

Austin Connolly

Fri, Jan 26, 2024 10:18AM • 39:18

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

schools, rate, broomfield, started, years, kids, close, daughter, boulder valley, nice, remember, good, worked, wife, lived, great, math, brookfield, school board, golf course

Austin Connolly 00:00

Well, I'm Austin Conway, and we moved to Broomfield in 1972. And I had previously gone to school up in Greeley and got a Doctorate. And then taught at the University of Missouri in Columbia. And I concurrently was doing some consulting in, in, a project in Denver. We were getting ready to use the ATS-6 telecommunication satellite for educational television. And they finally asked me, well would you please leave the University of Missouri, we'd like to have you become the director of research and evaluation for it, which I did. But before I left the University of Missouri, I asked around to my friends, and having three small children, I wanted to know where is a good school district in the Denver metropolitan area, and they suggested Cherry Creek or Boulder Valley.

David Allison 01:07

There you go.

Austin Connolly 01:08

And so initially I looked at Cherry Creek, and quite frankly, on a faculty member's budget I couldn't afford it. So we came up, and, prior to going to graduate school, we lived in a very small community down in Canby, Oregon, south of Portland. And so, we were comfortable with small town environment, rather than metropolitan. So when we, when I started looking, I was looking on the weekends when I was consulting here, and then I'd stay through the weekend, and I had an Arvada Realtor . . .

David Allison:

Okay.

Austin Connolly:

. . . showing me about. And we looked over in Golden and other things, and one day he said, well, I've got some contacts that say that Broomfield is someplace we should see, but I don't know it. But he brought me up, and one of the people in the project lived in Broomfield and he said, Well, your daughter has a horse we keep in the county fairgrounds in Columbia, Missouri, and I know you want to have horses and so forth, and well, Broomfield has Pony Estates. And I thought, by golly, so I talked to the realtor and said, Let's go try Pony Estates. Well, on the field, now called the field, there used to be horses on 10th Street. So when this fella from Arvada and I came by, we thought, We're sure enough in Pony Estates.

David Allison 02:52

Yeah.

Austin Connolly 02:53

And I came by and saw this house on Par Road, over in Northmore (???), and I liked it immensely. I called my wife that afternoon, and she got on a plane that same day.

David Allison 03:07

Wow.

Austin Connolly 03:36

The next morning, we close, and we went ahead and made the purchase, and we've never regretted it. It was super for us.

David Allison 03:19

That's great.

Austin Connolly 03:20

In that vein, I'll continue onto that story because, prior to the moving van moving our stuff, we drove over with our kids' sleeping bags and what we had into this home that have been vacated already, and we slept on on the rug on the floor, and it was darn hard. It was 4:30 In the morning, and I started getting up a little awkwardly and stiffly, and I thought, you know, one of the things I do a lot is golfing, but I've got a golf bag in the back of my car, and we're on Par Road. I'm gonna walk over and see what the golf course is like. And so at about 6am, I walked over to the golf course, and it was totally vacant. Totally, and nobody was there. And I thought, Well, I'm gonna introduce myself to the golf course. And so, I started out, and at about the third hole, I didn't know that direction very well. And it was just a little part, only a nine hole at that time, but a fellow caught up with me. And you may not know the name or not, but it was Jack Elliot.

David Allison 04:41

Jack Elliot.

Austin Connolly 04:42

He was the mayor of Broomfield.

David Allison 04:43

There you go.

Austin Connolly 04:45

Seven o'clock AM, first morning, and I got introduced to Broomfield by the mayor.

David Allison 04:52

Wow, that's amazing. Did he live in the area then?

Austin Connolly 04:54

That he did, but I never, I didn't know him well, never did know him well, but he gave me the history of Broomfield. And at that time, it had 5600 people in it.

David Allison 05:08

Small place.

Austin Connolly 05:09

Small place. And we loved it. And we lived only about three blocks from Birch Elementary. (disruption) I'm sorry. But at any rate, we lived only about three blocks from Birch, and it opened in 1972, and it opened almost at capacity.

David Allison 05:36

Wow.

Austin Connolly 05:37

It opened at, almost at capacity.

David Allison 05:40

Did your daughter go there too, then?

Austin Connolly 05:41

Daughter, all three kids went through Birch. And the point being that, the Broomfield schools, and Broomfield was a bedroom community, quite frankly, they were created that way by Boulder Valley School District. I think I mean, it was a matter of where are the resources available for expansion of schools and so forth. And at any rate, yeah, my, my, kids all went through, all the way through, and through Broomfield High School as well. And they did quite well. My daughter had a marvelous math teacher, Ron Cooper was his name. And Ron Cooper's wife, and he, I digress for a moment, he had been at one point, professional point guard.

