

Hudson River Valley Institute  
Walkway Over the Hudson Oral Histories  
Donald Pevsner: Worked on Bridge Preservation

**Date:** Tuesday, January 27, 2009  
**Length:** Approximately 37 1/2 minutes

**Interviewer (Jason Schaaf):** Okay, could you just tell me your name and spell it for me please?

**Donald Pevsner:** Sure, it's Donald L. Pevsner that's P-EV- for Victor S-for Sam N E R.

**Interviewer:** Okay, let me just ask you a couple of brief questions about your past and who you are-[cut off by Pevsner]

**Pevsner:** Alright.

**Interviewer:** And such, so we'll start moving towards to the bridge.

**Pevsner:** Sure.

**Interviewer:** So I believe, I read in the Mabee, that you grew up in New York City?

**Pevsner:** That's right.

**Interviewer:** What was your first experience with the bridge and could you just tell me about that?

**Pevsner:** Well I collected railroad time tables as kid and I was always intrigued by the New Haven's Maybrook line which of course crossed the bridge. The New Haven was a New England Railroad but they had this one main freight line that just went like an hour right into New York State way out of their regular territory, crossing an incredibly huge historic bridge and I was always intrigued with it. Then back around 1959, I got to ride over it in a special railroad excursion passenger train which was-consisted of I believe, one or two self propelled diesel cars known as an RDC (Rail Diesel Car) and we went all the way from the New Haven station in New Haven, the entire length of the Maybrook freight line over the Poughkeepsie Bridge down to the Maybrook Yard a little time down then back the way we came and that was fifteen at the time. We stopped right in the middle of the bridge, everybody got out on the catwalk. That was enough to hook me on the bridge

**Interviewer:** What were some of the things that impressed you about the bridge at that young age?

**Pevsner:** Well it was the first bridge crossing of the Hudson south of Albany and it's a stupendous structure. It's 6,767 feet long, it's 212 feet above the river, the views were incredible and it's a big black spidery monster, and you can't fail but be impressed by it. You don't have to be a big rail buff to be impressed by it.

**Interviewer:** So what did you go into, what was your career- what is your career?

**Pevsner:** Well I'm an attorney; I don't really practice law any more, other than public service work. I was the leading charter of the Concord supersonic airplane for fifteen years, from 1985 to 2000 and ran numerous multi-million dollar charters including the two round the world air speed records eastbound and westbound, in both directions that was, westbound in 1992 and eastbound in 1995. I will be doing an attempt on the last of three big round the world records which is around the world, over north and south poles in the winter of 2010. So I am -I've been a consumer advocate for my entire life. I actually became the leading consumer advocate in the aviation field in the country, donating all my time to public service style ala Ralph Nader and I've had a pretty varied career. Right now, I'm going to be 65 on April 19<sup>th</sup>. I semi-retired but I have some very exciting flight projects coming up. Oh yes, also I just got the okay last week to be the first charter over the new 8380 super jumbo jet, the double-decker one for around the world charter flight which I am targeting for April of 2010. So I have two very big multi-million dollar projects on my plate at the moment.

**Interviewer:** That's sounds pretty exciting stuff.

**Pevsner:** Yeah it's amazing, but I still haven't lost my love of railroading. I was a rail buff before I was anything else. Although there's nothing like steam, steam disappeared, when I was barely old enough to get to where it was in the New York area, in 1957 when I was thirteen. So I grew up with steam in Riverdale, New York but having said that and having it disappear in North America, I went to find it in places like South Africa, India and Europe and had a great time while it lasted. So that should give you a rough idea of my background.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so from the time you were fifteen, and I supposed up until the time of the railroad fire on the bridge-[cut off by Pevsner]

**Pevsner:** '74.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, what was-did you still maintain interest in the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge was it-?

**Pevsner:** I visited it numerous times, I was able to, while the railroad was still operating, walk out on the bridge, after May 8<sup>th</sup> of '74, when they put the chain link fence up. It was fairly easy to get around the chain link fence and I was across it at least a dozen times. On one of those times, the eminent trespassers with me included William F, Buckley Jr. who was an old friend and probably the leading architect in Canada, Arthur Erickson, E-R-I-C-K-S-O-N who designed Simon-Frazier University and an awful lot of other stuff. We were trying to find out what kind of a constructive adaptive reuse could be made out of it, again the question was who's going to fund it. We went up there in 19- I'm going to say 76, which is two years after the fire, unfortunately that was premature.

