

Ariel Wynn Interview, November 2016

J: June

A: Ariel

J: Hello.

A: Yes, hello, this is Ariel Wynn from The Fountains at La Cholla in Tucson.

J: Hi Ariel, this is June Hussey from Watermark in Tucson. Nice to meet you.

A: Ok, nice to meet you too, June. Carlene arranged that I should call you today for an interview.

J: Right so thank you for making time in your day to do that. And I'm excited to get to know you by phone. I've read a little bit about you. And I look forward to our conversation.

A: Ok, good.

J: So before we get started can you hear me ok?

A: Oh yes, just fine.

J: Perfect, I would like to go over just a couple of things if you don't mind before we get started. One is that we are recording this call so that we can produce an accurate transcript and get all your quotes and sentiments correct. But if you should say something along the way that you feel is too personal to share, just say that right then and there and say, "I don't want that part in the transcript." Ok?

A: Ok.

J: And then I wanted to also take a moment to explain to you the reason we do these interviews and I have been privileged to interview hundreds, literally, of residents around the country of different Watermark Communities and it's not only the sheer pleasure to get to know people but also it's really valuable, we think, to share their stories with other folks out there who may be struggling with what to do in their future. They may not know what their options are. We find that by sharing our residents' stories, people's eyes open to the possibilities for themselves. So we appreciate you sharing your story with us. And then I think what I'd like to do is invite you to introduce yourself. Say a little bit about who you are, where you're from, your life, whatever you feel like sharing as far as who is Ariel. And then from there we'll get into more detail about how you came to your decision to move and that kind of thing, ok?

A: Ok.

J: So you take it away with your own introduction like we just met on an elevator, ok?

A: Ok, my name is Ariel Wynn. I am a transplant from New York City, born and raised in Manhattan. And I worked in Manhattan until I was in my middle 50s. I then came to Tucson. We'll talk more about some other things but more about myself. I've always had a great interest in language. I had an avocation as an amateur singer. I mainly supported myself working for attorneys. I came from a small family. My parents passed away early and I've outlived all but two of my siblings. I never married, no children. And so I'm little unusual in that I don't have children and I certainly don't have grandchildren and I don't have great-grandchildren. But I find that I enjoy talking to people here who have. But it was quite a transition to move to Tucson and I am very happy I was able to do it. My company relocated from their national office in New York and they built a building here and transferred 45 of us down here which made the transition very

wonderful for me. And I still have many close friends from those early years. Is there anything further that you want me to say or should I go ahead about how I happened to come here?

J: Well, that's perfect. Let me ask you how long have you been living at The Fountains at La Cholla?

A: Just four years, my anniversary was just a couple of days ago.

J: Oh, good so you've been there a long enough time to really know it like the back of your hand, huh?

A: Yes ma'am, I do. Now, I do participate in certain activities. Having a background as a singer I particularly enjoy our sing-alongs. We get together once a week and sing a lot of golden oldies and some more recent classic music. That's a great avocation of course. We always have a lot of concerts to go to here and different kinds of musical events. And some very interesting lectures. I read a great deal so I appreciate the library. I borrow books from there all the time. I'm now engaged in new project. I did participate in a project to have a pilot program to see about developing classes for computer.

J: Oh, you're a Watermark Engage student?

A: I am.

J: Good, that's exciting. I just wrote a big article about that.

A: It's been a wonderful program. I've sort of withdrawn from it, having graduated, because I've had a lot of other things I've been having to deal with in my personal life. And so I'm not in class now. Although, we are forming a club of the original group of about 15 of us so that we can meet every so often and talk about things we still want to learn or have some more questions answered but they've got the new program underway. I'm gratified I was able to contribute to that.

J: That's wonderful. Well, we can talk little bit more about that later. I'm interested in knowing four years ago, when you did move to The Fountains at La Cholla, where were you living, first of all, just prior to your move?

A: Yes, I was living in Mission Palms Apartments which is the here on Orange Grove Road less than five miles from The Fountains.

J: I'm very familiar with that. I know that lots of people over the years have moved to The Fountains from Mission Palms.

A: Yes and I had one particular friend who, every couple of months over a period of several years, would call me and say, "Gee, it's great over here." And then I started coming when it looked like I was going to need the kind of help offered here at the independent living. Through those people, as well as another friend who had a friend who lived here, who encouraged me, Grace Huey was very helpful and so I gradually began to feel very sure that this was the right place for me to come. I looked at a number of other communities before I did come and what actually precipitated it was a bad fall and an injury that made it very clear that I needed more help. I couldn't continue in the lifestyle that I had.

J: And for people who don't know Mission Palms, that's just a straight rental apartment complex, right?

