

Ted Scott Interview, November 2016

J: June

T: Ted

2:16

J: Hello.

T: Hello.

J: Hi, is this Ted Scott?

T: This is he.

J: Well, this is June Hussey, very nice to meet you.

T: Hi June.

J: Thanks so much for taking time out of your day for this interview.

T: You're welcome, happy to do so.

J: Ok great, well, I won't take too much of your time but I'd like to start by just going over a few things if that's ok.

T: Good.

J: We do interviews with our residents like yourself all over the country and it's really quite a pleasure for me to meet all these fascinating people. And I look forward to getting to know you through your story today. I'm going to ask some questions that have to do with you know your decision on making a move to a retirement community, what prompted your decision, how you went about figuring out where you were going to move and those kinds of things. And also how you like living there now that you're there. And then what we do with the information is we share it publicly with people who may or may not have ever set foot in a retirement community. And we find by sharing our residents' stories it opens people's minds to the possibility that maybe they would like to live in a retirement community someday. So that's the general idea. And then I also want you to know that we are recording this conversation so that we can get an accurate transcript but if you should say something along the way that is too personal to share and you don't want it to appear in the transcript just say that right then and there say, "Hey, take that part out. I don't want to share that." And then we will strike it, ok?

T: Alright, fine, I appreciate that I can control the privacy.

J: Yes, yes so ok to begin with before I get into my questions I'm going to invite you to tell me a little bit about yourself. You can go into as much or as little detail as you want as far as where you're from and what your interests are and something about your family, whatever you'd like to share just so we can get a sense of who you are Ted.

T: Well, let's see I am 80 years old as of last September 25, 2016. I was born in a town in northern Michigan called Petoskey. However, I was reared in a neighboring town. I say neighboring it's about 32 miles away from Petoskey. The town is called East Jordan. There is a lake that comes into East Jordan from Lake Michigan and that lake is called Lake Charlevoix. And into Lake Charlevoix at East Jordan is the Jordan River, not the one in Israel. Now, having a lot of water around where I grew up in this little town made a place that was very much a tourist attraction in the summertime. And consequently the things that I participated in as I grew up had a lot to do with tourism. In the wintertime when I was growing up and by the way you can see that I spent the years of World War II in roughly the elementary school years consequently I grew up with gas rationing and food rationing and so on. I didn't travel out of East Jordan during those years very much simply because we just couldn't do that. And so the town itself became sort of an enclave of its own. I think you can just imagine growing up around this lake, wintertime, not at all with the ski resorts like they have now in that area. It just made for a very do I want to say cozy growing up environment. I also had a lot of relatives around. I lived next door to my maternal

grandfather. My grandmother died when I was about eight years old but until that time I ran away from my house to her house because I could have cookies. I always knew that. So my sister and the family it was just my sister and myself but my sister was 10 years older than I so you can imagine that I had an older sister mother. And she was often left in my charge and the things that I can remember saying to that poor sister of mine, "You are not my mother." And that just kind of set the tone of my growing up. I had a family of an uncle and aunt with six children. Three of those children were about my age. One just my age and another about a year and a half older, another a year and a half or two years younger. So we all played together and I had lots of parents because of family but the neighborhood had no locked doors, no locked car doors. We just kind of grew up in that cozy protective environment. We walked to school. I told my grandkids it was uphill going and uphill coming home. It's a very almost idyllic kind of childhood.

J: It sounds like it.

