

## Tom and Joanne Gildea Interview, November 2014

J: Jill

I: Ines

T: Tom

G: Joanne

Interview starts at 2:48

J: Good afternoon.

T: Yeah.

J: Hello there, this is Jill Hofer at Watermark Retirement Communities.

T: Hi this is Tom Gildea.

J: Hi, how are you?

T: I'm good and Joanne is on the other line, my wife.

J: Oh super, wonderful and I'm also joined by my coworker, Ines. She's here with me in Tucson.

I: Hi, how are you?

G: Good Ines, how are you?

J: Thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to speak with us. We have a few questions and we'll just really want to hear about what your experience was like as you made the transition from a house or condo or where you were to a retirement community.

G: Ok.

J: Beautiful, alright well if you don't mind I'll start out with a couple of easy ones.

G: Ok.

J: Alright, well first of all Joanne if you don't mind how do you spell your first name?

G: Joanne, all one word.

J: Ok and just the J is the only capital?

G: That's right.

J: Ok, super. Thank you and when did you two move to the community?

T: About a month ago.

J: Oh, no kidding, you're brand new. That's terrific.

T: Yeah, we are.

J: That's great and where were you immediately prior to moving to The Fountains?

T: We were down at Plantation Golf and Country Club in Venice, Florida.

J: Oh, is that right? Is that very far?

T: It's about 10 or 12 miles from here.

J: Not too bad, not too bad.

T: No.

J: How long did you live there?

T: 10 years.

J: Oh wow and before that?

T: Well, we came down from, we are originally from Pennsylvania.

J: Oh, are you?

T: Our home is up in Meadville, Pennsylvania.

J: Ok, alright and so what year did you come to Florida?

T: Well, we've been coming off and on for a long time but we only come down for about eight months a year and then we still have a home up north.

J: Ok.

T: So it's been 10 or 15 years ago when we first came down this way.

J: Oh, ok, alright came for the weather and stayed for.

T: That's correct. Now we're down pretty permanently.

J: Let's see when did you decide, "Ok we're going to look for a retirement community" and what was your motivation?

T: Well, I would say about three months ago, maybe four months ago I was working out at the gym and I had a little spell and it woke me up to the idea that possibly Joanne wouldn't be able to handle things if something happened to me in the big house. So then I called her daughter who lives up in Connecticut. She, being an attorney, I asked her to make some plans and make some calls and get some interviews on different retirement centers so that's how it started. And we went to five different retirement centers and when we came to, when we got to The Fountains, it just fit. That's the best I can say. We both agreed that this is the kind of place that wanted to go because, number one, of its size. You know it's not overly big, some of the other ones have so many people you have to wear name tags or you have to, we didn't want that and this is just perfect here as far as we're concerned.

J: Oh, that's terrific. Your daughter was a help, wasn't she?

G: I just was going to say, as soon as we found the place, we rounded the corner and it's a beautiful view of the lake. It's beautiful.

J: Really, that's right near your residence?

G: Yes and we really felt at home.

J: Really?

G: Yes.

J: What do you think contributed the most to that feeling?

G: Well, the campus is beautiful and it just, I don't know how to explain it because it just looks peaceful. It's just so nice.

J: How nice.

T: It's not crowded, there are not cars going on everywhere and people everywhere. It's just very serene and very calming. When you get our age, why that's very important, I think.

J: Nice. Every day should be pretty wonderful, as wonderful as it can be and I know the hustle and bustle, you can always get to the hustle and bustle if you want to.

T: That's right.

J: It's the escape from it when you're home.

G: Now everybody that we met before we moved in kept saying to us, "You're going to love it here."

J: Oh really?

G: One person even said "it's like being on a cruise."

J: No kidding.

G: We just had that good feeling, that's all.

J: That's great and you really did your due diligence. It's not like you just picked one place and hoped for the best, you looked around.

T: No, no. We really traveled around. We looked at five different places and when we saw this it just seemed to hit the spot.

G: I have to say we have friends that have been looking for maybe three or more years trying to decide where they want to go, what they want to do and I told them they're still looking after three years we did it in three weeks.

J: That's great, saves you a lot of time and heart ache.

T: That's right.

J: And trouble. So how's life different, you've only been there for a little bit and you're probably not quite into your new routine just yet but how is life different from being in the house?

T: In my case, it's not having to think about all the problems and all the breakdowns and the dishwasher, this or that. It's a relief more than anything else.

J: That's great, and yourself?

G: I was just going to say, I was a little reluctant when we first talked about it because we were living on a golf course and I loved living on the golf course and had lots of friends but I don't know, once we made up our mind to do it, it's been great.

J: That's wonderful, that's super. And what do you do day to day? What programs do you take part in or have you been on any excursions or clubs or classes?

T: I go to every class that I can get in, which, I was at a Constitution class this morning. I'm going to a foreign affairs class next week and then another Constitution class and then another outing on Greek antiquities. It's something about the Greek Islands. I don't know exactly what it's about but I go to every class I can because history is my interest. That's good and then we went to an outing over on Siesta Key last week. It was a brunch that they provided and it was very nice. We did that and there's things to do if you want to get out and do them, that's for sure.

