

Marilyn Interview, February 2017

J: June

M: Marilyn

T: Tony

15:50

J: Hi, is Marilyn and Tony on the line then? Hello.

M: Yes, we are, we're right here.

J: Excellent, well, nice to meet you both. My name is June Hussey and I'm talking to you today from Tucson, Arizona.

M: Ok, we have a daughter that lives in Arizona.

J: Oh, great, well, we're having beautiful weather here today. It's going to be about 80 I think.

T: The west is always the best.

J: That's what I think but you're on the west coast of Florida. That's not bad either.

M: That's right.

J: Well, listen, thank you both for making time in your day for this interview. I will try not to keep you too long. But before we get started I just wanted to go over a couple of things, first being that we are recording this conversation so that we can produce an accurate transcript and get your sentiments and quotes correct and accurate. But should you happen to say something in conversation that you don't want to appear in the transcript, you can just say right then and there, "Oh that's too personal, please don't print that." And then we will follow your wishes on that, ok?

M: Ok, sounds good.

J: Ok, and then the next thing I wanted to go over before I turn it over to both of you is just the reason we do these interviews. I've been privileged to interview more than 100 residents around the country that live in Watermark Retirement Communities. First of all it's just really a thrill to meet such fascinating people and get to know them a little bit. But what we do is we try to get into, beyond getting to know you as people, we like to find out what was going through your minds and happening in your lives at the point in time that you decided to make a move to a retirement community. And we try to get some insight into how you went about looking around and making your decision and a little bit about your life there now. And then what we do is we share your story with folks out there who may be just in the beginning of thinking about their own futures and what they're going to do. So by sharing our residents' experiences and stories, we find that it's very helpful to who may not have ever set foot in a retirement community and may not know that those options are even out there for them. So, that's pretty much the background. To start with, I'm going to invite you both to kind of introduce yourselves and tell us whatever you would like us to know, or like people to know, about you as people, where you grew up, how you ended up in Florida, your families, anything that you want us to know. And then from that point I will drill down with some questions about the move itself, ok?

M: Alrighty.

J: Alright, so you can decide who wants to go first or you can take turns and just talk for

as long as you like about who you are, just kind of by way of introductions. You can go right ahead whenever one of you is ready.

M: Ok, I'm Marilyn Flynn and I'm married to Tony Flynn and we moved here to The Fountains a couple of years ago. And we are here in the winter and go back to Michigan for the summer where his family is and part of mine. So we enjoy that part. Tony and I have been married eight years. We were both married like 54 years before that to our other mates. We moved to The Fountains after shopping around. My daughter and I came and shopped around and decided that this was one thing. I shopped around mostly with my daughter and we finally decided on this place. One reason was because it was a little bit less money and of course that's always good to anybody. So that's why we ended up here. And we're on the 18th floor and love the view down into the water where we see dolphins and manatees and of course birds and fish and like that. Let's see, what else? What do you want to say honey?

J: Tony is having a sneezing fit.

M: I told you there would be six of those.

T: My name is Tony, as she told you. We lived in the same town in Michigan that's how we came about meeting. Marilyn mentioned we've been together about eight years. I have to sneeze again. I'm trying to avoid sneezing one more time but at any rate, Marilyn didn't tell you that she was living a happy life there in Michigan and married and became widowed. And was widowed at the time that I also lost a mate. I was located in that town and had a business there, which I still have indirectly, which is a radio station. The radio station was my life. I started working in a radio station as a part-time announcer in high school. From then on news radio was my bread and butter from then to the rest of my life. I still get a little (inaudible) it's the same thing. The reason that Marilyn and I got together was the fact that I knew her last husband well. He was somewhat a friend of mine. In addition to that we both had residences on a street called Ash Te Wette Beach Drive. And as a result Marilyn found out that she could find me just by walking down the street. So she spent most of her time walking up and down the street.

M: You've got to get acquainted with this guy and then you'll know what's going on here.

T: She knows that.

J: That's funny.

T: That was how we met and fortunately it was a great idea for both of us. Our time spent together since then has been highly productive and successful. We were looking around for a place to spend the winter in Florida and we had gone to a number of places and we came here with the idea of a hop, skip and a jump stop to be able to come for maybe a week or two weeks whatever. And when we came and went through the facility escorted by a very capable young lady, Suzette, who did not hit us over the head but she on the other hand said to keep our eyes open and our ears open and told us what to expect and I think did a very good job because we haven't been disappointed I don't think in anything that we have run into since we have been here. Which is how long now, hon?

