

Harvey and Betsy Hinrichs Interview, November 2017

J: June

H: Harvey

B: Betsy

J: Hello.

B: Hi.

J: Hi, this is June Hussey. Who do I have here?

S: This is Sydney from Lake Pointe Woods.

J: Hi, how are you?

S: I'm good, how are you?

J: Very well, thanks.

S: I'm here with Harvey and Betsy Hinrichs. I'm going to step out and leave you guys to it.

J: Perfect, thank you very much.

B: Hi June, this is Betsy.

J: Hi Betsy, how are you? Can you hear me ok?

B: Yes, very much so. I took my hearing aid off. And my husband, Harvey is sitting across from me.

H: I'm on the phone.

J: Great, it's nice to meet both of you. How is the weather there in Sarasota today?

H: Beautiful.

J: It's always beautiful, right?

H: Not quite. The sun is shining, it's probably 81 or 82 or something like that.

B: Enough for him to play golf, he just got home.

J: Perfect, well, thanks for carving out some time in your busy day for the interview. We really appreciate it.

B: Well, it's fine.

J: Before we get started I just wanted to go over a couple of things. The first is we are recording this conversation so that we can come up with an accurate transcript I always like to tell people that if they should happen to say something along the way that may be is too personal they don't want to share with the world just say so right in conversation. Just say, "Please don't publish this part." And we will make sure we don't, ok?

B: You needn't worry about us on that.

H: Where are you going to publish it?

J: Well, that was the next thing I was going to tell you.

So, what we do generally with these interviews, and I've conducted many many of them not only at Lake Pointe Woods but around the country at other Watermark Communities, what we do with the information is we first of all, publish the transcript online so that people who are curious about retirement community living can go online if they want to hear the interview, read the entire interview, they can do that. But then we also take bits and pieces, kind of condense it into a direct mail postcard that goes out to people in the area who may be just in the beginning of thinking of their future and maybe they haven't started looking around. We try to include information from your standpoint as far as how you went about looking for your retirement community and why and when, how it's worked out,

that kind of thing.

B: Ok.

J: So that's the purpose. We are really just going to be after your particular story. You know everyone has their own story to tell and the more of the stories we tell, the more people we can connect with.

B: Ours was not very complicated because we didn't even go anywhere else looking.

J: Well, why don't we start by having you both, I like to just get to know you first, so why don't you take turns just introducing yourself and tell me, you know, where you're from and a little bit about your lives, your family, maybe where you worked or some of your hobbies, anything that you would like to share. And then we will get into more specifics about your move.

B: Ok.

J: So, go right ahead whichever one wants to start.

B: I'll do it. Really, we were not thinking about doing this but Harvey and I both had a rough winter here and our friends were after us to move into someplace like this, a place where we would be taken care of and not alone. And one friend, very close friend particularly said, "Why don't you go ahead and go to The Fountains?" And we have been here in Sarasota since 1993. I'm embarrassed to say it but we had no idea where The Fountains or what it was because it is so beautifully hidden kind of in here. And we came, made an appointment and decided to do it. We made an appointment and the person that we met, well the wonderful thing was that there is this wonderful gatekeeper here and he stepped off the curb, pointed his finger at us and said, "Here comes Harvey and Betsy, they're going to be living with us." Just right then the warm greeting and the way he handled it I knew that this was probably it, although we have quite a few of these in Sarasota. And we met with Dawn and she gave us a little tour. She and I particularly clicked so we left and told her that we would go home and think about it and then call her. So, I called her early that next day and she said, "Why don't you come over and let's look?" We have a Westie Highland Terrier we did not want to let Toby go so we asked if we could bring him, "Yes, you can." So, we came over and looked at the one that they had available and we said, "Ok, this is it." We have one of the smaller ones; one bedroom and the living room and we've got a couch kind of dividing us to a dining area. We've had many compliments on the way we've decorate it so that helped. I'll be honest, when I went up and saw one of the big, beautiful ones, because we always had big houses, I came back down and I said, "Harvey, I'm not so sure I can do this." But we did it and already had everything in. The Fountains helped us with a very good Realtor. We sold our house before we moved, within two weeks, I think. Then they helped us with a moving company that was very, very good and very, very nice people to work with. And so that's how we got here. And they had a kind of gathering as they do the week before we came, we moved in. I'm a people person and the warmth and energy that I felt when we walked in, I knew that we were doing the right thing. We've been here almost two months and haven't regretted it one minute. And with Toby here with us we are satisfied with the smaller one because we've got a backdoor and he goes out there and sits and watches the world go by, like he likes to do. So that's how we got here and we are very satisfied and that's about it.

