

## Howard Matson Interview, May 2016

J: June

H: Howard

J: Hello.

H: Hello.

J: Hi, is this Mr. Matson?

H: Yes ma'am, is this Ms. Hussey?

J: It sure is. Nice to meet you. Thanks for phoning in.

H: My pleasure, how are you today?

J: I'm very well and yourself?

H: Not too bad. I have a cough so periodically I may hold the phone away from my mouth so I don't cough in your ear.

J: No problem.

H: How can I help?

J: Alright, well, I wanted to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this.

H: My pleasure.

J: We interview residents all over the country for their stories about their lives and how they made their decision to move to a retirement community and what they enjoy or don't enjoy about living there.

H: Ok.

J: We're after your particular story today and they forwarded me your bio and I'm really looking forward to speaking with you. Let's begin by just, tell me first of all, when did you first move to Parkview in Frisco?

H: Been here starting my third year now.

J: Ok, good and were you living in the immediate area beforehand?

H: No, I lived in Portsmouth, Virginia.

J: Oh my gosh. What brought you to Texas from Virginia?

H: The only granddaughter I have.

J: Aww, and how old is she?

H: She's nine now.

J: Oh, how fun. That's nice.

H: See, had three children. One in Virginia Beach, we lived by her. One in North Carolina wanted me to move in with them. That was a nonstarter and then this one out here. My young son here wanted me to move in, he's got an in-law suite and that was also nonstarter. But I used the granddaughter as a tiebreaker so I didn't hurt anybody's feelings. Plus, it was a logical thing and I've never been close to her so to this was an opportunity.

J: How nice, so you must get to see her quite a bit.

H: Yeah, a lot more than I used to. That's for sure.

J: Yeah, very good. And so in moving to Texas, so, you didn't want to live with your relatives. How did you go about figuring out where you did want to live?

H: Well, first I had to sell a couple pieces of property, a rental property in Virginia Beach and the home in Portsmouth. Then I made up my mind I was not going to buy again but I thought I'd just move into a senior living facility. It was the kind of lifestyle I thought would be good for me at this stage. I'm getting very lazy as I get older. I don't like to do things, especially cleaning tubs and toilets.

J: Yes, nobody likes that, at least I don't.

H: No, no, that's right.

J: So you were pretty young when you moved in. How old were you?

H: 72.

J: 72 and what was the hardest part about making the move for you?

H: Well, we had been retired military. In fact, this is the third time I lived in Texas. The first time was with my wife so it was just another move. It was not that big a deal. I had a couple years to get rid of things and give things away and downsize. I had been out here before and I had seen the unit that I wanted to move into so I had pictures of the kitchen and stuff so I knew how much stuff I could bring with me and how much I couldn't. So between giving to charity and giving to kids and giving to neighbor's kids who are coming out of college as far as furniture was concerned I managed to pare down to the point where it's just about right.

J: Perfect.

H: It wasn't a big deal as far as the move was concerned. It was business as usual.

J: Right, well, being in the military how many moves do you think you went through in your lifetime so far?

H: Probably about 20, one overseas the rest in country.

J: So you're a pro when it comes to moving?

H: Well, my wife was a pro when it came to moving. I went to work and she handled it. I was attending the Naval War College and my boss Admiral Cooney came up and we were sitting in the officer's club having lunch and he says, "Where's Pat?" Pat being my wife and I said, "Well, the movers are here so she is home checking off all the furniture and telling them where to put it." And he said, "Oh, ok." Well, a year later now I've graduated command staff course and he is in town. We're at the club and having lunch he says, "Where's Pat?" And I said, "You're not going to believe it." "No" I said, "Yeah, the movers are there." So she handled all that stuff.

J: Yeah. So I wanted to let you recover from your cough there. Do you have allergies probably in Texas?

H: No, I've got an upper respiratory infection right now. I just came back from the doctor about it for the second time. I'm on the uphill slide I think.

J: Oh good, good. So tell me, your kids, how do they feel about you living where you're living?

H: I think they feel comfortable. They don't need to worry about me. Now, the thing that I didn't anticipate was that within nine months of moving here my other two kids would also move down here so for the first time since 1996 or 1997 we're all in the same geographic location which is pretty special.

J: That is very special.

H: They like the idea of my being over here. They know there are people look after me if I need it. There are people around. I obviously don't need much right now but you know, we all get older. And it's very convenient for everybody, for them all to reach me, and for me to reach them so it was a logical location when we relocated here.

J: And so tell me what a typical day is like for you. What do you enjoy doing there yourself?

H: Well, I exercise in the workout room. I join some people for breakfast. I work on the computer. I'm in the Rotary club here. I'm the membership director for the club. It's a 100-person club. I'm on the food committee here, in fact, I chair the food committee here. I'm a floor rep for the Resident's Council so between all of that plus the kids and doing things and going places I've managed to find myself a girlfriend and we have so much in common we have a lot of fun together. So between all of that plus the kids and doing things and going places I manage to stay pretty busy. I made up my mind a long time ago. I had a debate coach in college who told me about his dad, worked for the railroad for 40 years, retired, sat on the porch and was dead in six months. That's never going to happen to me, so I've always had a reason to get up every morning not just to sit and watch TV.

J: Yeah and I see here that you are a tae kwon do guy. Do you still practice that?

