

**ABSTRACT:** Edward Mutchler and his wife, Mary Mutchler, have lived in Colmar Manor, since they were in their 20s. Throughout their lives they have watched the town change for the better, in some cases, and for the worse in others. Edward Mutchler and his wife are both involved with the fire department, which is now located in Mt. Rainier, the Bunker Hill Fire Station. The couple share their opinions and stories about the history of the town of Colmar Manor.

**Edward Mutchler on the Name Colmar Manor:** Do you know where Colmar Manor got its name from? When they were deciding on a name, they decided it borders D.C., District of Columbia, and it's in Maryland. So, they took "Col" from Columbia and "mar" from Maryland to make "Colmar." It was a small manor so they named it "Colmar Manor."

**Mary Mutchler on children in Colmar Manor:** Kids played with themselves. There was a park. We'd come home from work. After the dishes were done, we'd sit outside in the summer time. The kids would play hide-and-go-seek. They played games like tag. The parents would sit out and maybe have a beer. The women maybe if they wanted one. They would talk. The kids would run around and play. The rule was: when the street lights came on, you are to be in front of your house. You don't hang on corners like they do today. That was the rule. Today, I don't think they have rules.

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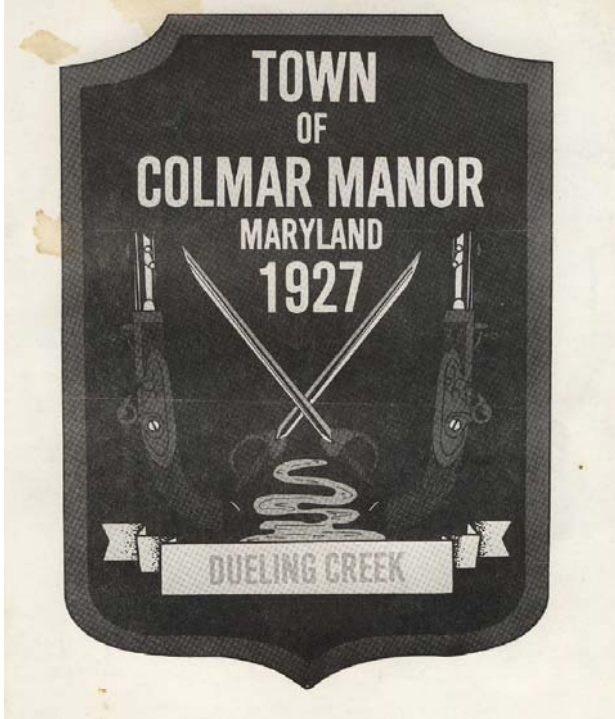
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Colmar Manor Flag



Ft. Lincoln Cemetery



Bunker Hill Fire Station



The Dueling Grounds

**Port Towns Interview Project**  
**Suzanne Stasiulatis interviewing Edward Mutchler and Mary Mutchler**  
**Interview at 3414 39<sup>th</sup> Place, Bladensburg, MD**  
**April 8, 2008**

**Suzanne:** Can you both please state your name, age, and where you are from.

**Edward Mutchler:** My name is Edward Mutchler. I am 83 years old. I live in the town Colmar Manor.

**Mary Mutchler:** My name is Mary Mutchler. I am 79 years old. I live in Colmar Manor. I was born in D.C. and raised in D.C.

**Edward Mutchler:** I was born in Mt. Rainier. I have lived all over the place in the Depression years. Things were hard. We moved all over the place. We lived in a dozen places in Mt. Rainier. I lived in Brentwood. I lived in Colmar Manor for a couple of years. I lived in Glenn Echo. I lived in Capital Heights.

**Suzanne:** Why did you come back here?

**Edward Mutchler:** After we got married, we were living in Mt. Rainier...

**Mary Mutchler:** You came back from the service to Mt. Rainier. The family lived in Mt. Rainier. He got out of the service, during World War II, and came back to Mt. Rainier.

**Edward Mutchler:** When we were looking for a place to live that we could afford, we found this house. We moved in.

**Mary Mutchler:** With help from the GI Bill.

**Suzanne:** Why did you decide to stay here?

**Edward Mutchler:** It was convenient. I worked down in Washington at North Capital and L Street. I would walk over to Mt. Rainier and catch the streetcar and ride down to North Capital St. and walk three blocks to work. After I got a car and started driving to work, I would be at work in less than 15 minutes. It would take less than 15 minutes to get home. We just decided to stay here. We thought maybe later we would move, because the house was small. We just added two rooms onto the back. We decided to stay here in the neighborhood. We had good friends and neighbors. Then, I got involved with town politics. Once I got involved with that, we were going to stay here.