T: Yeah, when I look back on it I was very very fortunate. I really was. The school, everybody knew everybody. I knew the parents of a lot of the kids and they knew me. The teachers knew my parents. Before I could get home from school and I did walk to school about a mile and a half the information that I did not want my parents to know arrived home before I did. It just was that kind of growing up which set a good scene I think, a good foundation for my life. And part of the experience was to have a deep appreciation of what community meant. I learned early that community meant adjusting that I didn't get my way all the time. A lot of times I didn't get my way simply because we as a community needed to deal with everybody and you know you won some and you lost some. Things were never perfect perfect in my estimation but good. So I learned early on a kind of sense of good, better, best. Not so much bad but just good, better, best. Somebody asked me about the people here at The Fountains how I was enjoying it and I said, "Well, let's be honest. They're all nice but some are nicer than others." As far as my judgment. So I think that background is standing (inaudible) now as I make an adjustment from living by myself. I'll explain that in a bit. Living by myself before coming into The Fountains where there are people and eating patterns are not as determined by myself as they were before I came but those are wonderful adjustments and I am very very pleased to have made them or I hope I am making them anyway. Now, I left that area after graduating from high school in which by the way I was very active in the music life of both the church that I belonged to and the school activities and in the community activities. So music was sort of a companion as I grew up. I started taking piano lessons before I was five years old. So when I left East Jordan I came to a junior college in the southern part of Iowa which was related to the church that I belonged. It is now known as Graceland University but at that time it was a two-year school and it was called Graceland College. I attended that for two years and then I transferred to Central Missouri State College which is now Central Missouri University. And I got my bachelor's from there. When I finished at Central Missouri I began teaching in Independence, Missouri. In those days, 1958, when I graduated teaching jobs were a dime a dozen. You had interviewing tables at the college or university and you just went down from one to the next to the next to the next and they you know kind of offered you a job and you could decide which one you wanted. I know that is no longer part of the picture. But at that particular time that was pretty so. You could find a job from New York to California, from Texas to Montana. So I chose to come to Independence. Again Independence had an attraction of being the headquarters actually of the church which I was active in. So I taught in Independence for five years. During that time I reacquainted myself with a girl that I had met when I was at Graceland College. She was a girl from Australia and had come from Australia to attend Graceland. When she finished Graceland which had become a four-year institution during this period of time she came to Independence to work at the world headquarters of the church known now as The Community of Christ. She and I met again and eventually we married. And so the fifth year of my being in Independence was my first year of marriage. Well, during this period of time Michigan was growing in salaries and so on and was looking very very attractive at least

economically for my wife and myself so the upshot is that we left Independence and moved to the Detroit, Michigan area. And I taught for two years at a middle school in one of the southern suburbs of the Detroit area. Well, by this time I began to realize that teaching in middle school was not exactly what I wanted to spend my life doing. I in fact said to my wife that I would rather sell refrigerators to Eskimos than I would please going back to that area of my career. By this time I had also earned a master's from what is now Northern Colorado University at Greeley, Colorado.

J: Oh.

T: And so I had my master's now and I was able to look at teaching in community college level. Community colleges around that period of time which was by now the very early 60s or right along in there was growing very rapidly. I think this statistics about that time was there was a community college being established about one per week somewhere in the United States.

J: Wow.

T: So I discovered a community college that was opening in one of the northern suburbs of the Detroit area just to kind of get a picture Detroit is in Wayne County but two counties immediately north of it one was Oakland, the other is Macomb both of them were new in establishing community colleges. Oakland County was right at the threshold and I applied and I received a position. I started teaching at Oakland when it opened and those were very exciting years of opening a college with sort of new educational ideas, facilities were makeshift to say the least and kids were coming in, remember this now we're talking about 1962 I guess we'd say, about 1965. We had a military engagement and young men were facing draft yet. And many of them were escaping the draft by going to college and all of that political brouhaha was going on.

J: Yeah.

T: It was a most exciting time. You can imagine having those kind of students coming in if you kind of remember history that was political unrest, marches, just a really for me a very very exciting time.

J: What subject were you teaching?

T: Well, there again was one of the advantages I had of being on the ground floor. When I started I will refer to the college as OCC because it was Oakland Community College, OCC. OCC had started out with two campuses and the campus that I was at was not the campus where the main administration was housed, the president of the college, etc. So we didn't have the full menu of courses that the other campus did. You there?

J: I'm listening.

T: I heard a buzz come through.

J: Oh, sorry.

