

## Miriam Gerber Interview, May 2015

J: June

M: Miriam

Interview starts at 0:34

J: Hi Miriam, how are you? Can you hear me ok?

M: Yes, I can hear you fine.

J: Wonderful, well I hope you won your bridge game earlier.

M: No, today was canasta.

J: Ok canasta, good.

M: Tonight is bridge.

J: I see, busy schedule. Well, I'm so glad that you had time to squeeze us in. I really look forward to speaking with you. This is June Hussey and I'm speaking to you today from Tucson, Arizona home of Watermark Retirement Communities. And I wanted to thank you for agreeing to share your story with us. We are primarily interested in hearing from residents who are willing to share their story with others who are thinking about or considering moving to retirement community because we think their perspectives are very helpful. So I'm sure Brian probably mentioned that this call is being recorded and just so you know, if you say something that you regret just say oh scratch that and we'll scratch it from the transcript, ok?

M: Ok.

J: Ok, very good. So Miriam tell us your name is Miriam Gerber, correct?

M: It's correct.

J: Oh good, I didn't hear you, sorry. And how long ago did you move to The Watermark at Logan Square?

M: The 5th of October was five years so I guess by the end of June will be five and half years, five years and six months. It's over five years that I'm here.

J: So that's long enough to know the place pretty well.

M: Very well.

J: And where did you live just before you moved in?

M: On Henry Avenue, that's in Roxborough.

J: So not too far away I take it?

M: Well, it's about 10 miles from here.

J: And were you living in a house or an apartment?

M: Apartment building, there were seven buildings and I was living in one of the buildings. I lived there for 39 years.

J: Oh my goodness. Was that a downsize move for you when you moved or was it about the same size apartment you moved to?

M: I had a bigger apartment than here. But this apartment here is great. It's big enough for me.

J: And so tell me about some of the reasons you thought about moving in the first place. When you think back 5 1/2 years ago, what made you decide you wanted to move to retirement community?

M: My husband had died, let's see, my husband is dead now 23 years, so he had died about 18 years before and I really wasn't thinking of moving but every week I got a call from another neighbor that they were moving here. When the sixth neighbor called me to say she's moving here I realized that I should move here because I would have no bridge game, no canasta games. And then I talked my sister also into moving here. So we moved here within a period of five weeks, eight people moved here, seven people from 7901 and my sister made the eighth person. And it's been a wonderful, wonderful move for

me.

J: Wow, that's wonderful you got to move with so many of your friends at once.

M: If you move by yourself, it takes a little time to get adjusted. My neighbor started to move and the last day was a Friday. I moved Friday morning and my sister moved Friday afternoon and that evening all eight of us ate dinner. And for the longest time we were known as the popular eight people.

J: That sounds great. I must say that's a pretty unique situation. I've not heard of that happening before.

M: I know, it was very unique.

J: Well, you're so lucky, so other than the fact that your friends were leaving, were there any other things that you considered about being in your apartment versus moving to retirement community?

Things that you either miss or don't miss?

M: I really don't miss anything because I have two sons that live, like, 10 or 12 minutes away from here so it makes it very easy for me and I love living here. The convenience is great, the people are great. I'm very, very happy here. And being close to my children, of course, makes it much easier.

J: And you have three children, right?

M: Oh yeah I have grandchildren and great-grandchildren and I am now expecting a great-great-grandson.

J: Oh my gosh, how wonderful is that.

M: Do you know how old I am?

J: No, how old are you?

M: I'm old, 93 years.

J: Good for you.

M: But I'm very, very lucky because my mind is still very good. I still drive a car and I have my car in the garage here and I'm very happy here because I love the people. I love the service. The people that work here are very nice and it's just a great place to live. The best thing about this place is when you move here, Watermark doesn't care what religion you are, what color you are, they treat everybody equal. Which that's how it should be. So it makes it very great for me.

J: That's wonderful. And so I know that you're a card player. You say you play canasta and bridge. What other kinds of activities do you take advantage of that the community offers?

M: Well I work at, they have a thrift shop here and I work in the thrift shop. I used to belong to the knitting club and I made a lot of sweaters here, many sweaters, like 80 or 90 sweaters for babies. But my hands are not as they should be so I don't do that. But otherwise I take part in, there's a beading class, I go to some lectures, I go to movies. I take part in as many things as I think I would be interested in and there are many things to be interested. They keep you busy all the time here.

J: Right, that's great. Well, it sure sounds like you're busy. I bet there's not a lot of 93 year olds living by themselves that are doing as much as you do.

M: Well there is. I want to tell you three years ago when I was 90 years old we were eight people having dinner, 90 years old. I was the baby of the group and when I told this to my daughter-in-law she laughed, so. To be eight people and be 90 and to be the youngest because all my other friends were 92 and 93 and there's quite a few of those, my friends that are older than I am.

