

ABSTRACT: Dick Charlton and Chuck Day are friends who are very involved with Bladensburg. They have considerable knowledge of the history and have worked on projects throughout the town. Both are members of the Aman Memorial Trust and have connections with Prince George's Heritage and other history organizations, as well as, the Anacostia Watershed Society. Both men tell stories about growing up in the area. In their view, the town has developed and changed in most cases for the better. However, they are always trying to do more for history and historic preservation.

Dick Charlton on Hitchhiking: "But back in those days, we did a lot of bicycling. We did walking. We took the bus. We hitchhiked. I hitchhiked all over the place. When I went to the University of Maryland, well part of the time, I lived on campus. But part of the time I was 1 mile away in University Park, right down Route 1. I would hitchhike. Walk out with my books and stick my thumb out on Route 1."

Chuck Day on the Anacostia Trail: "We have a lot of wonderful bike trails many people are not even aware of. Unfortunately, the bike trail does not connect to Washington D.C. yet. There was a fear of people out here, that if they connected, hoodlums from Washington would come out here via the bike trail. That's specious thinking. But it's a beautiful trail and it goes from Greenbelt all the way down through Bladensburg, past Fort Lincoln Cemetery, which in itself is a historic area. If you are familiar with the Battle of Bladensburg, that's where Commodore Joshua Barney stood up with his sailors and marines and countercharged the Brits, for which he was acknowledged by the British as being a heroic figure."

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Magruder House – Bladensburg



Sarah Walton, Dick Charlton, and
Susanna Cristofane



Magruder House – Before and
After Restoration



Margruder House Basement – Before
and After Restoration

Port Towns Interview Project
Suzanne Stasiulatis interviewing Dick Charlton and Chuck Day
Interview at Magruder House: 4703 Annapolis Rd. (Bladensburg Rd.),
Bladensburg, MD 20710-1201
October 1, 2007

Suzanne: Can you state your name, age, and where you're from?

Dick Charlton: Alright. I am Dick Charlton. I am 75 years young. I am basically a Prince George's County lifetime resident. I moved into University Park at the age of 3 with my parents, and I have been in this area ever since. I went to the University of Maryland. I was two years in the Army, spent in Germany, but other than that I've basically been here. I became involved in Bladensburg, in 1980, which was 27 years ago.

Suzanne: And, you are?

Charles Day: I am Charles Day. I'm 77. I was born in Washington D.C., which was a part of Prince George's County, before they gave it to the federal government. I was raised in Roger's Heights, which is East Hyattsville. I went Bladensburg Elementary, Bladensburg Grammar School, Bladensburg High School, but then I graduated from McKinley Tech in Washington D.C. I went to the University of Maryland. I have lived in this general area my entire life. My business is an insurance agency up in Beltsville. I have 3 kids. They all went to the University of Maryland, as did my wife. Dick got me involved in the historic preservation commission, of which I served 6 years as a commissioner. I am involved with Dick with the Aman Memorial Trust and the Anacostia Watershed Society, and we are concerned with the reestablishment of historic Bladensburg.

Suzanne: Let me just start on these questions. How long have each of you been a resident of the town? Should we start with Dick?

Dick Charlton: The business which I am involved in, or have been involved in for actually over 50 years, moved to Bladensburg from downtown Washington in 1980. At that time, Charlton and Associates, my accounting firm, moved into and restored with Prince George's Heritage, the Magruder House in Bladensburg, which is where we now are. I became more involved in Bladensburg at that point in time. Prior to that, I grew up in University Park, Maryland. I attended the University Park Elementary School and went on to Langley Junior High in Washington D.C., and from there to McKinley High School in Washington D.C., and then to the University of Maryland. But that whole time frame, I was operating kind of in the Bladensburg neighborhood. It depends on where you draw the circle I guess. I never had too much involvement directly with Bladensburg, per say, except they were one of the neighboring towns. There was University Park, College Park, Greenbelt, Hyattsville, and lot of the other little towns and Bladensburg. But they were boys club rivals in the community. That was in the 40s and early 50s. I didn't really know about historic preservation or even what all had happened in Bladensburg until quite a bit later. In fact, not until our firm that was operating out of

downtown Washington began looking for space. In fact at that time, I was very involved with the Prince George's Chamber of Commerce, and actually became president in 1974 and 1975. It made sense for us to move to Prince George's County. Also the tax benefits of historic preservation were then available and pretty much just became available. There was a lot of stuff going on from an economic sense to encourage historic preservation. I pushed to consider historic preservation as a place to locate our offices. I was fortunate to run into some people who had been here for many years, Susanna Cristofane and Sarah Walton, who were involved with Prince George's Heritage and Prince George's County Committee of the Maryland Historical Trust. They had acquired the Magruder House in that non-profit association. What I did was negotiate with them to provide monies for the restoration of the Magruder House in exchange for a 30 year lease. We had a joint project which combined my resources from private enterprise and the resources of the state of Maryland in a bond bill, and Prince George's Heritage that owned the Magruder House. We put together this very fine restoration in 1980 and 1981. I am now retired from the accounting firm. But it seems that one thing has led to another in the historic preservation field. Now, I don't do any accounting work, but I do a whole lot of historic preservation.

Suzanne: Is that why you decided to stay here?