T: What happened then was I started teaching in communications department teaching English but I was hired to teach developmental reading at the campus that I was at. That's because of my experience in the middle school teaching so middle school wasn't all negative in my life. It provided some good avenues of openings. So I taught developmental English, developmental reading but I also taught freshman English to get started. But in order to kind of provide our students with some opportunities in the liberal arts area because I had started out at Graceland as a music major they asked me if I had ever dealt with music appreciation. Well, yes I had because I took music appreciation as a required course in order to graduate from Warrensburg from Central Missouri. So I started the music appreciation courses at our campus. And we started small with only a couple sections but they were quickly filled up and so we added until I was teaching a full load plus overload of just music appreciation because we did not have a lot of other offerings. Eventually that, thank goodness, began to change and we were able to hire a person with music background, a music major. And he then started teaching many more music allied courses and we started developing humanity sections, humanities courses and so on. During this period as we finished up maybe after about four or five years I guess I became the department chair. And so also during that period we were dealing with developing curriculum which was my master's program

major and so that was right down my alley. I just loved helping to develop courses you know working in curriculum and all that sort of thing. I really was having a ball teaching at the community college. I love the kind of students we were having. I love teaching the developmental courses. Kids would come in hating English and I would tell them oh no they didn't. They would look at me and I would say, "Didn't you go on a date last night?" "Yeah, how did you know?" I said, "Well, I bet you didn't speak Swahili did you?" They would look, "What language did you use?" "English." Of course you love English that's how you got your date. That's how you get your job. The kids began to say, "Well, I didn't like the class." "Oh," I'd say, "Now, that's different the class of English is not the same thing as the language of English so don't say you hate English but you might say you did not like a class of English. That narrows it down I said, "Maybe if you'd have been in my English class you'd have loved it." So you have to distinguish. Well, those were lessons about clear thinking that we began to share with the kids. And you know was so rewarding just to see these kids who better than 90% of them were smart. Many of them had a sense of entrepreneurial possibilities doing just great things and when you kind of talked with them you began to say, "Well, maybe you don't really need to do four your college academic bachelor's that way. Maybe what you need to do is get an associate." And we had a degree program in running a small business. Because I said, "You are in yardwork. You've got a pretty big company and you want to know how to run your business better." So we just had such a wonderful time at least I did during my teaching years. It was just wonderful. During that time of course since my wife was Australian and all of her family were in Australia we made trips to Australia. Not only did I develop a family in Australia but I got to see the country. That was also a nice experience and I have a great appreciation for Australia and the Australian mindset. And so that opened up in my experience the difference from this little town in East Jordan childhood to spending from L.A. to Sydney would be anywhere from 14 to 15 hours in an airplane. So here was this young kid mind being exploded you know by extending a world and seeing people in different culture and different perceptions of things. So that's affected who I am. That's part of my identity. Hazel, that's my late wife, Hazel's background ancestry-wise, comes of the British Isles. Three of her branches are Scottish and one is English. Well, she and her sister began to get a great deal of interest in family history and so we made several trips to England and to Scotland etc. there again my mind got blown open.

J: Traveling will do that, won't it?

T: Oh yes. I think it was Mark Twain that said, "Travel is dangerous," or something like that, "to prejudice and bigotry and bias." Or some of those kinds of attitudes that they are challenged as soon as you get to know people and so on. One of the great things I did was I had a chance to take students from OCC to England for our fall semester. And we resided in Oxford and just had a very very good experience with taking the kids and I taught classes. They were OCC classes but we resided and used the university, the various colleges as resources for lots of things. So that was a wonderful experience and an eye-opening one. So that was it. In the meantime we were blessed to have one child, a son. He and his wife and three children live here in Independence. That's kind of an interesting story. He came to Park University and finished his bachelor's here at Park and that's where he met his wife who was an Independence girl. The tie was strong enough to stay here in Independence. So when the first child came along we happened to be in Australia at the time and when we got home we quickly made our trip down to see that first grandchild. And that first grandchild came out David, my son, laid TJ in the arms of Hazel and she looked at him and she looked up at me and she said, "Ted, I'm ready to move." So right then and there we made plans to move to Independence, to move back actually to Independence and by now I had retired. So in the summer of 1999 we settled back in Independence. Unfortunately, Hazel only was with us for one more year before she died with a brain aneurysm.

