

Yvonne Herbold Interview, August 2016

J: June

Y: Yvonne

J: Hello.

Y: Hello, June?

J: Yes, hi, is this Yvonne?

Y: Yes it is.

J: Well, hello there. It's very nice to meet you.

Y: It's nice to meet you too, very nice. Kind of looking forward to it.

J: Thank you so much for making time in your day to be interviewed.

Y: Well, I'm kind of looking forward to it.

J: Well, I'm glad and they forwarded me a very nice write up that you did which gave me a lot of insight and I'm looking forward to discussing all of that with you on the phone.

Y: Ok, that's fine with me. I didn't really think my life is that interesting.

J: Well, I think it is and I have to say I think you hold the record for living in your house the longest of anyone I've ever spoken to.

Y: I probably do.

J: So we'll get into that but let me make a few comments first before we get started. I just wanted to share with you the purpose of why we do these interviews and we do a lot of them, in fact, have done about eight of them today already and it's so much fun. I enjoy every single one of them. I love meeting the residents and getting to know a little bit about them and their lives and everyone is so fascinating. And then what we try to get to in these interviews is, in addition to getting to know the folks, is get some insight into the process that they went through to make the decision to move into a retirement community, you know, how they first thought of it, how they selected the one they did and then how their life is now that they are living there. So those are basically the kind of questions I will be asking you. But what we do with this information is we share everyone's stories with people out there who may have never thought about moving to a retirement community or maybe they're just in the beginning of their own decision-making process. So it's very helpful to share the stories and let people know that yes, it can be done, and yes it can be very good. So that's what we're after today. And we are recording this phone conversation so that we can produce an accurate transcript. But if you should happen to say something along the way that you don't want to share with anyone because it is too personal or something, just say so right then and there and we'll make sure he we omit it, ok?

Y: Ok fine.

J: Ok, perfect. So, because those reading this transcript aren't going to have the advantage of reading the little bio you sent me, I'm going to give you a chance to go ahead and share some of those things you shared with us on the phone and introduce yourself and just say a little bit about yourself and where you grew up and where you lived before you moved in and anything personal that you want to share in that way. And then we'll get into some of my questions. So you just go right ahead and share what you'd like to share.

Y: Ok, well, I was born and raised in the city of Mt. Healthy which is a little suburb of Cincinnati. And in Cincinnati we're divided East and West and way back when I was born, the West was country and the East was I want to say manufacturing and your CEOs and that type, so there was a rivalry there but that no longer exists. And I was born and raised in the house that my mom and dad bought and I was in it 75 years. I took care of my parents. I was very fortunate that I got a job in Mt. Healthy. I didn't really like a lot of change and move a lot. And so this printing company was building a place in Mt. Healthy and I had graduated from business school. Back then girls went to business school. We didn't go to college that

