

Jerry Rice Interview, November 2016

J: June

R: Jerry

J: Hi Jerry, it's June Hussey here in Tucson. Nice to meet you.

R: Nice to meet you.

J: And thank you so much for making time in your day to do this interview. We really appreciate it.

R: Glad to do it.

J: Ok so before we get started can you hear me ok?

R: Yes, I can.

J: Very good. I just wanted to go over a couple things with you before we get started. First of all I just wanted to review the reason we do these interviews so you can kind of have the big picture on it. And we do a lot of these interviews with residents all over the country. It's a great pleasure for me to do so. I enjoy meeting people and hearing about their fascinating lives. And then what we like to do with the information that we get from people is share it with folks who may be early in their process of deciding what they want to do in their own future, and by sharing our residents stories of how they came to be living at our communities, we hope that we can open some eyes and some minds to the possibility for themselves. That's all. Oh and by the way we are recording this conversation so I want you to know that and just in case you should blurt out something that might be too personal for the transcript you can just say right then and there in conversation, "Hey, please don't print this part." Ok and we'll strike it from the record, ok?

R: I don't think I'll do that. I don't have many secrets.

J: Ok, just in case, ok, very good. Well, at this point I'm going to invite you to introduce yourself and let you do most of the talking. We just like to get a good idea of who you are, what makes Jerry Rice Jerry Rice, anything you want to talk about...where you're from, your family, your background, your career, whatever, just go ahead and tell us. And then I'll get into some more specific questions about your search for retirement communities later, ok? So go right ahead.

R: Ok, well, my name is Jerry Rice. I'm 81 years old. I'm retired from the military. I served three years in the Marines and 17 years in the Air Force. When I retired from there I went in full-time to Christian ministry, Christian education. I got my college degree while in the service. As an educator, I graduated from the University of Alaska in 1974. And in 1975 I was sent out on a team to start a church and a school in Wichita, Kansas. We started Wichita Christian Center and Wichita Christian School. In 1976, we went to Joplin, pioneered Joplin Community Chapel and Joplin Christian School. In 1979 we went to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho and helped pioneer Coeur d'Alene Christian Center. And Coeur d'Alene Christian School has been operating for 35 years now, still a successful operation. In 1984 the Lord told me to come back to Kansas City and Independence and help my parents and my wife's parents as they faced old age. As we were with them, between the two families they were in eight different care homes and so we have a lot of experience with care homes and all the different problems that you can have and different places. My mother-in-law had Alzheimer's disease and some were able to care for her, some not. So we ended up moving her four times. My mother was difficult. She didn't want to

be in care homes. We ended up moving her three times before we finally got her settled. So I've had a lot of experience in those devices and I concluded at that time I would never put it on my children to see to my care and my wife's care when we got old. So we always had in mind what we were looking for. We came to The Fountains at Greenbriar to see a family that were celebrating the husband's 80th birthday. And I was so impressed with the facility I kind of put it in the back of my mind that if it ever becomes necessary for us, I want to look at The Fountains first because I was impressed with the facility and the cleanliness of it. There's no odors of any kind that would indicate old people or any of that sort of thing. And so this past January my wife had a stroke and in February she had a seizure. Up to that time we were living at the Lake of the Ozarks. We had a lovely home on the lake where we'd sit on the porch and watch the boaters and all that sort of thing. It was a lot of fun when our kids were younger and our grandchildren were young. We had a great time. But as we started getting older, it was harder and harder to maintain doing all the work that it took, and we were involved in a ministry in Kansas City that was 150 miles from where we lived. So we drove one way 150 miles every week and then back home 150 miles.

J: Wow.

