

Julian “Jay” Rabow Interview, February 2017

J: June

R: Jay

J: Hello.

R: Hello.

J: Hi, is this Jay?

R: Yes, it is. June, is that you?

J: Yes, it is. Nice to meet you.

R: Nice to meet you too, thank you. What can I do for you?

J: Well, I want to thank you for making some time for this interview. We really appreciate it. I would like to introduce the purpose for doing these interviews just to give you some of the background and expectations and then I'm going to let you do most of the talking. How does that sound?

R: That sounds fine. You go right ahead.

J: Ok, perfect. So first thing is that we are recording this conversation in order to produce an accurate transcript. We want to make sure we get your sentiments and words correct. But if you should happen to say something that you feel is too personal, you don't want to share it with the world, you just say so right then and there. Say, "Scratch that part." And we'll do so, ok?

R: Ok, fine.

J: Ok, and then the purpose is, we do a lot of these interviews and it's a great privilege for me. I love interviewing residents. I do it all over the country and I get to meet some of the most fascinating people. What we do is we begin by asking you to share a little bit about yourself, your life, your history, your things you enjoy doing, that kind of thing and then I'll ask some specific questions about how you made your decision to move to a retirement community and made the choice that you did and so forth. What we do, Jay, with the information then, is we share it with folks who may be just in the beginning of thinking about their future or maybe they have never set foot in a retirement community and we find that by sharing our own residents' experiences, it kind of opens their minds to the possibilities and allows them to plan their future accordingly.

R: I understand.

J: Ok, perfect. Well, then with that out of the way I would like to invite you to introduce yourself, talk about where you're from, some of your interests, maybe your career, your family, whatever you feel like sharing about yourself and then we'll go from there.

R: Okay, very good, Well, I'll start by telling you that my given name is Julian. Although, as a young person I decided that sounded too professorial, that I probably wouldn't be able to live up by it and so I opted for being called Jay, which is a nickname. Everyone calls me that. And my last name is Rabow. I am originally from Buffalo, New York, born and raised there. I owned a manufacturing business in the plastic packaging field and I sold it many years ago to three of my key employees and decided that I would like to retire. Both my wife and I were doing a great deal of sailing. We're both sailors. We came down to Florida on our sailboat to retire and look for a place to settle. We ended up here in Sarasota at the most marvelous community which met all the criteria that we had for a place that we wanted to spend the rest of our lives. Then each year, on

January 1st, she and I left on our sailboat and went to the Bahamas for four months of serious cruising. And we did that for 19 years, which period of time was absolutely marvelous. It was a wonderful way to live, outdoors in the water, sailing and diving. It was terrific until suddenly she started to show some symptoms of an illness and by the time we got a handle on it, we found out that it was a mental disorder for which there was no cure. She was very ill, going downhill for a long time, there was nothing that we could do about that. And so a lot of my focus was on her and her care. In the meantime, I played a lot of tennis. I do still play a lot of tennis, which is my favorite current sport although prior to this, all through my life, I was very involved in horsemanship, hunting and fishing, sailing of course, racing on sailboats. And she passed away last March. We lived in a condo on Longboat Key here for all those years and my children got on me and said, "You need to have a different kind of a life. You can't sit around here being by yourself. You're spending too much time alone and we think that you ought to think about a retirement facility." And so I agreed to go along with them. We explored most of the units here in the Sarasota area. And there was something about The Fountains here, The Fountains of Sarasota. I don't know what it was, something that captured my imagination. And I decided on moving here. I didn't know a soul in this place. They prepared an apartment for me which came out absolutely beautifully. It's a lovely lovely apartment and I've gotten well used to it. So has my wonderful dog has acclimated himself to the new surroundings. Interesting to note that the first two months that I was in residence here, not knowing anyone when I moved in, I did not eat one dinner by myself. Every evening there was a note in my mailbox or a telephone call or some kind of a date for dinner with people that I didn't know but who knew that I was a new resident because my picture and bio was posted on a bulletin board here. And each night I had dinner with somebody new. The couple of times that I didn't have a date ahead of time I walked in the dining room and somebody saw me all by myself and immediately got up from the table, came over and said, "If you're not eating with anybody please sit with us." It was an extraordinary experience and I can't tell you how great and seamless my transition was. Because the quality of the people here is extraordinary and I've made many friends here in the short time that I've been here. I've been here five months. I've made many friends and it is a marvelous facility. The services are terrific, the food is wonderful. I have complimented the chef because he clearly buys the top quality foods, particularly in the meat department and I'm a carnivore. The roast beef every Wednesday night is absolutely marvelous, tender and delicious. All the meats and vegetables are very fresh. The service is terrific. The dining room manager has, by the second day that I was here everyone knew my name, all the service personnel, knew my name and knew that I was new. They were so welcoming. I cannot tell you how it made me feel, not knowing a soul. I could sum all that up by telling you that I'm very happy with the decision that was made by coming here. I'm very comfortable. I'm surrounded by people who clearly care. There's lots to do here and I'm enjoying myself.