A: It has no senior facilities at all. Once a month they used to have a breakfast or something but I mean no it was certainly nowhere near. In fact, they have many families there and it is a nice community. But when I came here. we had a little party and there

were seven or eight of us. most of whom I had remembered from Mission Palms, all celebrating my arrival at The Fountains.

J: Oh great, that's great. Well, take me through. I guess you had a fall and so that sort of made you realize it was time for a change. Take me through the process that you went through to select your apartment and also did you look anywhere besides The Fountains before you made your decision?

A: Yes, I went to several other retirement communities. Do you want to know which ones they were?

J: Only if you want to talk about it.

A: No, they were nothing in particular except they were nearby. One was Amber Lights and another was, you know it's four years ago and I don't quite remember, to tell you the truth. Because everyone I've talked to here, particularly as new people come in and I meet people in the dining room, they always say, "Oh, boy I made the right choice." My good fortune was that I made the decision for myself. The sad thing is for the first few weeks or months when a son or daughter has sort of selected it for the person, the new resident, they usually have a little trouble figuring out, you know, hey this is a really good choice but I was able to and though I had an accident, I was well enough. I was able to, in fact it started before I fell, to look around different places. So I was very confident and continue to be very confident that this is an excellent choice and a very good place to live.

J: Good and tell me how you picked your apartment.

A: Well, you know it's like Grace said, "This is what we have available." And I went to look at. I'll tell you what I did do though after almost 2 years I decided I wanted to live one floor up. I wanted to be a higher floor. I was raised in the city and elevators don't bother me and I like the height. I also like the exposure of this apartment. And so for the last two years I've been in an apartment identical to the one I originally chose which is a Bougainvillea design, one-bedroom apartment only I have a view that faces north which happens to be good for someone who is hyper allergic to the sun as I am, so I don't get direct sun. A lot of people have these wonderful western and eastern and southern exposures but I'm particularly happy and that was a factor when I went to go to the second apartment. But I guess I saw with Grace probably three or four other apartments. I was not particularly interested in living on the first floor. I didn't at that time and don't now have any pets so that's part of the process. If you have a dog you really have to live in a first floor apartment. At the time I had quite a nice choice of apartments. I understand we are 97% full right now so I don't know but they do a very good job of letting you know what kind of apartment is available and also people can come in and maybe take a smaller apartment and be on a waiting list and get first dibs at the exact apartment they think they want.

J: Right, exactly.

A: Very thoughtfully done here.

J: Well and you're right it does stay very very full, 97% or 98% which is about as full as you can get with people coming and going. So the fact that there is a waiting list is important to point out. Ok, well, that's wonderful. So now take me back to when you moved in, the adjustment period for you. Was it hard to get used to? Tell me your experience.

A: My experience was because I'm a single woman and I've been retired now it's 15

years but at that point it was over 10 years I had been living alone. This was an adjustment for me but what a happy thing for me to adjust to. It took me a while to realize I could go downstairs and meet new people and have people to talk to, not have to be eating my meals alone. Not that I did entirely. I wasn't a complete recluse but it's a wonderful thing to have people that then you say hello to in the hallway or you get to know the neighbors on the floor in the building that you live in. And once you start getting up enough courage to try activities, you will find that you go to an event once or twice or a class or exercise or something and you begin to relax and say, "Hey, gee, I could never provide myself with this, my former circumstances never provided this." You know? And so I will truthfully tell you it took me quite a while. It was slow but remember I also, I mean of course I came to Tucson 25 years ago so I got over my original culture shock from New York to Tucson but of course it turns out Tucson isn't all that different. There are all kinds of wonderful things to do here. But after I got over my original shyness which I think hits people as they come in. They all of a sudden didn't realize how shy they were until they think, "Oh, gee, I don't know, there are people I don't know and going into a new place." That part of it just passes very quickly. You get over it.

J: You are probably a little bit out of practice when you first move in if you've been living alone, you haven't been sort of exposed to so many social situations recently. So that's interesting.