**Interviewer:** So what were some of the ideas that you came up with for reusing the bridge, reengineering it?

**Pevsner:** The idea and I had an option from Conrail for nine months in 1984, to buy the bridge and the right of way from the western end of the bridge, all the way to the Thruway, over past at New Paltz. It had rail access with a self-propelled rail car, put some sort of a low ride structure up on it, with glass walls, with New York history, railroad history, etc, etc, find some foundation or something to fund it but with three-three month options given to me by Conrail at the time, there just wasn't enough time to pull it off.

**Interviewer:** The Mabee book says that you were having trouble or that there was trouble getting-I suppose engineering firms to commit to it?

**Pevsner:** No that wasn't my problem; let me give you a little bit of the history.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Pevsner:** I kept track of it and the last major event before the option was granted to me by Conrail was approximately, 19- I'm going to say 1983, I was up there visiting the bridge as part of a drive through New York. I lived in Florida from 1965 to 2005 when I was moved up to the mountains of North Carolina to basically to get away from the hurricanes. I was amazed, I got there, the chain link fence, there was all sorts of heavy equipment around and it turns out that the City of Poughkeepsie had sued Conrail because pieces of rusted metal, old spikes, you know, particularly in the area of the fire which was over the City of Poughkeepsie and route 9 and over the mainline railroad tracks of Metro North and CSX, at that time Conrail. And they sued them and forced Conrail down in Philadelphia, which didn't want the bridge in the first place. They were forced to take it by Abe Ribicoff when he was Senator from Connecticut; they spent \$300,000 for a crew that removed everything above the girders from the east back of the river to the eastern edge of that east viaduct, where it joins the level ground. They absolutely hated to spend that \$300,000, it was insult to injury, they didn't want it in the first place. They say Abraham Ribicoff forced them to include it in the United States Railway Administration-Railroad Administration's final system plan. So they-Ribicoff had the goal of reviving the line and having through freight service into New England over the bridge again. Conrail didn't want any part of it, they already had Selkirk Yard up near Albany, they had the old Boston, Albany and Maine line into New England and they were sending their freight that way and basically would have been delighted if the Poughkeepsie Bridge had just gone away, well as it turns out, it caught on fire on May 8<sup>th</sup> '74 and that took it out of service permanently. After that, I approached Conrail in 1983, in the autumn, as fortuitously after that summer's \$300,000 check writing exercise on Conrail's part. I said, "how would you like to sell me the bridge for a dollar including the right of way between the shore and the New Paltz over pass of the Thruway, if I could find somebody that responsively with insurance, with maintenance, you know without having it become a dangerous derelict," what we call in legal terms an attractive nuisance. They were delighted and I only learned in late '83, that they had already lead bids to demolish it in secret, which ranged from about \$6 million dollars from a company in Texas that wanted to dynamite it into the river and pick the girders out; this right next to where the City of Poughkeepsie draws its drinking water by the way, you could imagine what's on the bottom. A

high bid was up around \$25 million to do a conventional demolition and needless to say, Conrail would have been delighted had I relieved them of that expense.