David Allison 06:58

Oh, wow.

Austin Connolly 06:59

Tall, handsome young man, with tremendous energy. And then he taught finishing schools back east for students getting ready to prepare for Ivy League.

David Allison 07:13

Yeah, wow.

Austin Connolly 07:14

He was bright and capable and highly proficient in math. And at any rate, my daughter had good fortune to have him for three years. And he had come just for three years because his wife was getting her doctorate in International Finance over at CU.

David Allison 07:36

Okay. Okay.

Austin Connolly 07:37

And when he came, fortunately, he came right before school started, or close to it, and so the positions in Boulder were already filled up. So he got over in the math department, and he was far more proficient than any Oh. What should we do to upgrade our Math studies? Well, let me have the top group, and I'll follow him for a few years.

David Allison 08:06

Just keep with it. Yeah.

Austin Connolly 08:08

I think there were 28 of them. Five of that group. I was president of the school board at the time, and I gave them they were co valedictorian, so called straight A's. Wow. Impressive. Three of those 28 kids went and graduated from Stanford. Wow. My daughter had a full ride. She was one of the five out of full ride at either CU or Mines, she chose Mines, because it was smaller. Graduated in geophysical engineering and ran a think tank for IBM ultimately. Very different. But at any rate, so that my my point is right from the get go of, of I was in education. When I taught education. I've written curriculum for about 50 years and math. elementary math.

David Allison 09:11

Nice.

Austin Connolly 09:12

I have my daughter is the math person in our, (family) I do kiddy math, but I loved it and even I was on a plane back from Australia. When I was 75 I had just done a workshop series from Perth or from Sydney to Perth. Kind of thing of some quantity. I'm 75, I think it's time to retire. But prior just prior to that for about seven or eight years, and after it for about another five years. I volunteer taught at schools, particularly Aspen Creek, and I would go from room to room grade to grade and tried to be there every Tuesday and Thursday. And it was gratis. Yeah, one time I had about couple million youngsters using my stuff. So I have files of it downstairs. And so at any rate, it was like being a grandfather to an unfortunate kids. That's an I loved it. It really did. Probably that was one of my greatest joys in life. Wow. So that's at any rate, but we get back in you can ask Quite so.

David Allison 10:38

Yeah, absolutely. So I you mentioned the school board. What motivated you to join the school board?

Austin Connolly 10:44

Well, first of all I was that was my calling was education. I loved it. It started out as a dairy farmer of all things. I had a small dairy and I taught math and science. Well, small school, and after six years, I decided, by golly, I'm milking 65 cows and doing math and science during the day. And I thought, you know, I think I like to work with people better than cows, and so, sold the herd, and came out to graduate school. And so that that's where we went. I'm digressing, and the question

David Allison 11:40

Is, you're passionate about education.

Austin Connolly 11:42

Thank you. Thank you get back on track. But at any rate. My daughter was when she went to kindergarten. I went to tell people hey, she's, we've gotten to position ourselves in Colombia close to what was supposed to be the best Elementary School, unfortunately, the loss of principal over the summer. And so it turned out not to be the best. But at any rate, I went a couple of times, I said, you know, my daughter is loves- Bennet Serf joke books. And she reads them in laughs. And she, she's always got it. She was in kindergarten. And I said, you know, she does read oh no they protested it. So I, I, that my, her older brother wasn't doing particularly well in school. And so when the next summer came, I had him go to summer school, with the idea to catch up, and to keep him without feeling like you've been picked on? We put our daughter also in kindergarten. Yeah. And that afternoon, I got a knock on my door, over the office and at the university, and it was lady she came in, she said, it was a kindergarten teacher. She said, Do you mind if I send your daughter over to Vearly Arden's Reading Clinic? I know she reads but I haven't got a clue as to what level? I said certainly. That was the first day for that kindergarten teacher. The other one had her a year and said she didn't read. This one said, hey, the first day I want to know, yeah, she was reading at a 3.8 grade level, wow. In kindergarten. Well, when she went to Birch, she ran the Bulldogs students store all kinds of things. But there was no real challenge. Then when she went to Broomfield High. Fortunately, she had Ron Cooper and they had a few really good that a great science teacher that, uh, Jack McGrath was a very good teacher in computers. And I can't remember the one in English in journalism. But they unleashed her.

