

## Peter and Sydney St. Clair Interview, February 2017

J: June

P: Peter

S: Sydney

J: Hi, this is June Hussey in Tucson. Nice to meet you both.

P: How's the weather out there?

J: It's just perfect. It's going to be in the 80s today.

P: That's not fair.

J: Well, you're there in Ohio and I bet it's not quite that warm, huh?

P: It was 60 yesterday though.

J: That's not too bad, you can't complain about that.

P: No, not at all.

J: Well, very good. So I want to thank you both for making time in your busy day for this interview. And I'm going to spend a couple of minutes upfront here explaining to you why we do these interviews and what some of the expectations are. And then I'm going to turn it over and let you guys do most of the talking. So they might have explained this part. I just want to make sure you understand we are recording this conversation so that we can get an accurate transcript and make sure we get all your sentiments and words as you stated them. But really the reason we do these interviews is because, first of all, we like to get to know who our residents are and get to know what their lives have been like up until today. And to get into some of the reasons why they decided it was time to move to a retirement community like Pinebrook, how they went about making their choice and something about their lives now that they are settled in. And then what we do with this first-hand information is we share it with people out there who may have not started even thinking about their future, what they are going to do and maybe they don't even know that such places exist as Pinebrook. So what we have found doing these interviews all over the country and sharing peoples' stories is that it helps people who don't really know where to get started. It's really just very helpful. So we do appreciate you sharing your story with us today.

S: Thank you.

J: I did mention we are recording it but I want to make sure you know that should you say something that you feel is perhaps too personal to include in the transcript that is going to be published please go ahead and say that right then and there. Say, "Please don't print this part." Ok?

S: Ok.

J: Alright, since we have two of you on the phone. I'm going to have you take turns. This first part is the part where I'm going to welcome you to introduce yourself and talk a little bit about maybe where you are from, where you have lived most of your life, your family, your career, travels, anything of interest that you would like to share. And then I'll get into some more specific questions once each of you has had a chance to do that. So either one of you can start. Whoever would like to go first, please go ahead.

S: Pete, you go first.

P: Well, my name is Pete St. Clair. I'm 88 years old. We came here on the 1st of June. We had looked around five of the other places, similar places in town. And Syd, my wife, fell and her back had given out on her in the condo that we were in the last ten years and we just decided we better move. So we were looking around and Pinebrook seemed to be the best place that we had seen. And we came through and looked at it. The people were very nice. It was a clean and orderly place. In fact, it almost felt like a country club atmosphere with the dining room and we just decided to move. Syd didn't want to cook anymore and I didn't want to learn how so we decided we better move. And the only thing I knew how

to cook was wheels of death, which are pancakes. I didn't want to eat pancakes every day so we moved here and we've been very, very happy. We have lived in the Cincinnati area for well over 40 years in different spots. We have lived in LA, Los Angeles and we've lived in Louisville for a while but we have spent most of our married adult life in the Cincinnati area.

J: Fantastic, Sydney would you like to go next and add to what Pete said?

S: Yes, I will. We've been married 62 years. We thought we would stay in our condo but my back gave out on me and it was hard to shop, hard to cook, hard to clean, all that stuff got to be a real hardship. So we started looking around and everyone seemed so happy here. The food was good. I love our apartment, it's beautiful. So we've been very happy that we made the move and while we could do it ourselves. Our children didn't have to do it. We could pick out our furniture and decorate it the way we wanted it, bring what we wanted to bring. So I think it was a perfect time for us to make that decision.

J: And so take me back to where you were living, how long had you been in your condo?

S: We had been in there ten years, thinking we would stay there because it was all one floor and you know, easy really and we liked it, we liked all the people. And we sold our house to our daughter because her husband had died and they were looking for a good school district. So she had our house, we moved into the condo and now she is getting married again because her husband had died and our grandson is going to buy the house. It all worked out.

J: How lovely you can keep it in the family that way.

S: I'm sorry?

P: Yes, we are very happy to have that.

J: Yeah, it makes it a little easier to leave your house when you know you can still go back and visit it, right?

S: Exactly, we are happy he liked it. It's close to a great school and within walking distance. I think it will be perfect for our grandson and he's getting married in October.

J: Wow, was that house the house that you raised your family in?

S: No, no, we moved around. We went to Los Angeles, went to Louisville but mainly stayed here and then my mom and dad needed help. My dad had Parkinson's so we moved into a duplex with them and helped her out. Then she got married at 82 so we found a ranch house which is the one her daughter has now and our grandson will have. Things happen and you just kind of go with the flow.

P: None of our children went to school in Anderson. Our grandchildren did but none of our children.

J: And that's Anderson, Ohio?

S: It's a suburb of Cincinnati.

P: Anderson Township.

J: Okay, got it.

P: In Hamilton County.

J: I see, so that's how far from Pinebrook?

S: About 20 minutes by car.

J: Good. So do you get to see your family often?

S: Yes, pretty much, yes.

P: Well, three of our children live in the South Bend, Indiana area. Our oldest daughter who lives here in our old house. And so we don't see the other three children that often but we do go up to South Bend once in a while. In fact, our youngest son and his gal came down last weekend in fact to visit which was very very nice.

J: Well, I want to ask you a question because you made this decision as a couple to move to Pinebrook after having thought that you were going to stay in the condo forever. Sydney I understand you are a nurse, right?

S: Yes, I am.