A: Outside your family. A lot of people I talked to say, "My children are grown now and I know my grandkids." But a lot of people for years they played a card game but they haven't tried anything new in a long time so it's a little scary. I will say that but I don't think that's bad for people to realize you may not plop right down and be totally happy. Some people are. There are some people here who come in and they land, they hit the ground running, as they say, and they are right into it right away. I just am amazed. For my own personal experience, I was slow but I'm a slow person anyway. But anyway it's not harmful to recognize that there is a period of adjustment. And when anybody says anything, you know, to me about it I'll say, "Wait, wait, you'll relax, you'll get used to it." And you begin to say, "Hey, I really landed on my feet here." But that may not in my experience happen right away. So I try to encourage people to just relax, just wait a bit and ask questions. We don't always know what the other person doesn't know. And gradually they say, "Oh yeah, so and so told me about that. Now I understand it." So of course all the materials that are provided, a lot of it is already there. There's all kinds of little tips about you can order such and such extra even if it's not on the menu. I mean nobody can write that down but those are things you find from the people you eat with. I think maybe it's important for people to know that when you come in you are usually introduced to people by being a fourth or a third or four people. You don't have to have plans ahead of time. But you won't have to eat with the same people every day either. I found one particular place I went to I found that alarming that I had to sit down with the same three people every day. I couldn't possibly be charming enough to keep conversation going with the same people day in and day out. You know there's just so much of that you can do. But that's a nice feature here to which may be something you can or do highlight in talking to people. Of course the food is wonderful. And they've just, in the last couple of months, they have made an improvement in the menus. There's the other thing maybe I need to say in favor of living here is that if something isn't just exactly or you see something or know something or you are experiencing

something you don't like, there are many, many avenues. There's committees you can sit in on without even joining. The executive director has open houses. And once a year, your building has a meeting of just the people who live in that building or that floor. There's cards in the dining room you can make comments and let them know if there is something that you think needs attention paid to. But the staff is also very very helpful. And all of these services are very considerate and very well thought out and spot on for all of our needs. There a lot of really interesting people here who have got fascinating backgrounds, what their careers have been or where they lived. Some people have traveled a lot around the world. I mean much more than I ever did. There's a surprising number of people that said, "I visited New York, I didn't want to live there." But you'd be surprised, their visits were pretty good, they were excellent you know people had to say. And so I feel there's a commonality there. I guess the only other thing I wanted to say is I'm planning on a long stay. I'm 82. I came in at 78 and I noticed some people expressed some concern about that but you know there is no age restriction. There are quite a few of us that are in our late 70s or early 80s. Many people of course, and a lot of couples, are well on up in their 90s. In fact we still have a couple people around who are well over 100. But the other nice thing about The Fountains at La Cholla is we are nestled right here at Northwest Hospital and there's an enormous number of all kinds of doctors in easy access here. Of course we have this transportation service to medical appointments that is Monday through Thursday from 8:00 until 3:00 and that's a great thing. And of course there are all kinds of rides by bus and car to things, other kinds of activity. But it's nice to know that if you have a doctor's appointment you call them. It's part of the package that you are taken there and you are brought back in a timely fashion. It's a really great service. When I was laid up in Mission Palms, I did have a volunteer organization that would come and pick me up for my doctors because I had to give up my car. Of course a lot of people here still have their cars you know. And I'm talking about mainly, I'm in the Town Center but there are 75 casitas around this complex that are all part of it. And we've got I think it's over 300 people in the main building.

J: Right.

A: Of course this is a funny story and I don't know whether you would want to use this or not. A son of a friend of mine was helping me pack when I was leaving Mission Palms. He just blurted out trying to make contact because we didn't really know each other very well and she was out of town and he said to me, "Well, I guess you expect to go and die there." And I said, "Jim, no wait a minute don't feel bad, that's ok. I'm going to independent living and when I need help there is The Inn which is for assisted living and then The Gardens is Alzheimer's. And if that's not enough it's one-stop shopping and then next door we have the hospice." I don't know if you want to use that but it was very funny after he got over his embarrassment. But it's true that is the aspect here is that we do have all these services all of course and we have the BAYADA Health Services and (inaudible name) Health Service too which is excellent. But you can always have your own health people but a lot of times when people think of coming in, they're not ready yet. But I was interested and I think a lot of other people would be interested to know that this is a long-term thing. You don't have to be close to the end, so to speak.

J: Well, as a matter of fact I'll tell you a personal remembrance because I was around when The Fountains opened in 1987 and when one of our very first residents moved in

she was in her early 70s. She lived there up until the time of her passing this summer. She was 101, Hannah was and she lived in the Town Center for most of that time. And then when she decided she didn't really even need assisted living but she just thought ahead and she said, "Maybe I'll move over here now." And then in the end she had the hospice care coming into her apartment. She passed peacefully. I just think that's, when you say "long-term," that's long term. That's almost 30 years she lived there.

A: Wow, that's quite a long time. I never did meet her but I know there was another lady here that was well over 100. Actually, she moved out, went someplace else and then she passed on. But there you go. I think that's something that people may want to, and families may want to realize that this isn't just someplace you're putting momma. It's just a long-term and a great opportunity. Because I feel that, having been here four years, I really truly feel, my physical problems are increasing of course, but I feel I'm thriving. I'm just having a good time. People say to me, "Wow, I'm jealous. I'm jealous." So I'm fortunate. I feel very blessed.