David Allison 14:29

That's great.

Austin Connolly 14:30

They challenged her and unleashed her. She did she did in school newspaper and all that kind of stuff, which ran a nice balance for math aptitude. But at any rate, my point being that I could see that we weren't getting the full value of Boulder Valley there. So eventually we ended up there was a small coalition. I guess I was the head of it. For President for Broomfield schools, self appointed. So I started going to some of the school board meetings and I didn't know. Yeah. Are we need better representation? Yeah. We need somebody who's willing to pound the shoe on the table. And so I took it on and but two or three things happened in that regard. Now I was on P and Z before I went to, to the school board. So I had close contacts with people like Hank Stovall and Walt, George Desiro. The whole they're my peer group. I remember when we had Paul Durda, it was a very good hire, yes, extroverted in a former quarterback leader, but at any rate. So I did get on the school board and but a couple of things happened that certainly far beyond meant my impact if as whatever it was, we opened Interlocken and some of the things and and all of a sudden, Broomfield took on a wealth generation if you would, and they noticed it. And Boulder, and all of a sudden, we didn't get the last selection on faculty, on principles, resources, on resources for buildings and so forth. So at any rate, it worked out very well. And and I do think that the people have followed me Jen ? was one can remember the lady that that had about seven children, she lived over.... She was one of our later school board members.

But she did both of them did very nice jobs. So at any rate, I remember at the time that Broomfield was considering becoming its own county. There was a whole group of people in, Hank being one of them said, we're going to have our own school district do it. No, no, no, no guys don't understand. There's a whole lot of expensive administrative stuff that you don't want to have to replicate. And so work with us. We'll make this happen. And Boulder Valley stepped up to the plate and done a very nice job of the heights, Aspen Creek, the renovation that rebuild of Emerald and everything.

David Allison 18:06

Yeah Emerald is a nice school now.

Austin Connolly 18:08

I haven't been in it since they rebuilt it beautiful. Yeah. But abandoned. I was in Emerald before it was before it was beautiful. But they have a surprising not all of those are some of the some of the larger populations of student populations, compared to some when I first went on the school board. We had a really neat, Pat Ryan, was his name was superintendent. He'd been there about 15 -20 years. But he was like a grandfather kind of thing. And and at any rate, and they decided that they need to close several schools because the demographics have changed. And some of those schools that had six or 700 kids now had 200 Wow, or less. And so he had the administrative staff identify like a dozen schools for consideration.

Dave Allison 19:19

Right, right.

Austin Connolly 19:21

They were all the all dozen had less than adequate student population. That I remember my first school board meeting was held at I can't, remember which, junior high but at any rate, I think we had all three television stations there for it. And as I walked up somebody was handing I was I was working late it in Denver and I came just before the meeting and somebody outside handed me a placard and said wave this. So I don't think, right. Be up on the stage waving Don't close our schools. But but the strategy was fantastic in that. We did close up at that time, five or six schools. But the schools that survived were so glad to have survived that they took the the the surplus population, right and integrated them seamlessly.

David Allison 20:35

That's great. Yeah.

Austin Connolly 20:36

It was a really neat, really neat strategy. I know he had no idea no intent of closing a dozen schools. But yeah, but the poor boy had to close some because you just can't afford it. We're the school district was paying almost twice as much per student. Wow, for expenses for those small population schools. Yeah. The one right, as you go into, on 36 is just as you enters, I can't remember the name of the school. Just as your and near Boulder on the west side there that was originally at track development, kind of it was a huge population of young children. And the school had that population to meet ended at one time. And it was down to 145, or something like that well, that you can't sustain. Not not be fair to all the other

schools. Right. So I already have it. But I enjoyed my time on the board. And I really enjoyed the members that comprised the board at that time. Very diverse group. Though one of the two people that I can recall being seniors at that time. One of them was Fritz Beerhouse. And Fritz had been I think the president twice. But he told me one time he said, I when I went on the school board, there was one stoplight in Boulder.. Wow. Wow. The other was Virginia Patterson. And she had a bookstore in Boulder for years, and the two of them and been on board at least 20- 25 years or more. But we we there was some turnover, but everybody, and everyone has diverse background and respected each other. There was very little politics other than just trying to strive to do what's right for kids. Yeah, it gets throughout the district.

David Allison 22:55

That's great. So how have you seen Broomfield change over time? Broomfield, You know, imagine how small the population was and how big it is now, but what else? Have you seen change?