**Suzanne:** How long have you been a resident of Colmar Manor?

**Edward Mutchler:** 59 years.

**Suzanne:** You lived here in your 20s?

**Edward Mutchler:** Yes, right in this house.

**Suzanne:** What were your occupations or previous occupations?

**Edward Mutchler:** I am retired. I worked in a printing company. It was called Columbia Pantograph Company. It was a photo/litho shop. They were down North Capital and L St. Later, after the riots, they decided to move out. They moved to Beltsville. Then, the company changed hands two different times. After the second time, the company went bankrupt.

**Suzanne:** What were the riots about?

**Edward Mutchler:** The riots were in '68 when Martin Luther King got assassinated. They were burning stuff down all around where our company was.

**Suzanne:** What was that like?

**Edward Mutchler:** I didn't go into work for about a week, because the area was so bad downtown. It didn't affect us out here. They called in the National Guard and they patrolled the city. Also, up to Eastern Avenue on the D.C. line, they were stationed on the border of D.C. and Maryland to keep the rioters from coming out. It was pretty quiet out here. When you went out, you could see the smoke from burning buildings downtown.

**Suzanne:** What was your occupation?

**Mary Mutchler:** I worked at Columbia Pantograph in the bindery. We were classified back then. Then, I worked as a clerk in an office supply store. It was up the street. I could walk to work.

**Suzanne:** What are you involved in now?

**Mary Mutchler:** I belong to the Lady's Auxiliary in the Fire Department. I am involved in the Senior Citizen Club.

**Edward Mutchler:** I have been involved with the Fire Department for 42 years. I am a member on the Board of Directors. I'm Hall Chairman at the fire house, in charge of the social hall. I am on the Executive Board for the American Legion Post down the street.

**Suzanne:** What got you interested in the Fire Department?

**Edward Mutchler:** I joined the Fire Department in 1946, when I lived in Mt. Rainier. My father belonged to the Fire Department and my brother belonged to the Fire Department. It was something to do. After I got married and moved over here, I got out of the Fire Department. Later, some of the fellows that lived here in town who were members of the Fire Department kept after me. So, I finally joined the Fire Department.

**Suzanne:** Can you talk about some of the different buildings the Fire Department was in?

**Edward Mutchler:** Basically, we really didn't want to move. The building we had up the street needed a lot of work, the same as the Mt. Rainier Fire Department and the Brentwood Fire Department. The county thought it was more economical to build one station, because we were all located within  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile where the station is now. We have been over there almost 4 years now. They wanted us to merge and become one corporation. Each of our companies has been in existence for 80 some years. They didn't want to give their charters up. So, we kept our own identity. When we moved over there, the county provided funding to the Fire Department, Station Management Funds. Each company was given so many Station Management Funds each year. When we moved over there, they cut the Station Management Funds from 3 shares to 1 share. It cut the funding down some. They put career staffing in, which is there 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We still have volunteers over there. We have problems with the career people and volunteers, but that has been going on for years.

**Mary Mutchler:** There never used to be a paid Fire Department. It was all volunteers.

**Edward Mutchler:** I think it was 1975, when the career fire department came in. When it started, a lot of members who were volunteers joined the career staff. After that, they forgot their roots and where they came from. They looked down on the volunteers. Some of them still do. We have problems sometimes. We are over there. When they started to issue the funds, instead of issuing so much to each company, we had to form another corporation as an umbrella. The funds go to Bunker Hill Volunteer and Rescue Association, Station 55. We have a Treasurer. All the funds go there, and the funds are dispersed as the 3 companies need it. When we first went in, there were some problems with the 3 corporation all pushed together. We have everything ironed out now.

We have our own equipment. Since we have been over there, Brentwood has bought a new mini-pumper for about \$175,000. Two and a half years ago, Cottage City bought a new ladder truck for about \$640,000. In the last 6 months, Mt. Rainier has gotten a new pumper engine, close to \$400,000. The county has one engine in there, an ambulance, and a medic unit. Most of the apparatus in there belong to the volunteers.

**Suzanne:** Did the Bunker Hill Fire Station affect your identity at all as a resident of Colmar Manor?

**Edward Mutchler:** No. The mayor and council support the volunteers. They understand the problems we have over there. They are behind the volunteers 100 percent. They have written letters to county executives about the problems that we've had.