J: Oh, I'm sorry.

T: So I lost her in about 15 or 20 minutes just very quickly. So from the year 2000 on I have been a widower. So that kind of establishes sort of decision making. We were in a condo in a very enjoyable

development. The neighborhood was great and so on. But the condo had four bedrooms and three full baths plus finished basement. I wasn't living in it. I just lived in a little corner. So for maybe three or four years I really began to think about you know this is just not what I ought to be doing. And so I began making inquiries and looking around to see kind of how my economics was going to work, you know what was available and just what was available, what kind of programs. I just spent some time just looking and absorbing. I did not have to make a fast decision. My second kind of what shall I say motivation was the fact that here was a condo that was getting full of stuff and with one child I did not want to have the fact of life is the end-of-life and I didn't want to have my demise with a house full of junk placed on my son. And I thought while I still have energy and capacity to think things through, energy to sort and deal with the issues I thought I want to save my son from the burden. Well, I just didn't feel it was fair to place on him. So what happened was a resident who is a very good friend of mine, I had known her for a long period of time, 15 or more years, she and her cousin we traveled together, we just played cards and so on she moved to The Fountains. And she was speaking so highly of The Fountains and here's where I think you folks are right: residents can influence greatly. She influenced me to seriously think of The Fountains. The way I think lots of times is I take a sheet of paper and I draw line down the center and I put pro and con.

J: Right.

T: So I pro and con and what I had learned about other places and what I discovered at The Fountains. And The Fountains began to look very very positive to me. I had some requirements that I wanted. I wanted second floor. I wanted the plan that is one-bedroom and a den. I didn't want a two-bedroom. Economically I probably could've done it but I decided I didn't need to do it that way, you know I didn't need to have a two-bedroom and so I could save myself that difference in rent you know.

J: Yes.

T: And that would be my advantage. I still have the energy to travel so who knows I may end up taking a trip to Switzerland or something because I'd like to do that. And so I just figured well, when those pieces of the puzzle fit well together I'm going to kind of think about this thing more seriously. So my friend kept talking positively and I paid a visit a couple or three times and talked with the wonderful salespeople. And all of a sudden the floor plan of one bedroom with a den opened up just like that. And I came and took a look at it and I fell in love. I mean literally I just fell in love. I walked in the door and I said, "This is it, this is it." I looked out the sliding door out onto the balcony and the view was just right. And the sliding door opened and I heard the fountain, the little lake and the fountain that is right outside my balcony. And I could hear that sound and I thought oh boy, three seasons of the year I can open up my balcony door and I can listen to that. Now, that's pretty nice. And there are some things about the plan that were challenging. How was I going to fit from the four bedroom three bath condo to this? But you know a couple of things just kind of settled on me. One was I felt like I was beginning a new chapter. And when you begin a new chapter the pages take you forward even if the plot starts at the end and goes backwards you know to the beginning like some mysteries are written that way, even if it's written that way I still am developing a plot and the pages take me forward and the story. I'm going forward not backward. Now, that was a mentor for me what to throw away because memories are not in things for me they were in my experience. That's memories. That was number one, number two I loved being where the apartment is because it's at the end of a long hall. That provides walking, that provides exercise that you have to do in order to get to the core, to the center. Consequently, without even planning an exercise program it is there for me, do you know what I mean? I saw immediately I was going to go down that hall more than once a day and that's true. That's what's happened and I needed to be able to get out of the chair and not find myself nesting. Well, that was number two I saw that advantage right away. I saw the advantage of people, being around people, keeping me socially alert, conversationally alert, some are not as up on topics necessarily that I might want to talk about but they still provided me a social environment that was stimulating. And my golly I can play games in the