Dick Charlton: Well, that's part of it. I don't know. Prince George's Heritage owns this building. Our group has a thirty year lease. There are 3 years, 4 years left on that lease. That's one of the reasons. We've already paid for it. Now, we have to maintain the structure. I'm likely to stick around as the landlord for at least until the end of the lease. That's one reason. The other reason is I became caught up, as Chuck will attest to, in historic preservation. One thing led to another and, with Chuck, I am now one of the Trustees and Treasurer of the Aman Memorial Trust. I am on the Maryland Historical Trust as the Prince George's Representative. I've continued. Actually, I didn't start as a member of Prince George's Heritage, because that's who I was negotiating with. But it didn't take long until I wound up as Treasurer of Prince George's Heritage. I've been involved with Prince George's Heritage for well, 25 years now. The accounting has kind of fallen by the wayside. But I am still up to my ears, ala this very interview, with historic preservation.

Suzanne: Chuck, why did your parents decide to move here?

Chuck Day: They were from Richmond, Virginia. It was about the time of the depression. My dad got a job with the government printing office. Like many people he was trying to find a place to have a home, and land was cheaper out here. He bought a lot out in Roger's Heights, and had a house built on it. He helped build it. It was a Sears and Roebuck House. There were 5 of us kids. All of us went to Bladensburg schools at one time or another.

Suzanne: Why did you decide to stay here?

Chuck Day: I got married, had children, and started an insurance business. I started that in Washington D.C. and moved it to Riverdale and then subsequently moved it up to

Beltsville, where it still is. My daughter, my youngest son, and another guy have taken over the business. Like Dick, I'm pretty much retired. I still go to the office and they chase me out when they're tired of seeing me.

Suzanne: Chuck, tell me about your favorite childhood story.

Chuck Day: Well, we used to always laugh when it flooded down here in Bladensburg, because the, the saying was, "If you flushed your toilet in Greenbelt it would flood in Bladensburg." They were very infamous floods down here. The Corps of Engineers eventually came along in the 1950s, wasn't it Dick?

Dick Charlton: Yeah.

Chuck Day: ...And did a flood control project. But up until then Bladensburg, Edmonston, and parts of Riverdale were subject to flooding in the spring and whenever you would have a heavy rain. As kids, we used to come down to watch the cars that were stalled out there. Some of my buddies would go out there and push the cars hoping for a tip. After they got 'em out, and if they didn't tip, one guy said he would push it back in.

Dick Charlton: Ha, ha. I didn't hear that. Ha, ha.

Chuck Day: When I got to high school, one of my classmates trapped muskrats on the Anacostia River. I used to go with him when he tended his line. He would get something like 15 dollars a pelt, and if he got a mink, he'd get about 40 dollars. He was always hoping to get the mink.

Dick Charlton: Did he ever get a mink?

Chuck Day: Yeah, sure did. Bob Brooks, he was a Tech boy. But I was always fascinated by old stuff. There were a lot of old buildings down here, and at one time it was reputed that Rockefeller was deciding on where he was going to do his work. He had narrowed his choices down to Williamsburg, Bladensburg and someplace else. He eliminated Bladensburg, because of all the floods. But we had more original historic buildings than Williamsburg at that time. But the flood deterred him and he moved his efforts down to Williamsburg. This was a famous port in colonial times the shippers used to have big square-rig sail boats come up the Potomac and up the Anacostia, up to Bladensburg to pick up hog's heads of tobacco. But eventually when it got so silted in, they stopped doing that and they channeled their efforts over to Alexandria and Baltimore. But you can certainly imagine the difficulty of getting a big ocean going sailboat up the Anacostia River, when the only power they had was sail. But they would horse them up here by getting rowboats out in front, with people in to row, with ropes tied to the boat, to pull it up to Bladensburg.

Suzanne: How about you Dick? What is your favorite childhood story?

Dick Charlton: Well, I can tell you one that that my father told me. He grew up in Hyattsville. He told me, he delivered papers in Bladensburg. He was a newspaper boy. He was actually still alive when we moved in here. He was born in 1899. He used to say, "I was born in the last century," which he was. He would have been about 13 or 14 years old when he was delivering newspapers in Bladensburg. He said one of the places that they got into and out of fast was the tavern over here, the George Washington House, Indian Queen Tavern. That was kind of a bad place. That was rough. He used to tell that story. When we moved into here he was 81 years old. He was really retired, but he kind of hung into the firm. He actually came into this office. But he had some other stories. He had buddies that lived in Bladensburg. He talked about his brother riding a motorcycle and skidding on the sand as he came across the turn there at the Peace Cross. He was going too fast and hit some sand probably left over from one of the floods, and it flipped him. It skidded out from under him. That would have been about 1916 or 1917.

Suzanne: How did you get around transportation wise?

