

**Paul and Mary Anne Butler Interview, August 2016**

**J:** June

**M:** Mary Anne

J: Hello.

M: Hello.

J: Hi, is this Mary and Paul?

M: This is Mary Anne, yeah.

J: Oh, Mary Anne, hi. It's June Hussey, thanks for calling in.

M: Well, I did what I was told.

J: Very good, well, we really appreciate your time this morning and your willingness to share your story with us.

M: Ok.

J: Ok, so let's see, is it just going to be you on the phone?

M: Well, did you want him on the phone? He's here.

J: It's up to you, it's up to you.

M: I don't know what kind of questions you're asking so let me hear what they are.

J: Well, I am going to just introduce to you the reason we do these interviews and then ask you to share a little bit about yourself and then...

M: Well, I did write a biography for you.

J: Yeah, I have your biography and I just wanted for you to highlight the things that are important that you would like to share with others. And then I'm going to ask you some specific questions about the process that you and your husband went through to decide that you were ready, first of all, to move to a retirement community and how you chose it, what your life is like now that you're there, those kinds of questions.

M: Ok, alright.

J: So you can do it on your own or you can pass the phone back and forth.

M: It'll get confusing. Why don't you interview me and then interview him?

J: Ok, that sounds perfect.

M: Alright.

J: And just so you are aware, we are recording this call so that we can produce an accurate transcript. And if you should happen to say something that you don't want to make public or it's too personal or something, just say right then and there, "Please take that out of the transcript." And we'll make sure we do that.

M: Alright.

J: Ok, very good so why don't you start, even though I have your bio, why don't you start out by simply introducing yourself, a little bit about you, your history, where you grew up, anything that you might think is important for people to know about you.

M: I thought I covered it all in that biography that Paul and I did together.

J: Yes, you did so if you don't want to make a comment for the transcript, you don't have to.

M: Well, I don't want to be repetitive and I don't have the transcript in front of me so I, you know. I grew up in so many different places that it would take you all of your papers to fill it out I think. If you look that biography over, I think we just sort of talked about

where we came from. We were in New Jersey before we came to Arizona.

J: Right, I see that. Ok, well then I'll pick and choose from your bio what we end up sharing with people.

M: I think you should, yeah.

J: That sounds great.

M: If there any gaps I will be glad to answer them. Listen, I've lived in 16 or 18 different places. I don't think you want the list.

J: Well, that's important to point out if you've moved around a lot, then you are probably a professional in moving by now.

M: Yeah, pretty much.

J: Ok, well, why don't we start by then you telling me where were you living, first of all when did you move into The Fountains at La Cholla?

M: Three years ago this August, today.

J: Ok and where had you been living immediately prior to that?

M: Saddlebrooke.

J: Oh, ok.

M: We were there 16 years.

J: Oh my gosh, and you came to Saddlebrooke from New Jersey then?

M: Yes.

J: How did you end up wanting to move out west from New Jersey?

M: Well, because we had three children. One had moved to Colorado and one had moved to Phoenix and then the other one was in South Carolina and we didn't want to go there so it seemed to make sense to come where it was warm. New Jersey does have a lot of snow and rain and ice and so forth and cold. So since Anne was here we moved to Tucson. I wasn't that fond of Phoenix so we figured that Tucson was better. She's two hours away from us and he's in Colorado.

J: Nice, good, so let's see, take me to the time when you're living in Saddlebrooke and you and your husband decided, was it one day you just said, "Hey, let's go look at retirement communities?" Or what was going on?

M: We had looked off and on and we never found anything that we thought we liked and then frankly I kind of forgot about it. The only problem with it was that he was 90 and I was 88 and it seemed like a time to make a change because Saddlebrooke was changing. You know the Baby Boomers were moving in and we could no longer do the hiking group and didn't play golf anymore. I wasn't even swimming for various reasons and so one day I went online and I looked up The Fountains because I had heard of it. And I can't tell you how I heard of it. Anyway, and I said to Paul, "Why don't we go and look at The Fountains? We've looked every place else." The last place we looked really just turned me right off because it was so organized or something. So anyway we came down here, talked to Carleen and right away we said, "We think this is it. This is what we would like to do." So from then on we made plans. It took, I don't know, a couple months before we got things settled and that's why we decided. Most of it was because of age and the fact that we were not appropriate for Saddlebrooke, which is an active senior adult community.