J: Wow that gives you role models to look up to.

M: Yes.

J: That's great. And let me ask you did you ever look at any other retirement communities before deciding on the Watermark?

M: No, I did not. Because I came here because my friends from 7901 were moving here. And I felt this is where I wanted to be, with my friends. It was great because I had my card games, I had my friends, I had everything that I needed, see?

J: Now tell me about, you've probably seen lots of folks move then, over the five years you've been there, is it hard for people that move in that don't know anybody or do most people know a few people

when they move in?

M: Well there are a few people that move in, when you move in alone it takes time to get adjusted because until they get invited to someplace, until they get to know people, so it takes them maybe six or eight weeks to get adjusted. For me it was no adjustment because I knew seven people I knew right away here so there was really no adjustment. And this was a wonderful, wonderful move for me.

J: That's great. So let's talk about folks out there that may not know about retirement community living at all, who might be living by themselves, and not having much to do. If you had a chance to talk to them and give them your advice what might you say?

M: I do many times because I know the people who work here like what's his name, the guy that called you, when I see them I always tell them right away, "Don't wait to move now because it's a wonderful, wonderful place." So whenever I have a chance I tell people how wonderful it is here. And you know some people move with a husband, of course that's a little bit easier, but if they move alone it's a big adjustment.

J: Let me just ask you, what do you think makes people hesitate to move in when it's, as you say, such a great way of life? What makes you think people are reluctant?

M: Well, I don't know. Some people are loners and they don't need anybody, see, they want to be alone. And some people when they get older especially, I'm old but they get older, they're afraid to make the move. But each person as you well know is different. But for me, as I say, I had no adjustment because the first night that I was here we had eight people that I knew for the last, some of them 30 years I knew from where I lived, see?

J: Yeah, so if your friends had told you when you were 80 that they were moving would you have followed them when you were that age too?

M: What's that again?

J: If your friends had made the decision to move when they were 80, younger, say 75-80 do you think you would have moved in that early?

M: As I said when I moved in I was 87 already so most of my friends were, one of my friends is two years older, there's two women that I moved with from 7901, I'm 93, they're 96. In fact one of my friends from 7901 just moved here. This coming Saturday she's going to be 102 years old. And she's very happy here because she knows us and she eats dinner with us every night and even though she's 102 her mind is still very, very sharp.

J: Now tell me about, do you ever participate in any of the outings?

M: I go to a movie sometimes. In fact last week I went to the movie which I loved very much. They have outings where they go to a place for lunch which I've gone many many times. And you know if you want to go to a certain place if you talk to the head, Jenny is her name, she makes sure she arranges a trip to that place. They listen to you, see? And I take part in many things.

J: And you mentioned you still drive, you have your car there in the garage. So what kind of uses do you have for your car, what do you use it for?

M: Like this coming Friday I go back to where I used to live because they take you like to Shop-Rite and the dollar store and every place but the stores are so big it only takes me like 20 minutes and the drive is very easy so like when I go to the bank there, I come in, "Oh, Mrs. Gerber." They all know me because I lived there 39 years. So I use the car not much and I guess the next year or so I'll be giving it to my grandchildren.

J: That's nice.

M: They take you to places. You have everything, all these good advantages here.

J: Right well that's wonderful. Is there anything else, I know you've told me quite a bit about what you like to do. Is there anything that you haven't mentioned that you like about living in the community, different activities you participate in?

M: For me it's enough. Once in a great while, when I have a free day with nothing to do, I am so happy.

Like today I played canasta all afternoon and now, when I finish with you, I'm going up for dinner. Then I play bridge tonight. And when I tell this to my daughter-in-law she says, my daughter-in-law is 61 years old, so I tell her on Saturday I said, "I go to yoga class every Saturday and then I rush home to eat lunch because I have to play canasta then I go for dinner and then most Saturdays I go to a movie." My daughter-in-law says, "I don't even do that much in one day." So I do a lot of things.

J: Well it sounds like it's working for you. You sound like you're very happy.

M: I am. I'm extremely happy. I just hope I should be well and enjoy a few more years here.

J: Right, what about having the health center on-site, does that provide any peace of mind for you?

M: What's that?

J: The health center being on-site?

M: It's not a health center; they're building across the street for the Mormons. It doesn't belong to us.

J: No, I was thinking about The Springs, the nursing center?

M: It doesn't bother us at all, not me anyway.

J: Ok, alrighty. Well, I have gotten so much information from you I can't think of anything else that I need to ask you unless there is something else that you'd like to say.

M: I was going to say I had forgotten to tell you that every Saturday morning I go to yoga.

J: Yes, that's good for you, wonderful, helps you stretch. Very good, well thank you once again. I really appreciate your time Miriam. Have a wonderful rest of the day.

M: Ok and you be well.

J: Thank you, you too. Take care, bye-bye.

M: Bye-bye.