So I put the idea in their heads that getting rid of it to a private individual for a buck was a lot better than spending between \$5 and \$6 and \$25 million dollars to take it down and they agreed. On February 1<sup>st</sup> of 1983, they gave me the first of three ninety day options and I started beating the bushes. At the time, Conrail was very responsible. I dealt with a lawyer in their real estate department named Laurence, J. Huff, H-U-F-F; my correspondence with him is in the possession of the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge Company as is the whole deed. Huff agreed with me that they wouldn't sell it to anybody who couldn't, you know, be a proper citizen and insure and maintain it, etc. My second option came along, after six months I still couldn't it. Then all of a sudden, I get a call from Mr. Huff. He said, "I don't know how to tell you this, I feel extremely embarrassed but our chairman of Conrail, L. Stanley Crane," who was very hard charging president of the Southern railway and he who became part of the Conrail after his retirement there, did a 180 degree reversal on the responsibility of any new owner of the bridge. "We just want to sell it to the first warm body," that's direct quote as relayed to me by Mr. Huff, "and we don't care about insurance or maintenance, and if you don't buy it, we have somebody in the wings who will." So I told Mr. Huff I am not interested in anyway shape or form in taking title to this bridge in a shell corporation without insurance or without maintenance funds. I had my third option by that time and I kept beating the bushes. I could not find anybody to fund it. So on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1984, remember, the first option began February 1, '84, three-three month options. I basically sent them a routine message; I am not exercising my option on the bridge and do whatever you want with it. However, I am appalled by the conduct of your chairman, particularly because at that time, Conrail was a public corporation owned by the U.S. government. So this guy was the most irresponsible executives I think I've seen in my entire sixty-five years on this planet.

But anyway, one day after my option, my last option expired, they sold the bridge for \$1 dollar along with the right of way which I negotiated out to the Thruway over past New Paltz, to a convicted bank swindler- felon named Gordon Schreiber Miller who operated out of a taxi cab office in Saint David's, Pennsylvania which is a suburb of Philadelphia, a little bit west of it. He proceeded to collect \$25,000 dollars a year from Central Hudson for rental of the power lines that then ran across the bridge and owned it for a while. Then he decided that he would gouge Central Hudson. He informed them their rate of rental for each month was going to be, I don't know the exact number but he was going to either, to triple it or quadruple it or whatever. So to their credit, Central Hudson told him to go to hell. They relocated the power lines under the river and they abandoned the ones on the bridge and cut everything off to him which is poetic justice under the circumstances. Then Miller wound up owning the bridge from November 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1984, all the way up to June-I believe it was June 6<sup>th</sup> of 1998. That's unbelievable, fourteen years of irresponsible ownership. All of the navigation lights were out on the bridge; the Coast Guard kept fining Miller's Shell Company which didn't pay anything to it. There was no maintenance whatsoever done on it. It was a total attractive nuisance, meaning anybody could get up on it and fall off it or God knows what. Then very fortunately, Miller decided that there was no upside in owning it anymore so he deeded it to one of his cohorts down in Pennsylvania named Vito Moreno and Moreno-this would have been in the mid 90s. Moreno owned it for a while, he finally came to the same conclusion, taxes haven't been paid for a long time. I

personally contacted the heads of the Ulster and Dutchess County Legislators as well as the Mayor of Poughkeepsie and the Mayor of Highland and strongly urged them to take it for non-payment of back taxes and make sure that you know the county's insurance, the city's insurance, the state's insurance whatever, cover it and get the lights back up. They refused to even consider it, they were a pack of cowards on both sides of the rivers, "we don't want to tap the liability of owning it." was the answer. So they sold their constituents down the river and that included Steve Saland by the way.

