

Rosaria Mastronardi Interview, May 2018

J: June

C: Christine

R: Rosaria

J: Hello.

C: Hi, June?

J: Yes, hello.

C: Hi, it's Christine and Rose.

J: Hi Christine and Rose, good morning.

C: Rose wants me to stay with her, she's a little nervous.

J: Oh, that's fine, if you want that's fine. Nothing to be nervous about, Rose. I won't bite, I promise.

R: Good morning

J: Good morning, how are you today?

R: I'm ok, thank you.

J: Excellent, so I'm going to just start out by going over a couple of things but first of all thank you for making time in your day to chat with me. I want to make sure that you are aware that we are recording this conversation so that we can have an accurate transcript. I just can't take notes that fast or accurately as the recording can. I always like to tell people that if they should say something that they later realize, "Oh gosh, I probably shouldn't have said that, it's too personal or whatever" just say so right then and there in conversation and we can edit the transcript, we can take out whatever you want that you have just said that you feel is maybe too personal to share. So, I just like to point that out upfront and then I like to review the purpose of these interviews because it is important. We do these interviews with residents all over the country and it's really a pleasure for me because I get to meet so many wonderful people but what we do with the information is we will create a mailer, maybe you have seen these before but we send it out to folks in your area and invite them to lunch and we use your story in the mailer as a way for them to connect with their own possibilities for their future. So, we have found that by sharing our residents' stories we can open up people's minds to the possibilities for themselves, a lot of people have never set foot on a retirement community campus and so we're just trying to get the word out and let them know what wonderful people we have living with us and extend an invitation to them to come figure out what it's all about. So that's the purpose and with that out of the way, Rose, I would like to invite you to tell me a little bit about yourself. They sent me a little bio and I would just like for you to introduce yourself, talk about maybe where you were born, where you were raised, where you went to school, your career, your family, anything that you would like to share so that we can get a feel for who you are. I will let you do all the talking you want, as much or as little as you like, go right ahead.

R: Ok, fine, thank you, my name is Rosaria and I have everyone call me Rose for short. It makes it easier that way. I was born and raised in Queens, part of New York City. I attended elementary school in Queens and then I did go on to Hunter College in Manhattan and there I earned two degrees a BA and an MS in education. Fortunately, I did receive a teaching position but it was out on the island in North Babylon, Suffolk County. And there I taught elementary school common branches one to six for 32 years and then I retired. During this time, I did do a lot of traveling. I traveled along the eastern coast of the US from Canada all the way down to Florida. And then I did some traveling in Europe which I enjoyed and loved very much.

J: And I understand that's where you met your husband was in Italy.

R: I did, I did meet him there, yes. And finally, we were married and I continued teaching until I gave birth to my daughter. Eventually she married and moved up here to Eastchester.

J: Did you say Westchester?

R: No, Eastchester. Eastchester is part of Westchester, yes.

J: Right, right.

R: So, I did since my daughter gave birth to a little granddaughter my husband and I were commuting back and forth babysitting for her so we decided to move up here also to Eastchester in Westchester County. And the house I lived in for 15 years eventually when he passed away I found myself with this tremendous house, it had four bedrooms and was quite expensive. It became a burden and a great responsibility. So eventually, after speaking with my family we decided that we should find a safe place for me that I would like and enjoy very much. My son-in-law had made some research and discovered that there was a place nearby in Tuckahoe not so far from right here where we are in Eastchester and he did some research and we came and met Christine and she was kind enough to so show us the whole place which really struck me as so nice I just couldn't stop thinking about it. So eventually I did move in here and I'm very happy. I enjoy everything that goes on here. I participate in as many activities as I can. I really don't know what more to say to praise the place.

J: Well, thank you very much. I would like to ask you to tell people when you say you take part in all of the activities give people an idea of the kind of things that you join in on and the kind of things other people might be able to join in on there.