J: And you had some experience taking care of one of your own parents? Is that what you said?

S: No, my parents, my dad had Parkinson's so we moved in with them to help my mother.

J: Right, right so you had experience as a caregiver to your own parents?

S: Yes.

J: And so when you thought about moving to the condo, long before Pinebrook was ever on your mind, did you think way ahead in your life that, you know, if you ever needed help, did you think about that?

S: Yes, well my mother got married again at 82 and they moved into a place similar. They moved into Mount Pleasant. And it made our life a lot easier because we didn't have to worry about them quite as much, you know? So I didn't want my daughter, she lost her husband, she's engaged again, she has three families she is looking after so we figured we needed to kind of look after ourselves as much as possible. So that's why we moved into a place like this.

J: Good, ok, so tell me about the move itself and your apartment. How did you go about selecting the apartment that you're in?

S: Actually, we were on the waiting list and they said this one was available and we loved it. It was on the third floor and of course they painted it, they put new carpeting in. It's beautiful. We are in a two bedroom, two bath and we have really enjoyed being here.

J: Good and what about a typical day. Do you each have your own interests, do you like to do things together or what are some of the things you enjoy doing there?

S: Well, basically we eat a few times a day and then we like the church across the hall and we like the Bible study. I play bridge. We like the music and programs that you have in the evening. And basically we still kind of have a foot in and a foot out because we see some friends of ours to play cards and that type.

J: What about you Pete?

P: Well, we're still connected with people from the condo that we moved from and we still go to birthday parties together and we go to dinner about once a month with that old group which is really nice. And then our daughter that lives here, she and the grandson and the granddaughter they come over every once in a while to eat. So you know it's nice. We have the best of both worlds. Syd doesn't have to clean. I don't have to do any dishes so I'm really happy. We are very happy here. And we've met many, many nice people.

J: Well that's great to hear. What kind of advice, having gone through this experience of making a decision and choosing where you wanted to live, do you have advice for other couples out there that may be themselves living in a condo and not thinking forward and maybe need a little bit of a nudge?

S: My advice is just go in and do it when you can do it yourself and somebody doesn't have to do it for you.

P: I think it's a decision that you, as a couple, have to make, or an individual, if you already lost the spouse. It's a decision you have to make and the sooner you do it, the happier you'll be.

J: Good and can you imagine what your life would be like if you hadn't made the decision and you were still back in the condo? How would your life be the same and how would it be different?

P: Well, I'd be having to cook and I can't cook.

S: I'm better now, I could do some cooking.

P: But no, we are very happy here. I don't know whether we could have walked up and down stairs. We were on one level there and we had a garage connected with our condo and that was very nice but we can't drive like we used to. And I don't drive at night and you can really get to most shopping areas within 15 minutes of here so I think it's just great.

J: Did you know folks at Pinebrook before you moved in?

S: No, we did not.

P: You knew one.

S: She came in after we did.

P: Charlotte, yes.

S: But no, we had been here for a meal, invited with, our brother-in-law got an invitation to bring a guest for his birthday so we had been here like three times and just looking around. We visited others and this seemed the best fit for us, size wise, people all were happy and friendly. It just seemed perfect for us.

J: And so since you have been there for about six months or so have you found it easy to make new friendships?

S: We have learned most everybody's name, maybe not the last name but yes you begin to be like a family if you don't see somebody for a couple days you wonder, "What happened to so-and-so?" I feel safe here, I just feel like if anything happens to either one of us there's someone here to help. I'm just very at ease here and very happy to be here.

P: Sometimes you almost run into somebody in the hall. It's unbelievable. I'll tell you one thing I like about it, they don't assign seats for meals. I think that's good because we have met a lot of people by being seated with different people. Of course sometimes people do want to sit with one another but as a rule you sit with whoever at random and I think it's great.

S: I like to go to, if you go to your room and you don't want to do anything, you don't have to. Nobody bothers you. You can just pretty much do what you want, when you want.

J: Good, well great. I think that you have explained the lifestyle pretty well. Is there anything else that you wanted to share with people that you think is important for people to know who maybe have never set foot in a retirement community?

S: One friend of ours said, "I would never put you in a place like that." I don't think she had any idea. I think she was thinking of the old homes that you put people in. And they came for dinner and they were quite surprised. So I just think, you know, if you haven't had someone in a place or, you just don't know how nice it is, really.

J: Yeah, no two are alike, are they? You visited several different ones.

S: Some of them were too expensive for us; they were very high. I don't think we could have afforded some of them. This is more like we can afford and we like the people. They are all sort of people like we are, same level. And there's not so many that you can't get to know people. I think we picked the right one for us.

J: Very good, well, great. Well, I think that's all the questions that I have unless Pete you have something else you want to add?

P: No, not to my knowledge. I just do you guarantee how long I will be here?

J: Well, we don't have crystal balls on the shelves but I sure hope you are there for a nice long time.

S: We celebrated his birthday and we promised we'd be back next year.

J: Very good, well, I hope so. I really once again want to thank you for sharing your time with us this morning and sharing your story with the folks out there who I'm sure will find it very helpful.

P: Thank you very much.

J: Okay, well you take care and have a nice rest of your afternoon there in Milford.

P: I hope it doesn't snow there tonight.

J: I don't think it's going to snow here. Alrighty, take care, thank you both.

S: Thank you.

J: Ok, bye-bye.