M: We've been here two years.

T: Isn't that amazing. It doesn't seem like that long to me so that's something to be said for it, ok. We really can't regret anything. They were helpful with the adjusting of the living facilities so that we put together a couple of facilities to make one that was a little

larger, roomier. It provided wonderful comfort and so on. We like living here. We wouldn't be able to fill much of a page if we wanted to write down what was wrong with it.

M: The only thing wrong with it is we need a balcony.

T: Yeah and a personal elevator.

M: Oh no. We need a balcony before the elevator.

T: A balcony would be nice, I agree with that.

M: You can scratch any of this you want to.

T: We're not going to tell you about where we come short because we don't necessarily come up short, we come up long. This facility offers a great deal of satisfaction and has provided the opportunities that exist.

M: Excuse me hon. If you want something to do, there's a lot of activity. If you are bored it's your own fault because there's a lot of things you can do and get out and meet the people, meet your neighbors, you name it. It's very well done that, a lot of good entertainment. Plus, just to walk the gardens out there where the pond is and things like that is a lovely walk and outing.

J: Well, why don't we talk a little bit, you say there's so many things to do. What are the kinds of things that you both like to do?

M: Well, to be honest we haven't got overly into the activities. But we do go to bingo twice a week. We haven't made much money, a little bit, not enough. What else have we gone to, Tony? We go to some of the entertainment in the evening where some man comes in and will sing to us, you know a little concert type of thing.

J: Do you take your meals there?

M: Oh yeah, you can go down and have breakfast, which we don't. We have breakfast in our room because I don't want to get up and get going; it's my fault. Then you can either have lunch or dinner, you make your own choice, same menu, you make your own choice. And then I love the little café that's here and you can go in there and get a sandwich or a wrap or the daily special. They have a blue plate special, and sandwiches and chef's salad and small salads, and a cooler with freezer ice cream stuff in it, ice cream on a stick and stuff. That kind of thing. And we like that.

T: And the bar.

M: Oh Tony, come on.

T: That's right. I forgot I don't drink anymore.

M: We don't drink and he's always joking about that. There is no bar here, thank goodness.

J: And how did you choose that particular part of Florida to spend your winters in?

M: Tony lived in Sebring and I lived in and I live in Oldsmar, Florida, East Lake Woodlands. After our mates passed, a month apart, and then when we got together and married, we sold our houses and bought a house together in Sun City Center. And then we had been there about seven years and just decided it was getting to be too much upkeep. It was a pretty big house. It was too much to take care of so we started looking for something that would be a lot easier on us as we're going to get older, I'm afraid to say.

T: You might want to mention the fact that you have a daughter in St. Pete.

M: Yes, my daughter lives in St. Pete. It was to help her not have to drive over to Sun City, you know, to help take care of us whenever we needed something. That was one

reason we came here.

J: Good and do you get to see your daughter often now?

M: Oh yes, yes, and she has four girls. They called tonight, one of the granddaughters are coming over and we're going to go out to dinner and they are going to go to bingo with us.

J: Oh, how fun.

M: Yeah, so that will be fun to have them go to bingo.

T: Actually, we haven't found the location to be short in any department. I don't think either one of us could come up with something that really bugs us because it's not here.

M: No, it's nice.

T: It's not that way at all.

M: The people are so very very nice. I haven't met anybody employed here that isn't pleasant. Just very, very nice people and the people in general, and in fact, I don't know if we know anybody that lives here, a resident, that isn't nice. I'm sure people get irritated now and then but that's normal.

J: Did you know anyone before you moved in?

M: No, we didn't. We didn't know anybody.

J: And of course you have each other but was it easy to get to know some of your neighbors?

M: I think so. Tony is a very friendly, outgoing person and he's even helped me to blossom more that way. So no, we haven't had trouble. We've had a few couples that, you know, you just kind of click with more. But we just have a lot of people that we speak with and feel kind of close to.

J: And what about, I know that there are classes you can take there and trips on the van to go to different places. Do you take advantage of any of those things?

T: We haven't been on a trip yet.

M: No, we haven't done that. I still drive so we can get out on our own so that makes a little bit of a difference.

