

Ben and Judy Adams Interview Excerpts, January 2015

J: Jill

B: Ben

A: Judy

Interview starts at 2:58

J: Good afternoon, this is Jill at Watermark in Tucson.

B: Hey Jill, it's Mr. and Mrs. Adams in Sarasota.

J: Hi, thank you so much for calling. I really appreciate your time.

B: How's everything in Tucson? Have you had your coffee?

J: Oh, I've had more than my share of coffee and yourself?

B: Yeah, we're good. I think your weather is pretty comparable to ours based on what I saw online.

J: I think so, as long as you're not looking at humidity we run pretty parallel.

B: Oh I know that, I know that.

J: We've got some rain today, it's really nice. It's unusual.

B: Good, you need that. It's another part of the world out there, we've been out there.

J: Oh yeah? There's nothing quite like the Sonoran Desert, it's a strange place.

B: It's got its own beauty.

J: Well, awesome. I don't know how much they told you about the call and how it's generally progresses but typically I just start with a few questions and we just chatter our way through. They generally last about 15 minutes and it's all about your process, not so much you know "rah-rah Lake Pointe Woods" or "The Fountains" but more so "here, people, is how one couple achieved this process, it's a big process and you got through it." Great, alright so let's see so I know that you're from upstate New York and were you both from there or did you move there later in life or were you born there?

B: I went to Syracuse University. That's how I ended up there and got my Masters in business there and I'll let Judy tell you where she went to school.

A: I'm from Binghamton, New York and we met in Binghamton and moved to the Syracuse area.

J: Nice and then did you have kids and work there for some time?

B: We had one of each and started our own leather goods business there and ended up being in the ladies handbag business.

J: Oh really?

B: We tried to have those products made for us under our label in the United States and it's so labor intensive to make those products we couldn't do that. So that made us look out of the country so we did end up, you know, seeing many parts of the world that we might not have seen otherwise, the far east, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Macau, and whatever so. When you are that young nothing frightens you so you just go forward and it turned out very well.

J: How wonderful, wow that's fascinating. Interesting and the company you continued it while you were in New York? Did you carry it down to Florida as well? Did you retire?

B: No, no we hired sales reps and whatever and eventually we had coverage across the country and then of course the Walmarts of the world came into the picture and a lot of

our customers didn't make it so we kind of had to reinvent ourselves so we went after the catalog business, the L.L. Beans and Orvis of the world and also sold to the armed forces and so it gave us quite an education along the way and made some tremendous friends in that process.

J: Neat.

B: We did sell the business eventually when we came here about 18 years ago.

J: Ok, ok, where did you settle in Florida first?

B: Well, Judy's parents retired in Fort Myers which is south of Sarasota and my folks retired in Sarasota.

J: Perfect.

B: So during vacation times through the years we'd come down to visit and when it came time to look around for a place we might enjoy we came back and we love it.

J: Yeah, Sarasota is a great place. Did you live right there in Sarasota?

B: We were in South Sarasota in a little town called Osprey which is about three and half miles south of The Fountains. We were familiar with the area and what it had to offer and for a town this size it has tremendous cultural activities and a lot to do.

J: You know you're definitely not the first people I've spoken with from Osprey.

A: Oh, really?

J: I think you have some neighbors who are from Osprey, some neighbors at The Fountains as well.

B: We do, we do.

J: Ok, neat. So you came 18 years ago to Florida, your folks were in the area and then you lived and you loved your life and Osprey and then what made that lightbulb go on to think "maybe we want to move to a community?"

B: Well, we had absolutely no plans to do anything but stay in our home. And I'm going to have Judy tell you how that process started.

J: Oh good.

A: This friend of ours, a widow, said she was looking for a smaller home. She had a big home, four bedrooms etc. and so we brought her over here to see it, thinking she would like it and she did like it but we did also. And we moved in and she is still in her house.

B: We keep trying to coax her but she initiated the whole process by, she didn't want to go out and look on her own. She was shy and she lost her husband so she asked us to kind of help her in the process so we visited four or five communities in the area knowing that we always liked The Fountains the best, that was our choice. So nothing really transpired. We can't get her to commit. She wasn't comfortable. So fast forward, I don't know, six months and Joe Kessler, who was then sales director here called one day and said, "Hey, guys you've got to come up and see this deluxe two-bedroom" and I said, "Joe, call somebody else. We're just not ready." He said, "Then get Judy and come up and see the unit." If you've ever met Joe, he's persuasive. We did come up and we did see the unit and we were fortunate in one respect, a couple had moved in and redone the whole unit and then two months later decided that it wasn't for them and they moved out. So we saw the unit that was completely redone and everything.

J: Two bedroom.

A: Great painting, beautiful.

B: The tile, everything was done so we went over to the café, we had lunch. Joe said, "You know go talk it over." And at that point we decided that unit, it's not going to be

here another week. Someone is going to grab that. And we have a gorgeous unit with a water view. And so at that point in time, Judy I think was the one that was more persuasive and said, "You know, while we're breathing and everything is good and we both have our health. Let's do it." So we did it.

J: Wow and when did you move again? When did you move to the community?

B: In October of last year so we're still newcomers.

J: You're coming up on half a year so you're definitely still fresh, fresh eyes as we say. You can still see everything for the first time. Well, so there you are completely almost surprising yourself with your decision to move but you haven't looked back.