Dick Charlton: Well, it's funny. Chuck probably feels that way too. It doesn't seem like it was all that long ago to us, to me. It essentially seems like yesterday. But in the 1930s and the 1940s in University Park, I started serving papers. Now, the Second World War was going on at that time, and I got a paper route when I was eleven years old. That would have been in 1943. From that point on I was an entrepreneur. That was my first official entrepreneurial experience. But the way I got around was by bicycle. Bicycle was that was how we transported ourselves and how I delivered papers. I had a paper route that was University Park, a little bit of Hyattsville and Riverdale, but then on up to north to College Park. To get to College Park, we'd have to go up Cat Tail Hill, which is Route 1 and Queens Chapel Road. That was a little tough, with the huffing and the puffing. But what we would do is get a big basket like you have in the supermarkets. In fact, they came from the supermarkets initially. We would get one of these big baskets and fasten it to the front of the bicycle, and put the newspapers in this baskets and then ride around the neighborhood to deliver them. We didn't have any cars. The parents had cars, but back then there was rationing going on. There was a car per a family. Now you got 3 cars for 2 people. Locally here, it's kind of funny, some of these houses they have 6 or 7 cars per house in Bladensburg, particularly with the Latinos. I don't know why it seems to work that way. I guess they have a whole lot of people. But they also have a lot of cars. But back in those days, we did a lot of bicycling. We did walking. We took the bus. We hitchhiked. I hitchhiked all over the place. When I went to the University of Maryland, well part of the time, I lived on campus. But part of the time I was 1 mile away in University Park, right down Route 1. I would hitchhike. Walk out with my books and stick my thumb out on Route 1.

Chuck Day: People would pick you up. There was no problem. We used to hitchhike everywhere.

Dick Charlton: There was no problem at all...To College Park and then back. With some of my buddies, we used to hitchhike on part of it, since we didn't want to walk the whole way. We'd figured out where we wanted to go, and then we'd hitchhike to get out

there. Then, maybe we'd spend our time in the woods out Paint Branch or lot of times we were at the Northwest Branch, Paint Branch back in the woods. We'd maybe spend overnight. We'd walk back out on University Blvd., stick out our thumb, and hitchhike back. We did a lot of it. I don't know about you Chuck?

Chuck Day: Well, as soon as I graduated from McKinley...I was 16, and as soon as I turned 17, I enlisted in the army. That was in 1946. They called me up in March '47. After 2 years in the army I came out and I had a discharge separation bonus. I took that and bought a '37 Ford. I was a big wheel. I had a car. It was a hunk of junk, but it had wheels. Then, I finally got rid of that and I had a '41 Ford, which was a superduper car at that point. But I pretty much was a day dodger from Roger's Heights to University of Maryland. Even when I became a member of football team under Jim Tatum, I still would commute to and from school. But around this area, there were just a lot of things to do and a lot of things to see. It was a very active time. It used to be Bladensburg Fire Department would have a carnival. Then, low and behold they opened up a bowling alley over here. We used to go rollerskating.

Dick Charlton: Rollerskating rink, yeah. Bladensburg Rollerskating Rink was big stuff too. It's now gone, but it was right next to Bostwick. The property where the rollerskating rink was is level now. But if you come down just to the north of the Bostwick property it's there. The Yatmans, the Cristofanes acquired that property. But that's where the old rollerskating rink was. It's a level, it's covered with asphalt. But it, it's just about the only level piece of ground where Bostwick is. If you were to walk north, there's a very steep embankment there. I don't know how much you trudged around there at Bostwick. But that piece of property was where the old rollers rink was. That, that was big stuff then. Going a little bit later in the 50s, after I got married in 1954 and did my 2 years in the army, then we moved to Berwyn Heights, which is also right in Prince George's County, adjacent to College Park and right up Kennilworth Ave. My kids, I had two daughters, they rollerskated at the Bladensburg Roller Rink on summers. That was kind of big time stuff.

Suzanne: If you were writing a history about the town, what would you include Chuck?

Chuck Day: Well certainly its early origins, the founding of it, and the excitement of it being a sea port. It was always just a mud hole when I was a kid. But going way back and reading about it, that was fascinating. Then, the Battle of Bladensburg...Dick has gotten me involved in giving talks about the Battle of Bladensburg. Then, ultimately, the burning of Washington...I would certainly include all those things.

Dick Charlton: Yeah, I would agree with that. Certainly, you would start there. That's the beginning. There are some very good things, which have been written about the entire area, but certainly centered around Bladensburg. George Denny, for instance, I don't know whether you know him or not?

Suzanne: The Mayor.

Dick Charlton: He was the Mayor. But he was the mayor of Brentwood. I don't think he's Mayor still. He still lives there. But he has written some stuff, which is excellent, about the whole municipalities in Prince George's County. It's excellent. It really is. He has gone to the trouble of summarizing a lot of information. It's centered on the municipalities of Prince George's County. There were a lot of little towns in this area, which evolved over a period of time. I think because of the demographics as much as anything else. But if you think about it in the broader sense, all of those little towns really are part of greater Bladensburg. There are some people who are very parochial about their towns. But I'll give you one example and there are a lot of them. Riverdale, the town of Riverdale is a separate, distinct entity. Riverdale was named for Riversdale. Riversdale was the Calvert Mansion. Rosalie Calvert and George Calvert built it back in the early 1800s. It was at Bladensburg. It was Riversdale at Bladensburg. Riverdale was actually named after Riversdale, which was one time a part of Bladensburg. If you take it back even further, before Washington D.C. was carved out and became the seat of the federal government. In this area, there were three towns. There was Georgetown, Alexandria, and Bladensburg. Now, there are all kinds of things. Montgomery County didn't choose to have as many little incorporated towns as Prince George's. But in Prince George's, there must be I don't know 30. There's a bunch: Berwyn Heights, College Park, Colmar Manor, Greenbelt, Cheverly, on and on. There's nothing wrong with it. But to me the history of this area is the history of all of it, not concentrating on each little, individual town.

