

## Brenda and Stan Uskavitch Interview, February 2017

**J:** June

**B:** Brenda

**S:** Stan

J: Hello.

X: Hello there, is this Jill?

J: This is June Hussey.

X: June, I'm sorry. It's Suzette. How are you?

J: Hi Suzette, how are you?

X: Good, I have the most loveliest couple here.

J: Oh, I can't wait to meet them.

X: Oh gosh, you are going to love them. It's Brenda and Stan Uskavitch. So I am going to turn the phone over. We'll start I guess with Brenda.

J: Ok, great, thank you very much.

B: June, I love June.

J: I love the month of June too, Brenda.

B: You are coming up. This is going to be your month in June.

J: I know and that's my birthday month too.

B: Are you kidding? That's too beautiful. Oh my gosh.

J: It's very nice to meet you Brenda. Is it a lovely day there in St. Petersburg?

B: Every day here is paradise. Every day is paradise. Especially here at The Fountains our fountain is overflowing with love and joy.

J: That's wonderful. Listen, I want to thank you in advance for making time in your day and I also want to go over a couple of things. Is Stan there with you?

B: Oh yeah, he's here.

J: Are you going to trade the phone back and forth and let him answer some questions?

B: Absolutely, sweetheart. Now, is there a speaker thing on this phone? I don't know. I wish we could hear you altogether. I don't know, Suzette is coming. Ok, we'll get on speaker.

J: Oh, that would be a great idea.

X: Alright, I didn't know you wanted me to do that. Let me try to do this without hanging up, June, hold on one moment.

J: If it disconnects just call back.

X: Are you there?

J: I'm here.

X: There you go, alrighty.

J: Very good, thank you for setting that up. Ok so Stan can you hear me too?

S: Yes, I can hear you loud and clear.

J: Perfect, well, my name is June Hussey and I'm talking to you both from Tucson, Arizona. And I want to thank you both so much for making time in your busy day to chat with me. Before we get started I just want to go over a couple of things. The first being that we are recording this conversation so that we can make sure we get everything you say accurately and not have me have to take notes and make mistakes. But should you

happen to share something that may be too personal, that you don't want to share with the world, just say so right then and there. Say, "Please don't include that part" and we will take it straight from the transcript. Ok?

B: Ok.

J: All right and the other thing, I just wanted to explain kind of the purpose behind these interviews and I have interviewed lots of residents not only from The Fountains at Boca Ciega Bay but other communities that Watermark operates around the country. And it's really really fun for me to meet all these wonderful people. But the purpose is to share with folks who may not have thought about their future yet, may not know anything about retirement communities, share with those folks our residents' stories and experiences about how they decided to start looking, where they looked, how they made their decision and what their lives are like now that they are living in a community. So that's the purpose and now that I have gotten through that part, I'm going to turn it over to you guys and let you introduce yourselves. You can take turns, one of you can start, you can go back and forth, just kind of share with us who are Brenda and Stan, where did you come from, where did you grow up, something about your families, whatever you would like to share that gives us an idea of who you are. Go right ahead when you're ready.

B: Ok, June, thank you for having us on the phone today. We are very, very excited about our life because actually six years ago we got married. However, we are always newlyweds. That's how everyone knows us, we're newlyweds. Because we both were widowed years ago then we met each other and immediately, I'm not kidding, in two months we got married. And we have been celebrating our life every day for the last six years, this is huge. And here we are at The Fountains. We actually moved from right across the bay, Bay Island, our condominium there, which we absolutely adored and loved. But it sold within 23 hours so we had already looked here at The Fountains because it's our same neighborhood. It's right here in beautiful Boca Ciega Bay. So we are very actually familiar with all of our neighborhood. It's funny, we overlook, on the 12th floor, our other condominium that we owned. It's right down below us. It's so funny. And Stan wants to tell you his career, his life, very prestigious life he's had. I'll let him come on in and start to tell you about his life, beautiful.

S: June, I don't think you need to hear all about my past history, college graduation.

B: Yeah, yeah.