We were running the social hall out for banquets, wedding receptions, anniversary parties, and birthday parties. Cottage City had a bingo night every week. In February, the Fire Chief came out with a memo that all fire stations had to have a dance permit, if they were running their stations out. There were only 2 stations at that time that had dance

permits and they were not issued properly. I had parties booked. I went to the Department of Environmental Resources to see about getting a dance permit, even though we weren't having dances. They were having cabarets at some of the stations and they had problems like to many people and fights. At one station, somebody was killed. That is one of the reasons they came out with the permits. Over here, they still have some problems with the station. They are operating under a temporary use and occupancy permit. When I went out to see about getting a dance permit we said, "No, we're not having cabarets or anything else." I went out to get the dance permit, November 9<sup>th</sup>. The first thing they said, "You have a U and O permit?" I gave it to her. She said, "You're not supposed to be holding anything in there." I said, "I have a party tomorrow night. What do I do?" She said, "Go talk to the Fire Chief he was the one who put the memo out." I said, "I might as well talk to the wall." That's the satisfaction I'd get. I called the President. He was working in Annapolis. He came over and talked to the woman. She wrote on the back of a business card, "OK to hold party on the 10<sup>th</sup>, pending review for application." We had the party that night. I had two parties scheduled the Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving, a 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, and a 25<sup>th</sup> birthday party. I went back out to the Department of Environmental Resources and talked to the woman. She said, "Well, there's really nothing I can do for you." I said, "Well, I've got these people coming from out of town. I can't say with a weeks notice, well you can't have a party; you can't have an anniversary." She said, "Well, talk to the Chief." I said, "I know what I'm going to do." She said, "Don't tell me." I went ahead and had the parties. Our President met with one of the Lieutenant Cornels with the Fire Department and the County Councilman from the 2<sup>nd</sup> District, Will Campos, and explained the situation. They said, "Continue what you're doing and we'll try to work things out." I started booking parties. On February 16<sup>th</sup>, I had a birthday party from 9-1. At 11:15, the Fire Investigator came in and called the police. He came upstairs and told the people the party was over and they had to leave the hall. He said, "You are having a dance." We said, "No. It's not a dance. It's a private party. It had invitation" He said, "Are you dancing in there." We said, "Yes." He said, "Then, it's a public dance." I said, "No admissions are being sold. We don't have cabarets. It's not a public dance." He said, "Well, the party is over." He wrote up a citation for having a party without a permit. Our temporary permit had expired. We had to appeal it on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March. Two days after they wrote up the citation, they came up with a year long temporary U and O. They had only been giving us a 90 day permit before. The mayor of Mt. Rainier had got a hold of Jack Johnson. When they had the hearing on the 19<sup>th</sup>, they said to check for the property use for the zoning, for the MTUZ zoning, and whether everything was in compliance. I had been talking with somebody in Park and Planning. They said the building was built with the sole purpose of social activities and public meetings. We were in compliance. The attorney came in for the hearing for the citation and said, "The U and O has been issued. They are in compliance." They expunged the citation from the record. They hadn't issued a permit for use of the building. All of the county stations have had the same problem, because they are older stations. The zoning has changed in the areas where they are. Their use and occupancy permits do not comply with the new zoning now. They all have to resubmit for zoning. It's a long drawn out process. It has to go through Park and Planning and other agencies to get clearance. We haven't been able to rent our hall out. They canceled our bingos. We don't have funds coming in from that. That's the situation with the Fire Department. We

don't know when we are getting the go ahead to rent the hall out again. The attorney that represented us at the hearing said, "Well, since they said it's been cleared, you can start renting the hall." But unless we have a piece of paper that said you are entitled to do this, we won't rent it. The investigators now will be checking the fire stations to make sure there are no illegal activities are going on. The law says it is a misdemeanor subject to a 1,000 dollar fine if convicted. There are a couple of career people over there that might call the investigator.

**Mary Mutchler:** There is more that don't really care. There has never really been any problem over there. They don't have open parties. They are all just private parties.

**Suzanne:** What was your favorite story from when you first moved here?

**Edward Mutchler:** When we first moved here, that was before they built the dike down here by the river, and every time we had a hard rain everything flooded. It all flooded down there. There was a half a dozen drownings down there in the Anacostia. The kids would go down. The water would be low. They would walk out and get stuck in the muck in the river.

**Suzanne:** Down by Peace Cross? Did the Fire Department ever come down and help?

**Edward Mutchler:** Yes. We had a small boat up the street. Many times, they went down by the river and pulled people out. A family in Cottage City had two boys and they both drowned.

Bladensburg Road was nothing but bars all the way down. There were stories about the bars on Bladensburg Road.

**Mary Mutchler:** The funniest part was Mt. Rainier was all loan offices along Rhode Island Avenue. They would go in and borrow money and then come over here and spend it in the bar. That was just something funny about the towns being like that.

**Edward Mutchler:** That was before they sectioned up where the Cottage City warehouses are, where the storage place is now. Jimmy LaFontane had a big gambling casino. They had cock fights in the back. If you went in there and lost your money, he would see that you got home.

**Mary Mutchler:** Well, that was the story. We were young. We didn't know. I was scared to walk on Eastern Avenue, because you weren't supposed to look down there and see what was going on. I never went in. You could hear the game cocks.

**Suzanne:** Was it mostly for men?

**Mary Mutchler:** Yes. It was for gambling. It was back in the old days. That was on Cottage City side or Mt. Rainier really. I lived right down across the railroad tracks from it.