Chuck Day: Bladensburg was also a port of entry where you had to register if you were bringing imports in or exporting out. You had to go through the customs clearance, because the government wanted its tax. I don't know whether you've gone across the Bladensburg Bridge, across the river. Over to the right, there is still a road over there called Georgetown Pike. Have you noticed that? A lot of people don't even know it's there. If you look at the map, I didn't bring it with me, at the Battle of Bladensburg it shows the bridge and then the road to Washington and over to the right is the road that goes to Georgetown. It still has that name on it. We discovered that there were a couple of millstones from the mill that used to be up here that the Calverts used to own. I think it was called the Carlton Mill. It was in a guy's front yard over in Cottage City and we got him to donate them to us. We got them moved and there over here at the Market Master's House. That mill is no longer in existence.

Suzanne: What do you think other people in the town should learn about the history?

Chuck Day: Well, certainly the efforts of those who came before us, who worked so hard to try to keep things going, increase the public facilities, and increase the standard of life for people around here. We always had a lot of charitable giving programs and civic responsibility. I would think the history of the area, something to be fascinated by and to be interested in. Just like Bostwick where you live. It was built by Christopher Lowndes wasn't it? Not long ago they had a reception in recognition of the First Secretary of the Navy. They had the Marine Band, and certainly that's a noteworthy organization. The Calverts, the Stiers actually, rented Bostwick while Riversdale was being constructed in such a manner that they could move into the east wing while the house was being

completed. Rosalie mentions in her letter in that book *Mistress of Riversdale* how cold and drafty it was over at Bostwick and how glad she could get out of there.

Suzanne: Any thoughts on what the community should know about history?

Dick Charlton: I second what Chuck has said, third and fourth it. But I think there's the community needs to know more and needs to participate and appreciate the river, the Anacostia River. There are many current residents who don't even know it's there, and don't know what it is, what it can be, or even how they can enjoy it. Part of the reason for that is it has kind of been an ugly place until recently. It started out beautiful and then as civilization moved in around it, upstream primarily, it became polluted. It is still semi-polluted, but to the extent that the community can be aware of the potential and exercise pressure to make the river what it should be. We all benefit from that. That's not just Bladensburg. I'm talking about the entire Anacostia Watershed, which includes all of these municipalities by the way. The Anacostia Watershed is a good defining boundary of what we all should be concerned about.

Suzanne: I want to ask next about the change in the town. How has the town changed?

Chuck Day: The town has for the most part has changed from an area with a lot of mixed-residential areas to one primarily of industrial area and some residential. The residential area has not kept up with its potential. There are a lot of high hills and high land up there that would make wonderful places for condos, because it looks over the Anacostia River Valley. Have you been down stream in a boat on the Anacostia River?

Suzanne: No, I haven't.

Chuck Day: Well you must do that. There's a lot wildlife there. You can see egrets and eagles. It's just incredible.

Suzanne: I'd like to. I've thought about it

Chuck Day: The Anacostia Watershed Society is one such organization that has worked and continues to work very hard to try to improve the quality of the watershed. Dick and I are involved with that as well.

Dick Charlton: Yeah, I will second what you have said again, relative to the landscape, the potential. I'm not sure if it's called Lowndes Hill. That's where Bostwick is Lowndes Hill. But if you go on further on up to the very crest of the hill as your coming from the east down Route 202. As you come up over the hill, that is a very high point and if you look over to the left at certain times, you can see 20 miles. You can see the capital. You can see all the way over to the cathedral, the other side of NW Washington. You could get to Capital Hill from right here, this place, in 10 minutes. It's kind of a backwater for residential lives and everything else. It shouldn't be that way. It has potential. Bostwick itself has tremendous potential, properly utilized. Chuck and I are involved in the Aman Memorial Trust. Again, we both kind of came into this, because of other stuff, Chamber

of Commerce and what have you. The Aman Memorial Trust's mission...it's a non-profit organization...is historic properties in and about the town of Bladensburg. That's what we do, and we don't make any money out of it. We just do it. But we've been pretty successful. We owned the George Washington House, sold it to the Anacostia Watershed Society and got 300,000 dollars for it. We have invested part of that, not all of it, into the Market Master's House in Bladensburg. We restored that. We have our eye on Bostwick.

Suzanne: The University of Maryland is supposed to help preserve it.

Dick Charlton: Yeah, Absolutely.

Chuck Day: We have also been working very hard to try to persuade the Town of Bladensburg to let us take over the property out in front of the Market Master's House, which was in colonial times a market square. We would like to return that to that area and do some building analogous to it that would complement it. But we have not been successful in getting them to see our vision. We haven't given up though.