Finally, Moreno decided to deed the bridge to the non-profit, that Bill Sepe had set up the Poughkeepsie Highland-Railroad Bridge Company Inc which is New York's non-profit corporation and that was done around June the 6<sup>th</sup> 1998, and one day later, the deeds were recorded, I think the 7<sup>th</sup>, the exact dates are on the Walkway group's website. Now it's in the hands of at least not a former bank swindler, it's in the hands of a non-profit corporation but with no money, no money to maintain it, no money to insure it, no money to put the Coast Guard lights back, same exact situation, an irresponsible owner with good wishes but with that being the case, they were not a proper owner for it. The proper owner for it was always the State of New York and very very luckily, nothing happened to cause a major catastrophe between the first week in June of 1998 and whenever this bridge is going to get deeded to the Office of Parks and Parks Historic Preservation and Recreation of the State of New York. I understand this has not happened yet. So theoretically, it's still owned by an owner with empty pockets and I just hope that nothing happens in the absence of insurance unless somebody's not telling there is insurance on the bridge now, I'd be surprised. The sooner that bridge is put in the hands of the State of New York, for insurance and maintenance proposes the better because it's sort of a [damaclease??]. I'll give you one example, those power lines are going to be removed in the spring, as part of the \$35 million dollar overhaul project, that's part of the budget that's been funded already, each of the brackets that holds those 615,000 volt power lines on the south side of the bridge, weighs 2,200 pounds. They haven't been painted or maintained in over thirty years, the wires are not exactly light either and if those brackets were to fail through corrosion or whatever, the lines are going to drop across the CSX main freight line track on the west side of the river which is known as the west shore and probably would not turn a signal red if it did. If a freight train comes barreling along at fifty sixty miles an hour and hits that, number one, it's going to derail, and number two, if- the cars are probably going to go right into the Hudson River and if there are any hazmat cars that's hazardous materials that could do a tremendous poisoning job on where the City of Poughkeepsie draws its drinking water. So the State of New York is aware of this because I've told them, so is Ulster County, so is Dutchess County. Nobody to my knowledge has done a damn thing about it. So it is top priority that those power lines and the brackets that hold them get off that bridge immediately as soon as it's warm enough to start working. I think they should be inspected periodically to make sure there's nothing going wrong with them in the interim. So anyway, now we know the scenario for the future and I'm delighted it's going to be funded and they will probably invite me up to the opening. I guess it would be accurate to describe my role is I accidently saved it from being torn down and I'm very proud of that. I never really got into it for the money. I was looking basically to find some charitable, big corporation to put a big landmark tourism facility on top of it which would blend in with the surroundings. They were a few others that who wanted to make a quick buck out of it, Ed Loedy was one. He's an architect in Poughkeepsie, Arthur Adams of Mahwah, New Jersey whose got

some background in short load railroading was looking to something with it, fortunately fly by nighters didn't materialize and there you have it.

**Interviewer:** What do you think of the plans, the current plans for the walkway across the Hudson there?

**Pevsner:** Reservations, unfortunately. The price of materials went through the roof when oil went up to a \$147 odd dollars a barrel. So they had to scale back the width of the cement decking by about ten feet as I understand. Now the price of materials has gone way down with the recession and oil is kicking thirty-seven dollars a barrel at the moment. I contacted Eric [Coolside??] up at Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation as well as Fred Schroeder. I asked if there would be any change in you know restoring the original width of the walkway decking, the concrete decking, because material prices have gone back down and his answer was, "well, we couldn't do that but there will be periodic spots along the walkway where it will be extended out to the original width plan," you know the wider plans which I think was thirty-four feet but not the entire length of it. I think that ought to be revisited and it would be nice if they could go to the original width, that's point one. Point two, is I think it needs lighting on it for night time there's no reason why people can't go on it after hours and that as I understand was a casualty of the increased costs. I think that they definitely need an elevator from near the Metro-North station in Poughkeepsie, up the pier to access the bridge on the eastern side, it's very secure to go all the way up on the roads and get on to the eastern viaduct where the track came from Hopewell and start out by that viaduct but those-these are relatively minor quibbles. The fact that it is going to survive and be owned by the state, and become a major tourist attraction, that's what governs it. It will be a fantastic achievement when it gets done.

I have one comment on the prior management of this, Bill Sepe, had good intentions when he founded the walkway group. I met him several times; he's one of the most stubborn guys I ever talked to on the phone. When he decided that his social policy is that government shouldn't fund something like this, his own personal philosophy, libertarian probably. Government shouldn't fund something like this; we shouldn't go to government for anything. His doctrinaire libertarianism was so severe that when they wanted to do a physical examination of the bridge, you know the last big study that was done on its condition, he refused to give the engineering crews access to the bridge. He didn't own the bridge. He was a president of a non-profit New York State corporation that owned the bridge. His handpicked board of directors never dared to challenge him and finally the grass roots there realized that Bill Sepe has turned into poison and they got rid of him and I celebrated when that happened. It's a definite pity that he did what he did because he started out with a good heart and he meant well, but he was way over his head. He never had the training in anything like this or any legal background or anything else to realize what he was dealing with and in the end he became negative and incredibly destructive. I'm delighted that when he was forced off the board in an in-house coup that now we have Fred Schroeder and we have obviously some responsible people who are guiding the walkway group nonprofit corporation. If they know what's good for them, [laughs] they will get that deed to the State of New York ASAP (as soon as possible). In particular, make sure those power lines, the de-energized power lines, don't fall down on the west shore railroad tracks in the interim because that would be an absolute disaster if it did.

