

Nadine Brill Interview, February 2017

J: June

N: Nadine

J: Hello.

N: Hello.

J: Hi, is this Nadine?

N: Yes, it is. Is this June?

J: Yes, it is, nice to meet you.

N: Well, very nice to meet you too, June

J: Thanks so much for making time to have this call.

N: It's my pleasure. I was honored when they asked me. I'm not certain what you want to know.

J: Well, I'll tell you exactly what I want to know. I'll give a little explanation here upfront about why we do these interviews and give you sort of the set up and then I'll let you do some talking, ok?

N: Ok, sounds good.

J: Ok, so we do these interviews with residents of different Watermark communities all over the country. First of all, we love to hear about your life and what you've been doing and where you grew up and all those kinds of things. It's always a pleasure to meet people and find out about their fascinating lives. And then secondly we like to kind of get some insight from you and your experience as far as how you went about deciding that you wanted to move to a retirement community and then how you went about choosing the one that you ended up choosing. And then what we do with this information is we share it with folks out there who may have never set foot in a retirement community or may be sort of confused about how they should go about making their own selections. We have found that by sharing our own resident's experiences it really helps people out there who kind of need a little bit of direction or guidance.

N: Ok.

J: That's pretty much the background of it. One note I'd like to make up front is that we are recording this call so that we can produce an accurate transcript.

N: Alright.

J: I want you to know that. But if you should happen to say something that you don't want to appear in the transcript because it is too personal or something, don't worry. Just mention it right then and there in the conversation. Say, "Oh, please don't print this part." And then we will make sure we don't, ok?

N: Sounds ok to me.

J: Perfect. So with that having been said, I'm going to kind of turn it over to you for a little while so that you can introduce yourself and share any kind of information that you would like with others about who you are, where you're from, to give us a little glimpse into your life, Nadine. And from there, you can say as much or as little as you want. And then from there I'll go ahead and ask you some questions. So go ahead and just kind of give us an introduction.

N: Ok, I'm a talker but then when I'm asked to talk sometimes I get speechless but I'll try to talk about myself a little bit. I was born in upstate New York between Rochester and

Syracuse and lived there a good portion of my life. And then my father, who did building of houses and things, decided that we were going to California. And I graduated from high school and Pasadena City College while we were living in California. Still having family back here I decided that I wanted to come back and spend some time with family back here; I did. And I was about 21 and I met my husband. We were married for 65 years.

J: Wow.

N: And had a long life together. In fact, I always say it's hard to think about my life before I was married and that. But his job took us traveling. He was promoted several times. In the company that he worked with, it was necessary that he travel overseas. So during a certain portion of our life we traveled to England and Scotland and Belgium and different countries with his job, which made it a very interesting life. And then he had a heart attack and became ill. A job opened up as director, executive director for our American Red Cross in Wayne County upstate. I decided I would take it. Financially, things were a little tight so I just went to work and I spent 27 years as director of the Red Cross. I'm a doer, I'm an organizer. I'm a counselor. I like to do things for people and my husband and I were great working together like that. And so it was a shock, he died very suddenly two years ago. Well, it's been a difficult decision. And I will say that I didn't think that this was where I wanted to be and so I gave it a try in an apartment by myself. And I have a few health issues that aren't serious, serious but they're health issues and my family all lived away from me in Newark where I came from. My husband and I started to think about it while he was still alive and we came in contact with The Fountains at Millbrook. We had looked at a number of places and we were just enamored with this. I think I have to say right off the bat that we were most impressed by our first meeting with Ruthie here at Millbrook. And then we kind of filed it because he didn't want to come. But after he passed I realized that my two boys, one was in Brooklyn and one lives just outside of Millbrook and my grandson lives in Millbrook, that I wanted to be with family. I wanted to be close to be part of the family. And so I made a phone call and when Ruthie picked up the phone I felt like I was part of the family already because she knew and remembered about me and talked with me. I came for a visit and decided that of all the places we had been looking at, that this was the place I wanted to be. And I think mostly because of the friendliness of the staff and how I was treated when I came initially. That's kind of where I'm coming from.

J: Well, good and how long ago did you move in?

N: I moved in the end of September, September 24th actually. It's been about four months.

J: Take me back, just a question, you and your husband had looked together at different retirement communities. Were you looking primarily in the area of Millbrook or were you also looking in Newark?

