

Jack and Libby Melville Interview, July 2018

J: Jill

L: Libby

M: Jack

9:55

M: My name is John Melville and my wife is Elizabeth Melville.

J: Well, hello there, hi, this is Jill Hofer at Watermark Retirement Communities. Thank you so much for calling.

M: Ok.

J: How are you both doing? Thank you again.

M: I guess having two people on the phone isn't working well.

J: Do you have a speakerphone option?

M: Let me go into another room.

J: Ok, sure.

M: Ok, so what do you want to know?

J: I, first of all thank you so much for your call. I would like to know, well, let's start with when did you move to the community?

M: March 2017.

J: Ok, alright, just a little bit over a year then. And before that where did you guys come from and did you live in one particular place for a long time or travel around?

M: We've lived in Sun City, Oro Valley which is about 12 or 14 miles just north of The Fountains. We lived there for 20 years. We moved there from Rochester, New York.

J: Oh, you did?

M: Yeah.

J: Ok, so you were there for quite a little while and then when you were in Tucson or Rochester did you work or raise a family, what did you guys do before moving to Arizona?

M: I was a mechanical engineer and I worked for Xerox Corporation.

J: Oh, did you really, wow. That's Rochester history right there, that's so interesting.

M: I worked in product design and that whole thing has dried up with the change in technology.

J: Rochester is a changed city now. There were some strong company headquarters there that started there and really changed America.

M: It was really a Kodak town. And Kodak has dried up and gone away now.

J: Yes, I know it's sad.

M: While I was working, Libby was home being a stay-at-home mother.

J: Nice, so you have kids, how many kids did you have?

M: We had four. We have one daughter that died of a brain tumor at age 30.

L: 30.

J: I am so sorry to hear that. That is just unbelievable that you had to go through that, I'm so sorry.

L: Thank you.

J: Thank you, are your kids far and wide or are they all kind of in the Arizona area, did they stay back in Rochester?

M: Do you want to answer that, Libby?

L: We have a son in Austin, Texas, we have another son and his wife in Rochester, New York and we have a daughter in Boston, Massachusetts.

J: Nice.

L: And we have grandchildren and great-grandchildren spread all over the United States. Nobody is here.

J: Well, we're glad that you are. When you moved to Arizona did your kids have an opinion about that when you first moved to Oro Valley?

L: No, not at all. Because it is a warm climate and good weather.

J: Yeah, it's a beautiful place to retire. And then how did they feel when you said, "Oh, I think we are going to start looking at retirement communities," were they involved in the process at all? Or share their thoughts?

M: We had shared the thought with them but they really weren't much involved. They knew it was time for us to start considering it.

L: Jack had been retired for quite a while and we were traveling around visiting his mother in California and my mother in Texas and hiking all the national parks and we finally decided it was time to settle down but we did not want to settle in Phoenix because it was a big city and somebody told us about Tucson and Sun City in Oro Valley and we were sold on it the moment we saw it.

J: Isn't it great when a decision just feels so simple and right? That's wonderful.

L: We were hikers and that was right there, the mountains.

J: I love that you did all that traveling and hiking. Were you so outdoorsy your entire lives and relationship or is that something you discovered in retirement?

M: I think it was about age 40. We started to become much more physically active. I was encouraged at Xerox to exercise and we had kind of a little club that would get out and jog at noon and they provided us facilities to shower and change, small gyms in the various buildings so that's the way I got started. And once I did I convinced Libby that really, she should be getting out and doing things too and she became a very avid jogger.

L: He gave me a membership at a gym and I didn't even own pair of sneakers so I had to get new sneakers and then they had an indoor track and I started walking and then jogging on the track.

J: How wonderful. And then so that kept you young and kept you moving and going. And then at some point you just thought what was the draw to having a retirement community?

M: You are disappearing into the background. We are really having trouble hearing you.

J: Oh, so sorry, this might be a little bit easier. I bet that's better.

M: That's better.

J: Oh good, I'm glad to hear, I'll hold it right here. What kind of put the twinkle in your eye to choose a retirement community, was it something that you were looking forward to leaving behind, you know, all the maintenance and the hassles or was it something you were really looking forward to or little bit of both?

