

Bill Jensen Interview, November 2015

J: June

B: Bill

J: Hello.

B: Hello there, how are you?

J: Good, is this Bill?

B: It is.

J: Hi Bill, this is June Hussey. Thanks for calling in.

B: Oh you're welcome there. What can I do for you?

J: Well I'm looking forward to chatting with you for a few minutes. We are recording this just so you are aware of that and that's basically so that I don't have to take feverish notes. We are going to publish the transcript so if you should happen to say something during our conversation that you don't want to be public just go ahead and tell me, "Oh, scratch that from the transcript" and I will, ok?

B: Oh sure but I doubt I would have to do that really. Ok sure.

J: It never really happens I just thought I better mention it. So Bill we like to talk with residents all over the country and find out from them how the process went for them in terms of deciding that it was time to move to retirement community and we do this because everyone has their own story and people who are out there who may be thinking about doing it love to hear what other people, how they went through their decision process. We think it's pretty helpful and we appreciate your time in advance for doing it.

B: Oh sure, no problem whatsoever.

J: Good.

B: In February 2014 I had a birthday. The day after my birthday, after reading a newspaper downstairs early in the morning, I went upstairs to talk to my wife who usually helps me take my blood sugar, and she had passed away of a heart attack.

J: Oh my.

B: It was just unbelievable. Well after 63 years of marriage, I was devastated. After the funeral, I realized I could no longer live in the house that we lived in, you know, for the past 18 years. So my son and I decided we would look around and see if there was a nice place where I could move. And we went to Pitman Manor, we went to Brookdale, we went to Brightview. And I had a friend years ago who was here at The Mews. I said to Bill, "How about we take a run over to The Mews?" Because none of the three really appealed to me. And when I got to The Mews I was amazed at the cleanliness when you walked in the door. Here all you see is bright lights and cleanliness. I love it. I love it dearly. I ran into one of the residents who was very friendly, spoke to me, told me what fun they were having there. And I could see some people laughing and having a good time. So we left and went back to the house and sat and discussed the Pitman Manor. It had a religious affiliation but I wasn't too concerned with that. It just didn't have any awareness, like the life, it's going to be difficult to explain this but I was looking more for living in a community where there was life and enjoyment and that's what I got at the Mews. The people there were marvelous and you know, what else can I say? Well, the residents were talkative, you know, where the residents at the other places weren't. The atmosphere wasn't

like it was here at The Mews. I met friendly people, friendly residents. I got honesty from the staff, honesty from the servers. We talked about food and they all said the food was very good here and that I would enjoy it and sure enough I came back a couple days later and was invited to supper and I enjoyed it very much, so there you are. And I moved here and it's a whole new life for me. It's a bright life and a friendly life and I'm happy here.

J: Very good, when did you move in?

B: I moved in in May of 2014. And like I said Rosemary, my wife, passed away in February 2014. It was very traumatic.

J: Had you two ever discussed moving to a retirement community while she was alive?

B: Not really because we have a few grandchildren. They would come over on the weekend spend a weekend with us and we would need maybe like two extra bedrooms. We were thinking about the possibility of one day putting the house up for sale and going into a manor sort of like this but the years kept going by and we just didn't do it. But I was always aware of The Mews because as I said I had a friend who lived here and told me how marvelous it was for him.

J: So you say you enjoy being around a lively group and a social group.

B: Somewhere you can fit in and be a part of it you know.

J: Yeah a part of a group, a part of the community. So how does that compare or contrast with your life before you moved in?

B: Our atmosphere at that time was church. We were very church oriented. I had been a church rector you know for a while. Rosemary was in the women's club. And I ran the Senior Citizens Club. I was president of the Senior Citizens Club I guess for about five or six years and it was supposed to be a two-year term which never worked out. And I arranged trips down to the casinos and various places, nice restaurants and things like that. That took up most of our time.

J: And so now you still get to do these things but someone else is helping make the plans, huh?

B: Oh yeah, absolutely, we have a young lady here named Angie who is just marvelous and full of life. And she runs the activities with the help of a young lady who is presently sick unfortunately who the entire place just adores and we're hoping that she gets better and comes back because she is full of fun and vitality and just a young lady who, what can I say, we adore her.

J: Yeah. Well, good so what kind of trips have you been on with Woodbury Mews? Have you gone down to Atlantic City or anything like that?

B: Oh yeah, I've made casino trips and I've made trips to some excellent restaurants that Angie picks out. We've gone to local theater and saw some first rate films. We've been to ice cream parlors and from there to local parks. We went along the riverfront and sat there and watched the big boats go by. We really do some marvelous things here.