much so I sent in an application. I thought, "Well, I'll just try." And I sent out several applications to various companies in Cincinnati like everybody sent to Procter & Gamble, to the phone company, to the utility companies, everything like that. That's what we girls did. This company, they were building the printing company and they contacted me and wanted an interview and they were located in downtown Cincinnati at the time. They had not moved up to Mt. Healthy as yet. And so we had an interview and they hired me, which I was very pleased, and it was about six to eight months that we moved from downtown Cincinnati out to Mt. Healthy to a nice new building. We printed and published vacation Bible school material and Sunday school material. Basically it was a Christian oriented facility and other religious books also. And then we grew and I was so pleased because it worked out that I was close to my parents' home as they got older and needed care. I was only five minutes away from where they lived and I was able to help them. I was close so if they needed me and it was a very good company to work with. Of course I was with them 44 years which was a long time. And I was manager of the purchasing department and so therefore I bought a lot of things out there. I bought everything from toilet paper to the rolls of printing paper on the big presses that we had, and everything in between. It was very interesting and very rewarding and very challenging but then my parents grew older and my dad, they both had longevity. My dad passed away at 89 and my mom was 94. And I was able to keep them home and take care of them with the help of a lady that came in and stayed with them while I worked. But my mom lost both of her legs due to poor circulation and so she was really total care but we managed. My eyes opened up a lot going through this as to what would be in the future. I never married so therefore I had no children. And I had no brothers or sisters so it was me. I had no close siblings. I had some cousins but I thought, you know, I've got to think about this. And that's what started me thinking about myself. But I didn't really delve into a lot of things. I would go visit some of my friends in the nursing homes but my mom was from the age that nursing homes were not good. She had some bad experiences with her sister but they are nothing like they are today so I mean she said, "I'll haunt you 'til your dying day if you put me in one." Well, thank God I had to put her in, not a retirement center, it was a basically a nursing home because she needed care. She had a major stroke and so she could not talk and she could not swallow, she had a feeding tube and everything and that's when I had to put her into a nursing home. And I'm so glad that was the first real experience that I had with one and it was a good one. I mean my mom really had kind of more of a life there than she had at home looking out the front door all the time and I thought oh, what a shame she had to waste, not waste but spend her life that way. So basically that's kind of what started me thinking about what would be in my future. And well, I lost my mother and I was still working and long story short, I mean I had been at several of the retirement centers over on the western side where I lived and visited maybe some people. And some of my friends had their parents in there and they were very nice but I knew I would still be away from this set of cousins, that's what I call them, a set of cousins that would help me if I needed help. Because by this time I had macular degeneration in my one eye so therefore had limited sight and also had severe arthritis in my upper spine. The use of my left arm was hurtful that's the only way I can describe it and because of this I couldn't turn my head all the way around and I gave up driving. That is what kind of led me to say, "Ok, now we've got to get serious here thinking about this." And my cousins lived over on the eastern side of town and one day they called me, they had their mother who would've been my mom's sister-in-law and they were taking care of her, she was still alive and they all lived around her. And they said, "We've got an appointment at Pinebrook." This here is when it was real new, they said, "We're going to take mom over. We'll come over and get you, you want to go over with us and get through it and then we'll take you back home?" I said, "Oh, yeah, why not?" Well, I came to Pinebrook and I walked through those front doors and I said, "Lord this is beautiful but I can't afford you." Well, it didn't work out that way, thank God. And they talked to me here and I thought gee, this is kind of what I need. But I thought I have to sell my house. I mean I had not made arrangements like that and I thought hmm. So the girl from over here, Chris was her name, came over and she talked to me and

they had me over here and showed me rooms, went over different things with me. By then I had retired from my work and thank God I retired what I thought was substantially well. I was pleased with my retirement but then then again I thought I really earned it too after 44 years and so I went over things with my financial advisor and we worked things out and he says, "Go for it." That's exactly the words he said, "Go for it." I said that's all I needed to hear. I put my house up for sale and it took me three months to sell it and they were so helpful to me over here. I picked the room out and the held it. When I came here there was only I think 45 or 50 people here and it was strictly independent living. Well, that's all I really needed and I thought boy, this is pretty good. I didn't have to have the grass cut. I don't have to worry about is the furnace going to go out, all repairs for the house. I mean it was 75 years old and I thought this is coming ahead and it can be really a big burden so my mind was made up and basically everything boiled down that I came to Pinebrook and it was the best decision I ever made.

J: Fantastic, when was that, when did you move in?

Y: Ok, I just celebrated my fifth anniversary. That's the way I call it, August 1, 2011.

J: Good.

Y: I'm here five years. I'm going in my sixth year.

J: Good, so you gave an excellent excellent description up until now. I mean I couldn't have added any questions that would have made that better so we'll move on from that point to now you're living there. Tell me how the transition was for you. Did you know anybody when you moved in?

Y: No, no but my aunt, who I discussed before, there was a lady that lived here, her name was Katherine Bauer and she was neighbors to my aunt and she had moved here. So she introduced herself to me and basically back then she was my sponsor. We won't even go into that. That was immaterial. She was the only person that I knew and was very nice to me and showed me all around which was a big help. Everybody was so helpful and the transition of moving, my family was worried that once I sold my house it would've been a big transition for me because in the past I did not move around a lot. In fact, his would have been the biggest move I ever made in my life. And so I won't say it wasn't, it was easy but it took time to adjust. And I come to find out when I came here that a lot of the people had the same problems. Not problems but same adjustment as I had.

