

## Linda Cohen-Calger Interview, February 2015

J: Jill

L: Linda

J: So sorry about that. I believe we got cut off.

L: I think so, yes.

J: Sorry about that. Well thank you so much for calling us and again I'm not sure how much they informed you about the call but they usually take about 10 or 15 minutes and we just chat about the process that unfolded for you as you made the decision to move to retirement community.

L: Ok.

J: Alright, beautiful. Well, if you don't mind I'll just jump right in with the questions but you can just chat or bring up anything that you care to. It's all helpful and we're just anxious to learn more perspective.

L: Ok.

J: Great, so when did you move to the Watermark, please?

L: I moved in on September 10th of last year, 2014. So I've been here just a few months.

J: Ok, alright, been there long enough to know the place but short enough to have a fresh memory of everything that took place during the moving time. That's great and just prior to moving to the Watermark where did you live? Were you from the area?

L: My husband and I were really raised and spent most of our lives in New York State, primarily Westchester County most recently. But we retired, both of us, from the practice of law and we wanted to live at the water. So we moved to a waterfront condo in East Haven, Connecticut. And that's where we lived just before moving to The Watermark. Unfortunately my husband died two days before we were scheduled to move in so he never got here.

J: I am so sorry.

L: Yes, me too. But I was very concerned about what my life would be like here and I expressed that to the marketing person that I dealt with, who is wonderful but she invited us to spend three days here as Watermark's guest, which we did in July. They set us up with dinners with different people each evening and we were invited to all the activities and at the end of the three days we were very convinced that this is what we wanted.

J: Well, that's wonderful. What a smart thing to do too really. You wouldn't make any other big decision if you couldn't try it before you buy it or test drive it. That's great, that's great. And then did you have to sell your condo and go through all that?

L: Yes the week that we were going to move and the week to my husband died, the deal on our condo fell through. The woman backed out and so that didn't happen as planned and I postponed the move by two days just because I was overwhelmed. You know, I was supposed to move in on a Monday but I moved in on Wednesday and he had died on Saturday so...

J: Oh for heaven sakes.

L: It was a pretty traumatic time for me. It was complicated also by the fact that one of my children who lived very nearby for a number of years moved to Chicago a couple of weeks before this. And I was used to spending a lot of time with him and his wife and his little girl whom I watched at least two days every week since the day she was born. My sister and my daughter came to help me. My sister lives in Georgia. My daughter lives in Portland, Oregon. And they were here, one at a time but they came and they help me pack and move out of my house because I was in the hospital all that time with my husband to be with him. And then they helped me unpack and get organized in the apartment. They were wonderful. I could not have done this without them. Not only were they wonderful but The Watermark was wonderful. They were very attentive, very cooperative, very thoughtful. (Inaudible) told

me immediately when I told her that Arthur had died, she said if this is not something you want to do now you're on your own we can cancel this deal; you'll get everything back. I said, "Thank you but I've given it a lot of thought and I do want to do it anyway." But I was very touched by that. The woman who helps you with the move in, Carol, she could not have been more attentive and better to me. You know everybody they learned my name immediately. The woman at the front desk knew my name immediately, including my apartment number. I was very impressed. The staff here is very kind, thoughtful, accommodating and very professional.

J: Well that is just what you needed too.

L: Yes, I was very very pleased, I really was. I still am. I mean we've had some very rough winter weather recently, a couple of big snowfalls and some of the staff could not get in and some of the staff was in and spent a night or two here even though they have family somewhere else. And they just took good care of us. I felt so safe and so welcome and so just comfortable and relaxed to be here and really that is one of the reasons I wanted to live here because I didn't want to have to deal with winter anymore and I really don't. I have everything I could possibly need or want in this building; all I have to do is take the elevator. I don't have to drive. More or less I hardly ever have to go anywhere or don't want to. I still drive. I still have my car and I like having that freedom in the better weather but when it's not good weather I'm perfectly happy to just hibernate in this building.

J: Well that's what it's all about. You've been dealing with those winters in New York and Connecticut for a long time. It's nice to take a break from that.

L: And not have to worry about the driveway being cleaned off and the roof leaking or the wind blowing at the windows. I mean I just felt very safe. And they couldn't even do regular dinners because they didn't have the staff available but they set up wonderful buffets and everybody pitched in, people who were in charge of all kinds of other things like maintenance and what have you they were there helping serve the buffet and clearing tables and they really really went out of their way for us.

J: That's great. It's like one family, isn't it?

L: Yes, I feel like we're all in this together and we've been very kind to each other as well. The residents are very friendly. It's easy to make friends. It's easy to join people for dinner. It's easy to chat with people at the various activities and figure out that this is someone you'd like to spend more time with, you know, that sort of thing. I can't say enough about it. It was the right thing for us to do and I'm sorry my husband never got here but I think for me it's wonderful.

J: Well, I am just so glad to hear that and I agree. I'm sorry he didn't get to enjoy that with you but thank goodness you didn't put that decision off until, you know, months later and then, you know, you really would've been... You already had too much on your hands but you would've had one more thing and then the whole winter and everything else.