J: That's great so I understand that you are a former Councilman of Woodbury Heights.

B: Yes that's correct I was on council and I was also (can't understand) clerk.

J: Wow.

B: A little bit of political adventure that I gave up very quickly. I don't like politics at all but it was a kick when I was doing it. You know it was sort of fun.

J: And then you were a football player I understand?

B: Yeah, I played a lot of football. In fact that's how I met my wife. She was 15 years old and a cheerleader and I was in my junior year in high school and we met on the football field. We

didn't get along too well at first. You know I noticed her but I had a lot of other young girls you know and we went to dances together. And all of a sudden it hit and my wife's favorite line was that I chased her for quite a while until she caught me.

J: That's fantastic.

B: Isn't that great? She was a lovely lady. You would have loved her very much, believe me.

J: I bet. I bet you miss her a lot.

B: Yes I do, I really do.

J: Now did I ask you whether you have kids living nearby or?

B: Say it again.

J: Do you have any children living nearby?

B: Oh yeah in a small town, just maybe five or six miles from here I have my oldest son. I lost my youngest son in May of 2013 and of course it had a great deal to do with my wife's death. Dr. Sullivan said she died of a broken heart. It was her baby boy. Yes so we lost him but I do have an older son who is a magnificent young man who just treats me like I were a king.

J: That's great.

B: It's very great.

J: How old are your grandkids?

B: I have a 25-year-old granddaughter who went to Elizabethtown College and got herself an MBA in occupational therapy. I have a 21-year-old grandson who is going to a tremendous culinary school in Philadelphia and when he graduates he'll be a chef. And I have an autistic grandson who is 18-years-old and I just adore him. He's fantastic. He's a great, great kid.

J: Good, so you get to see your family often, I take it?

B: Fairly often, yeah.

J: Good.

B: And they enjoy it when they come here. Incidentally they came to the last Christmas party that we had here that Angie set up down in the community room and the entire group here just thought they were fantastic. They sort of led the party. I said to the woman I guess she's the boss here, Dawn, she said, "Bill, you've got a great family." And I said, "Thank you. I appreciate it." I thought they were pushing themselves too hard, she said, "Never, never, they were just great fun." So I was very happy with that.

J: Good, now do you have plans for Thanksgiving?

B: Yes, I'm going to go with my sister because my son is going to make a trip to I can't think of the name of the place oh, Cape Cod. He's taking his family up to Cape Cod for the Thanksgiving weekend. I had Thanksgiving with him last year so I told him I said, "I don't want to wreck your family plans if you're going to go away, go away and I'll go have Thanksgiving with my sister." So that's what I'm planning.

J: Oh good. Well, for folks who might be reading this, would you like to offer any kind of words of wisdom now that you've had the experience of moving in and getting to become a part of the community, for folks out there that may not be familiar with it?

B: I would say this to most people: If you're looking around in this area particularly, of course, it's the only area that I know so I'm going to say if you're looking around in this area, go and see what they offer and then stop here and you'll be totally amazed at the difference you're going to find. That's basically what how I feel about it anyway. It's so different and remarkably so. You have to experience it to know what I'm talking about.

J: Right, so a visit is a good idea and talking to people like yourself.

B: That's right. Come in and say hello and sit down with us and join in the fun.

J: It sounds like you like to have fun.

B: I do.

J: You're my kind of guy.

B: I'm 85 years old but I've still got some life left.

J: That's fantastic. That's what keeps you young.

B: That's right. June, it's nice talking to you sweetheart. I really appreciate the opportunity.

J: Me too. Sure, we really appreciate your time and your insights and I know that your words are going to be helpful to people who read them, so thank you so much.

B: I hope they do and of course David asked me to do this and he's a great guy. He just got here. I had heard of him from the place where he came because I have a brother-in-law and sister-in-law whose family were there in Brightview. All I heard was how nice this fella David was to the other fella who was dying there. So his reputation preceded him before he came here. And we just like him a lot. He's a hell of a fellow, well met, you know what I'm speaking of? He's a friend right away as soon as you meet him.

J: Oh that's nice to know. Good.

B: So works out very well.

J: Very good well is there anything else that you wanted to add before we close?

B: Only if there is anything else I can do in the way of spreading the good news here just let me know.

J: Ok well that's nice. Thank you so much. We appreciate your being you and thanks for choosing Woodbury Mews.

B: Oh it was great and thank you I appreciate the opportunity to talk about it.

J: Ok you take care now and have a great day.

B: Thank you sweetheart bye-bye.

J: Bye-bye.