

Marilyn Savage Interview, November 2017

J: June

M: Marilyn

36:40

J: Ok, Marilyn, are you there?

M: I sure am.

J: So, thank you for sitting in on that. I'm sorry about the mix-up. You are from The Fountains at La Cholla, right?

M: Right.

J: Ok, good. I think I had you on my schedule for tomorrow but this will work out just fine if it works for you.

M: Yes, it works for me.

J: Ok, perfect. Well, great, you probably got a little bit of a flavor for how these go from listening and we'll just start at the beginning and make sure that you are aware of a couple of things up front. One is that we are recording this conversation. I just wanted to make sure you are aware that we are recording this conversation. And that's just so that we can get accurate information and not get facts wrong. But along those lines if you should say something that you feel is too personal to share with everyone, say right then and there, in conversation say, "Please don't publish this part" or, "Please don't share this part." And we'll make sure we don't, ok?

M: Yes.

J: You probably are familiar with what we do with this information but just in case you are not we will make a transcript available and put that on the website for people who are interested in reading the whole thing but basically we will condense the conversation into a direct mail piece that we will send out to the surrounding area inviting people to come in for a discovery luncheon using your words and your experience just to give them an idea of how you went about your decision to move to a retirement community. And we find that by sharing our resident's experiences with people out there it helps open their minds to the possibilities for themselves.

M: Yeah, it does.

J: Yeah, so let's start Marilyn, if you don't mind, with kind of a self-introduction. I'm going to let you speak for as long as you'd like. Tell me about yourself, where you're from, your family, anything you'd like to share on a personal level.

M: Ok, I was born in Chicago and lived there until I was 21 when I joined the Air Force. I met my husband at Randolph Air Force Base, we were both PFCs. He was a right gunner on the B-29 and he decided he wanted to be the pilot so he applied for pilot training and I worked in group headquarters and I typed his orders but I couldn't tell him. He went to cadets, became a pilot and that was during the Korean War. We got married and I got pregnant, in that order thank you. I got out as a buck sergeant and he went on. When he retired after 26 years in the Air Force he was a lieutenant colonel. We were stationed all over. We were stationed here in Tucson. Our two youngest children were born here. My oldest daughter was born in Austin, Texas. and we lived in New Hampshire, we lived in England, we lived in Ohio. He was born in (cuts out) of American

parents so we came from all over. I have three children. One daughter lives in Washington state. My son lives in Casa Grande. And my daughter lives 15 minutes away from here.

J: Oh nice.

M: That's sort of the history of me.

J: You were based at Davis Monthan for a while then?

M: 1955-1960. He was a B-47 pilot. I always say I was a single parent 80% of the time. But I had his money.

J: Take me, now that you've shared a little bit about your background, where were you living just prior to your move to The Fountains at La Cholla?

M: When Bob retired we came here to Tucson. We lived in an RV for a while. We bought a trailer, a mobile home. We were in a trailer before but we bought a mobile home and he died in '92 and I stayed where I was. The mobile home needed repairs and I decided, after quite a few operations, that I was tired of, you know, having to worry about upkeep with the mobile home. I called my three children and I told them, "Come and take what you want. I want to go into a retirement home." And so my daughter, who lives 15 minutes away from here, we met and we went to two different, well, the homes over here on the west side. I had been in the ones on the east side. So, both of us liked The Fountains best and plus I could afford it. When I got here, my son and my grandson helped me move in. After the movers deposited everything, they helped take all my clothes and my shoes and my grandson came out said, "Grandma, you've got way too many clothes and shoes." I said, "I know it." My grandson is a fireman and he looked and he checked around and he said, "Grandma, you're safe here."

J: Good, good.

M: I love it. I'm waited on, what's not to like?

J: Tell me about your apartment, which one did you pick?

M: I've got the living room, bedroom and den because I didn't want my computer in my living room or my bedroom because that's always the messy room. Plus, I stay up at night. I've always been a night person and so I can have my TV on at night in the den and it doesn't bother the neighbors. I like the extra room.

J: And are you on the first, second or third floor?

M: The third floor. I've got a beautiful view of the traffic light on La Cholla. My apartment overlooks the front of the complex here, trees all over, it's lovely.

J: Very nice.

M: I really like, I keep telling them downstairs the only thing I dislike is I have to do my own personal laundry. I like everything about it.

J: And did you know anybody living there before you moved in?

M: No, no.

J: Not a soul, huh?

M: The first morning that I went down to the dining room after I moved in, the hostess said, "Hello, Marilyn would you like to eat by yourself or join?" I said, "I live alone, I want to talk to other people." I've met so many interesting people here, from college professors, to farmers, to every kind of profession you can think of.

J: Tell me about a typical day for you, what kind of things do you like to get involved in, if anything?

M: I really don't get involved in too much here. I am involved, they have the ROTC from

Flowing Wells high school come here and all the members who have been in the military that want to do it, talk to them. There are about 10 of the cadets that come every so often. I think right now they are doing final exams. It's interesting to talk to them because they look you in the eye and they answer you with real words without an "ugh" or shrug of their shoulders. They all look super; their hair is combed and they are neat and it's a pleasure to talk to them.

J: Isn't that wonderful? And you are able to share some of your military experience with them? How nice.

M: Yeah, that's about the only group that I join in here because I still have the Society of Military Widows and the group MOAA and I'm involved with that.

J: Where does that meet?

