

## Ann Orkin Interview, August 2017

J: June

A: Ann

1:30

J: Hello, is this Ann?

A: Yes, it is.

J: Hi Ann, this is June Hussey in Tucson, how are you today?

A: Good, how are you?

J: I'm very well, thank you very much. So, thank you so much for making time in your day for this little interview. I really appreciate it.

A: No problem, my pleasure.

J: Ok, well, before we get started I just wanted to remind you that we are recording this conversation so that I can keep my hands free and not have to take sloppy notes. We want to make sure that we get your sentiments exactly as you present them.

A: Sure.

J: And secondly, I just want to go over the purpose of these interviews that we do and I've had the privilege of interviewing many of your neighbors already there at The Fountains at Lake Pointe Woods and it's always a pleasure. We love to get to know the people that live in our communities and share their experiences with other people out there who may not have any idea what living in a retirement community may be like. And so, we find it's very helpful for you to share your personal story and your experiences in looking for a place and deciding when the time was right and how you chose your apartment, all those kinds of things are great to share with folks out there that may be just in the beginning throes of deciding what they are going to do. So, with that said I'm going to let you speak for a little bit, if you don't mind, about yourself. Just kind of introduce me to you and the others who may be reading this. Tell us a little bit about who is Ann Orkin, where's she from, where has she lived, what kinds of things do you enjoy? Just give us a taste of who you are.

A: I was born in the Bronx New York. I moved to Miami Beach, Florida in 1950 which almost makes me a native with my family and I went through school there. I ended up heading the English department of a private school and enjoyed that for many years. When my husband retired, we decided to move from Miami to Sarasota and I moved to University Park Country Club. I lived there for about 18 years. I continued to live there after my husband passed away. I was in the house for five years and decided it was no place for a single person to be. I looked around for a long time at many retirement communities and decided that The Fountains had above all else. People are genuine, the staff is most accommodating and I have been happy. I've joined various activities and I'm just busier than I can be.

J: Wonderful, tell me first of all, how you decided on Sarasota when you retired with your husband from Miami. What attracted you to the Sarasota area?

A: We traveled around a bit knowing eventually we might want to move and we found Sarasota had all the culture and ambience and just everything beautiful along with the theater. We are very much interested in the arts and this was the place to be. My

daughter had married and settled down in Tampa so that was a good incentive.

J: Very good.

A: And then there were grandchildren to follow so all the more reason to be here.

However, we decided Tampa might be too close so we chose Sarasota.

J: It's a beautiful place to live. So, take me back to, you say you lived in your University Park condo for about five years after your husband passed away. What was it that finally kind of clinched your mind to say, "It's time now that I should make a different move"?

A: The responsibilities of a home to a widow, more space than I needed, good friends were beginning to shift to different areas and I was having trouble with my eyes. I felt that I would eventually want to be in a place where transportation is offered and I knew that the buses here go to various activities and this was very important and it took me at least five years to decide that The Fountains was the ideal place. The food is phenomenal, the people are delightful, the administration is accommodating. I have nothing but praise.

J: And you've been there now just over a year, right?

A: Yes, yes that's correct, just over year.

J: Talk about your apartment, how did you go about choosing, I know there so many floor plans there, how did you choose which one is right for you?

A: I did look at a lot of apartments. I was hoping for a waterfront but none were available as everyone hopes for a waterfront. And Phyllis, who was the sales agent at the time, took me to different areas. I wanted an apartment that was spacious but still a one-bedroom and this one was actually used as a storage unit but I saw the ability to enlarge the living area and take less space in the bedroom area and they were very accommodating to do this for me. They took down a wall, extended the living area, gave me a good size bedroom area and it's just worked out perfectly.

J: Nice. Now, what about kitchen facilities, are you someone who loves to cook or do you prefer not to?

A: No, the first thing I said to them, "I want nothing else in the kitchen except a microwave, that's my extent of cooking." The kitchen is small, I must admit, but it's just fine for a single person. I mean, I have breakfast on the breezeway here and dinner and evenings. As long as I have room for my Keurig I'm fine.

J: Perfect, tell us about a typical day. Is there such a thing for you there? What kind of things keep you busy?

A: I volunteer quite a bit. The typical day I get up in the morning, usually have breakfast where it's served on the passageway here, go to exercise class Monday, Wednesday and Fridays and the balance class Tuesdays and Thursdays. After that I have been volunteering at the hospital as a patient advocate. Since I have stopped doing that I've enjoyed taking many classes at the senior centers around town. So, my day is quite busy. As a matter fact people often say, "You have moved here to retire but we never see you." And I figure as long as I can do it, I'm up and about. It's just fine and they have buses going to various activities in the evenings so, no complaints.

J: Great.

A: And they have a wonderful library, always the latest books.

J: About how does your family feel about you living there?

A: Well, my daughter who lives in Tampa wanted me to live in Tampa naturally and I

figured no because I think it's time I don't want to be a burden and I don't want her to feel she has to check on me and so forth. She has a very busy life with multiple positions. That was fine. And I have another daughter in Oregon who's much too far for comfort but it's fine. They are pleased that I'm comfortable, happy, secure and taken care of.