H: No, I don't. My young son went out for karate and he wanted me to go out with him. I figured wow, he's getting ready to go in the puberty, male bonding, communication, it was wonderful and I was really impressed that he wanted to get with me on this. I later realized what he wanted to do was get me into

a socially acceptable situation where he could kick the crap out of me on a regular basis and everybody would praise him for what a good job he was doing. So anyway he managed to get his black belt in three years. It took me five to get mine. I got my second when I was 53 so it was fun. It was good exercise. I had a high pressure job. When I was in the Navy I was in media relations and a crisis communications expert so I did a lot of that. And then I transferred from the Navy to running the PR department for a local gas company which was about the eighth largest one in the country.

J: Wow.

H: We were always blowing something up or burning something down so it was a high pressure job. I would go to karate and work off steam.

J: Right.

H: In fact, I had one time, my boss had just made me so angry that day and I was just frustrated when I hit the dojo and all night long I pictured him standing in front of me where I'm punching him and kicking him and when I walked out that night I felt so at peace and calm with myself.

J: Yeah, well. You mentioned you're president of your Rotary Club. Does it meet there at Parkview?

H: No, no, we meet at Gleneagles Country Club which is about a 20-minute drive down the freeway from here.

J: I see.

H: It's a weekly meeting.

J: They do good things. I have a lot of friends that are Rotarians.

H: Most people, if they don't join in order to make the community a better place for everybody that lives there, they usually drift away. If they join for business purposes or contacts or something like that, it doesn't work out but we basically, our goal is to make the area around us as good as we can for everybody. All the Rotary Clubs are like that.

J: Right, that's great. Well, now that you've had three years experience under your belt of living in a retirement community, would you recommend the lifestyle to other people who may be in your shoes?

H: Yeah, of course it depends upon the person, the individual. But in my situation it was the perfect solution. You know, you've got activities, you've got places to go, you can make friends. There are six of us that get together for dinner every night. We have tours. Last year we had a tour to the north horse country. I learned more about fertilizing mares than I ever wanted to know and don't ever have to know any more about it. But you know, there are always some things to do and places to go. You can be as active here as you want to be or you can hole up in your room and do nothing. We have people both directions.

J: That sounds pretty good.

H: I think there is something here for everyone. You can do as much or as little as you want to. There are exercise classes. There are educational classes. There are learning classes. You can go do water aerobics. You know, they have special trips for shopping. There are people here who are really kind of isolated, you know, they can't leave unless a bus takes them to Walmart or to the shopping mall or whatever. So those things are available. If they need to go to a doctor, transportation can be arranged if they can't get family to help. So there really is a turnkey situation here for as much as or whatever you want to make it.

J: Yeah, what about people that have the impression that you have to be sick or really old to move in. What would you say to those folks?

H: Well, again I would tell them the same thing. You can be sick as you want to, as old as you want to. It's all up to you. You don't have to be old to move in here. I didn't move in here because I was old. In fact to be honest with you, I was surprised by the fact that I was one of the youngest people here. I expected to find a lot of people like me running around. And I didn't focus in on the walkers or the power chairs when I was touring the area with Susan. I managed to work three lunches out of her over two or three years before I finally moved in here but anyway I never really focused in on the walkers.

And I came in here a Sunday with my young son and I came in to start unpacking boxes and I walked into the lobby and I figured, "Well, let's get breakfast." And all these walkers were lined up down the hallway and I thought it looked like the nursing home. I had my sister in in Colorado. I thought, "My gosh, what if I gotten myself into?" They were just all congregated. You know when you have 220 some rooms you're going to have one or two of those things sitting around. But you know it's just life the way it is and everybody knows it and, you know, you work around it. I think there are people here who don't really need them but they like to have them so there is that group as well. But you know I guess I've kind of wandered and beat around the bush. Well, I've got a good friend of mine in high school, we both dated his wife. I took her to the senior prom, he married her and he and I are still friends. But she died a year ago so he was looking at it, but in his case my advice to him was to stay where he was because he is closer to his daughter. Down here he'd be logistically close but distance wise further away about an hour whereas now he is just ten minutes down the road. I've got a friend back in Virginia right now, I was in a gated senior living facility there in Portsmouth and he was my garage sitting, beer drinking buddy and after Pat died, I put on ten very happy pounds sitting in his garage drinking beer. But his wife has cancer now and she wants him to move out here. I don't know whether that's a good idea for him or not. He's got a son there in Virginia Beach. His wife's daughter is in Charlotte, North Carolina both of which are close. But he and I will have to talk about it. He's been out here. He's seen the facility. He likes it. He's comfortable here so we'll just play that by ear. But everybody is different and my advice is going to be different depending upon who they are.

J: Exactly, you hit the nail on the head there. And the important thing is you've got to look around at your options, right?

H: That's exactly right. You pick your best option.

J: Yeah. Well, very good. Is there anything else that we didn't talk about that you think would be important for people to know?

H: Well, I think people here are generally very, very happy. The staff here is wonderful. The executive director is superb. People just enjoy being here, I think. We've got our complainers. There are a few people here that are just going to complain because they don't have anything to complain about. But all in all I think people are generally pretty happy here.

J: Good, that's nice to hear. Well, great. I thank you for your time. It was very interesting getting your perspective and I'm really glad that you found Parkview and that all your kids have surrounded you now. That's wonderful.

H: I moved away to get away from them but here they are again.

J: Yeah, sometimes you can't get rid of them, huh?

H: Yeah, like a dirty shirt. They keep showing back up.

J: Right, right.

H: Well look, thank you very much for the time. I appreciate it.

J: Thank you, likewise. I appreciate it. Have a great day. Thanks.

H: Goodbye.

J: Bye.