J: Yeah, well, let me, it's interesting that you use that word thriving because we throw that word around a lot at Watermark but it is true. It's the one single word that really says it all. Tell me about some of the ways that you do thrive there. There so many things to do. How do you start to plan what you're going to do every day?

A: I get out the calendar and see what I've got. No, I don't participate and I don't feel it's necessary to participate in everything every day. I cannot possibly do it. I came with the whole package of my own personal cultural interests because I had been a singer. I'm devoted to opera and to listening to music and to going to cultural activities if I can, but as I say, the one main thing is singing. I am concerned about people who are losing their vision and so for a while I helped out at The Fountains events program. And now what we're doing is preparing, in fact this afternoon I have to show up for rehearsal, at least a dozen of us, to read and prerecord a message available by telephone to people with limited vision who can dial this number and find out what the next couple days activities are by phone. Because even though they print the calendar, even if they print it large, some people who are visually challenged have explained to me that it isn't the size of print, it's what they can actually see because of macular or glaucoma, which I have a very mild case of and we don't know what the future of that is but, because they can't read even the things that are posted in the elevator when we are preparing this service, to make it possible for people to pick up the phone and say, "What's going on today or tomorrow?"

J: Right.

A: That's probably not maybe well known yet. We've had trouble getting the equipment. We're getting very close now, all the equipment is in. And a number of us will take one or two late afternoons and record what we're told is the available information for the next day or two. Now, I think they are originally going to do this for sight impaired and then I think everybody will be able to call. It may depend on what kind of usage it gets. So my own activities are sort of bent in that direction of trying to find some way to help people who are having specific kinds of problems and challenges that I don't have yet. I've got severe back problems and mobility problems. You know it's a funny thing here even, so here there are just a couple of people who have scooters or are in a wheelchair and I'm still using a walker and having a lot of trouble with my legs. And this is a great place to be around people who have got other problems because they can help you. They say,

"Well, no wait a minute, don't worry about this. This is what you do about that." And that kind of interpersonal relating to the problem that you have in your life at hand is a very valuable aspect of this kind of community.

J: That's wonderful, well said. Ariel, I believe we have covered just about everything that I had on my list to talk you about. Is there any final words of advice that you might have to share with folks out there who may be in the very early stages of planning their future?

A: Yeah, I think maybe the best thing I could say is you don't have to go it alone. You really don't. You do not have to go it alone. And this is in my particular personal situation but I find it's just as true because you know not every son or grandson or granddaughter not everybody knows how to deal with and doesn't understand the problems as you're getting older. And this is the great advantage of a community like this is because you can find people who can understand where you are and help you figure out some solutions. Or at least if nothing else I pass out to people who ask the information about our cab service that we have in the last couple of years. I guess officially they can do it and I'll probably eventually ask them if they want to but not everybody needs it and when they have to give up their car they start talking about it I say, "Yeah, but for nonmedical transportation you call this number you can get approved and you buy vouchers and the taxi company takes you around Tucson for three dollars each way." I have one medical appointment that's well out of the five mile range from the hub. It would cost me \$30 each way and I'm paying \$3 each way.

J: Well, that's great.

A: It's part of Sun Tran's Dial-a-Ride program, Sun Shuttle Dial-a-Ride, but I found out about it because I was talking to one of the residents and she said, "Oh, I use them all the time." And it's sort of like one of those best-kept secrets but you're not going to go around the people saying, "Well, I can't get to the bus so I need help." You know you can only ask family to do so much.

J: Yes, that's correct.

A: And when you can do on your own. See, that's another important factor here. What I can do on my own, I have the means to do. When I can't do it on my own, I'll have the means for the help I need, when I need it. How's that?

J: That's perfect in a nutshell. That's a great sound bite as they say.

A: I wish you luck.

J: Ariel thank you again for sharing your time and also for contributing to the community so much. We really appreciate it.

A: Well, I'm so grateful for the opportunity because, and that's another thing too, people would do more if they had means to do it. You know, it's like a lot of people would be interested in something else if there were the means to do it. This community provides the means.

J: Very good.

A: How's that?

J: That's perfect.

A: Ok.

J: Well, thank you again, you have a great rest of your day. I'm sure you're off to lunch soon.

A: Yes I am actually, actually I am.

J: Ok, very good, well, you enjoy, take care now.

A: Good, June, I'm glad I was helpful.

J: Thank you. Bye-bye.

A: Bye-bye. You're welcome. Bye-bye.