

The Philadelphia Inquirer

ALWAYS ASKING. ALWAYS PHILLY.

LIFE & CULTURE D1

PHILLY'S UNLIKELIEST SPORTS DYNASTY



LIFE & CULTURE D1

25 ESSENTIAL SONGS THAT DIDN'T MAKE THE PHILLY 76 SONG LIST

HEALTH G1

WHY SOME IN THE U.S. ARE HEADED ABROAD FOR IVF TREATMENTS

SPORTS C1

HOW MUCH LONGER DOES WHEELER WANT TO PITCH?





Jon Krause / ForThe Inquirer

INQUIRER SPECIAL REPORT

BUILDING PHILLY, BREAKING DOWN

By Abigail Covington
Staff Writer

When Buddy Osborne’s phone rings, it’s because something has gone wrong. An accident. A death. A traumatic event on a job site. This past April, it was a catastrophic collapse. A parking garage had fallen, and three construction workers were dead.

Osborne, 67, the chaplain for the Philadelphia Building and Construction Trades Council, arrived at the scene to find an ironworker being interviewed by investigators from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The man had witnessed the collapse. The workers who died had been part of his crew. Osborne did not know him. They had never met. But as a chaplain,

Thousands in the region work in construction, a job beset by what one expert calls “a mental health epidemic.” So far, the industry has done more to treat the problem than to prevent it.

Osborne was there to help the workers who witnessed the traumatic event. His job, as he put it, was to “render support to workers in distress.”

He waited until the interview ended. Then he walked over, introduced himself, and placed a hand on the worker’s shoulder. “He’s a tough guy,” Osborne said, “but he just broke down.” Osborne hugged the worker as he wept. By the time he pulled away, his shirt was wet with the man’s tears.

The ironworker Osborne comforted was part of a workforce that is deeply woven into Philadelphia’s civic identity. Roughly 121,000 people across the Philadelphia metropolitan area work in construction, following a decade of steady growth. The Philadelphia Building and Construction Trades Council alone represents more than 50 local unions. Politicians court their support. The city celebrates the buildings, roads, and public projects they construct. But behind that civic pride is a workforce in profound distress.

Construction has one of the highest suicide rates of any major industry in the country, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 5,000 construction workers die by suicide each year, roughly five times the number who die from fatal worksite injuries, and male construction workers are 75% more likely to die by suicide than the general population. Construction

→ SEE MENTAL ON A4

CAMPAIGN 2026

Fitzpatrick is GOP’s least loyal lawmaker, data show

The Bucks Republican bucks his party more than any of his House peers, but still votes with Trump 70% of the time, an Inquirer analysis finds.

By Fallon Roth
and Stephen Stirling
Staff Writers

More than a year and a half into President Donald Trump’s second term, U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick has voted against the White House and the GOP more than any other House Republican.

Yet, he has still voted with the president and his party nearly 70% and 77% of the time, respectively, during this congressional term, according to a new Inquirer analysis.

Fitzpatrick’s nuanced voting record has become a focal point of Democrats’ campaign against the five-term GOP incumbent from purple Bucks County this fall.

His Democratic challenger, Bob Harvie, argues that Fitzpatrick has been a “rubber stamp” for Trump’s policies and the GOP establishment when it matters most. Meanwhile, Fitzpatrick continues to tout his moderate, bipartisan brand that has proved successful in elections past.

Both of those assertions will be tested in front of voters this November as Fitzpatrick defends his swing district seat in a heated race in the 1st Congressional District, which includes all of Bucks County and a sliver of Montgomery County. Trump narrowly lost the district in 2024, despite winning Bucks County.

Fitzpatrick is voting with the president and his party less frequently during the current Congress, which began last year, than he did during the two years of Trump’s first term, when the GOP also held the majority. The Inquirer found in a comprehensive analysis of the Bucks County lawmaker’s 5,064 roll-call votes since he joined Congress nearly a decade ago.

The data underscore how Fitzpatrick, the last remaining GOP U.S. representative in the Philadelphia suburbs, is able to simultaneously straddle party lines and talk about his disdain for the two-party system while also serving as a key vote in the Republican conference — a cocktail of qualities that has made

→ SEE FITZPATRICK ON A15

Big Daddy Graham is still the talk of the town

The radio host never realized the impact of his work. But five years after his death, Philadelphians haven’t forgotten.

By Alex Coffey
Staff Writer

Big Daddy Graham was as multifaceted as he was funny. He was frugal and generous, goofy and poignant, a college dropout who was brilliantly smart.

He didn’t go to church, but had a special reverence for the Blessed Mother. He could tell fantastical tales, like driving from Sea Isle to

94.1 WIP’s studios in under an hour, but could also be searingly honest.

He could recite Monty Python as easily as J.D. Salinger, Rodney Dangerfield as easily as Jack Kerouac. His musical tastes ranged from Frank Sinatra to Weezer.

In anyone else, these might seem like contradictions, but in Graham, they fit perfectly. It was this paradox that made him a great overnight radio host; Graham was never short on topics, even when he was short on callers.

Every weeknight, from around 2 a.m. to 6 a.m., he would guide the Delaware Valley through the expanses of his zany mind. Philadelphia sports was the draw, but the West Catholic grad often took detours, sometimes in the most

literal sense.

Why does the exit sign on the Garden State Parkway, for the Atlantic City Expressway, say “Camden,” and not “Philadelphia,” Graham once mused, while other road signs, heading north, say “New York City” and not “Newark”?

“He could never let that one go,” said his longtime producer, Mike Angelina.

The show provided a balm for the late-night workers and the early risers, the drunkards and the restless. But it came at a cost. Graham’s shift was exceptionally hard on his body. As his wife, Debbie, got ready to go to work, her husband would be taking Xanax to go to sleep.

His daughters, Keely and Ava,

→ SEE GRAHAM ON A6



Big Daddy Graham got his start as a stand-up comedian.

WEATHER B8
SOME RAIN
HIGH 77 / LOW 65

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