

## Nancy Sturtevant Condensed Interview, May 2016

J: June

N: Nancy

5:48

J: Hello.

N: Hello.

J: Hi, this is June Hussey.

N: Hi June, this is Nancy Sturtevant in Delaware.

J: Hello Nancy, nice to meet you. Thanks for calling in.

N: Thank you very much. What can I do to help you?

J: Well, I'm hoping that we can spend a little bit of time on the phone today and you can share a little bit of your story with us.

N: Ok.

J: What we like to do is interview residents of our communities for their perspective and insights into retirement community living and how they went through their own decision making process to arrive at where they wanted to live.

N: Good.

J: And the reason we do this is because we like to share the stories with folks out there who may be just starting to think about their futures and maybe don't know what retirement communities are all about.

N: I know the feeling.

J: Yes, you've been there, right?

N: I've been there.

J: So hopefully your story will help open somebody's eyes to maybe an easier way to go about making a decision.

N: I hope so. Let's see what we can do.

J: I hope so. Ok and just as a reminder we are recording this conversation so should you happen to say something along the way that you don't want to make public for any reason just go ahead and say right then and there, "Hey, please don't print that part."

Ok?

N: Ok.

J: Alright, great. So you're a resident there at Rockland Place and how long have you lived there?

N: I've lived here for three years.

J: Three years, very good and where were you living just before you moved in?

N: Well, I had my own house in the town next to where we are now. And I lived there for about 30 or 40 years I guess as we all have with the big house and lots of children and they're all gone. And then all of a sudden we have to start thinking about what we're going to do with our lives. And then you get hit with a stroke or a fall and your life is changed all of a sudden.

J: Right.

N: Then you start looking for places to go after you leave the hospital to get recuperated. And they suggest assisted living places. And so my family started looking

around and they don't live close by. One is in Maine and one is in Virginia and so they wanted to make sure that they found the right place.

J: Right.

N: They liked the idea very much, first of all, that they had a nurse on duty all the time and then she is kept in touch with the physician, your own physician to prescribe the medicines that I get. And they liked the idea that there are three meals a day. Talking to other people you find out that some of these places don't do that. And this, I think, is a big plus, a big plus because you have to make so many decisions at this point in life and one of them is not to drive. And this everybody says, "Oh I can drive, I can drive." And I argue back, "Well, you don't have to drive if you come to an assisted living place." They supply you all the things you need. You don't need to go to the grocery store because they have all the food you need. You don't need snacks like that but anyhow. They will take you to the doctor's office visits and they will take you to the post office or wherever else you have to go. You just don't have to go to the market like you think you do. That's a real plus, having lived through this. And they also provide transportation for you to your doctor's visits as I said. And just, I think, being closer to the home area makes it important so that somebody can drop in once in a while or get you supplies that you should think you need like boxes of Kleenex by the dozens I think get sent to me like once a year by Amazon. We're good friends with them. So that's how they got me here and I think everybody is worried about going into a strange place like this but the plus is also you get your own private room. Whereas I believe in a hospital you have to share room with people. It's nice to have your own place. You can bring things in that remind you of home if you like. But the other thing I think you should be thinking about if you're coming into those thoughts and place to leave your home, you've got to think about either selling your home or having the grandchildren come and take what they want. But you're going to need a lot of help doing that. And that's something you should be looking into also. And then once you get here you have all the nurses and all the aides. And it's a friendly place. And it's a team effort I find. Everybody helps everybody else and I know I'm walking up and down the halls just for therapy and I see people who are completely lost. And you know I'll go and try to help them get back to their rooms. And they're worried that don't know how to run the buttons. Well, the buttons are the elevator. And this upsets them terribly. You know they're all old people and they haven't ridden on many elevators. And they can't hear very well and they can't see very well and then I tell them, "Well, we have an aide assigned to each." You stop me talking if you have to.

J: No, go right ahead.