J: That's so great. Wow, you make me want to move in tomorrow. I'm curious, had you ever thought about this kind of lifestyle before your kids sort of persuaded you?

R: No, I never imagined myself being in this kind of a facility. After my wife got ill I had to sell my sailboat because she couldn't sail anymore. I got a fishing boat so that I could go out and fish. And I pictured myself doing that, you know, for the rest of my life, fishing

and playing tennis. The thing that was lacking, and the kids were right about this, that you need people around, there's got to be activity, there's got to be people around that you have conversations with, somebody to have dinner with, somebody to go to the movies with. So they were absolutely right. Although, I had never thought that I would ever be in this kind of a facility, I'm certainly glad that I made that decision.

J: Well, what kind of advice would you share with people who maybe don't have kids or maybe their kids are too shy to have that conversation with their parents or they don't think their parents are going to receive it well, could you offer some advice to people out there who may be reading this?

R: The only thing I could say to them is, based on my own experience, that when the time comes -- and we're all "on in years," I'm 89 years old and I just feel that I'm entering my middle years -- it's nice to have people that you can knock on their door, talk with them, walk around the property. By the way, the property is beautiful and beautifully maintained. It's wonderful for promenading. We all have to consider the fact that someday we are going to go. If it's a couple, one is going to be left alone and I think that it would be very, very wise for older couples to give serious thought to moving in advance to a place like this so that they are established when the final day comes for one of you. It just makes so much sense. I wouldn't have realized it so readily before but I certainly do based on my observations and my own experience here since I've been here.

J: Well, that's great. I sure wish more people were as open minded to that as you are and as knowledgeable as your kids were to recommend it.

R: Yes, I agree with you. They were wise and my initial response was, "Oh no, I'm not going to go to anyplace like that." I can't tell you how wonderful this is. This is like living in the lap of luxury, you are very well taken care of, they have thought of everything for our protection in every way. I think that anybody in their elderly years ought to give consideration to a place like this.

J: So tell me about a typical day for you there aside from the meals, we've talked about that, what other of the amenities do you take advantage of there?

R: Well, I really haven't fit into all of the programs here yet but there are many. First of all, I play tennis three days a week, not here but very close by and join the club that is only six or seven minutes driving time from here. So it's very, very convenient and I do that three days a week. They have courses here, speakers, there are courses in various, they have an art department here and every week all the artists meet and they do their work in an art room down in the facility here. The exercise facility here is marvelous; they have all very updated equipment. And the pool, they have a heated Olympic pool; it's beautiful and I've been swimming in that. They have movies, they have shows, they have entertainment sometimes in the evening, songfests and instrumentalists. You don't have enough hours in the day to do all things that are available to be done.

J: Well, now that you've discovered it and experienced it, can you imagine your life back in the condo? How does it compare?

