

Alice Shaw Interview, August 2017

J: June

A: Alice

J: Hello.

A: Hello there.

J: Hi, is this Alice.

A: Yes, it is.

J: Good afternoon Alice, this is June Hussey in Tucson.

A: Hi June, nice meeting over the phone.

J: Nice to meet you as well and thank you for making time in your day for our interview. I'm going to be letting you do most of the talking in this interview but I'm going to start out by just laying some of the groundwork first off. First of all, I just want you to know that we are recording this conversation so that I don't have to take messy notes and make mistakes. We really want to get your words and sentiments correct.

A: Ok.

J: And secondly, on that note if you should say something that you feel after the fact may be too personal to share, you can just say right then and there in the conversation, "Oops, please don't publish that part" and we we'll make sure we don't, ok?

A: Ok, fine.

J: Ok, very good. And just so you have an understanding of why we do these interviews and what we are after, I'd like to just tell you that we do interview lots of residents not only there at The Fountains at Lake Pointe Woods but all over the country, wherever Watermark has communities and it's really fun for me to get to know all the different people and they're all fascinating to talk to and I'm sure you will be as well. I've read your bio and I'm excited to talk to about all the different places you've lived and so forth. And then, in addition to just getting to know you as a person and letting people know who you are, we will also be asking you questions about your move and how you decided it was time to move, how you went about looking at your various options, why you chose The Fountains and finally what you enjoy now that you are living there and how it compares to life before.

A: Ok, fine.

J: So what we do with all this information that you give us is we share your transcript and we share your sentiments with folks in the area who may just be in the beginning of thinking about their future, maybe they have never thought about a retirement community and maybe they have never set foot inside a retirement community. So, we find that when we share our own residents' experiences with people like that, it opens their eyes and their minds to the possibilities for themselves, ok? So that's basically what we're after and at this point I'm going to let you do most of the talking and if you wouldn't mind, you can start by just introducing yourself, telling me, you know, as much or as little about your life as you would like to share, from where you were born to your occupation, your family, the places you have lived, all that kind of stuff up until the point where you made your move.

A: Ok.

J: So, go right ahead whenever you're comfortable.

A: It might be very boring but I'll start. I was originally from Vermont. Born and raised in Vermont and did a lot of traveling around until I found my spot in Boston where I finally ended up having a job and met my husband there, had my first child there. He was with the E.C. Nielsen company out of Chicago so

we did a lot of traveling and a lot of moving around. And then, let me see, we ended up in Connecticut but he decided to retire at 57. He didn't like the city living compared to Iowa so it's time to retire and move to Florida. So, I've been in Sarasota for 30 years. I love it here. Some days I am thinking it is too hot and where can I go that it's cooler and I can be happy but I can't think of a place without New England and who wants the snow?

J: Right.

A: My husband passed away about 12 years ago so I sold my house in Deer Creek here and bought a condominium at Phillippi Landings. I was there only two and a half years and one day my friend called and she said there was a flyer about The Fountains and she said, "I've never been there." And she knew I had been here visiting here quite a bit for two years so she asked if I would go with her and I said, "Sure, I'd love to." So, the person kept talking to me like I was the one that was interesting coming. I thought, "No, no, I'm not interested, I've never even thought about going to a retirement home." Even though I'm in my 80s no, I'm too young, I'm not ready. But my son happened to be with us and on the way home he said, "Mom, you know what? That is where you should be. You've been at the condominium for two and a half, you have absolutely no friends there, all your friends are at The Fountains. You have met all these wonderful people over the past two years." And I thought, you know what? He's right. I went home that day, came back and put a deposit on a ground floor unit here at The Fountains in April. Anyway moved in the first part of March and I've only been here about five months. And to this day I have not regretted the move. I just love it here. As I say, the people are what makes The Fountains so special. I have a friend, we went all over Sarasota looking at retirement homes before I made this decision and he ended up here and I thought, boy he made the right decision because I'm also here and just love it, except the food is too good. I'm putting weight on and now I'm going have to join the exercise team here but I do enjoy all the programs that they have. I'm not a card player so I don't to any of that but I do like the day trips. They took a trip down to Key West. I enjoy all the traveling that they do without having to drive or plan the events so that is one special thing I do like about The Fountains. As I say, what else can I say? I love it. So far I have no regrets and I plan on this being my very last move.

J: Very good, that's a very complete answer and a complete introduction. I want to ask you to focus a little bit in on when you first sold your house in Deer Creek, your husband had passed away and you decided to move to a condominium. Had you not ever considered retirement community living when you made that first decision?

