

Bob and Paula Crean Interview, February 2016.

This transcript documents the full interview, with edits by request of Bob and Paula Crean.

B: Bob

P: Paula

J: June

J: Hello.

P: Hello.

J: Hi, is this Paula?

P: This is Paula Crean, is this June Hussey?

J: It sure is. How are you?

P: I'm very well. So, we're connected.

J: Yes and is Bob there with you or is it just you?

P: I just asked him to pick up.

J: Ok.

B: Hello.

J: Hi Bob, it's June Hussey here in Tucson. How are you?

B: Fine, thank you.

J: Good. Well, I want to thank you both for participating in this conversation this morning or this afternoon. And before we get started I just want to remind you that this phone call is being recorded so we can have an actual transcript of the interview. But along with that if you should say something along the way that you don't want to make public just say, "Oh, can you scratch that part from the transcript?" And we can go ahead and do that, ok?

P: Thank you, yes.

J: Ok, very good. So as you probably were told we do these interviews with residents of Watermark Communities all over the country and we love to hear everybody's personal story as to how they made their own decision to come and live at a retirement community, what was going through their minds at the time, why they did it when they did it, those kinds of things, for the purpose of sharing it with other folks out there who may be just starting the process. We think they find that very helpful. So, that's what my questions will be based around but as we converse feel free to chime in anything you think would be of interest to folks like that, ok?

P: Ok.

J: Ok, well let me start by asking, when did you first move to The Watermark at East Hill?

B: August 20th of last year.

J: Ok, so about seven or eight months ago.

P: I think it's five. It's August 20th of 2015. On January 20th it was exactly five months.

J: Ok, very good and where had you been living just before your move?

B: Before we moved we were living in our home in Watertown, Connecticut where we had lived for 43 years.

J: Gosh and you were both born in Waterbury which is close by too, right?

B: That's correct.

P: Right.

J: Wow, so you're native Nutmeggers.

P: We are.

J: As am I.

P: No kidding, where June?

J: I grew up in southern Connecticut right along the Long Island Sound there.

P: Yeah, wonderful, along the shore, no kidding. As you said, we've been here all our lives and that's one of the, we feel we have the best of both worlds living here at The Watermark because not only it is only 12 miles, approximately 12 miles from Watertown where we lived for 43 years but it's very close to Waterbury where we have our base, our family and our longstanding friends are still there. And now we're making wonderful new friends here from all over the country.

J: Yeah, so the folks there at The Watermark are, as you said, from all over the country. Do you think that most people have family in the area? Is that why they end up there?

B: Most of the other residents are in the area because a child lives close by.

J: I see.

B: They've moved from distant places to be close to their children.

J: Right.

P: Yes.

J: And so tell me what it was like to move out of a house where you had been living for 43 years? Was that difficult?

B: To say the least.

J: Did you have good help, I hope?

P: Yes, yeah, we did. And it was something we had been contemplating for a long time so I had started cleaning out the attic years ago in anticipation of someday. We knew we didn't want to stay there forever.

J: Was it a large house?

B: It was a very large house, ten rooms, four bedrooms.

J: Oh my.

B: And we raised our family there and it didn't owe us anything because we got a lot of use out of it for all those years.

P: It was a wonderful place. We had 2 acres of land. We had a lot of privacy but the management, even though we couldn't physically do the yard work anymore and heavy work that we used to do, just even managing hiring other people to do that work became a chore.

J: Yes, that's very, very common, we hear that a lot. So those are the kind of reasons why you started to think about making a move and how did you decide where you were going to move? Did you look at other places or did you always know you wanted to go to The Watermark?

P: We looked at other places, several other places.

J: And so what was it about The Watermark that felt right to you?

P: Well, as we went around we did stay within a radius of about 20 miles from our original home base. We wanted to be a little further west of Waterbury rather than going further east because our two daughters live, one in southwestern Connecticut in Easton, Connecticut. That's not far from Fairfield maybe you know the area.

J: I've heard of it.

P: Yes and the other daughter is near New York City so we wanted this area and we liked very much what they offered here. We did look at other continuing care retirement communities. There's one right down the street called Pomperaug Woods that we also considered. And we also considered regular condos; you are familiar with Heritage Village probably.