S: Well, I did work for Caterpillar Tractor Company for ten years and for John Deere for 21 years. Then I was involved with an import export company for another 20+ years. Brenda and I just happened to meet in the quad cities, that's quad cities Illinois, Moline where John Deere headquarters is. Her husband had died and she had moved to Moline to live with her daughter. And I lived there for a long time. We moved there from Peoria to Moline and, I forget what year, I lived there in a high-rise condominium building, 12 stories. I was there over 20 years in different capacities on the board, president, secretary, you name it. And then she came and decided to get a condo by herself so she came to our building. And that first night she came in from shopping, she loves to shop, especially for bargains. I was down in the garage we had a lawn tractor for the association that we had a problem with the light and so I went down there to get a light switch off of it. And then as I was going back up into the building, this was a two-story concrete attached garage, I heard car doors closing and so as I walked to the

garage I said, "Who's making all this noise?" And I got up to her car and there she was. And just prior to seeing her I had a thump in my chest and I thought oh my gosh, I had a stint put in two years before. And I said, "Well, maybe I'm having a problem there." I walked around the car and there she was. And so anyway I asked her, I introduced myself and she said she just moved into the building and I said, "Can I help you?" And she didn't respond and I felt agitated and I said, "Can I help you?" And she said, "Here, you can take this." Well, as I said, she likes bargains so she had bought a package 36 rolls of toilet paper. And I could take that up for her.

B: Angel Soft by the way.

S: Angel Soft. She never used all that 36 rolls while she was there.

B: I got married too fast.

S: That was in October.

B: Two months.

S: And in December, the 26th, we got married. And then shortly after, well, two months after that, because I was still working with the export company, she picked me up at work one day and she said, "What do you think about moving to Florida?" I said, "Ok." Just like that. And so here we are. She mentioned that we are known as the newlyweds, which we always feel that way. I had been married 56 years and she had been married 41 years. And three years or four years ago we had, I think, three more years of our own marriage and so we had a 100th wedding anniversary.

J: Oh wow.

B: It was so cool.

S: We had a big party at a restaurant and we invited a hundred people.

B: It was so awesome.

J: What a great idea.

S: So here we are. As Brenda mentioned, we live across from Bay Island Condominium Association. We had looked here at The Fountains a year ago in February and we thought, "We are not old enough for that." And so we had a beautiful condo there. Brenda is a decorator. She's been a decorator all her life. Her and her husband had a terrific business in Sarasota. But anyway, we're in the association and finally I got on the board at her suggestion. Anyway, the big difference there is when you have the condominium, you buy it. And then when you are a member of the Association you get involved with the politics of the Association, the board of directors, etc. I had enough of that board business back when I was living in Moline. Anyway, we talked about it more this fall and we thought, "Well, maybe we should really look at our future as to what we are going to be doing." I'm getting up in age. I'm 86 right now and she's something like 29.

B: No, I'm 69.

S: Anyway we thought well, what if something happened to one of us. We had met people who were here at The Fountains who had been married and were thinking of moving over. They run a waiting list and so on and, lo and behold, the spouse died before they got moved here and so then it was up to the wife or husband to make a move by themselves. And we didn't want that for either of us. And at The Fountains, here we didn't have to buy in to it, like a lot of these retirement homes are. And so we sold our condo, like Brenda said, within 23 hours. The first customer, the first buyer bought it right on the spot. So then, in looking over here, our salesperson, Suzette, said,

"Well, you'll be on a waiting list." This was two days before when we made the decision and so we went back to our condo, and we put our place on the market and then the next thing we knew, Suzette called and said, "Well, the people that were going to take that condo they decided to take the apartment higher up and if you want it you can have it." We took it. And here we are.

B: So happy, so happy.

J: How long ago did you move in then?