morning, I can play games in the afternoon and I can play games in the evening seven days a week. I've got that stimulation all the time. In fact there are sometimes I purposefully say no in order to just have some quiet time in my apartment to help get things settled you know. The biggest one probably was the fact that well number one when I told my children that I was pretty much decided on coming to The Fountains when an apartment was ready they were ecstatic. They were so thrilled because they had secretly been concerned that I was rattling around in that big condo and they just didn't think you know that's what their dad ought to be doing. And so when I knew that they were behind me 101% that was a relief. And when I realized what it meant for me to go through and choose things that took me forward and could choose things that you know David could go through the things he wanted and objects that would be important for him. And I could choose objects to take with me here to the apartment and it was going to fit. I saw the puzzle just coming together. And you know what the final straw was?

J: What?

T: I called a realtor who lived in the same development that I did who had been in real estate for about 40 years plus I wanted to know kind of what I could expect out of my condo. You know kind of get some facts to make some decisions on and the upshot was it was a Friday night so I went with her and I said, "Let's put it on the market." Well, she knew of a couple down in Springfield who had been looking in this area she contacted them on Saturday, they came up on Sunday and saw the condo, they came back on Monday saw the condo again and on Tuesday I signed an agreement.

J: Wow.

T: I didn't even put a sign out. My neighbors didn't even know I had sold or had accepted an offer.

J: Sometimes it's just meant to be, right?

T: You know yeah. The puzzle just went together. The struggle was starting to sort and so on. I think I did a thing that again my friend who lived here she did it and it worked so successfully for her. I paid and started renting the 1st of September. But I didn't move in then but I paid the rent so that I could move boxes from the condo to here as they filled up. So I brought boxes from the condo three times leaving the final move of the big stuff when I would come and start living here. I brought all the kitchen stuff and put it in the cupboards and settled my kitchen. By doing that when I found some things that just weren't going to work I could take it back to the condo for my estate sale. When I found stuff that I hadn't thought I'd take but realized it would work I took from the condo and brought them out. And so I got to make decisions along the way, along the month of September. I moved in on the 22nd of September. And I moved right out of the condo and left for the estate sale people to put their sale together.

J: And are we talking about this September you moved in?

T: This September.

J: My gosh, so you've only been there about six weeks?

T: Six glorious weeks.

J: That's fantastic.

T: I've worked out things like for example you know the one hot meal a day, basically lunch and dinner because the breakfast Continental is more than I can handle anyway. For me I don't even hardly eat breakfast but I have a couple groups of friends that I've had breakfast Tuesday and Wednesday morning with for years. And so I have two big breakfasts a week with those friends, go out for breakfast. If I'm going out for dinner such as today I'm going out for dinner tonight then I have my big meal at noon as far as eating here. If not soup and salad, soup and sandwich makes up what I get for lunch which is just fine and I eat my evening meal. You know what I love the best?

J: What?

T: At 4 o'clock I don't say, "Oh gosh, what am I going to fix for dinner tonight?" I don't have to go and stand in front of the refrigerator and say, "What am I going to put all this stuff together?" It is the most wonderful feeling to be able to do that. When I came here simply because of how things had worked I

had not done a week of laundry. So starting the 1st of October I paid the extra money to have them do my personal laundry, they do the flat but do the personal laundry. When I realized how beautifully they do the personal laundry for me for \$50 a month, come on. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. So I went in the other day and I said, "You know, I think I'm going to have them do it for November." Maybe I will do my personal laundry in December but they're going to do it again in November.

J: That's great.

T: I'm telling you I can't get over how I discover things that are just better than I thought. No one can anticipate everything. I don't think that's possible particularly when you're making a move to a new place you know to a new situation, new environment. Even when you go on vacation and have a wonderful cottage at a lake you can't anticipate everything. So there are always discoveries and they kind of come in surprises to me and I think wow, isn't that wonderful? Gee whiz this is better than I thought. I never planned on this. And it just goes on and on like that. I just can't get over it. It's a discovery all the time.