N: An aide will be there for you for everything to help you with your bathing and your laundry and the housekeeping, we have and all the niceties that we do have. I can't complain about a thing. I'm just one that doesn't complain. I mean, you know, when I say the aides will tell you when the time is right to go for breakfast which is another confusing issue. When you go for brunch, when you go for dinner. And dinner you're in the dining room and you have a choice of menu of two things you know. Some people don't know about it so they worry about it. They can eliminate a lot of those things if they know about it and there's somebody to tell them. I just find that I'm the one that doesn't like the activity groups as much as being by myself and so I do a lot of puzzles at the end of the hall or in different rooms and I find people come up to you that way. And they start talking or helping and then I find out I have to take them back to their rooms and

find out. That's teaching me something too as well as them trying to learn where they belong. But I am enjoying staying here and we have to stay here we can't drive anymore, we can't go like we used to but this is just another stage in life. You have to accept it and some people are natural complainers, I think. They're going to complain about the food. I just hope new people coming in here get to see me before they get to see some of the other people as I'm wandering through the hall because the first thing they ask is, "How is the food?" I always say, "It's wonderful. I don't complain." Whereas others, no matter where they are or whether they had a stroke or whatever, they're complaining. It annoys me terribly. It's your attitude.

J: Had you ever considered making a move to a retirement community before you had health issues?

N: No, no because I could always take care of myself and I had the house but to break down a big house is a big challenge. And at that time I'd already had my second stroke and open heart surgery and so I knew that they said you had to be where you could be cared for. So that's what we did. To be able to come to a place like this, we had to sell our house, I had to sell my house so that I would have the money to come to this place, It has long paid off for itself because of the care that I get and the less worry my family has about me. I think that's most important. They know what's going on. In fact, my daughter is here for the weekend for Mother's Day from Maine. She has just visited with the director, Jen, I think her name is and Patrick. She just likes to put a face with the name and whenever she wants to call she knows who she's talking to. But you know I'm happy, I'm happy.

J: Good.

N: Friends stop by, not as often as they used to because you know, when you going to the hospital or into a place that you have to have transportation, sometimes they all say, "Oh, call us, call us." Well, when you get into your 80s, like I am, they can't lift you in the wheelchair, they can't get it in the trunk of your car. And I'm not sure I want them to drive me either. I depend on the transportation here or if somebody's husband doesn't want to get his car scratched. You'd be surprised (inaudible) so you end up more or less on your own. Or if your family is around they can help but sometimes you can't depend on their schedules either. You try to be independent and get things done but you make friends one way or another. It depends on what your personality is whether you want to be friendly with that person or not. J: Yeah, ok.

N: I don't know. I don't know anything about this. I sort of stay away myself anyhow so it doesn't matter.

J: Yeah. Well, what advice might you have to share with folks out there who are unfamiliar with Rockland Place and may be lonely in their homes?

N: Well, I think Rockland and anyplace, there are a lot of them around here. We looked into all of them to find out. The idea that we liked best was they had three meals and the nurses on duty. And they had transportation for doctor's visits. I'm happy with everything.

J: Did you go around and visit all the different places?

N: Yeah, my daughter and my daughter-in-law did. They came down together and one time with Patrick and liked this place better than any place. And it's a comfy area which we like and it's the kind of place we like to live in the country. The foliage is beautiful right now. And I have a nice room. I have one of the smaller rooms. My daughter had

bought me furniture when I came in and I said, "I don't need that because in a wheelchair you're banging into everything and it's in the way." So we got a smaller place and took the furniture back. And I have enough. I have a bed and dresser and desk and chair.

J: How did you manage your physical move out of the big house?

N: My family, my family all helped. I sat on the porch. I couldn't move around after having a stroke and surgery so I just sat there and watched it all go. It had to be done sometime and it was mostly furniture my husband had made years ago for us, many houses that we've had. And I hated to see it go but I just knew it had to happen. Now, we've taken care of the family and four kids for all these years, now it's time for them to take care of me. You know? What am I, 85 years old? (Inaudible)

J: Yeah, were you alone at home at the time that you had your stroke?

