

Joann Johnson Interview, August 2017

J: June

A: Joann

J: Hello.

A: Hello. Is this June?

J: Yes, it is, this is June Hussey in Tucson. How are you?

A: I'm good, how are you?

J: Good. I didn't hear you on the line. Did you just join or have you been waiting for me?

A: I just joined about 30 seconds ago.

J: Ok, great, nice to meet you JoAnn.

A: Thank you, same to you.

J: I don't know if they had a chance to kind of go over sort of the ground rules on this but I will be happy to do so.

A: Well, I do have information, written information here that I have looked at so I think I have an idea.

J: Ok, very good, see you know that we are recording this conversation? And along those lines if you should happen to blurt out something that might be too personal to share, you don't want to make public to say right then and there say, "Please don't publish this part." Ok?

A: Ok, sure.

J: And then you've read about the purpose for the interview and I'll just kind of go over that quickly. We do a lot of these interviews with residents not only at your community but at all the Watermark Communities around the country. First of all, I just love doing it I just love getting to know all the different people and it's really a pleasure for me but also, we do because it really, we have found helps people who may not have ever set foot in a retirement community and really don't know where to begin. So, by sharing your story and you know kind of the steps you took to get to where you are it kind of opens people's minds to the possibility that maybe they can do that themselves. So that's about it. I'm going to let you do most of the talking now and I'm going to let you start by just introducing yourself, anything that you would like people to know about who you are, maybe where you were born, where you grew up and went to school kind of just go through your life line for us and let us know a little bit about who you are.

A: My name is Joann J. Johnson. I was born in Los Angeles, California. You want the year?

J: Sure, if you want to share it.

A: 1928, (omitted date for security) grew up there and lived there most of my life and went to school, high school in Inglewood, California and then I went to Life Bible College in Los Angeles. And then went to work for the phone company and then for the Sheriff's Department where was an intermediate steno in a homicide bureau at a very exciting time. A lot was happening, the Manson case and different things like that.

J: Oh, my goodness, exciting.

A: It was the best job I ever had really. I know it sounds weird to some people but all the deputies there and sergeants and lieutenants and captains were so nice and so much fun to work with. And then when I retired, well I lived with my mother, she died and then, she was only 61 and so I was by myself in a big big house. And I had come out to the Valley, the Coachella Valley in Palm Desert every year with my cousins and then they had a timeshare the Desert Springs Marriott and then I finally bought it myself. And it was just sort of a ritual for us every year a couple times year to go over to Del Webb Sun City and look at the homes. And they were going to move here and I wasn't but they didn't and I did. It was one of those funny kinds of things. So, I moved here 15 years ago in February and built a house in Sun City according to specifications, my choices, and so it was a lovely home. I was very very happy there. I lived

there 11 years but as I was growing older the house got bigger and bigger and the responsibilities began to weigh on me a bit. Although I loved my home and when I left it and sold it I still could look back and say it was one of the best things I ever did was move into that home until, of course, I made the choice to move to this residence community. So, I moved here 11 years ago and I've been here four and a half years and I've been very very happy. But as to making a decision I do understand how emotional it can be. It was hard. I had done a lot of looking in other areas and had done it really for several years so it wasn't that new to me but it still was a big decision to finally sell my house move into The Carlotta. I did a lot of praying too and asking for guidance.

J: So, talk about that a little bit as far as it being an emotional time. I think a lot of people kind of put off decisions like this because they just don't want to go there, they don't want to put themselves in that emotional state of mind, how did you just get to the point where you said this is the right thing for me to do?

A: As I mentioned I'm a person that prays about things that I do so that was a big thing that I did, I would ask for guidance. Before I made a decision, I came back many many times to see the place then looked at other places and it comparisons but as to emotions it was hard because I loved living in my home and you have to face, it's a good thing to face reality and realize that if it's getting to be too much for you there are other options. And one of the best ones is moving into independent living where they not only have the independent that they have assisted living and skilled nursing capability. But it's kind of hard to explain emotions. I guess you get attached, you love your home, you like everything you have all your furniture and things, they are just things but still they are part of your life and they are an important part of your life and your friends that you make and maybe the clubs that you join in the place where I was. I guess that's the best I can say about the emotions but I think what helped my emotions is coming to see The Carlotta once I decided that this is where I wanted, where I thought I wanted to be because I had done so much comparing I was coming back and then people here was so friendly and there was no pressure but they would answer questions that helped, that helped a lot.