**Edward Mutchler:** When I was living in Mt. Rainier, we would come up across the railroad tracks in Cottage City. We would go through the cemetery. The cemetery wasn't large like it is now. We would cut through the cemetery and cut across the top of the hill. Then, we would go down and go to the lower part of the Anacostia. There was a swimming hole and fishing hole. The water was nice and clear.

**Suzanne:** What did you catch?

**Edward Mutchler:** Perch and Catfish. We would go there a lot in the summer time.

**Mary Mutchler:** I can remember one thing. The kids, when they were little, had tricycles. There were a lot of kids on the block then. They would always stay together. They were gone a while one day. The different mother's wanted to know where the kids were. Just when we started to look for them, the kids came by with their tricycles. They were decorated with ribbons and flowers. They were having a parade. We asked them, "Where did you get all those ribbons and flowers." They said, "In the cemetery." All I could think is they went on the graves. They cleared the graves after so long. They would put them in the trash. The trash was right up at the top of the hill. They could pick up the ribbons and the flowers. That was funny that day. They had a good time.

We had all the "beer joints," as they were called. We had four grocery stores. We had a dime store. We had a bakery. We had a drugstore.

**Suzanne:** Was this on Bladensburg Road?

**Mary Mutchler:** Yes, where everything is now. It faced Bladensburg. They closed off certain streets. We had a men's shop. We had a plumbing supply place. There were a whole lot of businesses all along Bladensburg Road, from 37<sup>th</sup> down to bridge. We had an ice cream place, One-in-a-Million. They made ice cream. I can remember growing up in D.C. That was a Sunday afternoon ride. You thought you were going really far. We lived on Florida Avenue, Maryland Avenue. We'd ride out here in the country. We'd get our ice cream. If you got 10 tops, you got one free. Every Sunday this was our Sunday thing.

It was quite built up along there. Then, it went down. Now, it's come back up with that little shopping center. We saw it go through Urban Renewal. When he was mayor, it went through Urban Renewal. It wasn't real popular.

**Edward Mutchler:** I got on the Town Council here in 1965, when the fellow who was the councilman, Bob Yost, got elected mayor. He had another year to go on his council seat, so they appointed me to fill his seat, in 1965. 1975 was the first year I ran for mayor. The town was deteriorating. Bob Yost, he had the idea to do Urban Renewal. We finally got a grant for Urban Renewal. They had the inspectors come out and inspect all the houses in town to see what they needed done. People applied and got loans or grants to upgrade their houses. We wanted to revitalize Bladensburg Road. They started acquiring all the businesses along Bladensburg Road. That was a long lengthy process. This was so

they could put businesses up there and parking. Before, it was just angle parking as you come down Bladensburg Road. It was a long process. It took a long time. The first piece of property to be redeveloped commercially was Burger King. People were always coming up with market studies. The people in town wanted a grocery store. The most convenient one was in Mt. Rainier or Bladensburg. The market analysis said the area won't support a grocery store. When they first started trying to get businesses, they approached McDonalds. McDonalds said no, because they wouldn't generate enough businesses. They got Burger King. Burger King was here a little over a year. McDonalds saw the business Burger King was doing, so they relocated.

They eventually decided that they were doing the building up in D.C. at Ft. Lincoln City. There was no grocery store all the way into D.C. They decided that a grocery store would do well here. That was when the Shoppers was built. Even though it was small, the Shoppers was doing more business than some of the bigger ones. They kept the drugstore. On the lower end of town, it's torn down now, was the old rustic cabin. It was a log cabin. Burk Motley had bought it. He played back in the '40s with some of the big, well known bands. He played clarinet. He stood on his head and played clarinet.

**Mary Mutchler:** They went way back. Jimmy Dean.

**Edward Mutchler:** I saw a lot of changes in the town. They redid the streets when the Urban Renewal came in. They did the sidewalks and the gutters and everything. They planted trees. That was one thing the Project Area Committee (PAC), which was made up of citizens, wanted. They wanted trees and wanted trees. The arborist came in and said the trees wouldn't grow in the small space between the sidewalk and the curb. It didn't have any room for the roots. They put some trees in. I think just about all of them are gone now.

**Mary Mutchler:** This storm came in and split them in half.

**Edward Mutchler:** With the heavy wind and everything, they started breaking.

**Mary Mutchler:** You know about the Dueling Grounds, don't you?

**Edward Mutchler:** When the town had their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1977, we had an all-day affair. Ft. Lincoln Cemetery put on a reception for all the local dignitaries. They buried a time capsule right out in front of their Administration Building. It's in between the two flagpoles, right out front. It's a stainless steel time capsule. It's about 3 foot tall and it's round. It's supposed to be opened in 100 years. That would make it 2027. When that was over, we had a mock duel in the Dueling Grounds. Frank Francois and Parris Glendenning were the two duelers, Stephen Decatur and Aaron Burr. They put on a mock duel. When that was over, they had a moon bounce and stuff for the kids. Later, when it got dark, they had fireworks in the cemetery. After that was over, they had a big street dance. The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was a big celebration.

