

Bonnie Lamrouex Interview, November 2016

J: June

B: Bonnie

:45

J: Hello.

B: Hello.

J: Hi, is this Bonnie?

B: Yes, it is.

J: Hi Bonnie, it's June Hussey in Tucson, Arizona. How are you today?

B: Far away there. I'm fine.

J: How is it going in Florida?

B: Well, it's nice, beautiful weather, can't complain.

J: Ditto, very good. Well, thank you, first of all, for making time in your day to take part in this interview. We really appreciate it.

B: Alright.

J: And before we get started, I wanted to take a moment to go over a couple of things.

B: Ok.

J: First is just the reason we do these interviews and we've done many many of them around the country, different residents of different Watermark Communities from coast-to-coast. And it's really a distinct pleasure for me to do these interviews. I enjoy speaking with everyone and learning about their lives.

B: You're writing a book is what you're telling me?

J: Well, I could, I could write a book. But the second reason we do them is for their insights into the process that they went through to figure out what they wanted to do in their future, how they looked at their options and weighed their options and ultimately decided where to spend the next chapter of their lives. We like to share these stories for the benefit of folks who may not have started thinking about their future or maybe should be thinking about their future, and to kind of open their eyes to the opportunities available in a retirement community. So your help and insights will be greatly valued. And we are recording the conversation so that we can get an accurate transcript of what you say. But should you say something along the way that is too personal to share in a transcript, you can just say right then and there please scratch that part from the transcript and we will do that, ok?

B: Alright.

J: Good so that's the end of most of my talking. And I'm going to let you do most of the rest of the talking starting with, if you wouldn't mind, introducing yourself and a little bit about who you are, just for context. It might include where you're from, where you've lived, things you enjoy doing, that kind of thing. And then we'll get into more specifics regarding the move after that, ok?

B: Ok.

J: So you go right ahead when you're ready.

B: I'm Bonnie Lamrouex and I'm, I can still say 85 years old. And I was born in Michigan and in 1991 my husband and I moved to Zephyrhills, Florida. We had three children

here living in St. Pete. And when he passed away, my kids talked and talked and talked for me to come to St. Pete. So one day, we made the rounds of the different retirement homes and had a list. And by the time we got done crossing every one off, all that was left was The Fountains. I love The Fountains and I'm happy to be here.

J: Well, very good. Tell me a little bit about your life in Michigan. You say you had three kids; did they grow up in Michigan?

B: Yes, all of them did and they all came down here before we did.

J: They like the sun, right?

B: Yeah, I've got a daughter and two sons here. In fact, I can see my daughter's house from my window.

J: Wow.

B: I've got one son still up in Michigan. I loved Michigan but it got so I didn't like the snow.

J: What town did you live in up there?

B: Saginaw and then we retired from Au Gres, right on Lake Huron.

J: Oh brr, that sounds cold.

B: Yeah when you got a nor'easter it was.

J: So then you must have, when you first moved to Florida, you moved to what?

B: Zephyrhills.

J: Zephyrhills and then did you have a house there or a condo?

B: We started out with a mobile home and then we moved into a regular home in a community, a 55 and over community.

J: I see. And then, so you lived in that home for a while and then after your husband passed away, was it your kids?

B: They kept saying, "You've got to move, you've got to move." And I kept digging my heels in saying, "I'm not ready, I'm not ready." So finally I said, "Ok, I guess I'm ready."

J: Tell me a little bit more about that feeling of not being ready because that's very common for people to feel that way. Can you kind of expand on that for me, what was it?

B: I still golf and I was in a golf league and I still got around good. And then in 2013 I broke my hip and so I think that was the time I started thinking I better be closer to the kids. But I still golf. I still golfed this year yet. I'm hoping that being I'm at The Fountains here that I can find a golf league and start golfing here in St. Pete.

J: Very good. How long ago did you say you moved into The Fountains?

B: I think I've been here two months.

J: Two months.

B: Two months.

J: So you're new.

B: I'm new, I'm new on the block.

J: And tell me about the transition itself. Take me back to the first night you spent there. How was that?

B: That was very good. You know you're a little confused and then of course you've got boxes all over the place when you're moving in but me and my cat moved in and I've been happy ever since.

J: Good and your cat's name I understand is Tinkerbell?

B: She is not a Tinkerbell believe me, not a Tinkerbell, not a Tinkerbell.

J: And tell me about the apartment that you selected for yourself.

B: Well, Caladesi, that's what I wanted but the one that they were going to put me in, something happened and so I can't get that apartment. So I'm waiting to get the apartment that I want. They put me in a temporary apartment.

J: I see, ok. And then did your kids help you with the actual move or how did that work?

B: They did everything. I had a mover but they did most of the packing. In fact, they did everything. I just sat by and watched them do it so that was very helpful.

J: And how did you decide what you were going to bring with you?

B: Well, that's another story. I've got a lot of stuff I've got to get rid of. You can't visualize what you need and what you don't need until you actually get there and so I still have boxes that have to be thrown out or given away. I love cooking. I love baking and I just figured I had to bring all my stuff here, my pans and pots and all that and I really don't need them all. So I've got to get rid of them but it was free when I was signing the papers my daughter and two daughters-in-law were with me and they said I couldn't sign any papers until there was a stove in the apartment because they still wanted their cookies.