M: Well, I guess to be honest we had just come to the conclusion the time had come to take the next step. Health was declining and I was concerned that if something should

happen to me, Libby would be alone, having to do all the work of downsizing and selling a house and we thought we would like to have that behind us.

L: And we were 85.

M: There was one other factor that led me to want to move and that was watching some of our friends and neighbors that waited too long. We had one gentleman who lived across the street from us that had to close the house and sell it from a hospital bed. He had no family here at all and had to handle it all by phone. That was the extreme but there were a number of other people that really waited too long and didn't have the energy or enthusiasm to really close up and sell. It's a big job for them.

J: Good point, I like the way you put that. It takes energy for sure but when you can do it with enthusiasm you have an entirely different experience.

L: Yeah, the downsize is a huge job.

J: How did you feel when it was all finished, when all the downsizing was done?

M: Oh, what a relief.

L: And how.

M: One of the nastiest things you have to face into is changes of address. I didn't realize there were that many.

J: Yeah, there is a paper trail. That's so true and then you moved and what was life like, how was it different once you got all settled and once the dust kind of settled?

M: Well, of course it's making new friends. We are so close to Sun City where we came from we still had close ties there. So, we would spend maybe three days a week or so traveling back there for events and activities. So, we were kind of slow in making friends and breaking into the retirement community. So, it made for an easier transition than sitting around wondering what to do.

J: True, when we have folks move in with a little more stereotypical maybe with people who don't continue so much with friendships so nearby we have resident ambassadors and we pair people up so they can have buddies and dining but nothing beats coming in as a couple. That is really fun that you were able to do that and enjoy it together, really have a better adventure. And then along the way did you think, what kind of impressions did you have living in the community? Was dining a highlight, was transportation or programming once you got settled in with doing a little bit more in the community, what do you think people might discover when they choose a retirement community?

M: That's a tough one, do you have any ideas, Libby?

L: I didn't hear real well but when we were looking at the different communities the people who interviewed us or showed us around their personal relation to us when they were talking and selling their place.

J: That's good advice, everybody should be paying close attention to that.

L: The Fountains was the best of every place we visited. The management here were just so interesting and so informative it really made a difference. We also knew a couple of people that were here.

J: Oh, you did?

L: And it was big enough, it wasn't real small either. I don't know.

J: I like that advice to think about the size of the community, I think that is a great bit of advice for people to learn when we write this up and pass that along. Size, professionalism and friendliness of the people who you interviewed and who you worked with, what else were you looking for in a community, of course location in

Tucson?

M: We are still bicyclers, we ride a tandem.

J: Oh, how fun.

M: One of the motivations is to get close to the bicycle path nearby. Are you aware of The Loop in Tucson?

J: I am, actually I am. I live near the Santa Cruz part of that, near Congress and I-10. Yeah, that's a really wonderful gem of Tucson that we have that.

L: We use it all the time, constantly, and we go every which way.

M: That is part of our motivation to pick The Fountains was the proximity to the bicycle path. We ride down your neighborhood once or twice a week.

J: How nice, what a pleasure. It's almost all year if you can get up early enough it is all year.

L: We are out at 5:45.

J: You have to be, especially this time of year

L: We go about 30 or 32 miles each time we go out so far.

J: I'll be darned and do you always take the tandem?

L: It's the only thing we ride

J: No kidding, how much fun. That's terrific.

L: It's hanging on a hook on our back patio.

J: It's just like another member of the family.

L: Oh yes, we have many many miles on it.

J: That is so great.

M: Your earlier questions about our impressions of the retirement community, I came to the conclusion, after doing some interviewing, that it's really like a big hotel. There are meals provided and some limited transportation for medical but it's basically people saying, "We are here to encourage you to do what you want to do. We aren't forcing anything on you, we're just a resort hotel."

J: With classes and clubs.

M: That's the way I feel about it, yeah. But you aren't forced into anything and you are free to come and go and do your own thing.

J: It's definitely an independent lifestyle. Do you live in the town center or in a casita?

M: In a casita.

J: Oh, you do, ok, so how do you like that? What is your casita like?