R: Well, you know the condo, I loved the condo, I had a beautiful condo right on the water but the main difference, after I lost my wife, is that I found myself by myself most of the time. I think it's harder for men to go out and make dates to do social things. It's easier for women to do that and I even find that here. They are busy every day, there

are groups of girls that are doing things and the men aren't so quick to do that. And I think it's a matter of shyness on their part. I'm not all that shy but some of the men here are and I can understand that. It's usually our wives who are the social directors in our lives and we're used to that so when that is no longer available I can understand why some of the men find it hard to make the change. But in a place like this, the people are so concerned for everybody else's welfare, which is a wonderful attribute, everybody keeps everybody else busy. I mean, we're all being invited to do different things, to go different places, to partake in the different courses that they have here, instructional courses and the lectures, and it's really like a very adult summer camp year around.

J: And have your kids been down to visit you since you moved in?

R: They all have. Everybody's very pleased with it. As I said, my apartment is beautiful and I walk my dog a lot and just enjoy. Of course the weather here is magnificent all the time, I don't have to tell you about that. You know about that except in the summertime. And same here, it's very hot in the summer but I play tennis all summer long. And luckily I'm in good shape physically and so I'm able to do that, not everybody can say that.

J: It sure sounds like you're in good shape if you play tennis three days a week and that's probably what keeps you so fit.

R: It is, it is. Bottom line is, I'm very pleased with this facility. I'm very pleased with the management. They clearly know what they are doing here and if something needs to be addressed, it is done instantly. It just shows that the people at the top know what they're doing and see to it that it filters down. And I know they own a lot of property all over the country and I'm sure that they're all run like this place is that I'm in here.

J: Well, that's great feedback. I'm glad to hear it. I just have one final question. It doesn't have to do with The Fountains but back when you and your wife were sailing, in trying to pick your ideal retirement locale, what was it about Sarasota that you just loved so much?

R: Well, Sarasota, first of all and I'm now talking about 1978 when we came down here on our boat, first of all, we expected to be on the east coast because we knew we wanted to cruise the Bahamas extensively every year. On our way down we stopped in every port and found the leading realtor and told him what we were looking for. We were looking for a community that had art, music, dance, especially a college nearby. Those are the things that we felt that we needed, that we wanted to have in a community that would give us the kind of a life that we were looking for because we were interested in all of those things: live theater, orchestras, that sort of thing. And we didn't find anything on the east coast that met our criteria. Every place that we went to met some of it but they didn't meet all of it until we got to Sarasota and then we said, "Oh my goodness, this is the community we want to be a part of." And so we immediately bought a condominium here and that was in 1978. We came down and we've been here ever since.

J: And did you keep your sailboat right in front of your condo?

R: Yes, we did. That was one piece of the list of criteria, we had to have our boat. We didn't want to have to get into a car and drive to it, which is of course what we had to do in Buffalo. We always had to drive to where our boat was and we said, "When we retire we want the boat right there." First of all there's always a two-page list of things to do on a boat so it gave me a place to go during the day. I always had things to do on the boat if I wasn't doing something else. So it just worked out beautifully until of course this

illness that took her. It got tough after that but I muddled through it. So did she. We did the best we could under the circumstances.

J: Right, well, I can't think of anything that we didn't touch on unless you can think of anything you'd like to add before we close?

R: No, I don't think so. I think that I've certainly made my point that this is a wonderful lifestyle in this particular facility, I can't speak for the other ones but this particular facility is extremely well-run and I'm so pleased to be a part of it and I'm sure it was the right choice.

J: Well, thank you so much. That's wonderful and I'm so glad that you were able to find the choice that matches you so perfectly.

R: Well, I just lucked in. Everybody was so good to me right off the bat, the sales, the marketing department, those women there are wonderful. I'm best friends with them today, they kiss me whenever they see me. It's great. This is a great place and I'm glad to be helpful to you by doing this with you.

J: Well, thank you, we really do appreciate it. I thank you for your time on the phone and for your willingness to share your story.

R: It's been my pleasure and I hope that this proves to be valuable to you. If you send anybody my way, I will certainly host them and make sure that they learn how good a place this is.

J: Well, thank you.

R: You're quite welcome.

J: When I come that way to move in myself, I'll give you a call and look you up.

R: I certainly hope so. You sound lovely on the phone and I'm sure that you are. Very good talking to you.

J: Thank you very much. Alright, take care. Bye now.

R: Bye.