Austin Connolly 23:09

Oh, my goodness. I remember from very, very, very early on thinking, gosh, you know, outside of you probably familiar with this, but I think our hardware store was Ace Hardware. Yes. Yeah. And if they didn't have it, man had to go all the way into McGuckins.

David Allison 23:36

Yes, yeah. Yeah.

Austin Connolly 23:40

So there there there are lots of changes that are I've been and I remember that Benito's was was the Mexican restaurant where you got to line up in the snow outside to get in but the food was so good. We've never found another Mexican restaurant. That compared with it.

David Allison 24:01

Now, where was that located?

Austin Connolly 24:03

That was located where Three Margaritas? Oh, excellent. Same building, but I think they have expanded it and so forth. But a building was right on that corner. Being here was there for about 20 years and not far from it was A and W Yes, yes. And so it was Benitos, A and W, and Dairy Queen. That was that was our was all right there on 120th. So, but there have been lots of changes, for instance. I remember when we first moved to Broomfield, the Miramonte club had a tennis court or two I think, I definitely had a pool. This golf course nine hole golf course had a pool and then had two tennis courts, and so forth. And so we progressed from Miramonte to the golf course involvement. And as our kids got older than we went down to the swimming tennis there on Main Street, yeah. Yeah. In fact, I think I planted about two thirds of the trees. Help plant them in that one. Shelter house. George Covington and I built Wow, we had one of the one of the members was into concrete. And so he poured the slab but but we did the rest, build everything else. Yeah. And George designed. And we made a mistake in terms of the bed, the height of it about six inches too much because he forgot that there would be a slab ups. That's taller than ever, we meant to happen. We never took a request pretty well.

But at any rate, coming back coming back. One of the things that I've really appreciated is that the town, even though it's grown twelve fold or whatever. It still has a feel of a small town. I think I was in water this morning. I swim at 6:15 every morning. Yeah. So it's usually seven days a week. It's Saturday and Sunday. Started later. But everybody knows everybody. Everybody's friendly. Everybody gets along. I've I've worked all over. And in so many places you can't even make eye contact with much less say hello or whatever. Yeah. Good morning. Oh, yeah, you get something wrong with you. Your question your voters. But at any rate, that aspect? I'm delighted to see that we do have

27:22

did allow to be expandable. No, for instance, Walt, Walt Spader was probably the one who pushed this more than anybody else like it remembers. And that was he said, We don't want to become surrounded. So we don't have the capacity to expand like Wheat Ridge did. Some of the other some of the other places did said we need to remain viable to grow our resources make it and boy that our Founding Fathers, if you would for Broomfield, they were really really capable individuals, George, Walt, they were really capable. And they set a course of action that the preservation of open space, all of the other aspects. I get a kick out of black I'm thinking if Josie Heath Raleigh and Josie Heath are close friends, okay. And we were in their bridge group. So they've come to play bridge here. And Josie said, you know, I didn't realize when I voted for the open space. That's Boulder Valley open space starts here but within 50 yards. Yeah. She says I didn't know I was doing you a favor, Austin, Yeah, that's a really clear day this time of the year. You can see the tips of the Rawahs that's up above Cammeron Pass. But we we've we enjoy our contacts in Boulder, my wife still goes to the Flatirons Athletic every morning. Normally, she didn't this morning because she's a tennis fan and she's watching in the other bedroom, and they're propped up watching the Australian Open.

David Allison 29:41

Jovovich and I probably go going,

Austin 29:43

Oh, yeah. But at any rate, I would say that we're proud of the fact that, hey, we've we've been able to bring in the things like Interlocken, the shopping center, and, and so many nice restaurants now. I was are sad to see that the First Bank didn't materialize First Bank Center. Understand why didn't you know they originally thought it was going to be a facility that I both the Avs and Nuggets would make use of but they didn't with with farm teams. So that would have been an underlying. If you were given him a consistent income or consistent income. Yeah, I was very fortunate to the my dissertation was I approached a publisher and said, Here's what I did in my dissertation and there was a, a diagnostic test. And they said well it looks like a nice star Austin either, Hey, I've worked on it three years or 3 more years. And later, I understand where they're coming from. But with their input and guidance and so forth, it became like a gold record. First time out of the box. And then obviously they said, Awesome. What else do you want to write? And so I wrote for him for 50 years. Wow,

David Allison: 31:35

What's the name of that first book based on?