**Suzanne:** If you were writing a history about Colmar Manor what would you include?

**Edward Mutchler:** I would include all that has happened in the town since I have been here: the changes, the people, and the demographics. The town now is made up of a lot of Hispanics. When we moved here, it was all White. They came out of D.C. Now, there are a lot of Hispanics. There are a lot of Filipinos. The nationalities are pretty much equally divided, I think.

**Suzanne:** Even though it has changed so much, are you still happy with the community?

**Mary Mutchler:** Basically, yes. Like every other community, the young people today aren't like the people we raised or how we grow up. It's the same problems that all communities have, groups hanging on the corner. Young people who don't even live in town like to hang, until their chased away.

**Suzanne:** Do you get along with your neighbors?

**Mary Mutchler:** Yes. We are Mr. Ed and Ms. Mary. They walk down the street and drive down the street. In the summer time, I am always on the front porch. There is always honking the horns and waving. The kids coming home from school say, "Hi Ms. Mary."

**Suzanne:** You watch out for each other?

**Mary Mutchler:** Yes. I'm home most of the time. We don't walk the town like we once did. We would walk all over, all the time, but we have gotten older and the legs don't take us there. It's more that than being afraid. I'm not afraid yet to walk in Colmar Manor. I don't know the day may come, or maybe I should be. I don't think it's that bad yet. I don't think we'll let it get that bad. I've lived here too long, I'm not going anywhere. If you don't like me sitting on the porch looking at you, then move on. I'm not going anywhere.

**Suzanne:** In what other ways has Colmar Manor changed?

**Edward Mutchler:** One change I don't like, that they are in the process of doing, is what they're doing with the Town Hall. The Town Hall, up on top of the hill, was built in 1959. It was having problems when I was mayor. The basement wall was cracking. It had water leaks. The present mayor and council want to build a new Town Hall. They call it the Port Town Community Center. What they're putting in it, I don't think the town really needs. They've raised our taxes so high to pay for it. They talk about a community center with a gymnasium and a running track. They talked about a swimming pool and a basketball court. They may get some of the teams in town interested, but not everybody. I ran Teen Club up there on Friday night for a long time. We would get a lot of kids on Friday night come to Teen Club. Back then, the parents were pretty strict - Go to Teen Club, come home from Teen Club. Then, some of the kids started getting automobiles or the parents were more relaxed. When that happened, the kids would come up to Teen Club, get in a car and go off somewhere, and then go home. Not just our Teen Club, but

all Teen Clubs were having the same problems. They gradually started losing all their membership. The kids started getting more and more freedom. Chief of Police, Mike Mulligan, he had been around for years and years. He said, "Look. They talked about starting a Boy Scout Troup." Nobody would want to join. I can see this happening up at this Town Hall. The money they are spending and what they are going to do, I don't think it's necessary. The neighbors I have talked to don't think it's necessary.

**Mary Mutchler:** They are asking for a Community Center. We are asking for a Town Hall. They are putting in a Community Center for the Port Towns. Our taxes went up. I don't know if the other towns are contributing toward this. It's supposed to be a Community Center for the Port Towns. They will have the use of it, but our taxes went up. This is what we argued about. The Senior Citizen Group got a letter and it asked if we would use it. We said yes we would and as long as it was done by grants and our taxes weren't raised. Well, our taxes were raised. They worked to get grant money. They would have had enough, if they had just built the Town Hall. The mayor and council meetings only draw maybe 4 citizens at their open meetings. You can't even fill the hall you have, so why get a bigger one. I don't understand. There are so many younger families that are struggling and the seniors that are in town. The young people today have to realize Social Security is based on what your salary was. Our salary back in those days wasn't anything near what salaries are today, hourly wage or anything. Our Social Security checks are nothing like what they are getting now. The young people don't understand that. We don't need a Community Center like they want. We need a Town Hall. They are including all the Port Towns, which is fine. I'm not against the Port Towns, because of what they have done with the river. Bladensburg has their own Town Hall. Cottage City has their own Town Hall. Why does Colmar Manor need to build this big building? It doesn't make sense to me.

**Suzanne:** Did you go to high school in the area?

**Edward Mutchler:** No. I went to McKinley Technical High School in Washington D.C. I went to St. James Elementary School in Mt. Rainier through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I went into junior high school in Washington at Langley Junior High School, which is right next door to McKinley Tech. Then, I went to McKinley Tech. I went to work and then I went into the service.