N: Well, no, we discounted Newark because our family, my daughter lives in Minnesota and we knew we didn't want to go to Minnesota, too far away, too cold. But both of our sons were located, our son Peter has lived in Brooklyn but he also has a home in Woodstock which is not too far from Millbrook. And John had just moved to Wappinger Falls. He's been in this area for some time. And he kept kidding with me and saying, "Move south Mom, come to the Hudson Valley, it's beautiful." And that's why in looking we went through, actually online, A Place for Mom, when we first started looking for

places. I have to admit that upfront a lot of them we were not impressed by, many of them. But here this enthused us but I couldn't get him to move right away. He didn't want to leave Newark and he died very suddenly. That was my first thought because I knew he knew what this place was like and whatever. So that's how we picked Millbrook.

J: So it must have been somewhat of a comfort to you knowing that he would have approved where you were moving.

N: Absolutely, well, he wanted me to be with the family. I now have a ten month old great-granddaughter and my grandson and his family that live in Millbrook just ten minutes from me.

J: Isn't that nice?

N: But I have to admit it was difficult leaving my friends. We did live in New England. his job took him. We traveled to Massachusetts, Rhode Island and different places like this but we ended up coming back to Newark and built our home and had been in it for almost 50 years. It was hard to leave but here I am.

J: Yeah, so those are some big decisions for people to make. And so admittedly it wasn't easy. How did you get up the courage to go ahead and do it?

N: Well, I was just sitting there one day and I was lonesome. The boys and my daughter had gotten a nice apartment for me. I had friends and everything but I can't drive anymore and I have one eye that I have a problem with and I can't drive anymore. So I was always dependent on everybody. And my oldest son, John, who has been a saint, he traveled at least once a month for a week to ten days, five and a half hours one way, to spend time with me and make certain that I was ok and I had everything I have. And I sat there one day thinking about it and I said, "I can't ask him to do that anymore. He's giving up time with his wife and his family," and I said, "I can't do this anymore. I've got to make the decision on my own. It's going to make it a lot easier." And it has.

J: Well, good.

N: It's a blessing.

J: Wonderful, ok, well, let's fast-forward then to your move and how did the moving process go? How did you select your apartment, let's just start there?

N: Well, of course I came for an overnight because as Ruthie said, "You can't buy a pair of shoes without trying them on." And I have to admit that from the minute I walked in here, I felt like I belonged. There was no pressure or anything but I just was made to feel welcome and to this day I feel that way. The staff and everything they just have been glorious. And she showed me couple of apartments and I kind of knew what I liked best. I picked the apartment I liked and we arranged the move and my whole family was here. I mean we had everybody. I didn't need moving men because I had everybody and they couldn't have been nicer. Our moving day was absolutely marvelous. I just sat there and pointed. Everybody put everything where it should be but from the time I moved in, it's just been a good place to be. And so after I had gotten here and everything, it took me awhile to get settled in, but I think it's probably that way with everybody.

J: Yeah, so what was the hardest part about getting settled and what made it easier?

N: Giving up. I had a nine-room house and moving, I had a lot of decisions to make. I think the part of it was, it's like starting a second life, starting all over again and I just had to give up a lot of things. And so it's a joke with my family because I have my

apartment, which I love, and I have things that I love here, but I also have things in my grandson's garage and my granddaughter's attic and the storage space here. I realize that it isn't really those things that are so important, it is getting involved and doing something. As I said before, I've always been involved with helping people, helping make their lives better. My job at the Red Cross was a people job. And that's what I was missing by being out there trying to make it on my own. I think it was basically getting out and finally meeting some new people.

J: That made it easier, yeah.

N: That made it easier. It isn't easy; it isn't easy even though I'm a people person. I get angry at myself at times. Well, I guess maybe we all want to be where we were, where it's most familiar. But I would say that as of today, I've settled in and the residents you know, it's been a good move. I'm happy.

J: Well, that's great to hear. Tell me about, first of all, your apartment and then, what a typical day is for you there.

N: Well, I take things a little easy right now. My apartment I love. I'm on the ground floor here at Millbrook and I dearly love it because I walk outdoors anytime I want to walk outdoors. I have a little porch and was just sitting here this afternoon watching the birds and everything at my bird feeder. And this is what I like to do but my apartment is just enough. One bedroom, one bathroom, kitchen and my living room. I have taken advantage of always being involved and I take advantage of sleeping in. They encourage me to come out for exercise but the doctor has suggested, I have a few balance problems a little bit that keep me from, I get involved. I go to different things. I've been involved right now, and I'm excited about this, we're starting up a new knitting and sewing group that's going to be doing items to give to needy children and whatever. We have some organizations that we're looking at. And so I've met a dozen or so ladies that are very interested in this and so that's mainly what I do. And I go and I enjoy dinner with different people. When I go to dinner at night, I like to try and sit with different people because I just think it's important to, you know, get involved. I just newly joined a bridge group. I don't play very good bridge anymore but they sound as though they are willing to welcome my poor card playing and that. I would say my daytimes are fairly quiet. I do a lot of reading and things. It takes a while to get settled in.