Dick Charlton: But that's a little difficult, because of the demographics of the town. The residents of Bladensburg don't hang around very long. They did, but those people are gone now. Now there's a transient community. A good example is Mayor Harrington. He lived in Bladensburg. He had a lot to do with the recent restoration of the community. But, he's now moved out of the town. He still lives in Prince George's County. He's a councilman for Prince George's County. That's good. That's helpful. But just the nature of the community, they are mostly apartment dwellers. The residents of the community are mostly passing through. One of the older ones Marion Hoffman, she's still here but she's spent her time on the council, and she's now retired from the council. She's still involved in the Bladensburg Local Development Corporation, which was one of the earlier business oriented organizations. In fact, one of the folders I gave you was put together by the BLDC. The Bladensburg Local Development Corporation let me speak about that. They were one of the older business organizations formed by the business community to do what has been done, I guess, over the last 30 years. I was very involved with that personally. I was president of that for a couple years. One of the things that happened, we helped create the Port Towns Community Development Corporation, which is kind of the baby of the Bladensburg Local Development Corporation. One of the reasons for that was that the BLDC didn't have the appropriate tax status to get grants and things. But there are, have been and still are other entities, almost too many to help make desirable things happen.

Suzanne: What started the theme of the Port Towns?

Dick Charlton: What started it? Well, it, it had to do with economic development, historic preservation, figuring that you can get more clout with organizing three or four towns than you could one. Park and Planning helped with this, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning. They were instrumental in helping to found it, and very helpful. It has, I would say, been very successful. Such things as the railroad pass came

about through a united effort. Now there are four that are in the Port Towns. It started with three and now Edmonston is one of the Port Towns Communities.

Suzanne: Do you think it's an effective tool in helping economic development?

Dick Charlton: I think so. Yeah. Every little bit helps. I don't think it's anywhere near reached its potential. I have felt that the Bladensburg Local Development Corporation, instead of continuing to operate as a separate entity should fold into the Port Towns CDC. There are other folks that don't agree with that. But, I see it now as a duplication of effort. Since the Port Towns CDC has the proper tax status, I think it would make more sense to consolidate our resources there. That may come.

Suzanne: What was the area like before the term Port Towns came about, going along with how the community has changed?

Chuck Day: Well, I don't know that there has been a great deal of change. I think that there has been more of a general awareness by the folks who live in the area, as far as people who are genuinely interested in trying to effectuate a change in trying to improve the living standards, more services and better services. I think to that extent they've been successful. But like Dick I think there's lots of room for growth and improvement. But it's a matter of getting people involved. It's hard to get people to get involved.

Dick Charlton: Well, one of the things that I think that has been a draw back is that you've got the business community and you've got the residents. As far as I'm concerned, most of the movers and shakers have been the business community. Very little of it has been the residents. In fact, from my point of view, the residents through the municipalities have almost been a hindrance to making things happen. It's what Chuck has mentioned about the property next to the Market Master's House. We want to grab that and make it go. The town won't let us do it. We will buy it. We asked them to give it to us, and get it back on the tax roles. Bostwick is another example, the same thing. The Aman Trust would have had that project up and running now. I mean it's been in the towns' hands for 10 years. I helped the town get it, because there was a bond bill. The town got it for nothing. The state put up the money and the county put up some money. The town of Bladensburg acquired that property without putting any town funds in it whatsoever. It's moving, but it's been 10 years, and there have been changes of administration, changes of personnel, and all of this. The current development with the involvement of the University of Maryland and the historic preservation people, where you're coming from, is a real light at the end of the tunnel.

Chuck Day: It's a real plus.

Dick Charlton: I think that could well be a way to make all of this happen. But somebody has got to convince the municipalities that this is the way to go. In general, I think that they are hesitant to pass the ball over to the private sector. Hopefully, it will happen. We're still around. We're getting older.

Chuck Day: There's a restaurant there now.

Suzanne: Mango Café.

Chuck Day: At one time there was a Roy Rodgers. That company turned that property over to the town of Bladensburg. That's why we had the audacity to ask them to give it to us, because it was given to them. They weren't doing anything with it. After 10 years, they're still not doing anything with it. We went to a great deal of difficulty of involvement to present them with a vision. But they just couldn't see our vision. They're still struggling along with the restaurant.

Suzanne: Ok, let me change the tone a little bit and we'll go on to some more personal experiences in the community. What activities do you participate in. I know your're involved in a large amount of historic preservation groups, and history groups, and AWS, but what activities?

Dick Charlton: Well, I played tennis today. At my age that's how I get my exercise is by playing tennis. I play a lot of tennis. I play 4 or 5 times a week. College Park has a beautiful facility at Paint Branch.

Chuck Day: Up near the College Park Airport.

Dick Charlton: Yeah. And the Country Club at Woodmore, and Columbia Country Club, I play some too. That's my thing from a recreation point of view.

Chuck Day: We have a lot of wonderful bike trails many people are not even aware of. Unfortunately, the bike trail does not connect to Washington D.C. yet. There was a fear of people out here, that if they connected, hoodlums from Washington would come out here via the bike trail. That's specious thinking. But it's a beautiful trail and it goes from Greenbelt all the way down through Bladensburg, past Fort Lincoln Cemetery, which in itself is a historic area. If you are familiar with the Battle of Bladensburg, that's where Commodore Joshua Barney stood up with his sailors and marines and countercharged the Brits, for which he was acknowledged by the British as being a heroic figure. There are a lot of people who use the Anacostia, when it's not low flow, like it is now, for their racing shells. A number of colleges and high schools have boats that they keep down at the Bladensburg Marina. They are used for working out. But the water quality is really not that great. I must tell you. It could be and it should be. But you have to remember that much of the silt and the pollution that gets to Bladensburg comes from Montgomery County. It's been a hard time trying to get them to start siltation ponds, where the water from the streets would go before it went into the streams.

