



How did you become one of the founders of FODR?

I was working in our drug store in Gloucester with my brother Jimmy Morgan. Jerry Stokes from Tappahannock (with Chesapeake Bay Foundation) called to set up a meeting with Jimmy. He arrived at the appointed evening just before we closed at nine. He told us about the opportunity possibly to purchase from Mrs. McKenna what is now the FODR Big Island property. After we closed the drug store the three of us gathered at a table and discussed the opportunity, its importance, and the challenges of finding money to buy the property. Jimmy was familiar with the area and really excited about its possibilities. After Jerry left, Jimmy and I talked about it and decided that we needed to contact friends who might be interested. Jimmy did most of this as I was in the legislature and away much of the time. He would set up meetings with friends who were interested in the Dragon. This was the spark. These friends were eager to help, and they did help in so many ways. They really are Champions of Dragon Run. Jerry Stokes continued to be the point person to make it happen.

Are you the older or the younger brother of Jimmy Morgan? Are you related to Captain Morgan rum? I am three years younger than Jimmy. Also, I am not as spicy as Captain Morgan Rum. (I'm much smoother and more companionable!)



What was the greatest challenge in building the organization?

Funding was the greatest challenge followed by getting enough volunteers to do the initial stewardship work on the Dragon. There were an amazing number of trees blocking the Dragon basically from Ware's Bridge to Route 17. But our volunteers did great work. Jimmy and some of the other founders really rallied to get individuals to donate money to enable the purchase from Mrs. McKenna of what was FODR's first property – Big Island. These individuals were generous in terms of both dollars and labor, all with the common goal of protecting Dragon Run.

Looking back, what was your favorite memory of FODR?

I think it was the amazing times that we would get to work in the Dragon, and one overnight paddle that gave me my most memorable recollection. I was just dozing off in my sleeping bag when a very near beaver loudly slapped its tail on the water startling me and then disappeared into the swamp. It is an amazing place and that was an amazing, unforgettable moment.

A funny story from the past especially about paddle trips on the Dragon? One is about Mary Helen. We were canoeing at Big Island one day and stopped to explore the island and look at Jimmy's Rock and his signposts identifying the trees. One sign indicated that a latrine was in the direction of the other end of the Island, but when we arrived there, we saw another sign saying the latrine was in the other direction. (A cruel joke.) My brother's sense of humor?

Two more stories if I may:

Four pharmacists, including me, all in their 50s or older and of somewhat questionable fitness, were attempting an overnight paddle on the Dragon from Ware's Bridge to the Rte. 17 Bridge. Well, we missed the yellow Dragon sign posted on a tree by my brother that would have led us to the channel and down the Dragon as planned. So, we inadvertently followed the old logging canal, portaging over (and under) seemingly hundreds of fallen trees. We were admittedly lost and did not have adequate food or water. After exiting the canal, we found a dirt lane leading away from the Dragon Run and followed it, hoping to find a house, and assistance. Seeing no houses, our hunger was building when we entered a farmer's field and found a crop of ripe wheat. So, reminiscent of Jesus' disciples, we stood in the farmer's field, eating the grain from the stalks. It did refresh us. Thankfully this was before the era of game cameras! We resumed our journey to the Rte. 17 bridge. Although we were paddling on the water, we had no drinking water left. When we arrived at the Rte. 17 bridge there was a man fishing, who deserves sainthood. He

had two beers. Both were F & S Beers (Furhmann and Schmidt, a brand of little renown whose brewery in Shamokin, Pennsylvania went defunct). The fisherman gave us one of his beers. The four of us shared gulps of that one beer. To date this remains the best beer I ever had.

My brother Jimmy had an old Mercury station wagon that burned more oil than gasoline. It was his work vehicle that carried all his tools, plus his canoe on the roof. It was notorious and a laughable sight to see. He knew it was one of his trademarks, dreaded far and wide. His boys and I, and many who would go on to be FODR founders, would look for ways to hide when we saw or heard the car —and not ride with Jimmy as we knew when he showed up in his “oil burner” that he would put us to work. And we always dreaded when he insisted on doing “one more thing” before we headed home. Somewhere in the FODR archives there must be a picture of his amazing dual fuel (oil and gas) station wagon.

Any ideas you want to share to further protect the Dragon Run?

Yes, I have two: FODR should further engagement and outreach in our communities and with our neighbors who own land along the Dragon Run. Sharing the importance of the Dragon and listening to our neighbors’ views are important to maintain positive relationships. This is a continuing responsibility and part of our mission to preserve, protect, and encourage wise use of the Dragon Watershed.

A few decades back, access was lost to the Dragon near the Route 17 bridge, (which today is named for my brother and FODR’s founder, Jimmy Morgan.) I believe this loss of access was the result of a lack of constructive dialogue between those that sought to use the Dragon and those who owned land along the Dragon. Additionally, we must continue championing by preventing bad things from entering the Dragon from any source, including chemicals, leaching toxins from illegal dump sites, erosion, etc. During my tenure in the legislature, more than a few times we were called on to act by curtailing among other things the problem of illegal dumps and dumping that adversely impacted the Dragon Run watershed and all of us living in this amazing place. We should never ever rest in our mission to speak up for the Dragon and with citizens along the Dragon.