J: Yes, yes and so in the end, what was it that made you think this is the place for us?

B: Well, we were very interested in a unit at Heritage Village and we nearly purchased it but our daughters talked us out of it because they said, "Why move twice? If something happens to one of you, then the other one isn't going to be able to stay in Heritage Village by themselves probably." So we thought about that and it made sense to us and so that's what made the change to Watermark.

J: So how do your kids feel about you being there now?

B: They're delighted.

P: They're thrilled.

B: They're very happy.

P: They're very happy. Our older daughter is a speech pathologist and she is familiar with what goes on in rehab facilities and she even had a friend who, years ago, used to be on the marketing team here at The Watermark in Southbury and so she was familiar with this particular community, our older daughter was. Even though her friend has since moved on to other employment but our daughter knew this building. We weighed and measured. As my husband said, we nearly did buy a place in Heritage Village but when we compared the two, June, we realized that there were so many activities here and you never have to go outside to get to them. Whereas in Heritage Village, it's a lovely condo community and people like it but you have to either get in your car or take a long walk to go to the gym or the pool or this club or that club or whatever. And here there so many wonderful activities and you never even have to put on your coat.

J: That sounds nice in the wintertime.

P: It certainly is. We found that this made sense to have an all-inclusive under one, altogether not only the physical therapy facilities but if we ever needed further care. So that was a big consideration for us.

B: What we could not tell beforehand and what we found out after we moved here was how wonderful the other residents are. They're very friendly. I wasn't here an hour working on unpacking when one of the other residents was inviting me to dinner.

J: Nice.

B: They're very very nice, very sociable, very pleasant.

P: Yeah, that really is lovely.

J: That's great.

P: We were made to feel very welcome and not only by the move-in coordinator who is a huge help, Dorothy Young, but Bob said the other residents, we feel like we can make very good friends here.

J: And how long would you say did it take for you to get acclimated and really feel like you were home?

B: Well, actually from day one everybody on the staff and the other residents were so pleasant and welcoming that we felt comfortable right off the bat.

J: Well that's good. Because I believe that's probably a big fear. I don't know if you've had that fear of fitting in or feeling at home but I think for other people, that's one of the

reasons they wait so long.

P: True, change is always difficult. Everyone is reticent to make that. It's a whole sea of change. A lot of our friends have told us that they think they're giving up their privacy because this is community living that our friends as well as we did for 43 years were insulated by all these trees and all this privacy around our house. You weren't accountable to anyone but we feel that we have that here. Our apartment is very ample and roomy and we never hear a sound. It's very quiet here. Everyone is very considerate and although it is community living it's kind of like living in a big hotel you know where the treatment, the gratuities and the other amenities are so amazing that you don't ever feel that there is any imposition on you at all. I love not having to cook dinner every night or a big meal. The food here is good and we enjoy very much going to the dining room and sitting with other very pleasant, interesting people and socializing that way every night. That made us feel very at home.

J: That's nice to hear so you participate in the meal program obviously. What other programs do you engage in that you are enjoying there?

B: Well, there is an exercise program that meets several times a week and we participate in that. And also from time to time there are trips organized by the staff here to various places, restaurants, museums, shows and we take those when we can.

P: My husband even got a hole in one last week, June. They have organized an indoor putting every winter in the common area, a group of people have organized putting, recreational thing and so we started doing that and that's a lot of fun. It's comical and it's fun. They are going to start a bowling, Wii bowling.

J: Oh yeah, that's fun.

P: We're going to participate in that but what I like very much, in fact it's starting right now, there is a lecture going on in the auditorium and at least once or twice a week there are talks given by either outside experts or some of the residents who are experts in a particular field and they put on these educational type programs and I love that.

B: We also attend when we can yoga and tai chi.

J: I love tai chi.

B: When we can.

P: Yeah, when we can. You love tai chi? I never thought, June, that my husband would actually enjoy going to yoga and tai chi but he does and there are you know the other people that go with us make us feel like we're part of the group. It's good for us physically and emotionally.

J: Right, so thinking back to when you were in your house it sounds like quite a different lifestyle that you're leading now.