Suzanne: I have heard a lot of buzz about trying get the Anacostia back together. Hopefully, we do that. What is your favorite spot in the community? We'll start with Chuck.

Chuck Day: My favorite spot. Well it could be the Bladensburg Spring. I have written a letter here that I haven't given to Dick. I've told him about it, but I haven't put it in readable condition, to try to get the WSSC to return the area.

Dick Charlton: Yeah.

Chuck Day: That used to be a health spa.

Dick Charlton: Spa. We've got a picture.

Chuck Day: That was known as the Bladensburg Health Spa.

Suzanne: Spa Spring?

Chuck Day: Spa Spring. Thank you. They used to come here for to drink the water and bathe in it, because it was a curative. Well right now it's a sewer dump. I have written this letter to ask WSSC to return it to its pristine condition, which is going to be like blowing in the wind, right?

Dick Charlton: Here's the Spa. See it. (*Reading*) "Spa Spring once drew visitors to Bladensburg for they were renowned for their beneficial and curative powers. Surrounding the spring was a park scene of many picnics and political gatherings throughout the 19th century. The spring was located at the north end of Water St. Baltimore Blvd. now an industrial area." (*End Reading*) What's now there is the pump out station. It's circular. People come in from all over the place to discharge their sewage into the main line, which goes to Blue Plains. That's where they dump it out and pump it out at Spa Springs. That could be your favorite. She said what was your favorite.

Chuck Day: Probably going down to the waterfront. I still like to go down there and walk across that bridge over to Colmar Manor. But I love to ride my bicycle and those are beautiful trails that come down through there.

Suzanne: Dick, your favorite spot?

Dick Charlton: There's so many of them. All along the stream say from Bladensburg not necessarily south to D.C., but north, Paint Branch up the College Park Airport, the Northwest Branch. I live on Paint Branch, which is further on up the stream. It's in the Anacostia watershed.

Chuck Day: Lake Artemesia. Oh, it's beautiful. It was an abandoned gravel pit. When they were building metro, they needed dirt and gravel primarily for road bed. They made a deal with the lady who owned it. They would buy the gravel from her and in turn she would deed the property over to Park and Planning Commission. After they did all that they reconfigured it into a lake and it's beautiful. It's limited recreation as far as using the lake is concerned. It's got beautiful trails all around it.

Suzanne: You favorite landmark or historic site? Are you going with Spa Spring?

Chuck Day: Since we can't go to Spa Spring. Well, certainly the Peace Cross. But the George Washington House has meant a lot to me over the years, because as a kid I used to, like Dick, ride by there on my bicycle and there was a barber shop next to it. I used to get my hair cut there, for I think 25 cents or 50 cents. Then, when we decided to try to restore it and stabilize it. I was involved in that. You know where your efforts go that kind of takes you as far as your interests are concerned. But the general area of Bladensburg has always been a someplace that I loved. But, I just feel like we're not doing justice by the potential.

Suzanne: Speaking more about some dissatisfactions in the community. What are you satisfied with and what are you dissatisfied with?

Chuck Day: I'm satisfied with the efforts that they that the community does as far as trying to maintain the integrity of the public facilities. On the other hand, I think they can do a whole lot more. There is ancient cemetery over here called, I think it's Greenwood, that goes way back to the 1600s in Bladensburg. Every now and then you have to get on the public works people to get over there to clean that up, because it really looks like a jungle and it's sad. People are vandalizing the tombstones. That shouldn't happen. But there are not many people who are still living who have relatives over there. I don't have relatives, but I have friends that are buried there. Old folks that I knew from church and I went to high school and Baptist Church and a lot of our members used to live in Bladensburg. They are all friendly people in the council and friendly people in the town. I used to have many friends when I went to school in Bladensburg. Obviously, I used to walk to school from Roger's Heights. There most of the people who went to the schools were walkers and many of them were bused in from Landover. There are people that still have many fond memories of their experience in Bladensburg and the schools. They all feel the same way that we do. It's a shame that we're not able to do more with the port, because that's certainly the center and the hub of what Bladensburg is all about.

Suzanne: Dick, back about favorite spots in the community. What is your favorite landmark or historic site?

Dick Charlton: I think I like the College Park Airport. Yeah, I'd say so. There's so many. I have memories about the College Park Airport...But also, Greenbelt, the community of Greenbelt. We used to play ball there. You probably did too. A big thing as kids, with the Boys Club, was to play under the lights at Greenbelt. It was the only field that was a lighted field.

Chuck Day: They had a swimming pool.

Chuck Day: The only one around, except when we went to high school in D.C. at McKinley Tech.

Suzanne: We were talking a little about satisfactions and dissatisfactions with the Port Towns. Do you have any opinions about satisfactions or dissatisfactions?

Dick Charlton: You always feel like you could do more. It's OK, but it's a bureaucracy. Being an entrepreneur, bureaucracies never move fast enough for me. I'll give you an example. The Port Towns had a program for façade improvements. I don't know whether you're aware of that. We spent some money on the façade improvements for which we obtained a combination of grants and loans. It was mostly loans, but a little bit of grants to do façade improvements...a good idea. We did them both here at the Magruder House. Also, we did them via the Aman Trust, at the Market Master's House.