J: Right so tell me about how you selected your residence. Are you in an apartment or a casita?

M: We're in the apartment. We had lived in a villa in Saddlebrooke and I didn't want

another one of those. I would rather be in the apartment. We have a three room apartment on the third floor, in the main building.

J: So, you're on the third floor with a nice view of the Catalinas?

M: No, no, we have no view of the Catalina's. We're overlooking the putting green courtyard.

J: Oh I see.

M: I didn't have to look at the Catalinas. I had been looking at them for 16 years so it really didn't matter.

J: Yeah, Saddlebrooke has a great view up there, doesn't it?

M: Yeah, much better than down here. It just looks like an old gray mountain down here. But it changed colors up there, much more interesting than here.

J: Well, tell me how is your life either the same or different now than when you lived at Saddlebrooke?

M: Oh, we don't do the activities, the golf and the hiking and the swimming. We went to the fitness center regularly. I don't do all that so much anymore because I do the tai chi and so does Paul but I found I was better off doing my own exercises. Although, I started with doing your exercises here. And I'm still active. I was in charge of the library here. I think that's in the resume I sent you. I didn't get into the writers group because I had done all that and had written four books and I didn't see any reason to go back through it all. It's kind of juvenile here, the writing, but I think it's very important and we've had a wonderful program sponsored by the library here called Writers Read. I've been very involved in that. I don't think that's in that. I had to stop somewhere because I didn't think you wanted everything. We've got one more session and it's been very well attended as many as 50 people or 45 or 50 every time. It's twice a month. And I did participate in that with my own books.

J: So that's where any resident who has written a book reads from their book?

M: Well, yeah but in the last one I took, the woman was French and, for example, and she is visually impaired so she only had one copy of her memoir left, a very poignant story about growing up under the Germans in World War II and bombs dropping on them while she went to school and so forth. And so I accepted parts from the book and then we had two people read it because Irene can't read it anymore and then she was available to answer questions. And people have been very complimentary about that so I've been involved with that sort of thing here. I did retire from being in charge of the library because when I hit 91 I thought it's time for somebody younger to come along so I got another woman and she's taking care of it but I'm not quite out of it yet. I still have a session that I go into on Tuesday afternoon. We have 15 volunteers that I managed to get together for the library and it's worked out very well. You should see the library. I'm quite pleased with it. It's two floors up here on the third floor.

J: Yeah, I have seen it.

M: You have seen it?

J: Yes, you've done a great job.

M: And then we sent over 300 books to Pima Library, Friends of Pima library for their book sales and they come and pick them up. They are the older books that we don't have room for and don't want anymore, the duplicates, that kind of thing.

J: Wonderful, well, very good. Well, let me ask you this, if you were to meet someone who had never set foot in a community like The Fountains and they maybe didn't have a

good impression of what a retirement community was, what would you say to them?

M: Well, when we first came down here I did have 18 people that The Fountains had a beautiful luncheon for in the clubhouse, you know where I mean, down by the pool. And they were all very impressed with it. Unfortunately, none of them have signed up for here because one couple went from Saddlebrooke back to where their kids are into a place like this. And the other one who wanted to come here but her daughter lives in Saddlebrooke and she said it was too far to drive so she's in Fairwinds. And the others are kind of waiting to sell their houses or, you know, let a few more years pass. But 18 people did see what is available here, they saw our apartment. They had the absolutely gorgeous lunch. So I've done that. And then I've talked to other people about it. One neighbor of mine in Saddlebrooke I gave her the folder with all the information but she's got a daughter who is not making any moves and a lot of these old people, I now think my neighbor is too old for coming in here. She's 94 and I'm not pushing that subject at this point but I have tried with some of them.

J: Yeah, what do you think it is that makes people procrastinate so?

M: Oh, they don't want to leave their homes. You know and I have to go up to the villa. We rented it for three years because two of our kids said, "Oh no, don't sell it, we want to use it." Well, that fell through of course so we got stuck with these renters. The first year, Paul kind of took care of it. Now, he's had a very serious illness for four months and it's left him a little, memory not too good, you know. So the next year we had a property manager who decided after a year he didn't want to do it anymore so it was up to 90-year-old me to handle all these tenants that we already had signed up through VRBO. Fortunately, my daughter in South Carolina did all the computer work. I just had to handle the requests from the clients and I'm too old for that kind of stuff. So it is for sale. Unfortunately, we had tenants in there until the 7<sup>th</sup> of April so it didn't go on sale until after that. And right now the only people that look at it are people like us who are too old for Saddlebrooke or too old for the big house, the two-story house with the pool that they buy thinking the grandchildren are going to come and visit. They come once and then they're stuck with the big house. And my realtor does not want to handle those big houses to sell so they can sell my little villa. So that's where we are with that and I'm still dealing with realtor. Paul can't do that kind of thing anymore.