**Interviewer:** I certainly hope so. Laughs

**Pevsner:** No kidding.

**Interviewer:** Let me ask you a question about something-[cut off by Pevsner]

**Pevsner:** They did not cover themselves with glory, they were cowards in Ulster, they were cowards in Dutchess and they were cowards at the state level and these are the elected representatives of the people. If I had it in my power to do it, I would can every last one of them who was still in office, that refused to accept the responsibility, kick them out on their butts.

**Interviewer:** Let me ask you a question about what some of the plans and proposals, you had for the bridge, in terms of its use.

**Pevsner:** I had a very simple one, people would drive up the Thruway, get up at New Paltz-get off at New Paltz, park in the parking lot that would be set up there right by the track, get on a rail diesel car or two and be taken right out to the center of the river and go right into a bay, you know with some shielding of a one story glass wall building where they would get off and there would be all sorts of displays of the history of New York , history of the railroad, history of the Hudson, going back to Henry Hudson, the building of the bridge, the whole bit. It would also be a station of the Department of Commerce's Tourism Division because the traffic on the Thruway is unbelievable and that would be such a magnet for it to push, overall, New York State tourism. Again it would have to have been funded by either the state or by the feds partially or a big corporation that wanted to put its logo on it. In nine months there was no way for me personally as an individual, particularly living in Florida, to find that. That was my idea. Ed Loedy had a much more grandiose idea. I saw his architectural drawings, he wanted to put a, I don't know, a seven or eight story structure, very gaudy on top of it. I questioned whether the wind loadings would have allowed that to happen. There were a few people who actually wanted to start rail service back over the bridge. That was grossly impractical and impossible really, from the moment that the fire happened, even though Abe Ribicoff in Connecticut wanted it, because railroads in the northeast had had it. The bankruptcies of seven northeastern railroads, including the New Haven, including the Pennsylvania, including the New York Central which created Conrail was in 1976. That was only two years after the fire. The reason for the non-interest in the bridge by the railroads is that freight traffic to and from New England had evaporated; the trucks had taken all the business away. You had a parallel route through Selkirk Yard that was only about fifty-miles farther north, it was not the end of the world. There was even an additional railroad routed to New England on the old Boston and Maine which is now Guilford, through the Hoosick Tunnel in the northern end of Massachusetts. So progress happened railroading in the northeast became a dead cat. Maybrook Yard which is one of the biggest railroads yards in the world became totally defunct. It now has a single track running through to Campbell Haul for some local freight customers. Yellow Freight, the trucking people, built an enormous trucking terminal because of course it's directly near Interstate 84 and the Thruway; it's a perfect trucking logistical setting. So then the Lehigh and Hudson Railroad which had fed

a tremendous amount of traffic to it was one of the bankrupts in 1976. The southern half of that railroad was duly torn up. The Erie railroad was part of the bankruptcies, so was the Lackawanna, a good bit of the Lackawanna was torn up, all of that feed from the west basically evaporated, even if it had been in existence, the bridge, you know for service. So running-reviving freight service across the Poughkeepsie Bridge was one of the stupidest ideas that I as a railroad historian, if you like. I've saved several railroad oriented things, I also personally saved the Catskill Mountain branch of the New York Central between Kingston to [Bloomville??] from being torn up and that's now that's the Delaware and Ulster rail ride and the facility in Phoenicia. If it hadn't been for me, that would have been a trail. That was another one of my actions during the late 70s. Anyhow, I didn't really see anything else. It made no sense whatsoever for freight trains, passenger trains is idiocy; even through the Mid-Hudson Bridge is admittedly inadequate. You don't take a structure like that and run a couple of trains across the river, where are you going to on the other side of the river? It's through freight route. There is or was you know, the big freight yard on the other end, Cedar Hill Yard in New Haven, the New Haven's enormous freight yard is also virtually defunct. They have a few container trains that are unloaded there and that's it. You know this is not 1945, when they had [centuries??] on the bridge twenty-four hours a day, to guard against German sabotage during World War II. When this one of the key freight routes in the entire eastern United States, it was vital just like horseshoe curve on the old Pennsylvania which is now the Norfolk-Southern west of Altoona, Pennsylvania, it was vital. It outlived its time for what it was designed for, what it's going to do now, is give people an incredible view of the river, a tremendous amount of railroad history, visually incredible structure and all for relative pocket change. I dare say that the State of New York misspends \$20 or \$30 million dollars every single day of the year on things that we don't even see. I am hopeful that the last \$12 million or whatever will be duly raised from the private sector because it's a \$35 million dollar project to do it right and they raised twenty three.