M: I think we ended up with one of the best views in the community.

J: Oh, what does it look like?

M: We face a wash with nothing between us and the mountains.

J: Nice, nice.

M: We have a beautiful view of the southern stretch of the Catalinas. And a lot of blue sky, a lot of sky, not always blue.

J: Almost always blue though. That is wonderful. And what is your casita like, is it a bedroom and a living room and what is the casita like inside?

M: You should come and visit us.

J: I should come see the bicycle.

M: It is two bedrooms, two baths, a little over 1,230 square feet.

L: And the laundry room, we have our own laundry room.

J: Nice.

L: I feel, we both feel that it is plenty. We don't need any more room. It would be nice to have a garage but that's ok, we are doing fine.

J: Right, for the bike.

M: We downsized more than most of the other people we have met. Our place is sparsely furnished. We got rid of all the trappings of the accumulation of 65 years of marriage.

J: Wow.

M: That was a big job, making the decisions. Once we got started unloading and getting rid of things it became easier and easier.

J: Interesting, that is very good to know.

M: And we finally ended up having to go out and repurchase. We went too far in some cases.

J: But that gave you a fresh start.

L: We bought things that fit into the living room. Our other things were too big. And another thing, when Jack was saying it was like being in a hotel, when we moved here I said to Jack, "You retired years ago and now I'm retiring from cooking." And I don't cook. We have breakfast and a very small dinner here but we eat out at the dining room for a big lunch.

J: Have a nice big lunch. Well, you know our office of course is right across the street and we are able to order from your same menu. We are able to come and have Gallery Café or order from the menu and it is wonderful. It is so varied, there so many options.

L: And if we decide we don't want what I have planned or we don't have anything we go up and eat in the café.

J: That is just perfect. That's great and when you go into the dining area do you find you have any favorites or everything rotating and varied and healthy enough for you, anything to speak of that people should probably look for when they are looking at a community, any advice in the area of dining, try things or ask questions?

M: From a food standpoint I think they have to decide whether they are vegetarians or not. Vegans really have to work hard at it. There is a vegetarian dish offered every meal, but that gives you a choice of one unless you are creative and can put together the side dishes and so on to make a meal.

J: Are you vegetarians?

M: No.

L: No.

M: We have some friends, a fairly new neighbor that just moved in a few months ago and she is trying to be a vegan and is struggling with it.

J: That is tricky. Well, it is a lot easier when you have a big menu and a lot of choices. Of course, with the Gallery Café you can make easy substitutions too. Well, that's good.

M: Just a thought for people, I'm sorry, go ahead.

J: That's ok, that's a good thought, that's a good thought. I was just thinking along those similar lines, what other advice would you give to folks who are thinking, "Gosh, should I just stay in the big house that I've had forever, should I move, where do I start?" People are kind of overwhelmed, any advice?

M: Looking at some of the people here there are at least two, maybe three that have converted the second bedroom into a storage room of all the good stuff they've been accumulating that their kids don't want but it's too good to throw away. My

recommendation would be to look very carefully at what you want to keep. Sooner or later it is going to go because from our experience the kids really don't want much.

L: And you don't entertain here the way you did in your bigger house.

J: You use the common areas.

L: You don't make an elaborate meal.

J: You'd rent the clubhouse if you wanted to do that at all.

M: Either that or just make arrangements to meet people at the dining room to eat together.

L: Or you have a very small simple meal, not an elaborate one using all your crystal and all that kind of stuff.

J: That's true and then you know without all that stuff you really focus on the life part of life, not the stuff part of life. You know, that is really smart to just say think about it and try to let it go. Do you, I mean of course you would probably advise people to visit and maybe ask certain questions or try the food. I'm trying to think of what other things might've been part of your journey that other people could benefit from, maybe advice to couples?

M: Meeting some of the current residents would be appropriate.

J: That's a good idea because they know better than anybody what the experience is like.

M: Yeah, the honeymoon is over. They tell it like it is.

J: Right, right and then they've answered their own questions. Did you meet with folks like that, oh you knew people at The Fountains, didn't you?

M: We know a few people, yes.