R: After my wife's stroke, riding in a car made her very nervous. She got nervous with noises and things like that. And I knew that I could not continue to do that to her because she is too precious to me. So we began to pray about what to do and in the latter part of June the Lord told us to sell our lake house and move back to the city. So we sold our lake house, signed the papers 1st of July. July 13th we moved into The Fountains. David took us around and Carrie Peterson was very gracious in showing us. And as we prayed about what we needed. I had picked out one of the units but the patio, the deck came off in the bedroom instead of the living room and I didn't like that particularly, so I felt uncomfortable with that unit so I called Dave and I said, "I need to renegotiate this." And as I prayed about it the Lord said, "You need a walk in shower and you need one with a pass through from the kitchen and you need one with the patio off the living room." So that's when we came over I asked Dave to show me one that had that sort of thing. He took us to what they call the Independence. It has exactly what we wanted, 628 square feet. We don't have to draw any conclusions about what to eat. And as you get older, you'll find it's kind of hard to figure out what to eat every day and what to get out of the freezer and do all those kinds of things. And in the mornings I'd say, "Well, what you want for supper, hon?" And she's all, "I don't know." And we went through that kind of on daily basis. And I thought, you know, "I need a place where they're going to provide us some good food. And so when we visited, Dave took us to the dining room and it was first class all the way, cloth tablecloths, cloth napkins, wonderful service, silverware, china, everything. And you felt like you were eating in a nice restaurant. The staff was courteous, the food was good. That was one of the big things I was concerned about, that we would have good food available and not be assigned to a table because I've been to care homes where you're assigned to a table. And you sit with people you don't have anything in common with and you'd rather be someplace else but that's your assigned seating, your assigned time. You have no freedom. And that's not the case at The Fountains. We have total freedom. If we want to we can sit at a two-per table where it's just two of us. If we want to sit with other people, all we have to do is tell the gal that is there and she will put us where we want to be. If we want to sit with certain people we can do that. In fact, just yesterday, we developed some friends last week. There were six of us at a

table. So yesterday morning, I signed us up for the six and told the people there. And I said, "These we're all six going to sit together. Can you give us a six place table?" And she said, "Sure." So next thing you know, we were all together and we're going to meet every Wednesday at 4:15 because we have a lot in common and a lot to talk about. And we enjoy each other's company so they have arranged that for us. So we are treated like real people, not just a bunch of old vegetables that don't have good sense. We still have pretty good sense. And since I've been here, obviously we're committed Christians. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe God put us here and we've become involved in Bible study. And then, after the first months I was here, Jason asked if I would mind teaching a Bible study. So now I'm teaching two Bible studies and attending a third one, which is right up my alley. We're involved in ministering to people. If people have needs, we pray for them. We're still alive and well and serving the Lord and we're going in a place where we're safe. Today I needed to leave to go wash my car. I don't leave my wife alone because of the stroke and things that she's had so we put on the little necklace they give you with the "Help, I've fallen and I can't get up" button. She had that while I was gone and I feel perfectly safe for her for the few minutes that I was gone and so she is cared for. We're comfortable. Our room works out really well for us. And the food is good. We get to choose when we eat and so we have no complaints. We feel like this is exactly where the Lord wanted us, so we are content.

J: I was going to say that's a pretty complete summary.

R: Well, I shared it with a lot of people. They've asked me how I got here and I said, "Are you sure you want to hear this?" And they asked me about my life in the military and between 20 years of military and 30 years of ministry we've been in 15 countries and 48 states. Lived in three countries so we're not novices. We are pretty well experienced at what goes on especially with the retirement home business. We know what the prices are. When my mother was at John Knox Village in the '90s she was paying \$2500 a month for she and my dad. And we're here in 2016 and I pay that for my wife and I. And that's 18 years difference so I have to think that The Fountains is not only excellent but reasonable in comparison to all the other organizations that you will encounter. So that's my experience.

J: Very good and how do your kids feel about where you're living?

R: Our son, he lives here in Independence. And he's very pleased with what we have. One of my main goals, several things: One, I don't want to dump responsibility for my life and my wife on my son because he's got a wife and four children. And they're all doing well but they have their own life. And we need to live our own life and be independent of them. They come over and eat with us once a week or twice a week or something like that and it's really nice at The Fountains. I just go down when you sign up to eat and get a guest slip and I can take my guests in and it's \$7.75 for my guests to eat. And if I eat in a restaurant it would cost me 24 bucks so it's a whole lot better eating here. And the food is good. Everybody likes it. We have, in our ministry a lot of times, invited people out to eat and we can invite them right here. We don't have to go to another restaurant or any of those things because everything is well done here. And so we're very pleased with that too.

J: Very good and how is your wife settling in?

