the Eastern Shore just below the Virginia line. I paddled for about 8 miles and [inaudible] beds solid. It was magically emerald and you could see to the bottom. You could see the crabs running. In front of the bow of my boat as my boat moved, I was in a kayak. There were Spanish mackerel leaping across the bow of the boat. It made me think about you and what you had seen.

Bernie Fowler: Yeah.

Ann Swanson: The reason I bring it up is that there are places in the bay.

Bernie Fowler: Still exist.

Ann Swanson: Yes. Which means, all is not lost. Keep fighting.

Bernie Fowler: No. We realize that and have great appreciation and respect for those that have helped to maintain that. It's a coming. My good friend, Dr. Tom Miller, tells me before the end of the century the mouth of the bay will be down to North Carolina because of the sea level rising because the land's subsiding. Like I said earlier in our comments, there's no magic wand. Even if we had one and we waved it, there's certain ongoing activities that are going to make these things materialize. Every perspective of what we do, if we got religion today and changed our habits all together, was able to get 100% cooperation, things are going to happen to this planet that we can't do anything about. Maybe it will survive, maybe it won't. I don't know. Again, you have to remember I've got ... I'm kind of hung up on that thing we call a Holy Bible.

Ann Swanson: It's worth the fight though. Right?

Bernie Fowler: It's worth the fight. Absolutely. I believe this and I spoke about this just down in Tennessee. Had a little group sitting around talking. I said, "Do you think we're bad as Sodom and Gomorrah?" We're off the water now. We're on culture. I said, "Actually, I have no way of knowing, but my guess is we're not a whole lot better." Because one of the sins of the world that was happening at that time. You remember when the angels was in Lot's house. They wanted to get these two men out to make love to them. I said, "That was part of the package when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. We made it legal a couple years ago in Maryland."

Ann Swanson: Wow. I guess Chesapeake Bay has absolutely defined your life. You've fought a lot for it. I guess maybe the last question that I have is ... There you were in National Geographic. There you were the icon. You really were. You became the image of Chesapeake Bay. For all the nation and all the world, out of thousands of photographs that they took on Chesapeake Bay and all the crabs and all eels and all the skipjacks and all the boaters, they chose you. That's pretty ... That's a pretty serious responsibility to be the Chesapeake Bay icon. How did that make you feel?

Bernie Fowler: It doesn't trouble me. I'm not afraid. I don't have any fear of the responsibility because I know that what we're doing is right. I know it's right and I know it's God's work here on earth. To compromise that would be hypocritical and sinful. It would be double crossing my Father in Heaven and I don't intend to do that.

Ann Swanson: So, it's been an honor to be a leader ...

Bernie Fowler:

It's been an honor, and it really has. I could have been an extremely wealthy person today if I wanted to be. Extremely wealthy, but we're satisfied. We got a halfway decent home. We're happy. Betty's happy here and she's been everywhere we've ever lived. We started out our marriage in a ... It was an old garage, one car garage. I made a hunting cabin out to rent it out. When we got married, that's where we moved into. Then, I added a little kitchen off to the side of it. Then the next thing you know, I added a bathroom on it because we had an outside privy at the time. Then, here come the children so, I decided renovate the whole thing. We ended up it was a fairly decent home. The exterior wasn't the most beautiful by any stretch of the imagination, but it was good and warm. We had 3 bedrooms, nice bath, nice kitchen. We were enjoying life.

I sold that, not because I was unhappy with it. I sold it because I saw a trend that I didn't like. Betty was taking my children off to Sunday school and I was staying there because Sunday was the busiest day I had. Then all of a sudden, it started ringing a bell. Remember the Sabbath day. Keep it holy. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. I decided that money wasn't everything. That I was going to be the leader of my family. That was my responsibility. God-given responsibility to be the leader and do the best I could. We chose after a very short conversation. We chose to sell it. We loved it down there. Sell it and move out of the community and do something else. Everything's worked out good. The little business I went in succeeded. It kept us going. It kept us in the cars we needed. The clothes we needed. What are kids needed and all.

There are not many regrets in my life. The regret I have is that I'm 90 years old. I wish I could be as fortunate as Methuselah and have the mentality, absent the dementia and the Alzheimer and all, to continue to work and strive. I hope it don't take the 700 and whatever it was he lived. 700 years. I do think it's going to take a lot longer than I'm going to be allowed to be a part of.

Ann Swanson:

Here you are 90 years old. You're sharp as a whip. You're in great shape. You'll run up the stairs. You'll remind me of things. What's the secret? Tell me one thing. What's your secret?

Bernie Fowler:

I'm going to tell you the truth as I feel it.

Ann Swanson:

Yeah. I would only expect the truth, Bernie.