P: Well yes, although we haven't given up our friends of long standing. As I say, we feel we have the best of both worlds. We still are able to participate in our children and our grandchildren's activities. Which we always did even in our privately owned house. I drive and it's convenient for us to get anywhere. But it's easier living. Every other week a wonderful cleaning person comes in and gets your apartment very clean. The laundry is done for you every week. As I said the meals, so yes it's different but it is different in a positive way.

J: Good

P: I haven't found any big disadvantages here. To me it's just the opposite.

J: Great.

B: People say, "Do you like it there?" And I answer, "What's not to like?"

P: He does. That's exactly what he says, June.

J: I love it.

P: Yeah, he does. He does say that.

J: Well, what kind of advice might you share with other couples who may be in their family home and thinking to themselves, "I can't even imagine lifting my finger to begin to clean the attic out" and therefore may miss out on a great opportunity? What would you say to kind of kick start their process?

B: One thing you learn when you go through this process is that you don't need all the furniture and furnishings that you have in your big home. You can get by very well on three or four rooms' worth of furniture rather than ten.

P: Yes and another thing I said, which is why as I told you early on that I started years ago cleaning out the attic, is that the longer you wait the more difficult it is physically for our bodies. My husband and I are in our mid-70s now and the longer you procrastinate the physically harder it's going to be. To us a move was inevitable. And the reason we wanted to do it now, June, is that we wanted to get to a community, become acclimated, make new friends and participate for many productive years in good health so we could enjoy ourselves. We did not want to wait until we were so debilitated if that ever happens, I hope not but we didn't want to wait until we were too old to really appreciate or enjoy or participate in some place like this. To me you miss that window of opportunity. What I would recommend to couples who are on the fence is that they try visiting the communities. Here at The Watermark they have what's called a trial stay. The marketing department sets up the couple or single person, many are single, we've met them, to stay for a day or two or up to a week and they can go to the dining room, mingle with the residents, talk to people, participate in the activities. I would highly recommend that couples who are on the fence do that. Start looking around and enlist the help of your children, grandchildren, friends to divest yourself of things that although they're emotionally you might feel tied to them, as Bob just said, you realize later you could do very well without them.

J: Right, that's great advice. Bob do you have anything to add to that?

B: I really don't.

J: And do you feel like you moved at the right time of your life?

B: Yes, oh yes I do.

J: Very good. Well, that's about all the questions that I had written down. If there's nothing else that you can think of that we didn't cover, is there anything that you wanted to say that I forgot to ask?

P: No, I do want to ask you about the written transcripts they're going to be placed on a website or how are we going to get to see something about a postcard that I think I read that we might be able to look over. "Residents have the opportunity to look at the mailers before they are finalized." How will that work now, June?

J: Ok, well, first of all the transcript of the recording will get put into words and that will be posted on the website. But from the transcript we will select different quotes and passages from this conversation and present it in a mailer. You will have the opportunity to review that and make sure it all looks the way you want and says the things that you meant to say. From there it will be sent out.

P: Nice, what is the timeframe on all this, how long does this take to process from the

transcript and the mailer and all that?

J: I will say it will all be unfolding in the next couple of months.

P: In the next two months. That's wonderful. Do you have the address you can give me of the website or is that something we will learn later?

J: I don't have it offhand but you will certainly be given that when the time comes when it gets put up.

P: That's wonderful.

J: And then you can share with all your friends.

P: Yes, because we live so close this is another advantage as far as marketing for this Watermark at Southbury is that we do have many friends our age and they've been coming here to visit us. And they're highly impressed.

J: Good.

P: Because some people when they hear the word continuing care, and there is an attached skilled nursing facility, and there is assisted living, and there is memory care, they are frightened. They think you're moving to a nursing home. They think you're moving to some institution, some horrible place and you'll have a little rocking chair and you'll look out the window at the parking lot. When they come here it's so wonderful.

J: Exactly, exactly so we certainly appreciate your help in spreading that word out there. That's always the challenge for us marketing folks, is to overcome those images people have in their minds.

P: Yes, true. Thank you for your time, June.

J: Oh thank you both so very much. I'm really happy to have met you and glad that you are happy there at The Watermark. You have a great afternoon.

B: Thank you.

P: You too. Bye-bye.

J: Alright, take care, bye-bye.