J: Well, great. Harvey, do you have anything you would like to add?

H: I've got to correct one thing. We did not sell our house in two weeks. It took all of two

months.

B: That's ok.

J: It probably just seemed like weeks to Betsy.

H: The location is great because we've been a member of TPC, Prestancia Golf Community. We used to live there and it's all of about a mile away so we are still members there. And I get to play golf with their old group two and three days a week. It's convenient in that regard.

J: So, why don't we go back a little bit further and tell me about how did you end up in Sarasota in 1993, where did you move from?

H: We moved from Minnesota, Twin Cities area. My brother and I owned a company up there. We manufactured garage doors. Then we also had three retail outlets in the Twin City area. So, he had some health problems so we sold it probably before we should have because I was only 55 at the time which was kind of a young retirement. So anyway, we did, like I say, we sold the company and our accountant pointed out that maybe we should consider moving into a state that didn't have an income tax before we took the money from the sale.

J: That was good advice.

H: We decided on Florida. We had been to Florida a few times but we were pretty sure we didn't want to live on the East Coast and we ended up on Gulf Coast and it's great.

J: How did you pick Sarasota of all the places on that coast to settle down in?

B: Ok, I can tell this. It was my 60th birthday and we drove down and my sister lived in the Atlanta area and she had a little dinner party for me. And this former flight attendant, when we met her, she said, "Where are you all going in Florida?" So I said, "I guess we're going to go to Naples because dear friends of ours in Sarasota are going." But they never did; they're still there. And she just walked away and didn't say another word so at the end of the evening she came back and she said to me, "Betsy, I've been watching you all evening and you don't need to be in Naples, you need to be in Sarasota. She got us a Realtor and we came on down and haven't regretted it all.

J: So, she just sensed that you would fit in best in Sarasota?

B: Right.

J: And I understand that you're an opera lover, is that right?

B: Yeah, I had never even been to an opera until we came here and the new friends that we met kept insisting that we should go to the opera. And I said, "I don't know anything about opera, I've never seen one." And finally, one of the friends called and said, "Betsy get your clothes on I'm going to pick you up and we're going to the opera guild." Then I became president of the opera guild. And then I was a member of the big board for 13 years. And Sarasota Opera is noted as one of the best in the world. I loved working there but physically now I'm just not up to it.

J: And so, you bought a house on the golf course, did you say, the TPC course?

H: We built one there. That wasn't the first house we bought. We build it after living here, we moved here in '93, we built the house in '94. Anyway, we lived in Prestancia for like 17 years. Then we went back to Minnesota briefly for four years, to family and grandchildren and so forth. But the grandchildren are getting a little older and they have things to do that don't include grandma and grandpa.

B: They started playing hockey and in Minnesota nothing comes before hockey so we came right back down here.

J: Well, the weather is little milder in Florida.

B: Yeah but I love snow. I was born in a snowstorm in Mississippi. Daddy had to walk to get to the doctor and he had to walk to get me into the world.

J: Wow, I never knew it snowed in Mississippi.

B: Oh yeah, I lived very near Memphis and there's a band of weather that comes through there quite often.

J: Well, I learned something new today.

B: I'm glad I taught you something.

H: They're known more for their ice than their snow but they have both.

J: Interesting. Betsy, you said something earlier that I wanted to circle back on and that is that you've lived in Sarasota for more than 20 years but had never seen or heard of The Fountains. That is something that I've heard many people say and it's because it's in a hidden little corner. It's near everything but nobody knows that it's back there, right?

B: Yeah and we went by The Fountains all the time because it's on 41 and Beneva but I think that's part of the beauty of it because it is well-kept. When you get in here and see how beautiful it is, by far the prettiest one in town.