M: MOAA is the Military Officers Association of America and I belong to that because I am my husband's widow and he was an officer. And in the Society of Military Widows I became chapter president and then I was national president for two years. Those take up my time, the rest of my time I read and take naps.

J: How long have you been there by the way?

M: About two and half years. I moved in 2015. I've met so many nice people here and twice I was in the hospital, once for an auto accident. Unfortunately, it was my fault and I wound up in the hospital with a broken sternum and eight cracked ribs.

J: Ouch.

M: When I got home, the BAYADA nurses came and made sure I was getting active again. Then in August I had a heart attack.

J: Oh wow.

M: It scared the heck out of me. I wasn't in pain but it was because I'm anemic and again the nurses came in, made sure I was not bedridden and they got me going and my daughter was very happy that I was doing that.

J: They have an office right there at The Fountains, right?

M: They do and they have been so nice. I'm fine now. I have a walker because I have arthritis in my back and nothing can change that.

J: So, you get yourself down to what, do you do breakfast and dinner? How's your meal schedule?

M: When I came in I told them I was not setting an alarm to come down for breakfast so I get up usually when the dining room is closing. I get up around 8:30 so I have a protein bar and a cup of coffee here and then I go down for lunch. And for dinner I have breakfast cereal, so I'm backwards.

J: I like cereal for dinner, too.

M: It's so easy to fix.

J: Yes, it is.

M: I always loved cooking but because of my back I can't stand anymore, so this is great.

J: Let me ask you this, what advice might you have for folks out there that may be living by themselves, maybe in a mobile home or maybe in a house and maybe they don't really know about places like The Fountains, what would your recommendation be to them?

M: I would say, "Come and see." My sister in Illinois is looking for a place and I told her, I said, "Go and see, check it out a couple of times, go have a meal at their place and go

a couple of times because you'll see something that you missed before." I came and I had lunch here twice and then my daughter and her husband came to visit so we had lunch there with my two daughters and my son-in-law and they all like this. I was glad that they could come in and see what I was going to go through. Don't sit and be lonesome because you can be as quiet and away from everything as you want here or you can be busy all the time, it's up to you. But why be lonesome all day when you can have good food and good company? And everybody is so pleasant here, the waiters and waitresses. I love to tease them. They will come and say, "May I take your walker to get it out of the way?" And I say, "Are you going to bring it back?" And of course, they smile when I say that. It's a lot of fun. One of the waiters, I had ordered cookies for dessert and I looked in the box and there was one broken cookie and I looked at him and I said, "You gave me a broken cookie." "I'm sorry, it broke when I put it in." I said, "How dare you?" Of course, I was smiling when I said it and he took it as a joke, too. But I would never do that really meaning it because that would be ridiculous. They are a lot of fun to tease and have fun with. I just enjoy the whole thing.

J: That's great. It's a community setting that is welcoming and obviously you've made yourself at home there so I'm really glad to hear that. Do you have any final words of advice for people out there before we close?

M: Just come and see it and have a meal here and talk to the different people around. If your children tell you that you have to come here, that's when you don't like it. When you make the decision yourself, don't wait to have the kids tell you you can't do something. Like my daughter, after my accident, she saw that I was okay at the hospital and she said, "You are not driving again." And I told her, "I know it." There are some people here that, I asked them when I find out they were new and I said, "How do you like it?" And one lady said, "I don't, I want to be in my own home but my children said I have to be here." And that's when they don't like it.

J: Right.

M: But if it's your own free will, don't wait until it's too late for you to make a decision.

J: Very good advice.

M: You don't have all the worries that you did when you had your own home. When I put the mobile home up for sale my furnace went out and I was without a furnace for three weeks in March. I was sitting inside the house with my jacket and a hat on. I went outside to get warm. Then my refrigerator went out and I had to buy a new refrigerator so I had to buy a new furnace and a new refrigerator. Boy, I was glad to get out of there.

J: You don't have to worry about any of that stuff.

M: If I've got a light that's burned out in the bathroom, I call maintenance, they come and fix it.

J: It's like having a handyman right down the hall.

M: Oh, you bet. They are so nice, too. You have security here. After I came home from the hospital after my heart attack, I got up at two in the morning to go to the bathroom and I lost my balance, wound up in the shower, didn't hurt myself thank goodness but I couldn't get up. I hit the button for calling help and a gentleman came up and picked me up and put me on the toilet. Now, I should have been embarrassed but I was so thankful that I was up off the floor. One time, this is funny, I was in the shower and I heard a man's voice calling, "Mrs. Savage," I said, "Who's there?" And he said, "the alarm went off" in the bathroom. And I don't remember hitting it or anything. He said, "You're in the

shower, close the curtains. I'm coming to turn it off." I didn't see him and he didn't see me. Funny things happen, at the time you think oh my goodness, but now you laugh and it's funny.

J: It is nice to know that call button is there, in case you need it, so you are not on the floor for days before someone finds you.

M: Now, you check-in in the morning, you hit that little button, it's nice.

J: Very nice.

M: I love it here.

J: That's great to hear, it sounds like you're very happy and I'm sure glad you found the place that was right for you.

M: I am too and my children are too because they don't have to worry about me.

J: Great, I'm so glad to hear it, Marilyn. Thank you again for making time in your day for this interview and for being so patient on the phone while we waited to get started.

M: I'm sitting down.

J: Good, you take care, have a great rest of the day, enjoy this beautiful weather we're having.

M: I am, thank you.

J: Ok, good, alright, thanks again.

M: Okay, bye.

J: Bye now.