R: Yes, we receive a daily sheet each day and on the daily sheet you can participate in whatever activity that you would like. And of course, the first activity is always exercise in the morning which I really enjoy. We always have a different person leading the exercises but they are all good, they're all fantastic and I participate in all of those as much as I can. And then we have another activity called word scrambler which is very interesting and here is where your English vocabulary comes in, it's lots of fun, I enjoy that. And there's also artwork which I enjoyed tremendously. I like drawing and I like painting. I do not trace but I try to copy as much as I can and I really enjoy it. And I should say I'm not too bad at it. What else? There are so many other activities like there are other word games, let's see, card games.

C: Talk about the art class.

R: The art class, yes, I enjoy your class very much as I was saying.

C: June, there's a painting that she made that is actually on my desk so when she sat down she goes, "Oh, that's mine."

J: And you are going to submit for Expressions I understand?

C: Yes, we are.

J: Yay, I'm so excited about that, thank you.

R: I really enjoy that very much.

J: That's great, have you always enjoyed art?

R: Oh yes, I've always enjoyed art. I don't draw anything, I usually copy. I'm very good at copying, not tracing but copying something and then coloring and what have you. I've always done that since I was a child so I really like that very much. And also, another activity is we have a piano here and at the holiday time I did play some holiday music but I haven't played for quite a while. I do enjoy playing that, the piano here. And there is that sheet with all the activities helps us along because sometimes we do forget, "Now, what is going to be next?" We do have people coming in speaking to us. Someone does come in with art, someone else comes in with history, we have somebody else coming in with famous people. Just the other day we had someone come in and talk to us about our government starting from the beginning of our country.

J: Wow.

R: There is just so much that we take interest in, whatever we like to do we can enjoy doing.

J: Wonderful, well it sounds like there's a lot of opportunities and choices for you to stay active in mind and body. One thing that you haven't mentioned yet and I would love to ask you about is the meals that you get there. How does that work?

R: Well, we have breakfast, of course, lunch and dinner. Truthfully, I enjoy the meals because we do have a choice. If there's something that you feel you really don't want to have that particular day you can just go back to the other part of the menu and you have a choice of anything there that you would rather have. The meals are very good.

J: And did you know anybody when you first moved in, Rose?

R: No, I really did not know anyone. We came and Christine was kind enough to take us around and show us the different rooms and what have you.

C: There were some other ladies here that I knew she would be a perfect fit for. They have formed a wonderful relationship.

R: The first two ladies that I met here were Catherine and Lena and they have been wonderful to me. They have guided me, they were my mentors I should say. They were wonderful, they were the first two I met here as a resident.

J: So, would you say that it is easy to make new friends? Is it a welcoming place?

R: Well, I think you have to make an effort too, you know. You just can't sit around. I think you have to get up and move so I can make acquaintances. You know I think it is up to the person.

J: Just like always. So, I'm curious about this, before you ever visited The Fountains at RiverVue what was your experience with retirement communities? Were you familiar with them at all?

R: No, I wasn't at all. I'm going to be very honest about that. My son-in-law did some research and he is a lawyer and he did some research and he found one right here, he said, "There is one right here in Tuckahoe, let's try that, let's go in and find out what it's all about."

J: And were you apprehensive at that point about the whole idea?

R: Well, in the beginning I was because I had a house and I said, "What do I do with the house now?" It was difficult for me to go about selling it and what have you but my son-in-law and my daughter were fantastic they did all of that for me so I didn't have to.

J: So what kind of advice might you have to share with other people out there that may be living in a big house as you were and may be feeling burdened by taking care of that house both financially and physically but maybe they don't have a family member as helpful as you have? Would you have any advice to share with them about going about looking around at their options?

R: Well, I was very fortunate that was done for me so I don't know. I suppose they could go to their town supervisor and find out what might be the nearest place for them to visit an assisted living area and they may get some information from the town.

J: And what about coming to see you at The Fountains at RiverVue, would that be something you would recommend?

R: Of course, anyone who would like to come and visit me, they are free to come I am here at their disposal.