B: Even after we made the decision, you go through a process where you second guess yourself and "do we really want to follow through on this." And you have to go through that and I think until you're both thoroughly comfortable. There's a little agonizing for a few weeks. Some people, I think, may not follow through. We decided what was the point in waiting? We knew that eventually we would come into The Fountains anyway so we just, we went forward. We're very pleased that we did and we've never regretted it at all.

J: Oh, that's great. You have a really unique experience in that you had that really low pressure touring that you really weren't looking for yourself. All those places that you visited, you know, you didn't have that agonizing checklist, what's good, what's bad, you know what can I live with, what do I want to change. That's really probably a very healthy way to do it for people who can.

B: Well, we had an advantage to in that we knew a couple here who are in the business of moving, in downsizing people who want to move into retirement communities and they in fact moved us. So we knew every facility here, what the advantages of each one was, what the disadvantages were, how the meal plans worked. So we had that advance that most people do not have.

J: Nice.

B: We had the background knowledge and that really helped as well.

J: I bet. Really that transition is so important and even if it's kind of difficult you get through it but what a wonderful thing to make it as painless as possible. That's great.

B: We've seen too many people wait and either come in with a spouse who is not well and then in a few short months one of them is put into assisted living or whatever. Or they've waited too long and lost a spouse and then they're all alone having to make that transition which can be, you know, pretty heavy duty for some folks.

J: Sure compared to, you know, if you already lived there, just simple things, it's not simple to have a knee replacement but simple things that you can just really be still close to each other. You've got just a walking distance if someone does need to have a little procedure done and be in more of a respite situation. That's great, that's great.

Well, so you're there, how do your kids feel? What did they think?

B: I think they were surprised. I know they were surprised because we're at the younger end of the spectrum here and we have friends that came in just before we did, that are our age and so we're definitely at the younger end of that age bracket. And I think our kids were surprised. But then I guess in the second breath, I think they were relieved to know we're set. They don't have to concern themselves. They're very familiar with this area because they would come down and visit both their grandparents and us. So a good feeling, I think, all the way around.

J: That's great and best to make your own decisions, to not let the kids have to have that burden.

B: True, true.

A: That's right.

J: No offense to any of our kids but I'd probably rather make my own decision anyway.

B: Exactly.

J: Well, that's good. I'm not surprised that they're happy and you know you're younger because you're so proactive. And you're going to get everything out of living there. You'll get to take advantage of everything.

B: We're still getting acclimated to everything that is offered here. We still do an awful lot outside. We still travel. We still see the kids. But there's a terrific assortment of activities here for everybody for every age.

J: Are there any that you're partaking in? Any exercise classes or clubs or anything?

B: We both exercise outside the fountains. I go to a large gym and Judy goes to a little smaller one so we haven't done that as yet. And we are on the classic meal plan which means we eat here. We pay as we go. Judy is an excellent cook so we're still, you know,...

A: cooking.

J: But at least you've got the option in you don't have to get in the car.

A: That's right.

J: If you really wanted to take a night off.

A: That's right and we do go to the dining room and enjoy it and also the café, both places.

J: That's nice, have some variety.

A: Yes it is. They have two nice facilities here. It's very nice.

J: And then you could be social. Sometimes and it's nice to just have a quiet dinner at home but sometimes it's nice to get out and be merry.

A: Right, right and they serve wine which is very nice.

J: That's important. That's one of the spices of life really, isn't it?

A: That's right.

J: Especially in nice groups when people are congregating. Alrighty, let's see here what advice do you have, I mean obviously you've already literally been in the position of giving advice, what advice do you have for people who are out there on the fence and they just maybe don't know where to start to even consider whether they should move.

B: Well, I guess we're all in that position at one point or another and unless you make an appointment, go with friends, have a meal, talk to some residents, you're never going to have a clear vision of what's out there. I mean it isn't for everybody. We know folks that won't make that step. That's their choice but you really have to, I think many people have preconceived ideas of what a retirement community is all about. And until you break through that and go see for yourself and talk to people, that's the first step you have to take. And we have volunteered to do that here and bring friends in so we can expose them to all the great things we have and the casual, easy lifestyle that now we have transitioned into. You just have to make that small step and I think that you will benefit greatly when you see what's there.

J: Nice, wonderful, seems like very good advice. Anything similar or different advice for couples?

A: You both have to be on the same page.

J: True.

A: You can't have one on the fence and the other one for it.

B: Mutual commitment.

J: Everybody's got to be happy.

A: Yes and you know if you're not happy where you live, you're not happy.

J: Yeah, it's pretty all encompassing, isn't it?

A: It is.

J: That's true and part of that is getting out there and being involved, especially for folks who are maybe in a little different situation. You two have each other and you have a lot of stuff going on but people really just need to dive in and find out what their options are. And you know they could wait another year too, who knows, who knows what's right for them. But knowledge is power.

B: We know several couples where one spouse wants to do it, the other does not. And yet they haven't taken the time to make that first commitment and visit any of these communities here in town so you've got to break through that.

J: Because then you don't even really know, otherwise what are you even disagreeing on, who knows.

B: Exactly, you're not getting anywhere.

J: Well, beautiful, thank you both so much for your time. I really enjoyed speaking with you and gosh I love your story about your leather goods business and how proactive you are and I appreciate your time.

B: Well, we enjoyed talking to you this morning.

J: Thanks.

A: Yes.

B: Continued good luck.

J: Thanks so much you guys have wonderful weekend.

A: Ok you to, thank you, bye-bye.

J: Bye-bye.