J: Well, it sure is I have been there and it's like living in a little nature preserve, isn't it?

H: It's 53 acres which is kind of nice. It's got a lot of room to walk our dogs and stuff. It seems like the trend now is going more to high-rise type buildings as opposed to spread out on a big campus like this one is.

J: And did you say you didn't look at any other place or did you look around?

B: No, we did not.

H: No, our friend had been looking for a few months and have been to a few places. We have friends that live in one that's not too far from here and we've been there many times but we kind of made our mind up we didn't want to go to that one, so anyway.

J: So, why don't you just describe for people who have never seen The Fountains just like you'd never seen it, what was it that appealed to you when you first drove in and saw it for the first time. Do you remember?

B: Yeah, I can tell. It's very well-kept. It looks good. It's inviting. I tell you, David at the gate is a hundred percent the best gatekeeper I've ever seen. He has made it very warm. In fact, he thinks Toby just runs the world. Having been in job positions that I was, and I was around a lot of people and a lot of circumstances, as I say, the first night we came to that greeting we were overcome with the hospitality committee and the warmth of it, of which I'm now a member.

J: Good.

B: The help here in every area is just remarkable. I haven't met a single one that wasn't very nice and pleasant. I'm sold on the place.

J: That's great. Take me back, we didn't talk about your earlier lives, how did you two first meet?

H: It's been a few years

B: It will be 30 very soon.

H: I had lost my wife and Betsy was single too. Somehow or another, that was before internets and all that good stuff. We each ended up from different directions of a dating service, that's how we met. That was before computers and internet dating and all that good stuff.

J: Do you have kids from previous relationships?

B: I was married to a Methodist minister and we had three sons. The oldest is 61, we lost the middle son and our youngest son is now 55. Then after our divorce, which he asked for, and it came out of the blue but I'm very grateful for it now. And I've been a national trainer for a wonderful company in Minneapolis. I was also one of the first, if not the first patient advocate in a large hospital. And then when I was married to my first husband, I was a teacher of the second grade. And then when Kennedy put in special education, I was asked to teach that and I did. I had the same class for three years that was in Richmond, Virginia. It's been a full time really.

H: I only had the one child, a son. He's married and has two children, the boys, both boys. They are living in the Minneapolis area. They have lived there all their lives, they love it, I guess.

J: Do they ever get down, your kids and grandkids, to visit?

H: Oh yeah, at least once year they come down for a week or so.

B: Pardon me but when we called Rick, who is my oldest son, 61, he said, he didn't like it and he said, "Mom are you sure you're going to a good place that will be able to take care of you and Harvey?" And I said, "Yes, I think it's number one on the list. We are very satisfied that it is." And then after we got moved in we hadn't been here two or three weeks and Rick called, he's a very successful businessman, and said, "I'm coming down to look this place over." Well, he came down and we rented one of the rooms and he was sold on the place and so he's coming back for Thanksgiving and he asked for the same room. Well, I went down to the concierge desk and they said, "Oh Betsy those places are rented from year-to-year by the same people." So, Rick is going to stay in a hotel.

J: And will you have Thanksgiving right there at The Fountains?

B: Yes, in fact we are going have it in the apartment.

J: Nice, now, we didn't talk about the cooking situation and the dining service. Do you enjoy cooking still?

B: No.

J: No.

B: Just flat no.

H: Anyway, we are on the meal plan so we could eat dinner here seven nights a week but it seems that it works out that we take a couple nights a week off for various reasons. And we still have friends in the area so we either get out or they come here and so forth.

J: So sometimes you entertain and sometimes you go out to your favorite restaurants?

H: Not really no, we just take a deep breath because the meals here are too big and filling and I don't want to gain 30 pounds.

J: Sometimes the food can be too good, huh?

H: Yeah it can and the wine flows freely a lot of times so that may or may not be a good thing too.

J: Well, what kind of advice do you have out there for couples that may be in a similar situation of wanting to look ahead and situate themselves as you have done? Do you have any advice to offer as far as going through the process and maybe time-saving advice?

H: Probably not but there is one thing. Somebody has to consider if something happened to one of us, our kids are all up north so who is going to help take care of the

one that is left? So, anyway, by making this move ourselves and selling our home. it saves them a big headache sometime in the future. Anyway, that's something to think about, I guess.