**Suzanne:** What was it like when you first moved into Colmar Manor as a married couple?

**Mary Mutchler:** We were scared, because we had bought a house and had a baby. The kids just sit and shake their heads when we get together at the holidays. We talk about when we bought this house it cost \$8,900 or \$8,500. The monthly payment was \$49 a month. They laugh, but their dad brought home \$50 a week. It was scary, just like it is today for young people buying a home.

**Suzanne:** What were your neighbors like?

**Mary Mutchler:** They were very friendly. There were a lot of kids. We were stricter. Next door is one of the oldest houses on the block. She had a young daughter. Mine was just a baby. The Wagner's lived next door. All her kids had grown up. She raised her kids there. Helen lived across the street. She had two children. She had one when I moved here. There were a lot of young families. There were seniors there too.

**Suzanne:** Were there a lot of programs for the children?

**Mary Mutchler:** Kids played with themselves. There was a park. We'd come home from work. After the dishes were done, we'd sit outside in the summer time. The kids would play hide-and-go-seek. They played games like tag. The parents would sit out and maybe have a beer. The women maybe if they wanted one. They would talk. The kids would run around and play. The rule was: when the street lights came on, you are to be in front of your house. You don't hang on corners like they do today. That was the rule. Today, I don't think they have rules.

**Suzanne:** Do they have organized sports?

**Mary Mutchler:** There was a Boys Club.

**Edward Mutchler:** Before they completed the landfill up here, it was all swamp. Back behind the school, there was one building that dropped down and was hollow there. We would go up there and play ball.

**Mary Mutchler:** They had a Boy Scout Group. St. James had the Brownies. I was the leader.

**Edward Mutchler:** Do you know where Colmar Manor got its name from? When they were deciding on a name, they decided it borders D.C., District of Columbia, and it's in Maryland. So, they took "Col" from Columbia and "mar" from Maryland to make "Colmar." It was a small manor so they named it "Colmar Manor."

**Mary Mutchler:** In the show "Welcome Back Cotter," the one that played the principal in that show was from Colmar Manor.

**Suzanne:** What was your favorite spot in the community?

**Mary Mutchler:** The front porch.

**Edward Mutchler:** In the community, there wasn't much to do. We would go back to Mt. Rainier. My parents lived in Mt. Rainier. Her mother, grandmother, and aunt lived in Mt. Rainier. We would go to Mt. Rainier for the weekends. We'd go out to dinner. We'd go to Burt Motley's. Every now and then I go to a bar and have a beer, but not that often.

**Suzanne:** What is your favorite landmark or historic site?

**Edward Mutchler:** They talk about the Dueling Creek. I told you about reenacting the duel. That is a landmark. It is written up in a lot of history. Battle of Bladensburg and Ft. Lincoln Cemetery...

**Mary Mutchler:** Ft. Lincoln was very pretty at one point. It was a beautiful cemetery at one point. A lot of history goes with it, the burning of Washington. That's where they came marching through to get to Washington. It's not as nice as it was once was.

**Suzanne:** What is not the same?

**Mary Mutchler:** The upkeep. It's not kept up the same.

**Edward Mutchler:** It was church owned. They sold it to the corporation that owns it now. They had a big floral clock that is up by the funeral parlor now. The grave sites were kept up real nice. They kept expanding and expanding. They went back, back, back. They had their own maintenance crew up there. Now, it's all contracted out.

**Suzanne:** How do you feel about the term Port Towns? Is it effective in drawing attention to history?

**Edward Mutchler:** I think it's bringing these four communities together. Edmonston just came in in the last 2 years. It is uniting them. They're working together. It is just like the three companies in the fire hall. I know, Cottage City was saying a couple years back they were not going to put x dollars in, because Bladensburg was getting all the stuff through the Port Towns. Now, they are working together.

**Mary Mutchler:** I'll be glad when they finish the railroad tracks. They fixed the foot bridge coming across. There is talk of doing more stuff on this side of the river. I have to laugh when they call it a river, because most of the time you can see the bottom. I call it a creek, but they call it a river.

**Suzanne:** How is the town connected to the other communities?

**Edward Mutchler:** Last Thursday, they had neighborhood watch. Every last Thursday of the month, they have neighborhood watch. It was the first one that they've had, since the Town Hall relocated to 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. They had all the Chief's of Police from the adjoining towns. The Major from the County Police was there. Politicians were there. They signed a joint agreement where the towns are working together. They signed an agreement so that they can all work together. We are seeing more police come through town. It's working that way. I think the elected officials are trying to work a lot more closely together. Sadara is very involved in the CDC.