J: Ted, I just love your attitude. And I could honestly listen to you forever. We've been talking or I should say you have been talking for almost an hour and I could listen to you all day long. I've got to tell you this is the easiest interview I've ever done because I didn't have to ask a single question. You put it all together in such a wonderful way and I know that people are going to enjoy reading this.

T: Well, I hope so.

J: The difficult part is going to be condensing it. All this wonderful story that you've given us condensing it into a tiny little mailer that we have to make. I'm going to have to talk to them about that.

T: Well, I also want to say I told David Fennel that when I give my talk it won't be my life story. I wanted as you started out it seemed to me the best way to kind of give an overview was to use my life story as the thread and kind of go through it that way so that you could kind of see what brought me to here. Now, you can choose out of that what you see as the best portions of information that will fit for the situations that you need.

J: Yeah.

T: But I'm not going to do this when I give my talk. I want more let's sit down and cozy conversation.

J: Yeah, yeah, I can see from speaking with you why you were such a great teacher and how your students must have loved learning from you.

T: Well, thank you, that's a wonderful complement and I appreciate that very very much. Cherish that. So anyway I'm looking forward to February and an opportunity to encourage others to seriously think. I really do think that as we get closer and closer to what I am calling the later seniors we ought to very seriously think what it means to plan not to put it off. I really wish I had even been more diligent and maybe even came here rather than near my 80th birthday somewhere around my 65th.

J: Wow.

T: Because the lifestyle here with these people I think is very very significant for keeping us healthy, helping us think clearly financially because there is a systematic sense that you have to have you know you do, where is the rent coming from, how is that going to figure in where my income is, what can I afford? Those kind of economic questions that I think are important to deal with. And a kind of creativity that doesn't die. If you stay alive you know. I haven't even yet begun with people I know there's a reading group, novels, reading and talking about them. I haven't even begun to find that out yet.

J: You're going to love it.

T: I haven't even started on that yet.

J: Yeah, well, you could probably lead your own reading group.

T: I'd love it.

J: And all kinds of other classes you could teach there through Watermark University. We would love for you to do that.

T: See this is why I wish I'd have started at least five years ago, ten years ago.

J: Yeah.

T: I just think these communities are so important. We do not become self-centered as much.

J: Yes, good point.

T: That's kind of my motto. Community life makes us less self-centered.

J: Beautiful.

T: Aches and pains are less, they just are. You have a pain but there is somebody down at the center that's waiting for you to play pinochle. I'm going down the hall to play pinochle. That sounds funny, that sounds little but that is important to me. I will play pinochle because I love playing pinochle and I have a lower back pain that stays with me and sometimes I would rather sit in the chair. That's the wrong thing to do, get up walk the hall and go down and play pinochle. By the time you get down there to play pinochle I may have forgotten my pain.

J: Right.

T: And I think that is the underlying reason why it is so important for seniors especially widows and widowers, especially to not live in four walls and get away from people. I know too many who are they are living painful lives because they just are staying in their four walls and they are afraid to leave. The older they get the more afraid they are to leave. That's wrong. That sounds too judgmental and I don't mean it that way because I know there are some people that have lots of good reasons for doing that but my feeling, that's where I ought to say my feeling is that's wrong. They need to get with people. They really need to be with people.

J: Well, it sure sounds like it's working for you and you have discovered the formula that works for you and that's all we want for people is to help them discover what their best situation is going to be. I want to thank you Ted for all of your time and thoughts this morning or this afternoon. I'm sure that in February when you have the luncheon you're going to make an impression on everybody there.

T: Well I hope so, I hope for good. I hope it's for good anyway. I hope they don't say, "Will he ever shut up?" Let's get this meal going on. Thank you, I'm glad I can be of help and I'm looking forward to it, as I said I'm looking forward to February.

J: Well, I hope you have a good pinochle game to look forward to today and I'm going to let you go and good luck discovering the next great thing that happens, ok?

T: Alright and my very blessings to you too.

J: Thank you Ted. Have a great day.

T: Bye-bye.

J: Bye now.