Suzanne: I want to talk about how gender roles have changed. How have, since you've lived here, gender roles changed?

Chuck Day: Well, women have always been involved. I remember my father was active in civic affairs in Roger's Heights. He interacted with the people down in Bladensburg. He was involved with the county civic association. There were some very active ladies in Bladensburg, who were involved with civic affairs. Betty Tayman. Remember that name by chance.

Dick Charlton: Yeah I do.

Chuck Day: Mrs. Batch. Ladies have always been involved and they still are. He was talking about Marion Hoffman. She was very much involved.

Dick Charlton: Right here. *Shows Picture.* To tell you the truth, I think the Bladensburg folks were ahead of their time. I really do. These two people here, Susanna Cristofane and Sarah Walton, were the two principle individuals that got me involved in all this. That was 25 years ago. I guess maybe 100 years ago, they weren't so involved. But I don't know that. I know that Susanna Cristofane was the mayor of Bladensburg for quite a while. She was a very influential person to make things happen. I mean she was good. Her daughter, Susanna Yatman, her married name, they owned Bostwick. She was pretty effective too. She didn't really become too involved until probably the mid-80s or something, when her parents, both of them, eventually passed away. We already talked about Marion Hoffman. There is one of the council people. She's on the Bladensburg Council. She's good too. I can't think of her name right now. I think from a gender point of view the town has been out-front. Maybe some of the other ones too, Colmar Manor. There are some of the folks and Cottage City. They've been pretty active I would say.

Suzanne: How have conceptions of race changed?

Chuck Day: Well, we have, as I see it, more involvement by many of the folks in the Black community. We could use more involvement. Certainly, years ago, they were not welcomed as much as they should've been and could've been.

Dick Charlton: Well, I can't speak too much to that from the early years, because I didn't get really on the scene here in Bladensburg until 1980 or 1981. But at that time, there was definitely a Black influence. One of the key people I've already mentioned was former Mayor Harrington. Well, there's Walter James, the Mayor. Walter Fickland is on the council too. The other lady, Carolina Watson. She's Black too. I think that's really been fairly smooth. There's currently an influx of Latinos that's noticeable. I don't know if your question is leading to that or not. But even that seems to be fairly smooth to me, to everybody's credit. If there is friction there, I don't notice it. I really don't feel that's been an impediment to making things happen. In some ways, maybe it's even been positive. I know Mayor Harrington, Councilman Harrington, was very effective, just because of his personality. He's due a lot of credit for making things happen here. I think that there are always some oddball things that happen here or there, but I don't see that as a problem at all. In fact, again, I think that the community, the Port Towns community in general, can be pretty proud of how all that's worked, from my point of view.

Suzanne: I want to know about kids in the town. How do children fit into the story? Do the children grow up here and stay in the community or are they moving out? What's life like for your kids?

Chuck Day: Historically, the kids I grew up with have all moved out. Their families lived here in Bladensburg. They went to school in Bladensburg, but as they grew up they moved out. They've gone to everywhere. We just had a high school reunion that I was invited to, for Bladensburg, even though I didn't graduate from there. But I retained my friendship with them. They're all very interested in what is going on in Bladensburg. I gave them an overview of what I am involved with with Dick and the Anacostia Watershed Society. They're interested, but they have their attachments elsewhere.

Suzanne: Have your kids moved away?

Chuck Day: My oldest son lives in University Park, Ed Day manager of Riversdale. My youngest son lives in Brookville out near Olney. My daughter lives in Davidsonville.

Suzanne: Any thoughts Dick, on how children fit into the story?

Dick Charlton: My offspring aren't children anymore. My oldest daughter is 52 and the other is 47. They did grow up in Berwyn Heights, formally Charlton Heights. We bought a house in Berwyn Heights, which was really comparable to Bladensburg, in a way, just east of College Park. Nice community. It's still there. We bought a house there in 1958. My children, both daughters, grew up essentially in the Berwyn Heights community. They went to Berwyn Height Elementary School, a public school. The older daughter went West Virginia University, and the younger one went to William and Mary. Neither one of them went to Maryland. They wanted to get away from home a little bit. My wife went to the University of Maryland as did I.

Well the schools changed. The Prince George's County Schools. There is a whole ethnic thing which occurred, having to do with essentially school busing. It started in the 70s. I

don't know, I suppose it's essentially finished the pendulum swing now, but I'm not sure of that. I was President of the Chamber of Commerce at that time, 1974. Unfortunately, Prince George's County was one of those that dragged their feet with the integration of public schools to the point that they were singled out by the court system for not properly desegregating their schools, and came under the court enforced administration of integration through busing. That happened starting in the 70s. It was a very unfortunate thing. I'm not taking issue with what the courts decided. I'm satisfied that the Prince George's County school system didn't do what it should have done in the way of complying with the desegregation laws. But the penalty that happened was horrible for the school system. Because what happened is that all the kids got mixed up, in order to get the right numbers of Blacks and Whites for the schools. All that started busing people back in forth. It, in my judgment, ruined the neighborhood school concept, because people no longer went to their neighborhood schools. My kids went to elementary school in Berwyn Heights where they lived, which was fine. But when it got to the point where desegregation was mandated by the courts and kids were put on buses and moved to get the right mix of Black and White, it really disrupted the neighborhood schools.