J: Yeah, well, that will be nice to have that behind you when you get that done.

M: It will, it will. Yeah, I'm very pleased with it. I've made good friends here. You know nothing is ever perfect. We had a problem with the rug splitting and before I knew it we had a new rug in here, yesterday, a new carpet all the whole place.

J: Nice.

M: A little bit of work to get ready for it but we were still able to do that.

J: Good, good.

M: And I have to say I like the help here. They're wonderful, the staff in the dining room, the girls who clean the apartments, the maintenance group. They're all just wonderful. I have no complaints at all. Nobody has ever been rude or anything.

J: That's nice to hear. Do your kids get to come and visit you ever?

M: Oh yeah, they do. Now, when Paul got sick this last April, I guess it was about May, sometime in May my granddaughter organized a family reunion and she rented a house because our villa was for sale so that wasn't going to work too well and so she rented a house and the whole family came, including the little great-grandson. So we had 12

people and that was fun to see them. They come, Anne comes, she helped me get Paul out of rehab when I had to bring him home here in, let's see, when was it? He was there for three months, he was out four months but he had the last two months here. And I'm glad we moved before although we could have had the same services in Saddlebrooke it just wouldn't have been in-house you know.

J: Right, right so you've been able to access the services that you need for him?

M: Well, I wasn't happy with the hospital too much. Although I've been in that hospital in intensive care and I had wonderful service. But they were just overcrowded at Northwest. And he lost 30 pounds and it's because he wasn't eating and they'd bring these big trays in and nobody thought to. And I tried not to be there during feeding time you know, I wasn't aware of this and then the same thing happened when they moved him over to Life Care and I was not too happy there. Finally I wised up. He was getting physical therapy over there and that was the main reason he was there but the facility was terrible. The help was nice but the facility wasn't much. So then I brought him home and my daughter stayed with me the week even though she works. She got off to come down and help.

J: Yeah, well, they must be happy to know that you are in a place where they don't have to worry about you constantly.

M: Well, my son said, we didn't tell them we were going to move from Saddlebrooke and so my son and one daughter came for his 90th birthday and so I was kind of nervous about telling them, you know. I thought they would tell me, "Why don't you stay in Saddlebrooke, you know?" And my son's reaction was, "Oh, thank God we don't have to do it." Because they have trouble, you know, a lot of these old people don't want to leave home.

J: Right, right. Well, it seems like you were very realistic and do you feel like you moved at the right time?

M: I think so, yeah. I think we did. In your 90s I think it might be kind of hard for a person to adjust to the change but they have to do it, of course. Usually what happens, the unhappiest people are the ones who didn't want to come and the kids put them here.

J: Yeah, so do you think there is a right age to move or is it just up to the individual?

M: Well, yeah, because some people have illnesses, you know broken bones and strokes and that kind of thing so that makes a difference. We had a few little things. I had a couple of bad things but nothing that kept me debilitated. But it depends on, you know, like a stroke could be something that is lasting, the repercussions of it anyway. And I didn't have any of that.

J: Well, I've covered all the bases that were on my list. Is there anything else that you think is important for people to know?

M: I just think living in your own home all by yourself if you're a widow or even a couple is lonely. You know older people are not that interesting to young people. They think, oh the neighbors and the little children are going to come and visit. I think that's wishful thinking most of it. And anyway most of the women today are working, the ones who might have gone and visited their elderly neighbors. They don't have time.

J: Good point, good point. Society has changed over the generations.

M: It has changed. Plus, the fact that people lived in the same town for a long period of time and so you knew all the neighbors, you got older with them. That hasn't happened to my generation particularly. Some people but I think sitting in your own house looking

at the four walls, cooking your own little toast and tea is not a good arrangement. We are getting very good food here and I think the food is one of the reasons so many people are living so long.

J: That's good to know. One more thing that I wanted to ask you, it was about your books. You said you've written four books. Are they biographies or history?