J: Great, so you decided to kind of turn the page and start a new chapter and how did you choose your specific apartment there?

A: Well, I just looked at several and I liked the view in this one that was available, or were two that I was looking at and I like the size, great apartment size and I had compared with others too. I have a two-bedroom two-bath and almost 1200 square feet and all my furniture fit in quite well. That was part of it too. I would take my own measurements even though they do that for you if you want them to and check and see can I put this here and put this here. That all helped build my confidence too. I just chose it because I liked it. I like the location and the view and the space.

J: And what is your view?

A: I look out on the courtyard. I tell people I have a swimming pool in my backyard because I look out on a lovely pool and lots of trees with lots of flowers around and grass. It's a beautiful area to look at. And I'm on the first floor. Some people like the second floor but I chose the first. And I'm close to the dining room and I found out that's kind of nice, close to the mailbox, close to things that I like to be close to.

J: Good and then physically the move itself, did you have help doing it?

A: I had help from friends that once I made the decision in new just about when I would be moving I had a lot of help. And then of course Carlotta does give you money to move and they help you too. So, when moving day came everything was set to go and they put everything in place just beautifully and then the next day they would come back and change anything that you wanted changed from here to there, you know how that goes?

J: Yeah.

A: And hang pictures on the wall and all of those things. They made it very, very easy. It was different than when you move yourself and have movers come and they place things but still you have to do all the work. But I didn't really have to do anything.

J: That's good and did you have friends that were living there already, did you know anybody?

A: No, no but I sure made friends with the marketing people because they were so gracious and as I say I came and looked at the place many many times. Then you get to know, we have a wonderful lady, Donna, in the lobby here. People are friendly so when you come to a place several times like going to the restaurant you get used to seeing people and they're friendly.

J: And so, you've been there did you say four years now?

A: Four and a half years.

J: Four and a half years, good so tell me about that kind of things you enjoy going there, what is a typical day like for you if there is such a thing?

A: Well, I go to the exercise class five days a week in the morning, I do a lot of music here. I'm an artist and a composer so I started what they call a gospel sing-along and I do a lot of PowerPoint so that takes a lot of my time so I'm on the computer a lot. Of course, they have movies here, last night they had a special movie time and we saw an oldie from 1945, State Fair, there's something going on all the time. You participate in what you enjoy. And then we have a Bible class, in fact that was today I participated in that. We have a chapel service here on Sundays, I participated in and I happen to lead the singing. Then I'm in a choir that right now we've been off for the summer but we are called The Singing Fountains.

J: Oh yes.

A: So, we have about four concerts a year.

J: That's great. Have you always been interested in singing?

A: Yes, I tell people I think I came out of the womb singing. Everything reminds me of a song and so I've got a little bit of a reputation.

J: That's great. Do you feel like you moved in at the right time in your life?

A: Yes.

J: And what advice might you have for people who may be kind of stuck in a house and you know maybe the house like you said is getting bigger and bigger but they haven't thought about what to do, is there a good first step as far as going forward?

A: I think it's good to sit down and think about what is it that's beginning to be a little bit more than I can bear, too much of a responsibility, what would I like to get rid of? Of course, you think of finances too, sit down and write things down. I am tired of paying taxes and utilities and homeowners insurance and the gardener and the housekeeping and the maintenance, etc., because when you move into The Carlotta all that is taken care of for you. So that's something to think about and then you are responsible for the upkeep of your home so if something goes wrong then of course you are responsible. If something goes wrong here you just call maintenance and they take care of it. People tend to get lonely in their homes. And if they are active getting older maybe it's harder to get the places where they can participate in activities. They don't see as many people that often; where here you just walk down the hall are out in the courtyard, the casitas of course you have to walk outside for that. You see people and everybody is friendly. You don't just see older people you see younger people. We have waiters and waitresses and caregivers and the employees that work here. And then there often like on Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Father's Day, Mother's Day all those special days there's activities going on and they often bring their families, their children. So that's nice too. I think I'm wandering from your question.

J: That's all right, it's all good. Let me think what else.

A: It's just hard to, well it's something that you have to feel in your own self. Although as I said I think asking questions, going back several times, checking with residents and seeing how they feel it all helps with the emotional thing I think.

J: Right and then I know that The Carlotta has a full continuum of care on-site was that something that's important to you?