T: It might be a nice idea to add runways to this facility and rental airplanes so that for a weekend you know, rent the plane.

M: Ok Tony, come on.

J: So you're there for how many months of the year, about seven or eight and then you go up to Michigan for the summer?

M: That's right, about seven. We usually come down about May 15th and go back around October 15th or whichever way. I had shoulder replacement when I came down this year and that's been very nice. I had home therapy when I came home from the surgery but after that I go down to the gym on the first floor and they are doing a wonderful job of helping me exercise and I'm doing very great. I'm in really good shape.

J: Fantastic, that's not an easy surgery I understand.

M: No, but it's my second one and it went much better. My other shoulder I had done a while ago so this one went much easier. I'm not sure just why but it went well. I'm very very thankful.

J: Well, that sure is convenient that you have rehabilitation facilities right in the building.

M: Very very much so. On Tuesday we can see our family physician right here in the building. We make an appointment and we can visit him right here without having to go out and drive to his office. We don't have to do that and there's a lot of that type of thing

here, like hearing aids and all different kinds of doctors that will come here and do different things.

J: Wow, that's a great convenience, when you think about how much time you could spend in your car going to see various doctors, huh?

M: Definitely and you know when you are getting older, which most all of us here are, it's just an effort to get out and go, that much more for some people, especially when you're really not feeling well. So it is wonderful. It's very thoughtful and convenient for us, the residents.

T: The alternative to getting older is not desirable.

J: That's right, that's right. Well, what do you say to the naysayers out there who say, "I don't want to move to an old folks home." What would you say to that comment?

M: What would you say to people that are saying they don't want to move to an old folks home? My response, Tony, you can do it as soon as I do, you can think about yours. My thought was kind of the same when I came here and looked around or went to any residence, you know, you think there's a lot of wheelchairs here. There's a lot of walkers here and it's kind of like, "Oh, I don't know" and it is, it's a big adjustment. I felt that it took me about three months until I felt it is going to work, this is possible, all of these people are really nice. This is our life. It happens to all of us so get with it and move on. What did you think Tony?

T: It was no big occasion. Here a lot of people have had that happen to them. And as a result you don't feel out of place at all.

M: Tony turned 90 in November.

J: Well, happy birthday. That's a great milestone.

M: I'm going to be 83 this month, the 19th.

T: I think there's an interesting thing about this place is that you get on and off elevators, you are moving around, you're going in and out, seeing a lot of people and because there are a lot of people here, the attitude is usually friendly and is warm. It's a togetherness thing as opposed to a who the heck are you thing.

M: Well, they're your neighbor.

T: I think the time has been the asset there and still is.

M: To those people that say they don't want to come here, you have to just set your mind to 'this is something we need to do and so we're going to move forward' and you make up your own mind. I don't want to be responsible to get the sprinklers fixed and get the trees trimmed and all that stuff. And you come here and say, "Ok, this is where I can go and not have to do all that stuff."

J: Right.

M: Get your own attitude in the right place and it's good.

J: And what about when you go back to Michigan are you in a house there?

M: Yes, we have a home there. In fact we have two homes. Tony has one that he has rented out and like he said earlier, we are on the same street and on the same lake. So we live in the one. His nephew is close by. They do wonderful, wonderful care of us and they get it all up and opened up for us and like that. So we go back and move into that place that we've been in for a long time.

J: And then it's back to cooking your own meals and doing the grocery shopping, is that how it works?

M: That and finding the good restaurants right there in Hillsdale.

J: Ah.

M: When we get there, I can go out and pull some weeds and do some stuff like that, which is good for us, keeps us moving.

T: What's the population of this building, do you know that? I'll tell you the population of Hillsdale is about 9,000. It's almost the population of the building but not quite.

J: Not quite, not quite. You both must love the water. You've got a lake house in Michigan and you live on the water in Florida. Has that always been important to you being on the water?

T: It has to me.

M: We've both been on the water to some degree. I think he was on it maybe more than I was with my family. Tony has had five sons and I have four daughters. And we owned a supermarket and he had the radio station so as soon as he came to town in 1961 we naturally got acquainted with him because we did business with him through the radio.

J: You bought ads from him?

M: Yeah, yeah and our kids went to school together. It was interesting when we both lost mates about the same time. It was amazing that we just connected somehow.

J: Yeah, well, what sort of radio station do you own? Is it AM or FM?