J: Yeah.

N: And that. But there is not any lack of choices. My main thing has been, as soon as I can get together with the instructor, I want to get involved in wood carving. My grandfather was a great woodcarver. He has a number of items in our historical museum upstate. And he did carousels and different things like that and he carved all the people, the horses and things like this. I don't know whether I have any talent that way. I like crafts, anything you can do with your hands and put together and make things out of nothing and like that but I thought I'd get involved with that. I have to admit that sometimes I'm not an early riser.

J: And that's okay.

N: I'm kind of taking advantage of it but last night we had a Robert Burn's dinner which was absolutely one of the best things that has happened since I've been here.

J: Tell me about it.

N: They had the bagpipes playing and they brought in haggis. Are you familiar with haggis?

J: Yes.

N: It's not my cup of tea. We had eaten it before in Scotland and I knew right away I didn't really want to imbibe but we had haggis and scotch and a nice dinner and readings and singing and there were probably over 50 people there. It was great because I met several new people that I haven't really had the chance to talk to and I think it's, as soon as you can get involved with something like that, people, that's when you find people who have the same likes and dislikes that you do.

J: Right, wow, well it sounds like there's been a few things that have piqued your interest there.

N: Yes, there basically is. Of course, I think what I'm happiest about right now, this early, here is that I'm close to my family. I'm able to participate in things that they do, birthday parties and things like this. But then I can do a lot on my own. I don't have to be dependent on anybody. The hairdresser is here and I'm happy with her. And everything is inside. I can look at all the snow. Of course, you wouldn't understand that way out there in Phoenix, but I can look at the snow and know that I don't have to go outside. I'm safe in here. My kids come to visit and my grandbaby comes to visit. So I've got the best of both worlds.

J: That sounds great. So having been through this experience and difficult decision making and obviously survived, do you have any advice that you could share with people struggling with the same kinds of decisions and maybe feeling hesitant about making a change in their lives?

N: I think probably it's to just swallow hard and give it a try. You shouldn't say no. I've always been one that wanted to try things but I think with making such a decision like this, I think you just have to take a deep breath and move forward and let it happen. You know, I always say that any situation you're in is all what you make it. You have to give a part of you in order to have anything be a success. I've talked with a couple, Ruthie has had me sit with some new residents and their families and talk, when they have been a little bit apprehensive. I think we all go through that. We're used to our regular routine and then all of a sudden, you know, we have to give everything up but you really don't give up a whole lot. I'm on the telephone, if I'm not busy with somebody here, I'm on the telephone talking with friends, you know, so I would just say, "Pick up, take a deep breath and look at it as a new adventure." It's another chance to move out, make new friends.

J: I think that's great advice. One last question and that is, when you compare your lifestyle now to when you were on your own in your apartment, are you glad you made the move when you did?

N: Oh yes, I should have come sooner. I put it off. But I think we go through that adjustment. I should have come sooner but I'm happy that I did it. I'm very happy that I did it. I have everything that I need here. And the thing of it is I make it a challenge every day to meet at least one or two new people to just make it a point to go up and talk with them. We're all here together and it's just amazing. Last night I sat at the dinner and somebody, one of the residents sitting across from me said, "I don't think I know your name." And I said my name was Nadine and she said, "That's my daughter's name." Isn't that wonderful? And so then we exchanged all these things. You never know until you try.

J: That's right.

N: I don't think my story is very exciting except that I guess you just have to be spunky and look at it like you did when you were out living your other life. You have to look forward to all the things that are going to happen and so many good things happen. I can't think of a day here that I haven't been happy.

J: Well, that's wonderful to hear. Well, great, Nadine, you may not think that it's very exciting but I think that a lot of people will relate to the words that you've shared today and your experiences. I think that you'll inspire people when they hear about how successful you've been in making this decision for yourself.

N: Well, I hope so. Your publicity is great and I think that a lot of people, well, you just have to have an open mind and I think that you do a great job. I really do think you do a great job. I tell people here on staff all the time but I think it's great that you hear about how good they do here. It's a beautiful place to be.

J: Wonderful, well, on that note then, unless there is anything that you'd like to add.

N: I can't think of anything. I can't think of anything.

J: Ok, well, I think we've covered all the important bases. It's been a pleasure speaking with you and I'm really just so happy that you've found the place that is right for you and that you can be so close to your family there. I hope that you will enjoy it.

N: I certainly will. I certainly will. It's been a pleasure talking to you, June.

J: Thank you, Nadine. You take care now.

N: I will. Bye-bye.

J: Thanks, bye-bye.