**Interviewer:** Let me ask you, what kind of resistance did you find, when you were first coming up with your ideas and your proposals?

**Pevsner:** Well I didn't find resistance, it's just that everyone thought it was fairly far out as an idea, you know, "boy that's interesting but gee whiz that's-" you know we're just a little too conventional for. That was the basic response I got. The state which I think should have done it back then didn't do it. They just didn't do it, either they didn't have the money or I couldn't get access high enough. As an individual, you know, I don't associate with the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate and the Governor of the State of New York and I certainly didn't in 1984 when this was all going on.

**Interviewer:** So would you enjoy coming out and seeing this thing when it gets done and-cut off by Pevsner]

**Pevsner:** Yeah, I'd love to do it.

**Interviewer:** In late September.

**Pevsner:** I have somebody at the-Fred Schroeder or whoever, you know just invite me up and I'll fly up for it.

**Interviewer:** Great.

**Pevsner:** Why?

**Interviewer:** It's just a question to throw out there.

**Pevsner:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Let me see-it looks like I've covered everything that the Mabee book had spoken of and some other stuff-is there anything else that you would like to say about the bridge and-[cuts off].

**Pevsner:** I really can't think of anything else, except that it's an incredibly unique survivor of the industrial age of the late nineteenth century. Mostly built in 1888, that's a 120 years ago, over a 120 years ago, it opened January 1 '89 to traffic. The 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that was just three weeks ago, not even. So the fact that you've got this structure that was formerly a key part of the railroad network in the country and they don't build bridges that look like this anymore, in case you're wondering, they're ugly concretes for the most part or very utilitarian steel. This one is a mind blower and it takes people back to what it was like in 1888, twenty- three years after the Civil War ended. For that kind of a historical structure to survive against all odds, really is an incredible boon to the area that it's in and really to the whole state and to the entire railroad history community too which I'm happy to be a part.

**Interviewer:** How would you think- how would you envision celebrating this bridge twenty, fifty, a 100 years from now?

**Pevsner:** I hope it's still standing a 100 years from now but I think that it will even be more historical than it is now.

**Interviewer:** Great, great, I can't think of anything else to ask you, you've given some fantastic information here.

**Pevsner:** Yeah somebody finally named the bad guys there are-there aren't too many people who were informed enough to do that. I was in the middle of this from 1983 all the way up to 1998 and I saw who the bad guys were and I dealt with the bad guys and I even talked to Miller once.

**Interviewer:** Really?

**Pevsner:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What was that like?

**Pevsner:** Very strange, again the number that he got me, this was pre-computer days, to call him, was you got to answer to the Saint David's Taxi Company. It was a taxi company in the Philadelphia suburbs. I asked for him and he called me back from somewhere, it wasn't listed. He was shadowy mysterious figure. I must say, I find it absolutely appalling that Conrail would even consider selling the Poughkeepsie Bridge to a guy like that. L. Stanley Crane should have been fired for that but nobody every found out about it, not until much later, either he was retired or dead. He's dead now.

**Interviewer:** One thing that has always puzzled me and maybe you can offer opinion on it-cut off by Pevsner]

**Pevsner:** About what?

**Interviewer:** Something that always puzzled me about the selling of the bridge to Gordon Schreiber Miller were there another-[cut off by Pevsner]

**Pevsner:** He was waiting in the wings, he had a contingent option obviously and one day after my third-three month option expired, Miller said-I told them I'm not buying it and Miller, said "I will exercise my option." and they gave him a foot high pile of the deed and took the dollar and got it off the books. That was what Stanley Crane was quoted-L. Stanley Crane was quoted, "I just want to get it off the books, I'll sell it to the first warm body, I just want it off the books." After that \$300,000 expenditure in '83, it was just a [sticking and crawling???] chicken bone. So Miller who frankly I don't even think should be fit to own a working automobile, wound up as the owner of this company-the corporation that owned this bridge to which he formed.