T: Both.

J: So is it a music station or talk?

M: Local.

T: It is a communication device, local, try to be friendly to everybody in the area, keep them advised on what is happening in the area or outside the area. The music is music and not noise hopefully. If it's noise someone finds another job. Our goal is to play enjoyable sounding music and be an information station as well.

J: So when the kids wake up and it snowed two feet outside they tune in to see if they have no school?

M: Yeah, right.

T: Absolutely.

M: They are hoping and praying.

J: Well, I grew up with a station like that so I understand.

T: Whereabouts?

J: In Connecticut. Well, let's see what have we not talked about that you think is important for people to know?

T: About this place?

J: Yeah.

M: I don't know about places I'm sure they do have the laundry facility. I'm just trying to think of things that I do during the week. There's that.

T: I think the interesting thing is the range of occupants. There are those who can just barely get around but that's not the predominant. There are a lot of people who are perfectly healthy like you and I. Age variety is interesting. I'm 90 but there's a lot of guys here that are probably 75.

M: There are some older than we are and they are just as healthy as we are.

J: So it's not about age so much as attitude, huh?

M: Definitely so. If you want to grump around you can, but that's your loss.

J: Any final words of advice to people out there that may not know what their future plans should be?

M: Start looking because they told my daughter when we started looking that, you know, a person will shop for a year or two or three years before they actually decide so when the thought starts going through your head, go out and start looking around. You are not going to decide for a couple years anyway, so get out and look and it gives you a chance to see as much as possible.

J: There's a lot to look at, right?

M: But we really like the fact that we rent and we didn't have to purchase. There are some that rent but I think there's maybe more that you have to buy your place. We really wanted to rent because we wanted to be free to, if one of us get sick and we have to go back north or whatever, we can get out of here, you know, without waiting to sell and go through all that process.

J: Right.

T: The attitude here is very friendly, that's important. The age blend from like mid-70s up to 90?

M: There are several people here that are a hundred.

T: There's a good mix there. There's never any rigid fence between those age groups at all. As a matter of fact the people in the building did us a nice job when we were looking around at a place to go because up on the 18th floor they managed to find a place where they could join two units.

M: We already said that. They know the double rooms. That was our gal and we weren't ready to come and so she shopped around for us and when she thought she found something, we came and looked at it. And it's absolutely perfect for us.

J: So you combined two apartments into one so you have two bedrooms?

M: No, we have one bedroom and one living room and two bathrooms and then on either side of the two join together are long full-length closets and then there still is another regular kind of a closet. So we have four closets between the combination and that is wonderful.

J: I bet. It sounds beautiful. And are you in your apartment now or no?

M: No, we're in Suzette's office.

J: Ok, I was going to ask you to look out the window and tell me what your view is.

M: Oh, our view is water.

T: Boca Ciega Bay.

M: Yeah and then out is the Gulf and we look right down on the fountain that when you come into The Fountains and make the circle there, the fountain, we can look right down on that, and there is a dock right out there where we can walk out and sit on the dock and look out onto the water. The swimming pool is down there so, lovely, lovely view.

J: Nice, well, great. Did you come and try the meals before you decided to move there?

M: They fed us one meal when we came to look. When we were out looking around we ate here once and maybe when we came back we might have eaten again. I'm not sure if we took that opportunity or not the second time.

J: Do you ever cook in your apartment?

M: We do breakfast everyday but I thought I would do more than I am doing but I had an illness so that stops some of it. Did we cook more when we were here last year? I think last year we did a little more preparation of food but we don't do much.

T: It doesn't seem like we changed much.

M: We don't need to and that's the nice part. If you want to, fine. There is that opportunity but we don't need to. I'm not a person that's thrilled to death to be standing at the counter cooking, so this fits me fine.

J: Good.

M: I know I've talked to people that like to cook and they do, they cook in their room, they go down to dinner also but they do cook things that they want for themselves. You can go either way, whatever suits you the best.

J: Good, well, I know I've taken up probably as much time as you are willing to give and I know you got your grandkids coming over so I will let you go. And I want to thank you both so much for your time and sharing your story with us today. We really appreciate it.

M: Feel free to cut out whatever you need to cut out.

J: Alright, you both take care and enjoy the rest of the day there in St. Petersburg.

M: Thank you very much and you have a good day too.

J: Thank you very much, take care, bye.