M: Well, when I retired, semiretired, I had a full-time job. I quit that job when I was 60 so I could write the books, too old I should've started sooner. But I did self-publish in the beginning and then the books were online on Amazon. I was looking for something else to do so I thought why don't I write a memoir? I grew up in the Great Depression. My family was wealthy and they lost everything. It was when the markets went down and we had a slight recession so I thought well maybe that would be timely. So I wrote a smaller book. I did research but I did a lot of research on the historical fiction. What happened was I was only going to do ten copies for the family and I had a friend who lived in Saddlebrooke who was into writing. I asked her if she knew a printer who would do ten copies for me because the self-publish thing you have to have the whole deal you know. So she gave me about three names and I sent an email to one of them and of course it was Down But Not Out: A Little Rich Girl Grows Up Poor in the Great Depression. Well, it was timely so he got in touch with me, this publisher here in Tucson. And he published nautical and historical fiction and he paid for everything. It didn't cost me anything, like when you self-publish you're paying for the deal to be done. And so I thought this is great and he was wonderful, he got bookmarks and helped with the marketing and everything. And then he said to me, "Well, I see on Amazon you've got three more books." I said, "Yes." He said, "I just ordered them. I'm going to read them." He called me back and said, "I want to publish these, too." So he did. Fireship Press I still get a measly check every so often. And yeah they were marketed in England and here, Australia, but that was 10 years ago that I wrote the book, maybe longer even. I started when I was 60-something. And I went to the University of Iowa summer writing school.

J: Do they call that Bread Loaf, is that what that is?

M: No, no, this is at the University of Iowa. And it's one of the oldest writing schools and we had professional writers that taught us. It was wonderful. I went every summer for about three weeks and it was 9:00 to 9:00 books. And that was fun. So and I haven't gotten into too much of that here other than this library thing. In the library against the wall, the west wall, are the books that were written by people who live here. And then there are classes as you know, people who teach writing. I don't get into that. I'm too old for that. I did a little of that back in New Jersey for the library but I don't want to do that anymore. It's kind of frustrating. It's been wonderful. I majored in journalism in college and then I worked for newspapers and then the kids came and I slopped around the kitchen for eight years. Finally went back to work part-time and was always in doing PR then. That's what you're doing, right?

J: Yes.

M: Have I met you?

J: I don't believe so.

M: Because some girls came over from Watermark about the seven senses or whatever they were and we got books out in the library that fit those subjects. There were two girls that came over. I have a feeling they were contracted employees.

J: I'm over there quite a bit because my mom lives in The Gardens so.

M: Oh really? Maybe I've seen you then.

J: Probably. I've worked there for a long time. I was one of the first employees when they opened The Fountains in 1987 so I've been there a long time.

M: Yeah, I've always wondered when it exactly opened. So it was '87.

J: December 1st.

M: It's kind of like I think Saddlebrooke was '84 or '85. I figured it was the same time or close to the same time.

J: A lot of stuff was being developed in Tucson in the late 80s, yeah.

M: Well, it's because the weather, of course, which hasn't been wonderful this year but for the most part in Saddlebrooke I never thought I was that hot as I've been down here in this particular summer.

J: Yeah, well, it's been very humid with all this rain.

M: I know. I grew up with humid but somehow it seems worse here with all the heat.

J: Yeah.

M: This 100 degrees, it's been kind of unusual for so long.

J: Well, I left the East Coast myself so we're kindred spirits.

M: Where did you live?

J: I lived in Connecticut.

M: We're practically neighbors.

J: Yep.

M: When I worked for the (inaudible) system which was the national fundraising and PR organization for nonprofit agencies, I made a lot of trips to Connecticut and Massachusetts and all over. That's good country back there but it's so crowded now.

J: I know, I know.

M: Every kid got a car when he or she was 17 and it just crowded the highways.

J: Yeah, alright.

M: I do miss the coastline though.

J: What?

M: Sometimes I miss the ocean.

J: Yeah, me too.

M: I loved to swim in the ocean. I really did but I couldn't handle it now.

J: Well, Mary Anne it's been lovely talking to you. I will look for you next time I'm there and I'll definitely look at the library and all the books that the residents have written. That sounds very interesting.

M: Yeah, it's against the west wall and there is a typewriter picture right there and then there are some resource books down there for writers too.

J: Good, well, I'm going to let you go. I've taken enough of your time and I think we've covered all the territory that we needed to so thank you again very much. I really appreciate it. Ok, thank you very much.