B: Two and a half months ago, but this is the best place to live on earth because, think of it, it is so very safe. In here, it is like, there's no problems, you just live here, you just pay your rent and you live happily ever after and if anything happens, for your future if you have to go beyond to the next level, it's already here. We are so happy about this. In fact we are just thrilled. And our friends, some of them were quite surprised that we moved here but we told them the reason. We both have been widowed and we know what happens. We know. We were both sitting in our own condominiums, left there alone, then you have to move by yourself. So we are so thrilled we were able to make this move. But really Suzette was the one that so impressed us in The Fountains. You know what, she is like amazing. And she's the one that really guided us into this, not just her, the whole staff here, they are phenomenal people. I've never seen such beautiful people ever.

J: What a nice compliment. I wanted to see if you had looked at any other retirement communities besides The Fountains.

B: Yes, we did but we looked in Seminole, Seminole Lakes. However there you have to buy into it and it's pretty expensive. We didn't want to do that for our future. We love being tenants; we just love it.

S: We still have that independent streak in us, so here we can come and go. As I've told a number of people, we didn't come here to die; we came here to live. And so we are living. We come and go as we want and do whatever we want outside. And the people here are so congenial. We love the restaurant they have here.

B: We love the food.

S: We've had over 100 guests here since we got here, people from Bay Island and other friends. We just love it.

J: That's fantastic, well, give me a little compare and contrast to your lives back in the condo. Compared to now, what's different and what's the same?

B: Well, what's different, in our condo we've always been big, big entertainers so we would have, like, 10 people for dinner in our condo but now we absolutely love it because we still have 10 people for dinner in the dining room here and we don't have to do the dishes. I love it. So that's one great, beautiful contrast. Not only that, our apartment here is put together, so it's one of the larger. It's a two-bathroom apartment and, oh my gosh, it is so easy to take care of. In fact, there's no work at all. In fact, today housekeeping came and you know, they vacuum and all that. Our apartment here is so beautiful. We were so happy. My husband, in his world travels in international with John Deere, he collected all these beautiful works of art. Well, we were so happy we were able to bring them here and they all fit right in because our apartment here is 880 square feet, I think, so it's quite ample. And oh the beautiful storage. So here, this life is much simpler, much simpler but gratifying completely.

J: Very good and you don't have to be on the board, right?

B: Oh hallelujah.

J: Do you both have kids that are living anywhere, from your previous marriages?

S: Oh yes.

B: Basically though we don't really have any family right here. That was another decision. We wanted to come here to be totally independent for the future because we just want them all to live their own lives. They are in Illinois and St. Augustine and one is here but everyone is busy with their own beautiful lives of working, working. And now we feel such a great freedom that we will never ever have to say, "Oh, please come and help me, please." We don't want to ever do that. So we are very happy here and both of us together, it's just very happy. We call this our next chapter. When we moved away they had a going away party for us at our condo and they called it the next chapter. It's not the last chapter, it's the next chapter. And here we are in the next chapter, we're turning the pages. It is so nice to be in the next chapter. I mean, I and Sam both, we always, like in my life I always had plan A, Plan B. So I feel in control of my own life here, like whatever happens, we both know where we are at. And that's the beauty of life. It really is for the future. As I said, June, we both were widowed and believe me, believe me that is the worst thing in life and so you sit there. My life became very dark, dark, dark but now I met Stan and we are into the big, big light of God. It's like we're living in a rainbow.

S: Well, also, having them come over here and having friends come over here, every now and then, we'll start talking with another couple and they say, "Well, when the husband dies or the wife dies, the other party will go back up north." Brenda and I don't want any more north in the wintertime. Not any.

B: Not ever.

S: We don't even go up there for Christmas or anything else. If there isn't any better Christmas than our children could have coming here to Florida then we don't want to go up there.

B: The Fountains though is a beautiful place here and I have to tell you, the staff here they are phenomenal. I mean they all are incredible people. I don't know how they found all the best people on earth to work here, the valet drivers, the servers, everybody. Not only that the food is incredible. Actually, I'm sad to say I've gained a few pounds just by living here. It's terrible

J: Why don't you tell me about a typical day, if there is such a thing, for you there at The Fountains. Give people an idea of the kind of choices you have of things to do right there in the community if you don't have things going on outside.