**Interviewer:** That's amazing.

**Pevsner:** It's beyond amazing it's [malfeasus and misfeasus???] in the executive sweet of Conrail owned by the federal government. In the person of L. Stanley Crane, former president of the Southern Railway and L. Stanley Crane has been lauded by many railroad professionals since then as a true railroader, a true professional. Looking at him as a lawyer, I see somebody who was an absolute snake and he betrayed the citizens of the United States and he betrayed the citizens of New York State, just to get it off the books. This is the kind of executive that should be put out to pasture and not let near anything dangerous again. I'm sorry he's not alive; I'd tell him that to his face.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs] The Mabee book mentions that you approached several developers such as James Russ, and Donald Trump what were their opinions?

**Pevsner:** Never even heard of then, Donald Trump is the last guy on earth I would want to do business with. He's not my type. He's an exhibitionist and basically uses other people's money and makes it look like it's his own he-I wouldn't have anything to do with him. I did approach

Russ, I did approach Lowell Thomas, who was still alive at the time and living in Pawling and he thought it was a fantastic idea but you know between thinking it's a great idea and finding somebody to put up the money to buy it which wouldn't have been a hell of a lot actually but take on the risk and insure it and all was more than anybody I talked to wanted to. I think I gave that letter from Lowell Thomas to the Walkway group also, to Sepe's-the predecessor of the current guy. He wrote me, it wasn't long before he died.

**Interviewer:** Okay, what were some of the assessments from I guess your old firm Rowell and Associates of Syracuse what did they think of- cut off by Pevsner

**Pevsner:** Well Rowell and Associates were railroad engineers and they volunteered just on-to donate their time to see what the condition was.

**Interviewer:** What'd they think of it the-how did they assess it?

**Pevsner:** Again who's going to pay for it?

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Pevsner:** Who was ready to stand there and to the legal engineering- not the legal- the engineering work? That's the answer with everything is whose going to write the check? I couldn't find anybody to write the check.

**Interviewer:** Did they look how structurally sound the bridge was at that point?

**Pevsner:** No because Central Hudson had commissioned a study right around that time.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Pevsner:** I believe that had to do with their power lines before they decided to de-energize them. Though Central Hudson studies were provided to me by Central Hudson and as I remember the bridge was in fairly good condition. I see from the Walkway group's website, by the way that the piers are in good condition. I had heard years ago that there was some scouring on some of the piers that might have required some underwater masonry. The way they built them was in a crib which fortunately down that deep and fresh water preserves the wood. So it's probably in pretty good shape. I wonder if whether any divers have been down to dive to double check the piers before it becomes a New York State owned structure. If not, I think when it warms up, they have a duty to the public to send divers down and make sure those piers are okay. If there's touch ups that they need, pointing or whatever, I'm not quite sure the word for that. It wouldn't be fortune.

**Interviewer:** I think I've heard that had been actually done.

**Pevsner:** Well I'd feel better if I knew it was done.

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**Interviewer:** It may have been Liechtenstein and Associates if I'm not mistaken.

**Pevsner:** Oh, it's nice if somebody did, if somebody didn't do it, it's a signal of omission and they ought to do it.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, [laughs] I would imagine so

**Pevsner:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Well great, I think that covers everything.

**Pevsner:** Well it's good talking to you, if you need any updates on this just give me a call at the same number.

**Interviewer:** One thing that I'm going to do, is shoot you over, I guess I'll fax it over, a release form and that basically is just a standard form that says I can use this recording.

**Pevsner:** Either email or fax it.

**Interviewer:** Okay great. Great, I'll get that over- [cut off by Pevsner]

**Pevsner:** Make sure you have the fax number on it.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, okay thank you very much sir.

**Pevsner:** Very welcome; it's good talking to you.

**Interviewer:** Alright bye-bye.

**Pevsner:** Bye.

[End of Interview 37:22]

**Transcribed by Paul Contarino**