Chuck Day: Big time.

Dick Charlton: You can go back to one of my speeches in 1972. You want it? Because I predicted it would happen, when I was President of the Chamber of Commerce. People moved. They would not put up with that. Neither Blacks nor Whites would put up with forced bussing. Nobody liked it. A lot of the people that had roots in Prince George's County both Black and White moved. They went to Anne Arundel County, Montgomery County, and Virginia. And as a consequence it really gave the school system and everybody else a black eye, because it didn't work. I think everybody acknowledges that it didn't work.

Chuck Day: I wrote a letter to good old Judge Kaufman, who made the decision for mandating busing. My suggestion was: take the money that would go for bussing and use it for remedial education for the Black folks who supposedly were not getting a good education. We were spending less money per student for Black kids in their schools than we were in White kids. That was a crime and a shame. But take that money and use it to help them get caught up and get ahead. But he didn't even write me a note back, so I dropped it.

Dick Charlton: Yeah you know. It became so complicated. Again, bureaucracy was taking over this whole system. It's bad, complicated as it is. The state of Maryland is still suffering from that. But the focal point of all of it has been Prince George's County. Fortunately, the residents of the community, I guess they are strong enough, have been able to endure this and put up with it. It has worked. But it really made things difficult. Even today the average price of houses in Prince George's County, the median price, is 10, 20, 30 percent below the surrounding area. The reason is still because of the school system in Prince George's County, I think.

Chuck Day: I think you're right. I completely agree.

Dick Charlton: We are still carrying that burden. Now, through it all, everybody fortunately has been able to get along, and to their credit.

Suzanne: We talked a little bit about economic changes that have occurred. In the past 10 years is there anything that sticks out in your mind that you'd like to add?

Dick Charlton: You talking about here in this area.

Suzanne: Yes. Bladensburg or Port Towns in general.

Dick Charlton: Well, I think the Waterfront Park has been a real plus. It's working. It's not a real noticeable economic boost yet, but there is activity there, positive activity that I see as a harbinger for the future. The rest of it is not doing too hot. The pharmacist up here, Ramdass Pharmacy, he was one of the early people to come in and place his money on the future of the area. I guess he's doing alright, but I think he was open to more. You might talk to him. On the other side, I think the Colmar Manor area under Rufus Lusk has a shopping center there. They are doing very well. I would say the economic increase for his part of the area is greatly increased. I don't see quite so much on the Bladensburg side. I don't know exactly why. There's some, what I consider a downside, economic misfirings. That is a little disturbing. It has to do with the Kennilworth Avenue Corridor and the accumulation of...I don't know if they're illegal immigrants or what. But there are a lot of Latinos that hang up there between Bladensburg and Riverdale, along the 7-11, at the corridor there. I mean hundreds of them. For that's, you know, it's an economic thing. People go there if you need casual labor. That's where you go. You can pick up folks. But that to me is heading in the wrong direction. I see some of the late night activity. I don't see it because I'm not here, but I hear about it, the late night activity at the Crossroads. It's an economic activity in a way, but I don't see it as a plus. I see it as a minus.

Suzanne: In what respects is the town unique and how is it unique among the Port Towns?

Dick Charlton: This town of Bladensburg? Well, I think its documented history. Of course, that's where I'm coming from. But I see that as unique. Now, Colmar Manor and Cottage City have some, but not to the extent that Bladensburg does. The historic attributes are a real plus.

Suzanne: We are doing research on the history and development in the Port Towns. Can you tell me how history is a part of everyday activities, if it is?

Dick Charlton: Well, I don't think it is a whole lot. Tonight, right here, there will be a meeting of Prince George's Heritage, which is the organization that has been kind of on the forefront of historic preservation in Prince George's County. It's centered right here, in this structure. It's what got me involved. Of course, I see it as very positive, not only for Bladensburg, but the whole county and the state. The activity at Riversdale and the

University of Maryland. I see all of those as adjuncts for what we got going here in Bladensburg.

Suzanne: Ok. Any closing remarks you want to tell.

Dick Charlton: Well, I think it's nice to, that you're doing this. I think it might be helpful to supplement what you've got here with, in this day and age, TV. Get that out there. There are a lot of written materials. I've given you some of them. You could branch out into 10 different directions, on the historic aspects of it alone. I'll give you some of the organizations: Prince George's Heritage, the Aman Memorial Trust, the Bladensburg Local Development Corporation, the Port Towns Community Development Corporation, the Anacostia Watershed Society, one we haven't even mentioned, the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA), the Maryland Historical Trust, the Prince George's Historical Trust, and the Prince George's Historical Society. That's off the top of my head. There's a whole lot that are all pretty active. I'll mention one other one, it's up the road a little ways, but it's still in Prince George's County. Prince George's Heritage is assisting in the restoration of Oaklands. Oaklands is a historic property, a Snowden property, which is on Contie Road in Laurel. It's one of the original Snowden properties. Prince George's Heritage is involved in that, administering it. But that's just one activity. All of that has kind of evolved from the historic preservation activities here in Bladensburg.