A: Not at all, no, I was a very young let's say 80-year-old and I just felt young. I figured retirement homes are for elderly people and I wasn't there yet. Who knows but now I know, yes, I'm like everybody else here. I am in that 80-year-old group of people and enjoying them but no, I had never considered retirement community living.

J: Had you ever been to a retirement community like The Fountains before you bought your condo?

A: No, just visiting with my friend while he was looking for a retirement home but no I never even considered it.

J: So, you had a friend that was at The Fountains and then you started visiting and that was kind of your first introduction to The Fountains?

A: Yes, they had me for dinner twice a week and all the people I got to know at The Fountains, they were my friends and I would have cocktail parties and Christmas parties at my condominium and they were my best friends. I still feel very close to them here. I just feel so comfortable and everyone is so friendly. So anyway, what can I say?

J: That's great. So if you think about folks out there who were like you, who were maybe living by themselves in a condo and hadn't ever thought about retirement communities or didn't think they fit in, do you have any advice to give them that might save them some time and anguish?

A: The people I can think of that would be thinking about retirement, the ones I know, are going to where their children now live to be closer to their family when they retire, even though they are in big houses and they should be in retirement centers now, they are not ready like I was not ready, so it's hard to tell people or let them know that, you know, the time is right now. You don't think about it but it's hard to tell anybody. I do have one friend that came over here for one of their Discovery Luncheons and she sounds very interested. I have another friend that I knew from Iowa 45 years ago and also has signed up to come to The Fountains because I'm here. Little by little. Another friend from Deer Creek, they're coming here from around the Rosedale area. It's a lot of word-of-mouth I think, too, when they find friends they're anxious to come too.

J: Well, it does help to know somebody. That's why we like to send out these invitations for people who may not already know someone. They can come and meet people, feel a little more comfortable. Tell me about your son, Brad, does he live in the area or does he live up north?

A: He lives up in Indian Rocks Beach which is close to (inaudible).

J: My grandparents used to live there. I used to go there all the time and visit them.

A: Oh really?

J: From when I was living in Connecticut, I love that town.

A: I lived in Bethel, Connecticut for a few years.

J: Yes, I see that and you are from Vermont where I have been many, many times as well so we have a lot in common.

A: As a matter of fact, your name seems so familiar but I can't place it. I don't think our paths have crossed but your name sounds so familiar.

J: Well, there are a lot of Hussey's in New England.

A: Maybe that's it then.

J: So anyway, your son is not too far from you then, do you get to see each other much?

A: We talk on the phone every single day, my daughter-in-law and granddaughter are coming tonight to stay with me, tonight and tomorrow night they have sort of a business down here so they're tying it all together to keep in touch with me. I see my son at least two or three times a month so it's nice having him close but not right next door.

J: Well, and a lot of people do, like you mentioned, some of your friends are thinking of moving back to wherever their kids are. What was it for you that made you want to be independent of your family and close but still independent?

A: Oh boy, that's just me, I need my independence. I was married for 47 years and after that I just became me. It was time for me. I have been on my own for 12 years and I have no desire to get married again, I just love my independence and freedom to go and do as I please and my family also likes that that I am independent and do things my way.

J: That's great. So, tell me about your apartment you selected on the ground floor, describe it.

A: It's a two-bedroom two-bath, dining, living area. And I turned the second bedroom into a den so when the kids come down they have a pullout sofa in there so they have a place to sleep. They have a nice patio out on the back of the apartment and the sunroom. So, I live in the sunroom so I can look out on the patio and see all my flowers and plants and I still like it's very private. I love it, I can't explain it. I'm right near the front entrance going in so I don't feel like, I have a little courtyard out there. I feel very private here. Nobody can really look in but I see people and cars going by now and then but it's not

busy. It's just a nice and quiet and peaceful apartment and I love it. But I did lie when I got a ground floor apartment because the marketing gal was showing us an apartment up on the third floor, I guess it was available, that my friend was interested in seeing. Well, as they say on the way down they keep saying, "Well, Alice, what you think about this?" I'm not ready yet besides I would have to have a ground floor because I have a dog. She says, "Oh, let me show you one." I thought oh my gosh, I just lied. I don't have a dog. So, she soon showed me this apartment and I fell in love with it. That's what my son said, "That apartment is for you. It's on the ground floor, you get a view, you are not looking at the treetops." But truthfully, I do take care of my dog, I've had him for two weeks so it really wasn't a complete lie. He will go home for the weekend so I will have more independence then.

J: So, it sounds like your son was a factor, his feelings were a factor in your decision.

What do you think that your son liked for you about The Fountains?