G: I have to tell you I went to the new mall here in Sarasota. They had a bus that went a couple days after it opened so that was a treat. We've been looking forward to seeing what's going on at the new mall and wouldn't have wanted to drive there.

J: Right, I'm sure parking would have been a trick.

G: Yes but they took a bus and they're going to take a bus every month until after Christmas.

J: Oh nice, that's smart.

G: Yeah so that's good.

J: And do you care for any of the classes or do you take exercise or walking?

G: I take and exercise and I love the pool. They have an absolutely beautiful beautiful pool and I go do water exercises all the time and then I take another movement class in balance. That's fun.

J: Nice that sounds cool.

G: Oh, I tried tai chi too but.

J: You did?

G: I have to think about that.

J: That one takes a little practice, doesn't it?

G: Well, it's very slow, very very slow. I hate to say that but it's very slow.

J: You can take tai chi on the days that you're feeling slow. I have to try that. There's something for everybody here so.

T: They have a fairly decent gym here. I go to the gym every day and work out.

J: Nice.

T: I've been doing that for two or three years so that's a treat for me. I enjoy that.

J: Nice to not have to get in the car to do it.

T: That's right. So, I can go all over the campus in my golf cart.

J: That's perfect.

T: Yes, it is.

J: Less maintenance and you don't have to worry as much about it.

T: Right.

J: Well, those are a lot of ways that life is different from when you were in the house and I think this kind of information is valuable to people who are out there wondering. So, you may have received mail from retirement communities or seen ads and whatnot. So, we're always trying to just learn more so that we can relate to people who were in that situation because a lot of people maybe don't have that get up and go that you do to make that decision and like you said, to get it done in just three weeks is really remarkable. Do you have any advice for people who are out there in the world? You know you mentioned your friends who are in their third year.

G: I think they have finally decided. I mean they wanted to come here but they just couldn't make that step to put their house on the market. They're going to be coming here soon.

J: Well, that's good. They'll get to have a taste of your lifestyle.

G: That's right, that's for sure.

J: And how about to couples? I always like to ask, when I'm interviewing couples, I always like to see if you have any advice for other couples because actually, what you already said was extremely thoughtful and extremely caring towards one another, because you don't like to think about these things but you've really done a good thing to have each other set up here with your friends and your new routine while you can still enjoy it together.

T: Well, my advice, like I said, it's better to act rather than react. If we waited too much longer, I'm 84, if we wait too much longer then the next thing you know your kids are trying to make decisions for you that maybe you don't agree with but you don't have the wherewithal or the mental capacity to make those decisions. So I wanted to do it primarily so that if something happens to me, Joanne will be taken care of. That's the primary reason for the move.

J: Wonderful. That's great and I'm sure your kids really, I mean, they don't want.

T: They're so relieved. They were a little upset to start with because they wanted us to move back up north where they are and I'm not about to go up in the snow belt and live that life. We haven't done it for 10 or so years. Then afterwards they got the gist of everything that was going on and now they're so thrilled. They've been down here to see what we have and it's just wonderful. They know we're going to be taken care of down here. That's the key.

J: They probably know you're having a lot of fun too.

T: Yeah.

G: And the nice thing is, we have a villa here. We're in a villa and that's nice.

J: What's that like?

G: Oh my goodness we have a lot of room. We have two bedrooms, a sunroom, a den, laundry room, a nice kitchen, great room and a screened in front porch.

J: Oh, that's lovely.

G: It's wonderful.

J: Wow, that must, you almost don't have to go anywhere. Do you take your meals in the main dining area?

T: We have not yet. We do go over there. We can go and pay as you eat. I wanted to keep a little bit of, we like to go out and eat and I like my wife's cooking.

G: I was going to say he likes my cooking.

J: Yeah, let's just get to the point shall we, let's be honest here. It's perfect because then you can treat it as a walking distance restaurant if you want.

T: That's right.

J: It's still got the option.

T: We have the options.

J: Do most places offer that option when you looked at the five places? Is that how it works most places? Where you can choose?

T: I can't answer that because the other places we didn't really get into that deep.

J: Ok.

G: I think they offer because one place also had like the villas and I think some of them did offer that. You didn't have to eat there but I'm not sure about that.

J: Ok, I like that flexibility. It's interesting.

G: Yes.

T: I'm not sure. I don't think I want to commit to that yet. Now, if one of us gets incapacitated or something, then it becomes a necessity.

G: If I can't cook.

J: If you can't cook, that incapacitates him. I think this is just wonderful. I mean it's just terrific information. I can't think of another question to ask. This turned into more of a conversation than an interview which I really appreciate, that's been fun.

G: It was nice talking with you.

J: Yes, likewise I hope you can continue to enjoy life there and settle in with even more programs and again thanks for giving us some of your busy day. We appreciate it.

T: Ok.

G: Thank you.

J: Alright, ciao ciao.

T: Bye-bye.

G: Bye-bye.

J: Bye.