Austin Connolly 31:39

Well it was called Key Math. Okay, Key Math. And I think in about '86 or '88, there was a survey done of the top 24 individually administered psychoeducational tests in America and it was ranked number one by like 20 points and kind of say utility instructional utility. I always took that as wonderful. Yes. So there's a Canadian version and an Aussie version and a Kiwi, you're sure. And there's a French translation for Canada and so forth. So my point being I've never had another gold record. But editions of that have come out and it's it's good. Allow me to be flexible and do the stuff that we love to do. Yeah. And we love to travel. But this is still our, our home base.

David Allison 32:35

Where have you been recently or what some travel locations

Austin Connolly 32:41

Oh. my goodness. Where do you want to start to look about you can see that. There's I got the pot, Neva Cooney, Japan. The horse came from Sheon in China. The bases came from the South Island, New Zealand.

David Allison 33:02

We could do the tour right here.

33:08

Austin: There's a vest that came down from we were brought down from Tibet by yak to Bhutan, there is no road between Tibet and Bhutan. There's a trail called a calamari trail. We've hiked it, then up the Tibetan Highlands we done the Inca trail we then criss crossed the Alps four times. The Dolomites by gosh, did ride the Rockies cycle Oregon, but we didn't *Tuscany in Derby been Crete. Wow. Of Corsica, a whole bunch of places. spelling of these?*

33:52

Dave: Fantastic. That's great. Your wife do that to get

33:55

Yeah. I worked very hard for years. But then I will take off two or three weeks and we'll go someplace. And my wife says that first week, I'm still all locked up in what I'm doing. The second week I'm obnoxious inactions. yodeling there, my version of it. By the third week, I'm tensed up again, getting ready to go back. But we did that for years. So at any rate, we've really met so many wonderful people in Broomfield in and around Boulder we we feel blessed. Yeah. And it was a great, great community. to raise kids in. Yes, yes, yeah. We're all three of our kids. Just got a new great grandkids yesterday. Yeah. congratulations on our third grand!

34:58

Dave: Is that That's good. Yeah. Do you and your children live? Nearby now we're kind of all about.

35:05

Austin: We're headed down to Tucson next week. We have a condo there. Actually, it was originally my son's. But I said, I'll take over the mortgage says he bought a house there. And so and so we'll be there

for a while, but he's in Tucson. We've got one who just moved to Florida. Coral Springs, we're just about 30 miles west of Fort Lauderdale. And then our youngest for years had a fitness operation that he owned and operated up in Edwards up in the Vail Valley. Oh, yeah. It was really, really a good one. And with the pandemic, and so forth, he started doing online stuff. And now, he's moved down to the bar curl, something like that. Right. Close to Cherry Creek. Okay. And he and his wife both do it. Zoom. Wow. And I mean, he's got clients like the number two person at Google and so forth. His wife that I mean, and so he's got clients from there to Florida to New York to wherever, yeah, wow. He used to also take them biking. So he's the one that took us through Tuscany and Piedmont and so forth. But at any rate, it's it's kind of nice to have. He and his wife and their, their two daughters live in the Boulder. Denver area.

Mostly done through here.

Dave: So you've got kids in the area

.37:03

Dave: Yeah. That's wonderful. Well, awesome. It's been a pleasure chatting.

37:06

Austin: I'm sorry. I, you know, you're like a captive audience. No, I don't get to talk to many people other than saying hello for good morning or have a great day. Yeah. Yeah.

37:21

That's great. And I really appreciate it. I do want to ask just one other quick thing. So you've been in this house for a while. Have you had an opportunity to get to know your neighbors that sort of thing? Yeah. Absolute connections with

37:35

interest in the next door neighbor. We, you've heard of Hank Stovall. Yes. His son was next. And he lived right behind us and down about two houses. Hank did okay. And his son and his wife they met when they were both engineering students in the University of California. Okay. And they, they're about four or five years, Nigeria. Hey, we much prefer boom, boom. Let's get back to back the Broomfield. Okay. I know at least two or three instances where people have done that. It's interesting. And we were just delighted with our neighbors. Yeah. The one the only thing that that like, like the next door neighbor, I think they had three girls when I'm just getting back from San Jose. She's been getting her Master's doing an internship there. But I had them in kindergarten first grade. And my point is, this this this group is is no longer has young children and I I so enjoy working with kids and kids. Yeah. So that aspect of it. I met her yesterday or the sub during juice coming in. Oh, my goodness. She's a full grown woman. Still as a kindergartner or you know, times change by Tucson.

39:13

So, really appreciate it. Thank you. Okay, yeah.