J: Good, have they been to visit?

A: Oh yes, yes. My daughter from Tampa, of course it's just about an hour and half ride, she comes over but I go there much more often because it's easier, you know, the college kids and she has jobs and my son-in-law's working. Thankfully I still can drive up to Tampa and spend the night and come back so there's no problem. Yes, they have been here when I moved in. They were kind of taken aback by a different style of living than they were accustomed to seeing me in but they are very happy now because I am safe and secure. I have to tell you the GPS system where they can tell wherever we are at any time is great.

J: Oh.

A: I had occasion to use it, I had occasion to use it and I do have to tell you that the concierge and valet are fabulous. They are right on the spot when you push that button.

J: Good, very good. Now, what kind of advice would you have, since you been through the process of looking around and evaluating, for someone who is just maybe starting in that process? Can you save them any time or make any suggestions to make the process easier?

A: Well, I think you need to see a few units before you decide and I think, as far as I'm concerned, once looking around, anyone – unless they have friends living in a particular retirement community that they feel they want to join, that would be different but I think it takes careful looking, intelligent thinking of what one wants and see what each facility has. If you want friendly people you have it here; if you want beautiful walking grounds you have it here; if you want a high-rise this is not it but who wants to be in a high-rise? It's wonderful to be able to, even in an emergency, if you had to walk down the steps you'd almost be outside. I would tell them to be selective, look around and spend a day or two or an evening to check it out and see what you want to get to meet the people. The first few months are very daunting, they're difficult, you kind of think, "Did I do the right thing?" But I think as you look around and see all the ambience and amenities we have, you can't help but be pleased.

J: Very good.

A: And I tell that to new people. Some hesitate, "I'm not making friends, I'm introverted. What do I do?" You know, you just give it time. It takes a few months but I would encourage people to do what I did. I decided the only way to get my foot in here is to get on the committees and become active and take part. You cannot adjust to a new facility if you just sit in your apartment or go to meals. I find that people are very happy to have you help them out on activities and committees. This has been a wonderful opportunity. It makes you feel good to be alive.

J: That's great. It's interesting when you talk about being introverted. What kind of things does the community do to help someone like that kind of get acclimated; do they sit you with people your first night or introduce you to people? Talk about that.

A: It's the hospitality committee and I think the hospitality committee is all important. You might not want to put this down but the hospitality committee, I think, my feeling,

can make or break people's views of what is going on. They're supposed to take the people to the Tiffany Lounge for the happy hour. I think they take them to dinner once or twice and introduce them to other people. There are no assigned tables but it's difficult for someone moving in and I know some people have said they just are alone, they don't know what to do. So, I think what any facility has to do is really, I think the primary group is the hospitality committee to make people wanted and tell them what to do and how to get around. And then hopefully other residents will do the same. It's a hard move. It's a very hard move especially when you are leaving, I come from Florida but some people are from out-of-state, that must be even more difficult. But I think if the community opened up more and people, if you are assigned someone, take them around, show them what to do, help them along the way, invite them to dinner, get them in with a crowd if you can. That's probably one of the most difficult moves for someone to adjust to I think. I must say fortunately I knew some people living here when I moved in and they were most helpful. But a lot of people come from out of the area and it's very difficult.

J: About the physical move itself, how did you handle that? Did you have help?

A: Senior Moves helped me move. I just turned it over to them. They have some wonderful, wonderful women working for them, outstanding. They just came into the house, they tag everything, they ask you what you want to sell, what you want to give away, what you want to take, what you want to give to consignment shops and they do it all. At the time I had some serious hand surgery so I said, "You are on, I cannot do a thing and that's it." They just did everything, they crated everything and the Larkin Movers brought it here and they put everything in place and they were fantastic. The women working for Senior Moves were wonderful. They were really good.

J: Well, I bet that kind of information is very helpful to people who may be thinking, "Well, I just can't physically manage a move itself." Maybe they don't know places like that exist.

A: It's most important to have, yes.

J: And were they introduced to you by The Fountains?

A: The Fountains recommended Senior Moves. At that point, I haven't seen them around lately but they were the most active group that got things going. Senior Moves and Larkin Movers did everything for me. They were recommended by The Fountains, yes, they were.

J: Well, good. Compare your life today to, you know, a year ago before you moved in. How would you compare the two scenarios?

A: Well, my life before my husband passed away was very active because I wanted to be in the community and do everything and know everyone. Once he passed away I continued my activities but then widows are in a separate category. The friends you had as couples slowly fade away and my life was getting very depressing and very lonely. And although I did a lot of volunteer work and belong to groups, I still felt that I needed to be in a secure environment. I was still in a large house by myself with the alarm system and everything, but they're still, "Oh my goodness, I'm alone and my neighbors are boarded up in the next house." I don't feel that here. And the wonderful thing about The Fountains is if you want privacy, and I am a very private person but a very social person, you can go to your apartment and close the door and sometimes I forget I'm not in a private home. No one bothers you, no one intrudes and yet sometimes I get up and

think, "I don't know if I'm in the greatest mood today." And all you do is get dressed and go down and there's always someone to talk to. But the one thing about The Fountains, people respect your privacy. But they are also open to be with you and talk to you if you choose to do so. It's the best of both possible worlds.