Bernie Fowler:

I could tell you a lot of things that I do, but all of those things is called a plan. I wasn't the one that generated that plan. That was a divine plan for

my life. I think it all culminated because of the uncompromising commitment that I made back in 1938 when I was 14 years old. That and you know you have to keep your heart in good shape. In order to keep your heart in good shape and your lungs in good shape, you have to challenge them.

STAYING HEALTHY

- Bernie Fowler: That doesn't mean once every 6 months. That means every day, every day but Sunday. I don't ...
- Ann Swanson: What would you do? Run?
- Bernie Fowler: Run. I had at home. I don't do it now because my legs are starting to trouble me some. It's not unusual.
- Ann Swanson: What did you do?
- Bernie Fowler: Every morning when I'd wake except Sunday morning, my first thing after I'd go to the bathroom, brush my teeth, rinse my mouth out ... I have a little machine in my bedroom. It's called a shaker. You just lay down on your back. It has a mat. You lay down on you back. You put your heels in there and it shakes your legs. I mean really fast. You can make it as fast as you want to shake them. Then after I do that, I have certain routines I do like on my back. It's just like you're riding a bike over here because you don't have any stress on your joints at all. See, that's very easy to do. You're warming them up for the day. You're getting them ready for the shocks. I usually do that never less than 100 times. It's very easy. You can do it ...
- Michael: How do you count? I mean like ...
- Bernie Fowler: Just count as the one foot goes up ...
- Ann Swanson: See so that's kept his mind sharp too.
- Bernie Fowler: 1, right foot 2, right foot goes up 3, right foot ... Not 1, 2, 3, 4. Now, you sound it when the right foot goes up 1, 2.
- Michael Fincham: I see.
- Bernie Fowler: Then, you do that. You can start off with 50 and then, you can go to 100.
- Ann Swanson: You've done that every day.

Bernie Fowler: Every day. Every day, even when I hurt. When I have pain and I have pain.

Ann Swanson: Have you done that for 50 years or 20 years?

Bernie Fowler: No, I can't say that I did it that long. It really started ...

Ann Swanson: When you were older?

Bernie Fowler: In about 19 ... I'll give you the exact year when I started: 1979.

Ann Swanson: Even if you ...

Bernie Fowler: I was taking exercise and I've always ran. When I was a kid, the store was a mile away. Mom would say to me, "Go get me a stick of butter." You didn't buy a whole pound. You couldn't afford it. Stick of butter was 10 cents. Give you a dime and I'd run to the store. I'd get that stick of butter and run all the way back home. It was just a habit. Didn't have a bike. There's no automobiles, only 6 automobiles on the island.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

Ann Swanson: You didn't have a bike because you didn't have the money.

Bernie Fowler: Didn't have the money. That's right. My first bike ...

Ann Swanson: Bernie's told me stories about where he had to tape his shoes together.

Bernie Fowler: Oh, my god.

Ann Swanson: Yeah. Terrible stories.

Bernie Fowler: When the shoes wore out on the bottom, you'd take cardboard. Go around one of the old stores and get cardboard. Bring it home and then take it and cut a piece as near as you could cut it to the sole. Draw it, you know. Stick it inside there. It worked good. It really worked good. It kept your foot warm except if it was raining that day, the cardboard didn't last you long.

I remember one of the most and I'll never forget this. One of the most embarrassing times in my life, I was in school. We were setting the table. They had the tables set U-shape. We were doing a speech, but we also had to draw an image of what we were going to talk about. I wanted to talk about beautification of the homestead. Then, I had to draw a home that you'd find on a typical farm. I was so excited over that. I'd always

keep my feet down like this, but that one particular time, I was just relaxed so much that I went like this. I was just enjoying doing that. I figured this is going to get me an A. This is good stuff. I heard some snickering and I look like this. I looked over there and they were looking at the holes in my shoes. It was just like somebody had punched me right in the gut. Right in the solar plexus. They were friends. Don't get me wrong, but kids can be cruel. Kids can be the cruelest tool there is.

Ann Swanson: Boys.

Bernie Fowler: Oh, boys. Oh, yeah. It was just absolutely embarrassing. That stuck with me all my life. I outgrew it, but I never forgot it. I never forgot it and I never forgot the 2 boys that was doing most of the laughing. They're both dead now.

Ann Swanson: You've always been appreciative for everything you have.

Bernie Fowler: Yeah. That did not in any way impede me from the kind of things I thought I should be doing in life. We have always had prayer ... We never go to bed ... If we do go to bed if Betty happens to be having a lot of pain and she's not able to, we won't read the Bible and do the study lesson that night we'll do it ... We've gone sometimes as much as 3 nights because she hurt too bad to do it.