J: So how long did it take you, as you say, to adjust and feel at home?

Y: Ok, I can remember the first time my cousins took me up to their place and we came back and I said, "We're getting close to home." And they turned around they says, "That's the first time you called it home." And that was about six months later.

J: And what made it feel like home to you?

Y: Number one the people, number two the staff. But my apartment that I came into, of course I brought my own stuff and thank God, I wasn't a collector of junk so everything that I really and truly wanted fit into the apartment. They were helpful, they put the things in place, pictures and everything and I walked into my living room and I thought, gee, this is almost just like my own house, my pictures and everything. That was a big help to me and the same way with everything else. I thought, oh the atmosphere, my apartment, the people, it all helped me feel that I could adjust my life the way I wanted it. And every little bit would just fall in place, maybe this would happen and I would think, we've got a wonderful beauty shop here and the first time I went and had my hair done I thought gee, this is pretty nifty because it's right around the corner from where I live here and I thought now, that's pretty good And the food is fantastic. I do have to say this, when I came here I gained 7 pounds! Now you don't do that with poor food. So then, I thought ok Yvonne, you've got to start watching just a little bit. Because I didn't want to buy new clothes, let's put it that way. And just everything, all the activities that we had. I will say this, five years ago I was in better shape than what I am now and as the years go on, and when I say that I'm still in independent living and I still love it and I still manage with it no problem, but my arthritis has kicked up, I mean it gets worse and there's nothing I can do for that. It ran in my family and I'm seeing this now just in the five years now, every year it goes on I thank God I made the decision back

then. It wasn't too soon. When I first came here I was 75 years old. That was a big number for me that year and I thought maybe, because a lot of people here were like 80, 85, 90, and I thought maybe I did this too soon but no, no, the longer I was here, the more things fit in and this was the biggest and best decision that I made for my life.

J: Excellent. So tell me how your life, aside from the physical changes you're experiencing, how is your life different or even the same now than it was before you moved?

Y: Is my life the same now as when I moved?

J: Yeah, I mean what kinds of things do you still do that you used to do and what kind of new things do you do now?

Y: Ok, no it's not the same because I'm able to experience more because I couldn't drive anymore. And so therefore we have transportation here wherever we want to go and that I would not have had at home. I had to give up driving because my physical condition. There's activities here. Of course I have to say, if you want to be very active you can and if you don't want to you don't have to. I mean your meals are served. I don't have to worry about going to the grocery store and bringing in food and worrying about somebody taking me there and home. Here if I want to go to the grocery store we have transportation at our convenience. And people, they have people around, always have people. And so many activities. Now, when I first came here I was very active. Well, I went on, they have some trips and stuff like that because my health wasn't that bad but as time grew on, I don't go on a lot of the trips now but I mean we have, I play bingo twice a week and I play cards twice a week and then anything in between if I want to do extra things they have here, I'll do that. I mean we always have activities here that if you physically can't do things you can, they are very good at keeping your mind straight. I would not have had any of this at home, I really wouldn't have.

J: So now that you've experienced this lifestyle for five years, what kind of advice might you offer to someone who has never set foot in a retirement community and may have their mind set up that they're never going to move?

Y: That's a good question. Depending on the age, like I thought I was too young but because I had experience and went around and had seen retirement centers on my side of town or just exposed myself, not purposefully but through I had some friends that they had parents in there, and I would go with them to visit and that's what really kind of got me. I mean if you're in a position where you wonder, how am I going to be taken care of, that is the time. I had an aunt that lived in a retirement center around here like this and she knew my situation at home and she said to me, she said, she said, they called me Vonnie, she said, "Vonnice, you will know, you will know when you're ready and when you are, do it." And she was so right, she was so right.

J: Well, that was great advice to hear from a relative, wasn't it?