**Suzanne:** What are the major political issues in the past?

**Edward Mutchler:** People in the small towns were involved in the politics and everybody was interested in being a mayor or council person. You don't see that as much

any more, especially here in town. They've had the same people in office for a long time. Nobody wants to run against them. It takes time. Back when I was on the council, we were meeting almost every night of the week, sometimes even on weekends. They don't have that anymore, especially in this town. They are not letting the citizens know what's going on. They're supposed to have a meeting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month. They have a work session the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of every month. The work session you could sit there, but you couldn't say anything. Then, the regular meeting got so people stopped going. All their actions were at the work session. Then, they'd approve the minutes at the open meeting. I have been up there. They used to have copies of the previous months minutes. Now, they don't have anything up there. You don't know what all has transpired. They pass all kinds of motions to do this and do that and nobody even notices it. They are not keeping the citizens really informed. If they don't feel like having a meeting in July or August, they don't have a meeting and recess. The charter says they should have one meeting every month. They do have national night out, in October, I think. It's on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month. They say their going to have a work session. They just meet where they are going to have the night out and have the night out. They don't have the work session.

**Mary Mutchler:** You couldn't get by with that when we first moved here. The citizens wanted to know what was going on. It was brought up at the meeting. They told you: this was brought up, this was brought up. Then, they would vote at the open meeting. That's when the vote was done. Now, it isn't. Like he said, we don't know anything. We didn't even know the taxes were being raised. I wish they would get people get back in caring about the people, not about foreign lands and all this. Care about the United States, the people who live here. Take care of us. This is happening from the little towns all the way up.

**Edward Mutchler:** You can't get a hold of the council people or the mayor. They don't publish their telephone numbers. When I was mayor, my home phone number was listed, and I got all kinds of phone calls at home. You can't get a hold of the council people now. They are really not keeping citizens informed. I see the newsletters from Brentwood. I see the newsletters from Mt. Rainier, because they send them to the Fire House. They have actions and motions made. They really keep people informed of what is going on. That's the only problem I have. I get along real well with the mayor. I was the one who got her involved in politics. I get along with the council people, but you never see them. Back when I was on the council and the mayor, I walked every street in this town, not just politicking, but stopping and talking. I found out their concerns. I keep telling people when you're running for election the name of the game is to walk and talk.

**Suzanne:** What were some of their concerns?

**Edward Mutchler:** People had concerns about the streets and trash collection. I'd make note of everything. I would never promise I was going to do anything. I will try. I'm not promising, I'm going to try. You say I'm trying and I hope we can get it accomplished. That way you're not obligated to do it. There's so much that goes on that you don't know about.

**Mary Mutchler:** His pay was \$31.90 a month.

**Suzanne:** What was it like being a woman in your 20s in Colmar Manor?

**Mary Mutchler:** I was very opinionated back then too. I was always that way, or I had the mouth. To me it was the same, as far as I was concerned. If I didn't like something, I let you know. I was raised by a single mother. I had to take up for myself, back in those days when it wasn't popular. You take up for yourself, because Mom was working. She wasn't around. I guess I just grew up that way.

**Suzanne:** Was there racism in the community? Is there racism now?

**Mary Mutchler:** One of our best friends lives across the street. She is Black. She and I talk about it a lot. I said in the family, I guess it's how you are brought up. I didn't really see racism. I was brought up in D.C. They were just Black people. They were people working the same as we were. There were no putdowns. We never used the N word. There was respect, because they were people. We moved to Mt. Rainier. I know in Mt. Rainier, there was an under the table law that Black people were supposed to be out of Mt. Rainier by dark. When I came from D.C. we were like, "What?" It was strange, because we didn't have that. That just sort of went by the way. I guess it was something from back in the earlier days, before my time. I had worked in the State Department. I worked with a lot of Black people. We were in the reproduction printing end of the State Department. It was something so normal for me to be around. I guess there were people who were racist, but it wasn't in my family.

**Suzanne:** Do you think there was racism in the area?

**Edward Mutchler:** No. I don't think so. The first Black family that moved into town moved over on the hill. When they started moving into town, when I was on the council and then mayor, I knocked on their door and talked to them. I got the first Black council person involved. He had just moved into the lower end of town, where they had just built some new houses. I'd stop and talk. This Project Area Committee, or PAC, had a couple of openings. They were the ones that were advising the mayor and the council on Urban Renewal and what they would like. I talked to him one day, "Joe if you want to get involved in the town, there are couple of openings on the PAC Committee. Why don't you go up and join the PAC Committee." He did. I resigned as mayor in '82, because of my blood pressure. There were financial problems in the town. We had an Administrator who had embezzled money. Investigators came in. They investigated me. They spent a couple days up at the Town Hall, inquiring and digging. They spent half a day here, interviewing me. They cleared me of anything in it. This Black council person, Joe, he started saying I was involved in it. My blood pressure was so bad. At that time, I was still working. The company was on the verge of bankruptcy. I didn't know from one day to the next whether I was going to have a job or not. I'd go to work. I'd come home. I'd go up there. I was at the doctor's one day, and he said, "What kind of problems do you have that's keeping your blood pressure up?" I told him. He said, "You have to work for a