J: Right and Betsy you said that friends had urged you to make this move, is it something that you two had discussed amongst yourselves beforehand?

B: No, it did not even enter our mind but Harvey and I both had some health challenges all winter.

H: It was summer.

B: No.

H: Winter and spring.

B: This very close friend really helped us out with food, would bring food over and things like that. So, when we came and saw this, it all just came together. As I sit here looking at our little place, you know, I'm very satisfied and it's a good feeling to know that physically, if we need help, it's right around the corner. And if Harvey were to, God forbid, leave me, then I'd be comfortable here. I really like, as I said, I'm really a people person and we've got so many people here that I'm enjoying and comfortable with. I like the thought that I wouldn't have to be alone all the time.

J: Well, there are so many couples out there that don't have those conversations and don't kind of think ahead, as you have done. I hope that those folks who get this mailer might think, "Maybe we ought to start thinking about that and go take a look at our options, too."

B: I was asked by Beth, I don't know what they call those, the meetings of people who are interested, and she said, "Betsy would you be on the podium as a new person?" I never back off from doing anything like that so I have done that and then encouraged people that day. Then last week, Beth asked Harvey and me to sit at a table with people who were interested. It was a good experience and I just told Sydney, "I think there's one of them that really would come here." She's a new widow and has no children. Quite frankly I really encouraged her to come. And she was really impressed with it and I said, "Now, if you decide to come, be sure to give me a call and I'll do everything I can to help you."

J: Isn't that nice. Well, I think we've covered almost everything I can think of, unless there is something else you think people ought to know.

B: Now, we have a dear friend that just moved this weekend up to Bradenton. He has Alzheimer's and she had a terrible experience with the moving company. Juanita has got more on her plate than she can handle right now and she didn't need that and she said, "Oh, I wish I used the one you used." And I would recommend them to anybody.

J: What was it called, do you remember?

B: Larkin Moving Company.

J: So, you would recommend them? Good.

B: Oh yes, and they were the nicest young people. Like the company I was talking to the owner of it and I said, "Will you be coming for us to meet you?" And he said, "Oh no, I've got a new baby, I'm going home." And then the kids took it over from there and they would call, a very nice young man was in charge and he said, "We will be there at 8 o'clock on the morning that we move." The doorbell rang at 8 o'clock and then another company, Sue Ellen's Senior Movers, came and packed, just did everything. It was remarkable. I've never seen anything like clockwork like that.

J: That must've been a big relief because the thought of moving really is a turnoff for many people, surely from the physical aspect of it, so it's nice to know that there are companies like that that will make it very turnkey.

B: The one thing that was hard was deciding on, we've always had big houses, we had to get rid of a lot of furniture, in fact two vans. But Harvey arranged to have an estate sale and we've already done well with that.

J: Oh good, that's good advice too. Ok, any last words from you Harvey?

H: Not really, I guess unless you've got any other questions, I don't know what it would be.

J: Alright, well, I think that you've shared a great deal of good information that will be very helpful to people so I appreciate that very much. I know that you have things on your calendar to do so I will say thank you and let you go do those things.

B: Let me ask you, where are you?

J: I am in Tucson, Arizona.

B: That's headquarters, isn't it?

J: Right and it's a beautiful sunny day here just like it is there.

B: I bet it's a little bit warmer though.

J: It's about the same.

B: Oh, is it?

H: Let me ask you a question, how many facilities like this does Watermark have?

J: I believe the number is 52.

H: 52, around the country?

J: Yes, in something like 20 or 21 different states.

H: Ok, just curious.

B: Are you interested in Minnesota at all, in the Minneapolis area?

J: I'm sure that they are always looking so I don't think any territory is out of the question.

B: Weather might scare some people off because it does get rough sometimes.

J: Not to the natives.

B: It was nice talking to you.

J: Natives are used to it, right?

B: Oh yeah.

J: Alright, you too. It's been a pleasure getting to know you both. I thank you once again for taking the time to have this interview with us today.

B: We appreciate doing it.

J: Thanks again and you have a great rest of your day.

B: Ok.

J: Bye now.