B: There is so much going on in here. We have only lived here a short time, however, we are people on the go. We go outside a lot. The parties here are gorgeous. On Friday there will be another party. Then they have luncheons for the ladies and the men. They have music, oh, music all the time in the lobby. Beautiful, you can go down and hear it. It's really very talented people they bring in here. And then there's all these classes. Well, as I say we haven't had much time to join in because we are very busy on the outside of The Fountains.

S: We live about a mile from one of the most famous beaches in the world.

B: Yeah, St. Pete Beach. We just came from there today, right now. We had lunch out there on the beach, so beautiful. I mean this is one of the best areas I think in the United States of America and here we are. And The Fountains is such a special place because

it's on the water. Our waterway that we know and enjoy so much.

J: Tell me about your view from your apartment.

B: It's phenomenal, are you kidding me? From our apartment we can see, I don't know if you know this, the Skyway Bridge and big ships go under the Skyway.

S: Cruise ships and freighters.

B: Cruise ships and freighters! We've been on those cruise ships going under the Skyway Bridge. It's amazing to see our view. And at night it's utterly breathtaking but in the day also, all the boats, all the sailboats, all the marinas, we can see everything from here plus the beach. The very famous Don Cesar is right out our window on the beach.

J: Wow.

B: I know. I can't believe I could ever live in a place like this.

S: (Inaudible)

B: Anytime, come on down.

J: I have been there and I can picture it. I would love to live there someday.

B: Someday, yes.

J: The way you are describing it makes it sound like it must be expensive. Were you surprised that it was as affordable as it is?

B: Well, for us it's affordable. Let's face it, we have a decent, good income from our careers, however, many people perhaps, and we did sell our condo for top price. Some people maybe couldn't afford it, but I think everybody could afford it. We have a large unit here but you could down scale to a one bedroom one bath and that, I think, is very affordable. I really do. So someday, when one of us check out and go to heaven, the other one could move on down to a smaller place. Actually, you wouldn't need two bathrooms for one person. I think it's affordable. Oh and the beautiful swimming pool here, it's heated, it's right on the bay. It is so wonderful. We go there two or three times a week. But we are only, like a mile and a half from the famous beach, so you have all options here. Really, this is the greatest place.

J: That's wonderful. So I think we've covered a lot of territory in this conversation without me asking very many questions. Is there any other advice you would like to share with other couples who may be kind of putting off this decision or wishing they didn't have to think about it. What would you say to them?

B: I would say don't wait too long and this other issue, since I was widowed, and I'll tell you something, June, when you are widowed you sit there alone in your condo. What happened to me, I cannot eat alone. I could not eat. I got really sick. I almost died out of my grief but the greatest thing here, Stan and I both said, this is fabulous because no matter what happens to either one of us, this is the best thing of all: you never ever will eat alone. Never. You go to the dining room and you can eat with other people. Now, to me that is such a priceless thing. You always have people around you. You can thrive like the newsletter says.

J: That's good advice coming from someone who has experienced both sides of that equation. I know a lot of people who are married maybe don't think about that. They should think about that.

B: Most people don't think about it until you are right in it, until you are there, and then you are like, oh my gosh. But, The Fountains is such a beautiful solution to life. I think it is. I mean, it is for the rest of your life. There's all the different areas. I mean, moving from one stage to the last stage of your life is so beautiful. And it's reassuring to think

you don't have to worry about anything. Nothing.

J: Wow, do you have anything else to add to that, Stan?

S: Not really, it's almost 4 o'clock and it's happy hour.

B: It's happy hour.

J: Oh my goodness. I would not interfere for a second in your happy hour.

B: Believe me June, we have to have a martini.

J: Yes, I'd be right there with you. Well, thank you very much for your time today. I really appreciate all your wonderful thoughts and sentiments and sharing your story with us.

You go have a fun happy hour.

B: Ok sweetie, thank you so much.

J: Thank you, nice to meet you, bye now.

B: Bye, June, happy birthday in June.