J: That's funny. Well, with the holiday season coming up I'm sure that you're going to be very busy baking.

B: Like I told them here, I said, "baking cookies is my therapy and your pounds."

J: I bet it will be popular with your neighbors too.

B: Yeah, yeah.

J: So you've only been there just a short time. Have you met many people since you moved in?

B: I get into as much as I can to meet people. Because I guess when you get our age, you need people. I'm one of these that need people. So I try to get into as much as I can to keep busy and they have enough here that you can be busy every hour of the hour.

J: What kind of things have you involved yourself in there so far?

B: I got into the card games, things like that, you know. And when they have something going on in the auditorium I try to go. I try to do as much as I can and you can do a lot here, that's for sure.

J: Yeah, so how is your life different now compared to just before you moved in? Would you say you feel more independent or the same or how is it?

B: I would say I'm not as lonely because there's enough people here so you're never lonely. I think that's the main thing. Even though I was active in my house, if I didn't go out there was days I didn't see anyone. And here you can be busy all the time and meet people. And that's the good part.

J: Did it take you a long time, after your husband passed away, that you realized that you were very, very lonely or is it something your kids noticed?

B: No, of course I lived in Zephyr and they are about an hour drive so I didn't see them every day, even though they called every day, I didn't see them. But it wasn't too long afterwards because we did so many things together you know. Then all of a sudden, you're by yourself and there's things that couples do that singles don't.

J: So then you sort of feel left out of things, huh?

B: You do, you do. I played cards and I golfed but it still wasn't enough. There were too many days where you were by yourself.

J: Right, well, what kind of advice do you have for other folks that may be in that

situation and may not have discovered a place like The Fountains? Is it something that you would say that they should start looking at?

B: Well, when I first came here, of course, I turned my name in and then pretty soon I was getting invitations to luncheons and that and I kept coming to find out more and more and more. And I think this is what they should do. Your lunch is a very good idea, very good idea because that's what sold me on The Fountains was coming here for the luncheons and the people were so nice and I thought this is where I want to be.

J: And how many other places did you say you looked at?

B: Well, when I started out, see our Sunday paper here has the whole list of all the independent living and so I called some and I went online for some and I think the day we made the rounds we went through about five different places.

J: Wow.

B: The Fountains was the first one because my daughter just lived a block away, two blocks away, so we came to The Fountains first. So then we go to the next one we say, "Oh, this is nice but I like The Fountains better." And by the time we got done the only thing that was still on the list was The Fountains.

J: So what is it about The Fountains that appealed to you so much?

B: The atmosphere and I think they keep you busy if you want to be busy and everybody is so nice and the food is very good. I love the food so just everything about it. And it's on the water. That's the number one for me being from Michigan, being on the water. I love the water.

J: Now, do you have a view from your current apartment?

B: I can see the water off in the distance but the one that I will be going into is on the water side so I will be seeing sunsets and it will be beautiful.

J: Nice, very good and how do your kids feel now that you're in and settled?

B: They love it. They're coming here all the time. Like I just had one today, "Do you want company tonight?" "Well, not really," but they're looking for cookies.

J: Yeah, right, alrighty, well, let's see your cat Tinkerbelle settled in ok?

B: Yeah, she's comfortable right now which is good. She's not a Tinkerbelle.

J: I understand you're a baseball fan too?

B: Oh you betcha I was up to 1:00 or 1:30 watching the Cubs win.

J: Yeah and you're a Rays fan.

B: I go to Rays games so I'm hoping next year I can do the same. There were five of us ladies that got what they call the flex plan. We got eight games to go to. So we made the eight games and then my daughter-in-law works for St. Pete Times so she gets free tickets so I go with her. I go quite a bit, I go quite a bit.

J: Very good, have you picked out a golf course that you're interested in playing on?

B: Not yet. I've got to do that. My son belongs to a country club so I'll have him take me around and my daughter likes to golf so it'll be like a little family outing.

J: And I bet that you find some golfers living there too that would love to go out and play.

B: I'm hoping I can find a golf course and get back on a league. We'll see what happens.

J: Very good, alrighty, well, can you think of anything else that would be important for people to know about, just the entire process of thinking about the future and making a move that's beneficial?

B: Well, I was talking to one lady when I came for one of the luncheons and they showed us the apartments and that and she said, "But I have so much furniture." And I said, "Furniture is material things, you can get rid of those but if you are comfortable in a place that's all you need, you don't need all the furniture." So something like that you know. I don't know if that makes sense but.

J: Yeah, it sure does. I mean, your priorities change over time, don't they?

B: That's right, that's right. It's not being lonely like a lot of them people like me, widowers, you sit in the house and you're lonely after a while. This is very good. I recommend it.

J: So you have, there at The Fountains, you have a lot of single people as well as couples don't you?

B: Yes, we do, yes, we do. A lot of widows. Everything works out, everything works out. I'm happy, I'm happy here.

J: Very good, well, that just about wraps up my questions then, Bonnie. I really appreciate, once again, your taking the time to chat with me and share your story with others.

B: No problem, hon, no problem.

J: Alright, well, you enjoy the rest of that beautiful day there in St. Petersburg.

B: You have a good day too, hon.

J: Alright, bye now.