A: Yes, because if I ever needed it's here and I don't have to move anywhere else. I think that's a very

important thing. Yes, I'm glad you brought that up because that's very important.

J: Have you had occasion to use any of the services?

A: No, I haven't. But I know people here have and do. It's wonderful. In fact, I have a friend that moved in here that I've known for ages, she lived in Los Angeles, when her friends which are my friends also saw this place that I was going to move in then they are the ones that brought her she is now going to go to assisted living because her health, well she's healthy but she's having dementia and things like that. It's nice to know that there's people around to take care of you if you need it.

J: Because we sure can't predict what's going to happen to us, can we?

A: No, no we can't, we sure can't.

J: Well, I think we've covered a lot of territory in this phone call. Is there anything else that you can think of that I forgot to ask that you think is important for people know?

A: Well, they don't have to cook anymore. I forgot to mention food. We have Cece's Carlotta Café and they have breakfast and lunch and then we have dining at night and on Sundays it's a brunch and on special days it's a brunch. And there's a lot of choices. And the dining time is spaced out you can come when you want to. It's a two hour like at night it's 4:30 to 6:30. And that's nice and then the brunches are 11:30 to 1:30.

J: And how many meals a day are included in your program?

A: Their dining dollars, they called them dining dollars and now I understand the 30-day program. Mine is a 15 and if you go over they just put it on your bill which I do because I eat all my dinners here and breakfast. So, it's a little more than the dining dollars provide but it's so reasonable, dinner only cost \$7.50. There's no reason go and get that kind of dinner and you have choices; three entrées and two salads to choose from, two soups and desserts etc. So, I'm very pleased with that.

J: Do you, your friends and neighbors there ever go to dinner outside in the community?

A: Yes, once in a while. In fact, I'm glad you mentioned that because one of the activities is going out a couple times a month and the bus takes people to different restaurants and you just sign up for that if you want to go. Then you can go out on your own which I do one occasion.

J: So, you drive your own car?

A: I'm an independent living, and yes, independent is just what it says its independence so you can do whatever you want to do. The only thing you have to do if say you go somewhere and stay overnight, go on a vacation, a couple nights away you just fill out a form so they know where you are because they take good care of seeing that you are ok every day and there's a system for that too. Every morning there's little tag that they put up at night and if it's not down by certain time they will call to see if you are ok so there is a safety issue here too which is important.

J: Right, well, that's all great information. What about Watermark University classes, other kind of things that keep you busy, do you do any of that?

A: No, I don't to the classes but they are available, they are here. I'm so busy with my music and my art and the programs that I am involved in.

J: What kind of art do you do?

A: PowerPoint, I used to paint but I don't. PowerPoint is a Microsoft program on the computer.

J: You do art in PowerPoint?

A: Well, it's an artistic thing if you want to make pretty slides.

J: That's wonderful, good for you so you have your computer right there in your apartment?

A: Yes, sure.

J: That's nice, that's great. Well, good.

A: That's another thing they have, they have computer for classes for people that want to learn. They have upstairs a computer room with a couple of computers like the other day my printer wasn't working right so I put my information on a little flash drive and went upstairs and put it in the computer and used the printer. They have a lot of games that people play. We had Wii bowling the other night on a big

screen. They have bingo and bunco, different games that a lot of people like to play. It's fun.

J: So, if I did my math right you are 89?

A: I will be at the end of this month.

J: Very good, well happy early birthday.

A: Thank you, June.

J: Would you say you are unique in the fact that you are so computer savvy compared to your peers or are a lot of people there up to snuff on the computer?

A: There's a few that are but I say for my age, I don't know unique that's a pretty strong word, yeah probably, probably and that's a story in itself. I was working when personal computers came into place so I have inquisitive mind and I just went for it and kind of learned on my own. I've always enjoyed the artwork that you can do on the computer years ago it was Harvard graphics now it is PowerPoint. I guess you would say so.

J: Wonderful, ok Joann, well, I'm sure you're probably getting ready to go to dinner so I will let you go unless there is anything else would like to add.

A: No, there's so much a to think of everything but I would just say that I am very very happy that I made the decision and I wouldn't change it for anything.

J: Excellent, that's a great note to close on I think so thank you once again. I really appreciate your time and you enjoy the rest of your day there in Palm Desert.

A: Thank you, you too in Tucson, right?

J: Yeah, thank you, not too far away.

A: Thank you very much.

J: You're welcome, bye.