Y: Yes, yes it was and I mean I never thought that I would, although I really and truly think my experience with my parents being older and going through, you know, what they did, I think it made me realize. It didn't make up my mind back then but it made me realize that there may come a time when I need to be thinking that way and when it came I knew it. I just knew it.

J: Just like your aunt said.

Y: Yes and of course I still tell the two cousins that came and got me and brought me over here I said, "Was there a method to your madness in getting me over on the side of town?" They said, "No."

J: How was it moving across town, did you get used to the new surroundings pretty quickly?

Y: Yes and no. I got real used to going to the bank and just different things that I had to do but of course they had different trips here back then and I was still able to go on to some trips and I really got to see some things in Cincinnati that I didn't when I lived on the other side of town, you know different highlights and that was very, I was very thankful for that which if I had done it now in my condition I wouldn't have been able to do that. So therefore, I mean I would suggest anybody, don't lay down and say, "This is it." Because you can't do that you've got to come in and be prepared, not prepared, you've

got to want to see what kind of life there is out there and there is a life out there. I mean, I came here and I thought if my mom and dad would've had this, their life would've been so much better than what it was. Of course that's going back to an older generation too. Nursing homes were nothing like they are now.

J: Right, right. Well, I think you've really hit on all the major points that I think people will be interested in. Is there anything that I didn't ask you that you think is important for people to know?

Y: Maybe with my job, the longevity with my job, the company that I worked for, was owned by a gentleman who was very good friends with Billy Graham and I did have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Graham. He came out with the owner of our company one time to go through it and that was a rewarding experience.

J: I'll bet, wow.

Y: I mean he was just a very nice gentleman and like I say very good company. I was very lucky, not lucky.

J: It sounds like you worked hard. Yeah, rewarding, not so much luck. It has to do with hard work, right?

Y: Right. I mean it was just everything fell into place too because I got to grow with the company. It was very large and I got to grow with the company. Some people don't understand, how do I want to say this? When your company, well like Watermark, they're a corporation and I worked under corporations, you know, that was a corporation. They owned other companies, they looked at things a little differently so therefore I had experience, you know, some people say they don't understand, they're 90 years old and they never worked under anything like that and here I am preaching, "Now, this is the way it goes, no, you can't do that." Sometimes I think I better keep my mouth shut. I'm not made that way.

J: Well, it's nice to have experience working for a company that you love and that gives you opportunities and that is growing and it's exciting. I can relate to that because I've been with Watermark from the day it started so I've had a similar pathway to yours.

Y: That's right.

J: That's nice. Well, listen it's been great talking with you. I know you probably have things to do and we've really hit on everything, your story is really wonderful and I know it'll be inspiring to other folks and, my gosh, to move out of a house after 75 years, that's quite an undertaking.

Y: Yes it is, yes it is and I won't say it took some adjustment, it did, but when you're ready. I do have one thing I'm very involved in here. We have what we call a Resident's Council and I'm secretary.

J: Yes. Oh good.

Y: Yes and it's very rewarding here. And I do have a chance to open my mouth sometimes because I mean it's, we just started last year and it's really on the go now, we've really got it going good.

J: Good, thank you for doing that. It's so important for residents to have a sounding board you know and a way to express themselves and let their opinions be known. It makes it a better community for sure.

Y: Absolutely, it really does, yes. In the five years, I'm not the oldest one here, but I've learned a lot and I've gone through a lot and it's all been rewarding. When we went from one owner to the next I mean it was very, it was not hard. Everybody says, "No," I said, "We've got good food. We've got a roof overhead and we've got everything going for us. And the transition is nothing." That's usually the speech I have to give them. Of course the new ones that come in, they don't how. And your old ones, I just told them, I said, "Just hang in there."

J: Yeah, well, thank you so much. Thank you so much. It sounds like you're a great member of the community and we're glad to have you.

Y: Thank you, June. It's been a pleasure. I enjoyed it.

J: Thank you, you have a great weekend and you take care there in Cincinnati.

Y: Ok, thank you.

J: Alright, bye now.