A: Mostly because my friends were here. I've had two falls before, not my fault, one the sliding door was opened and the wind pushed the other door and pushed me out onto the front walkway onto the cement. The time I was ushering at the Oslo and I hadn't had lunch and the ushers cannot sit and it was a sold-out performance so I hadn't had lunch and I passed out going to my car after the performance. So that wasn't my fault really either because I didn't have a chance to eat lunch. But those are the two falls and that's when my son said, "Mom, I'm way up here 80 miles away." And he'd feel so much more comfortable if I'm there, if I fall, that somebody can pick me up and they'd know who I am. That was a major decisions too. I realize I'm not 39 anymore. You're getting up there and you do need help now and then.

J: Did you look at any other retirement communities before you make your final decision to come to The Fountains?

A: No, I did not because I had been with my friend and I'd seen them all with him so I knew that none of them were for me.

J: So, you had seen them.

A: This is it. You walk in and you just know it. That's why my friends are coming here. They did the same thing. They looked all over Sarasota and they are coming here.

J: Excellent. Talk about a typical day for you. Are you involved in some of the things that are going on besides the meals?

A: Good question, not really, I have A-fib for one thing so by the time I walk down to the exercise room I've had my exercise already. I just go to the lectures and the town hall meetings. I'm busy but doing what I don't know. I love to go shopping by myself, I don't care to have somebody else following me around but yeah, I just enjoy my quiet time to myself. I do a lot of reading and I've been going to the movies over here. They really have some great flicks over here in the cinema. So, I'm doing those but I'm kind of a quiet person actually. I don't really need a lot of activity in my life. I'm just kind of quiet. I don't play cards, used to but I don't anymore but it's here for anybody that wants to be active. I thought, oh my Lord, today in the dining room they got mah-jongg going on all day long. There's no way I could sit all day and play mah-jongg, I'd go bonkers. I love it. Everyone has their own specialties of things they like to do and people here, there a lot of bridge players. I used to play bridge and I thought "ehh", had enough of that. I like gameplayers like Bingo and Trivial Pursuit, anything in the evening that they happen to provide here, activities. That's about it.

J: It sounds like you are content having options and doing what you want to do.

A: Yes, and nobody bugs you or anything. They include you to go for dinner and to do things, but they don't feel hurt if you say, "No, I don't really feel like doing that" or something. Everybody kind of just leaves you alone, leaves you up to your own pace of things you want to do here, too.

J: Now, back your bio that I'm looking at. I see that when you were younger you worked at Lake George, what did you do at Lake George?

A: Pardon?

J: What was your job there?

A: I first started at a dude ranch. I went as a bookkeeper and all the young people were downstairs in the dining room, here I am up in an office all day, they are at the beach and I thought, that's not fair so I said, "Can I become a waitress?" And they said, "Sure." So, I became a waitress and that started my fun career of going from New York. Then I also spent a couple years working at the Fort William Henry Hotel there as a switchboard operator. I did such crazy stuff. Then I got into the hotel circuit of going down to Daytona Plaza Hotel and worked there for a couple years. Then I went to The Breakers and worked there until I finally decided it's time to settle down and that's when I went to Boston and met my husband.

J: Ah.

A: But it wasn't ready until I was 27 years old, I was just enjoying life too much, you know?

J: You were having too much fun, weren't you?

A: I wasn't ready to settle down but I did, finally. All my friends were getting married and I thought, "Alice, just bite the bullet and do it. It can't be all that bad, everybody is doing it." I had a good life.

J: How did you and Roger meet?

A: Actually, he was from Maine and my roommate was from Maine and he was a basketball player and she was a cheerleader so he found out that Nancy, the cheerleader, was living in Boston and I happened to be her roommate that, she was never there and I was and we just kind of hit it off. That's how that all happened, very quickly. Met in February, got engaged in June and married in October.

J: Wow, that's a quick romance.

A: 47 years it went on, you know when the right one comes along I think and when you are ready.

J: Sort of like a retirement community, you know when the right one comes along when you're ready.

A: You got it.

J: Well, listen I think that we have covered all the bases that I can think of unless you can think of anything else that you'd like to add or you think is important for people to know.

A: I just can't think of anything, it's such an individual personal thing to move into a retirement center but I knew it was the right time for me at this time. Last year I would've said "no." This year it's time and I'm glad I made the decision. I think it's the right one.

J: Very good, ok, thanks Alice I really appreciate all your time in your thoughts and everything. It's been a pleasure speaking with you today.

A: The same with you June.

J: Take care, have fun.

A: Ok, will do.

J: Bye now.

A: Bye now.