J: Yes, that's what I was going to say. Very good, do you feel that you moved at just about the right time or do you feel like you could have moved a little sooner?

A: I think I moved at the right time. I'm still able to drive, not at night but I'm still able to drive. I'm still able to do things out in the community. I don't think I was quite ready to make that move but when I did, it was the right time. My fear is for people to wait until they cannot enjoy the activities and move around much. It's too bad. As I watch people move in with their walkers and wheelchairs. They can't possibly enjoy the area as much as I can because they can't get around. I think the big mistake people make is not moving in time so they can enjoy the facility as needed.

J: How important was it to you that there was a continuum of care available?

A: Very important. My big regret is, they have assisted living, they don't have full-term living because if someone gets to that point down the road. Hopefully I don't reach that but it's always a fear. It was most important to me that they have the independent living and then assisted living to go to so you don't have to move yourself up. That to me is vital. I appreciate the communities that have all three units, assisted and full-time but not every facility can have that.

J: So, you mentioned that you would have preferred a waterfront view, that's of the lake, what is your view when you look out your apartment windows?

A: Well, I look out at the parking lot.

J: Oh!

A: But there are lots of trees and I don't mind. I see all people walking their dogs. It really isn't bad. I'm on the second floor and I don't have many trees in front of me. That would've been nice but you get accustomed to everything. It's fine.

J: Do you like to walk around the grounds?

A: Oh yes, I'm a walker, absolutely because the acres, that's very important to me to have the space to walk around and do things. They have an exercise room, it's small but it's there. But the grounds are very, very important to me to walk around the outside. Absolutely, I mean, we are in Florida.

J: Described the grounds to someone who has not been there before.

A: Oh, they have 50 some odd acres of flowers and birds and trees. It's just so restful to walk around, not this time of year in Florida but it's very beautiful and restful, it really is. And wherever you look, you see nature. It's magnificent.

J: Wow.

A: It's easy access to, you know, different areas. The high-rises in town that have care units, many of them have limited walking spaces. Some of them are in the main downtown area where you just don't walk but this is, it's country here. I came from the other part of the area about 40 minutes north of here and it was much more built up but here, I'm free. I can walk outside any time, not have to see cars. I can just walk around the grounds and the grounds are beautiful.

J: I've noticed that a lot of people are surprised at learning where The Fountains is because it is kind of tucked away yet it's close to many many conveniences. Can you talk about that for a second?

A: As far as I'm concerned, I lived in the University Park area which is one of the most crowded areas at the moment. It's been built up over the past ten years very commercial and overbuilt. Traffic is very, very uncomfortable. Coming down here it's much more open. You don't have the upscale shopping areas that I had up there but you do have convenient shopping areas. You have Publix all over the place. You have [undecipherable] on your various mall stores. The large shopping area development that was here has folded because, as we know everything is going online; you don't have many needs for department stores anymore but there are small stores, there are conveniences, there are restaurants. It's fine. It's a smaller area but it's much more comfortable and very compact and everything is close by. So, I have no problem with that.

J: You told me you do a lot of volunteer work but I can't remember, did you tell me where you do your volunteer work?

A: I had volunteered for years at Lakewood Ranch Memorial Hospital as a patient advocate.

J: Oh right.

A: I had also volunteered at the Resurrection House as a volunteer, it's a day shelter. I had also helped mentor in the public schools. And I had my finger in a number of private businesses as well where I went in to just consult. And I tend every cultural event in town that I could possibly get to. That keeps me busy. For the past few months I decided I'm going to retire and just do what I want to do.

J: Well, I think you deserve that. Excellent. Can you think of anything else that we didn't talk about that you think might be important for someone to know?

A: The main thing, it's a very friendly place. And people are genuine. No one brags about who they were and what they were unless asked. And the most important thing is no one complains about their illnesses, which really is unique.

J: Yeah.

A: So that's fine. As I said, it takes a while, people have to give them time. It takes a good six months to decide this is what you want. Of course, if someone wants they can leave. It's really fine. I just enjoy it. And as I sit here and talk to you looking out my window even though I'm looking at the parking lot, it's completely private. As far as I was concerned, and the food is just unbelievable.

J: That's good.

A: The chef and the dining room are outstanding. Everyone compares the first year you're here, you know when the college ten, when kids go away to college and gain ten pounds, that's everyone who moves here. It really is.

J: That's a great testament to the quality of the food I suppose.

A: It's wonderful, it's outstanding. It truly is.

J: Well, thank you Ann so very much for your time. I'm sure you have lots of things planned for the rest of the day so I'll let you go and do them.

A: Ok, thank you, good talking to you.

J: You too, thanks again, you take care.

A: Thank you, bye-bye.

J: Bye-bye