J: You probably turned to them for some good advice.

M: Our mind was pretty well made up. I don't think we took the need for advice very seriously.

J: Nice, good, good, ok.

M: We had decided, well, among other things our social life was drying up for a number of reasons, the clubs we were in were changing significantly. A lot of our friends and acquaintances were making a move already so that our acquaintances we still had lots of those but our friends were slowly, one by one, disappearing. So, we reached the point with our social life changing, we thought, "Well, what the heck, let's just start over somewhere else now rather than watching it happen."

L: Yeah, most of our friends were our age or close to it and their children wanted them closer by because their health, there were just signs that it was time for them to go where their children are so that's why our really close friends have mostly all left Sun City for that reason.

J: Well, it's good to be around family but I suppose your kids could visit anytime at the drop of a hat and it's not too hard to get over and travel and it's wonderful to be in a city that you love with a view that you hold dear in your outdoor lifestyle, you couldn't do that in Rochester.

M: No, our plan is that we are going to try and stay in Arizona as long as we can be outside. If we become housebound then it doesn't matter where.

J: Then you can be anywhere. That's just wonderful if you have anything else, oh, go ahead.

M: We are anticipating that when that time comes we will move there rather than have

them come here.

J: You'll have another adventure.

M: Yeah.

J: That's right. Well, I certainly sincerely appreciate your time and if you have anything else to add I would love to hear it. Any words of wisdom for people who are just afraid to even pull their heads out of the sand so to speak or afraid to even think about it?

M: We have some friends that we've been working on that should have retired to a place where there is someone to take care of them some time ago. He is afraid to drive because he can't see. And she isn't doing well and has to tell him where he is and when to turn, when to stop.

J: Oh my.

M: And they aren't quite ready to make the move yet.

J: Oh my, that sort of makes you want to be careful on the road.

L: Yeah, some people just can't face into it.

J: They just don't know what they don't know.

M: Is that enough to go on?

J: Oh yes, it's really helpful and I sincerely appreciate your time and I hope you two both have a beautiful weekend and enjoy the monsoons and maybe I will see you out on that river trail one of these days, that would be fun. I'll watch for your tandem.

L: We have enjoyed the monsoons in this casita because we have such a huge big panorama before us and we can see all the big huge clouds and the winds all coming towards us. And great huge rainbows, it's been wonderful. We were very lucky to get where we are because when we moved in we were in an 850 square-foot apartment and our stuff was in storage.

J: Well, welcome home. I'm so glad that you've chosen The Fountains and thank you again for taking the time to speak with me. I really appreciate it.

L: You're very welcome.

M: What happens with this mailing you are putting together?

J: So what happens first is the recording is transcribed by software, it runs through technology and it just comes out pretty darn close to just right and we go through it and look and see if there are any typos or changes that the machine didn't pick up and from there we just pull, maybe gosh a 20th or 30th from here, or there and we know we are going to get a lot more accurate than if I were trying to type what we were talking and it will be a lot faster. Then we put together the mailing card and it will go to Carleen, you know at The Fountains to look at and we can ask her to make sure that you get to take a look at that and that everything looks good and right and accurate. And then it is mailed to people who have expressed interest that they might want to you know come for an event or have a tour or coffee or lunch or whatnot and it will have these bits of advice that you have given. You know ask questions, don't be afraid to downsize, it's not easy but it's possible depending on how the card is written it will talk about just lifestyle of retirement in general; whether you moved to The Fountains or not we just want people to understand take a look around out there, see what you might, you might really find a happier more full, more joyful and thriving life than holding onto your stuff in your house.

M: Yep, that's true.

J: Regardless of where you move.

M: Ok.

J: Ok, sure, well, thank you again

M: We don't have any other obligations, we just wait around and wait for it to happen?

Oh, we are supposed to have a picture taken.

J: Oh good, I hope they ask you to do it with the bike. I have to admit, I would love to see you two on the bike, that would be fantastic. But Carleen will get with you.

M: Ok.

J: Wouldn't that be fun? Alright, well, thank you both in and enjoy the weekend.

L: You too, bye-bye.

M: Bye-bye.

J: Bye-bye