R: She is settling in well. The hard part is not looking back at what you had. When you have to give up a 3,000 square foot home that overlooks the Lake of the Ozarks that's kind of a big step but here everything is well kept. The landscaping is nice. It's attractive. It's convenient because

she grew up in Independence. And so we spent a lot of time here, in and out visiting the family, so we are very familiar with the area. It's very convenient for us. She tends to look back more than I do because I spent my life in the military. When you left a base you didn't spend any time looking back and saying, "Gee, I wish I were back at that base." Because that's such a waste of energy. So I kind of developed a pattern of life that when I leave a place I say, "That was wonderful, thank you Lord, glad to have been there and I hope we do well on the place we are." So I'm more of a present person. But she is doing well. I take good care of her. She did fall one night at 4:15 in the morning and got her legs in such a position we couldn't move her and so I pulled the little call light in the bathroom and pushed the button and about three minutes later Interim Health people were there. The two of us couldn't budge her so we got the security guy and between the three of us we were able to get her up. She didn't hurt anything but the fact that that help was available almost instantly was very, very comforting especially when you have someone who has had a stroke and a seizure and you never know when something like that might happen. So it's very comforting to me to know that I have that help available anytime.

J: Right, very good, well, gosh with all of your experience, not only in the military moving so much, but with your parents trying out so many different places in their day, what kind of advice would you share with folks out there that may be living in their homes and being by themselves and not really getting involved in too many things? And maybe they don't know about retirement communities like The Fountains, could you share some words of advice to people like that?

R: If possible, if possible go to the places that are available, look them over before you need them and decide if this would be an available place. What happens with a lot of people is they put it off and put it off and put it off and then by the time they need them they're so disabled and so weak they can't make a wise choice because they are choosing when they're in a desperate situation. If you choose in advance, just like I saw this place probably eight years ago when we came to this guy's birthday party, and I said, "You know if I ever come to that point, I'm going to start by looking here because I've seen the place, it's attractive, I've been to their apartment. I know what things are like. I could live in a place like this." So I decided in advance that this was a possibility. The problem is people that say, "I will never get old. I'm never leaving my house," are not facing reality. Just like people who buy houses with flights of stairs and say, "I'll always be able to climb stairs," because that is not necessarily so. You need to realize that life does change and though you'd like to say you can do this, you might not always be able to and you need to build a future, not try to hold off the future and say, "Well, I'm going to live in the past. I'll never get fat and I'll never get old, I'll never be crippled." Because in all probability if you live long enough you're going to get some of those things. See, I had an advantage in that way. I had my hips replaced in 1997 and 2002. And we lived in a house that had eight stairs up to the second floor and after going up and down the stairs with a walker all those times I said, "If I ever build another house it's not going to have stairs up to where I live." So when we built at the lake I put a ramp in from the garage to the house. We could do everything on one floor. I put in 36 inch doors so I could get in and out in a wheelchair if I had to. I put in handicapped toilets, 17 inch toilets so I wouldn't have to worry about sitting down on the floor with those low 14 inch toilets. In other words, think ahead, plan ahead and realize that you may need those things. If you don't need them it doesn't hurt you to have them, but if you need them and

don't have them, then you're really hurt because you're forced to make a move against your will and you make your family miserable. You're miserable because you don't want to go, they're miserable because they're trying to help you. You set yourself up for that kind of a situation. The idea that you will never get old is a big mistake because if you live long enough to keep breathing and saying, "Yes, dear," you will get old.

J: Ain't it the truth though? Well, that's a very pragmatic approach and gosh I wish more people would think like you do.

R: Here's two things I never want to say, "If I had only," or, "Gee I wish I had." So I'm not going there. When my wife had the stroke I realized something had to change. I began to pray about, "Ok, Lord, what's the change going to be?" And you know, the Lord always gives you direction if you ask him. And he put us right here. I'm very content here. And so is my wife.

J: Very good, well, on that note I think that just about wraps up the interview. I think we've hit on every point that we could possibly hit on unless you can think of anything else you'd like to add.

R: Nope, I mean honestly that's the way we lived our life. That's how we do things. So here we are.

J: Very good. Well, Jerry, I appreciate once again your willingness to share your story. It's wonderful and I'm really glad that you found the place that is right for you and your wife and that you're enjoying life there at The Fountains. Go forth and enjoy the evening, ok?

R: Ok, God bless, bye-bye.

J: God bless, thanks, bye.