living. What about this job as mayor. He said do you really need that? He said that is causing most of your anxiety. You should give something up.” The next night, I went to the meeting, and I submitted my resignation due to my health. Joe was on the council. I didn’t go up to Town Hall for a long time. I went up to a meeting one night. It was close to election time. He came over and said, “I see you walking. I know what you’re doing. You’re out politicking. Are you going to run for office again? You don’t want to do that, because I have enough on you, you may get in trouble.” I said, “Joe, you don’t have anything on me. If I wanted to run for council, or even for mayor, I would beat you or anybody else, because I have never lost an election before.” I saw him again. I said, “Joe, the first time you open your mouth and threaten me again, I’m going to your house.” You know what happened to him? He got arrested for forging checks. He forged 4 or 5 checks a week, \$600 each one. He was forging a councilwoman’s signature and his, making checks out to himself. He’d go to one liquor store and then another liquor store and cash them. Then, I went to work up part-time up at the town, when Mike Garret got elected mayor. Finally, all the things they took to the court got brought back. I went in there one day and looked at the checks. There was a stack of checks. The first thing I looked at was the signature. I knew Mrs. Merkle well enough that that’s nowhere near her name. He got sentenced to jail for weekends. He could still work. He had to go to jail in Hyattsville on weekends. He lost his job from drinking. He lost his house. That’s the only Black person I ever had problems with in town. I got along with everybody else. I still do. Anytime I want anything, I just yell, “Hey, Chris.” Pedro is next door. He is just as nice as can be. Connie is across the street.

**Suzanne:** What economic changes have occurred, since you have moved here?

**Mary Mutchler:** I think some are loosing their houses. You can see the houses that are up for sale around here. The house, two houses up, is up for auction. I think it’s because they can’t afford it. They have big loans. Before, we were all in the same boat. We just lived from paycheck to paycheck. You got your paycheck on Saturday, that was when you worked 6 days a week. These young people, today, got hooked into these outrageous prices for these homes in here. When we read the prices in the paper, we are like, “What?” Right away, we get in the car and ride around and to see is that the house that is \$350,000. That doesn’t entice us to move. We need more than that to even buy another house.

**Suzanne:** Do you feel history can contribute to revitalization?

**Mary Mutchler:** I think history is very important to everything.

**Suzanne:** What are your satisfactions or dissatisfactions with the community?

**Mary Mutchler:** Politics, but you can be happy one day and mad the next day. Basically, it’s good. I always say it can be worse.

**Edward Mutchler:** You never see the councilwoman in this ward. I think if you are interested in running for a job like that, you should be out in the community talking to

people to find out their concerns. They have to call the Town Hall, 277-4920. The Secretary takes the message and gives it to the councilperson.

**Mary Mutchler:** Or if you're walking and she's sitting on the front porch, you may be able to grab her. I don't think some of them understand what it should mean. We would go to the Municipal League Conventions in Ocean City. It was going to the meetings to learn something from other communities. Now, I think they are going to the meetings more than they used to, but we never hear anything.

**Suzanne:** In what respects is Colmar Manor unique? How is it unique among the Port Towns?

**Edward Mutchler:** I think a lot of the people who have moved into the town in the last few years were moving in here for the convenience of D.C. and the homes are low cost. The transportation, you can't beat it. You can walk right up the street and get a bus and get to the Rhode Island Metro or Cheverly Metro. If you are driving, you can go straight down Bladensburg Road into Washington D.C.

**Mary Mutchler:** Also, the history. The Dueling Grounds. Ft. Lincoln, not as a cemetery, but as a fort. The history of the river, when they would sail up it. I sit there and look at it today and I'm like wow, ships came up here. I think it is sad that the majority of the children today aren't taught the history like I was in school. History was a big subject when I was back in school. I don't think that the children are taught history or geography.

**Edward Mutchler:** They are not taught any history any more. The fellow at the Fire House said he was talking to his boy about the war and Hitler, and he said, "Hitler? Who is that?"

I went to a reunion of Veterans down at the World War II Memorial. There was a group of about 25 kids from a junior high school in Michigan. The group I was with was the Anzio Beach Veterans. We were over in a section of the World War II Memorial. We had red and white baseball hats on. And the group came over and asked the Secretary about Anzio Beach. He said, "I've seen the movie a couple of times. I've read the book a couple of times. I'm very, very interested in it." This fellow, John, started explaining about World War II and Anzio in particular. This group of kids stood there and listened the whole time. Once in a while, one of them would ask a question. They said, "They don't teach us anything like this in school anymore." He said, "This is something we should all know about, but they don't teach it." I think that is something that should be taught, history from way back, coming all the way up.