N: Well, no I had a son that was in and out and he was with me basically but he took me one night when I had these funny feelings in my chest to the emergency room but there were too many people that I could see through the window waiting to be served and I said, "Come on, let's just go home." Which we did and then about three months later I had it again and he said, "Well, let's go now before it's too late." We went to the doctor three o'clock in the morning so at that point they rushed me right into the emergency room and did whatever they did and whatever happened, my heart happened. I think I had a stroke at that time too. I don't know I was sort of out of it but he tells me these things.

J: Yeah, well, you're lucky he was with you.

N: Yes, yes. But he's got other things and he's about an hour and half away from here. So I had to depend on the transportation. Just the other day I had an appointment for the dermatologist and I have been calling him to tell him and he would work it into his schedule you know and I thought, "Oh boy." Well, when I got there they said, "Oh, no, your appointment has been canceled." I said, "What are you talking about my appointment has been canceled?" And they said well your son had called and left a message over the weekend that you were canceling the appointment and he had to go to New York. He couldn't take me.

J: That sounds like a big misunderstanding.

N: Thank you, that's a nice way of putting it. But I manage alright. I manage alright. And I'm happy here. The people are nice and other people that come to visit think this is a lovely place. And it shows by I think they have ladies come in to play bridge and have lunch from the outside of course they pay for it but it's outside people and they're older people that are looking at places they might go. And to come in to play bridge one day a month or something like that is nice to let the outside know what we're doing.

J: Right.

N: So I'm afraid I have nothing but good things to say really.

J: Well, that's good news to my ears.

N: In fact, I stayed awake last night worrying about what you might want to know when I wrote up about four pages. I'm not going to bore you with all this but everything is good. Everything is good.

J: Well, is there anything that we didn't go over that you have on your list that you think is important for people to know?

N: If they were asking, "How is the food?" I always say, "It's wonderful." And I'll add, "I don't have to cook it. That's the way I like it."

J: That's what most people say, yeah.

N: Are you in Delaware?

J: I am not. I'm in Arizona. That's a long way for me to go.

N: That's what someone said about the change in the time because you're in Arizona and you're in a different time zone.

J: Right, right. But I would like to come there someday.

N: It's a lovely area. We've lived in and out of Delaware for I don't how many years, 50 some years. And we get transported around by the DuPont Company which has gone out of business really. But we've had a lot of experiences with different places and enjoyed it. Wilmington, we've been back to twice. I'm originally from Rhode Island and my family lives in Maine, one of them and the other in Virginia so it's not like we're strangers to the area.(Inaudible) and I'm glad I did.

J: Well, that's good, that's good. That's a good note to close on I suppose. Well, thank you Nancy.

N: Anybody that wants to come by I'd be glad to give them a tour.

J: Very good, well, that's a nice offer.

N: I don't know if Patrick would like that but I'd be glad to.

J: You might put them out of a job you do it so well.

N: Well, you know I've been through the feelings. I've been through this and not knowing what times things go on or where you go in the elevator. I can still get confused whether I turn left or right depending on where I'm going from the elevator. But luckily I had an extra neighbor here that I followed around and she'd tried to help me. We're still good friends. But I think the orientation is the most important thing, getting people to be familiar with things.

J: Right. Ok, thank you Nancy. We appreciate your time and all your feedback and insight. It's been very, very helpful. I hope you enjoy the rest of the day there. I know it's getting late, probably dinnertime by now.

N: Oh, I've already had mine.

J: Oh, ok, perfect.

N: Everything is fine. If I can help you any other way, give me a call.

J: Thank you so much you've been so kind.

N: Good luck to you.

J: Thank you.

N: Bye-bye.

J: Take care, bye-bye.

N: Bye-bye.