L: Yes. I did ultimately sell the condo three months later in December I did sell it. I took a little beating on the price but I just had to get out from under it so that was a good thing. And my husband I looked at a number of places before deciding that this was our favorite. And we looked in Florida because we had a winter place in Florida for many years. We looked down there, we looked in Connecticut. We looked in New York State and every time we looked at something or spoke to someone about it on the phone before we even went to see it we could tell that it just wasn't the Watermark. It didn't have the features that the Watermark had. Some places don't have any balconies and we knew we wanted very much to have a balcony. Some places didn't have kitchens. They had like a little kitchenette with a microwave and not even a sink. You had to get the water from the bathroom. Well, I like to cook so those were not suitable for me and you know various things that we found wrong with every place and we kept coming back to saying, "This is not as nice as The Watermark. We like the Watermark much better." So here I am.

J: Well, that's super. How do your kids feel about you being at The Watermark?

L: They are so happy and so relaxed. I have one son who lives a mile away from here with his family and

we see a lot of each other and they don't have to worry about me being stranded or isolated or that I have plenty of company and activities and so forth. My other son, as I said, recently moved to Chicago with his family and he came to see this place with me, you know, before I moved and he'll be here, as a matter of fact, on Saturday to visit.

J: And will your granddaughter come too?

L: No she can't. He's coming on business so you know how it is. And my daughter in Portland, Oregon who, you know, saw the place when she help me move in they all said, "It's wonderful, it's so great for you mom. And it makes us feel good, so good to know that you're in a good place and that we don't have to be so concerned about, you know, everyday things. Like getting the groceries into the house and picking up the mail from down the street. And getting the trash can because it blows away after they empty it." And then I'm running around the neighborhood looking for it you know all of those things that sound trivial but they're not trivial, they're tough, you know. Running around looking for your trash can is not fun so... And all the little conveniences, I mean, I had my flu shot in the building. There were two days that you could go down and get flu shots. It's wonderful convenience. I can mail things right from the front desk, packages, they do the postage, I pay for it and they give it to the letter carrier when he or she shows up. It's so wonderful, I haven't been to the post office, I can buy stamps here in the building. There are so many nice things really, such thoughtful things.

J: Oh that's great, they really do add up don't they?

L: They do, they do.

J: And then, you know, we all get our little colds and aches and pains. I myself have a cold right now. And just to know that someone can bring you what you need. You can have tray service. Someone will be there to check. That's just great, that's just great.

L: And we help each other out a lot, you know, we do a lot of nice things for each other. We're all similarly situated. You know everybody scaled down from a bigger place and, you know, getting older and has more difficulty doing certain things. And many widows, you know many of the women here like myself are widows. So we have a lot in common to begin with and we just, it's a real community. It's not just residents at the community and we do a lot for each other.

J: How nice. I love to hear that. That's terrific. Let me see here, it's a nice conversation. I haven't looked to my list here for a minute.

L: I'm sorry I'm running off at the mouth.

J: Oh no, it's perfect. It's really the best way to go, just to chat and talk about all the little things because that's what really matters in fact I'm looking at this list and we've already answered a few of the questions which is great. So you did look at other places? And you did visit them. That's great and what programs have you become involved with there at The Watermark, classes and clubs and exercises and whatnot?

L: I go to the gym. I take an exercise class every day and then I work with one of the trainers to devise a plan besides that for me, so that I can use machines because I didn't really know anything about them when she showed me how to use them, so that was good. I think I need a little refresher course because we went through them kind of quickly but I think maybe each week I'll ask her to show me one again until I get them all under my belt. And I've gone to the weekend movies in the afternoon. We've had some wonderful films and we're going to have one tonight that I will go to. I don't usually like to go at night but I really want to see this film, it's called Boyhood. I'm going to go to that this evening. I do not go to breakfast. I don't feel like being up early. I'm glad that I'm retired and I don't have to get up early. And I don't want to be dressed and I'm really not that sociable when I get up anyway. My kids know that we used to have very quiet breakfast because I was not very talkative in the morning. So I have my coffee and toast at home and I don't join anybody for breakfast but I do go to most of the dinners. What else? We started a new potluck supper group once a month on Sunday night because we don't have dinner on Sunday so we had one so far and I participated in that it was a lot of fun. And I signed up for

the next one. I signed up for this wellness class that is going to start on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February and it goes for several weeks. I'm trying to think of what else. Oh we had a conversational Yiddish class one meeting last month and we're going to have one meeting this month and that was a lot of fun. I go to the wine tastings. We have a man who comes and brings wine and explains the different regions and vineyards and the different grapes and all of that and then he gives everybody a little taste of the ones he's talking about. What else? I go to the happy hour on Friday night. We usually have some live entertainment. Sometimes it's not too good but sometimes it's wonderful. It's sort of uneven depending on who the entertainer is. What else have I been doing? I'm pretty busy I mean I don't get a chance to do some of the things that I need to do, you know my own things, because I'm running rendering other things. We have a very nice library, very nice library with a lot of recent books and that's very nice also. I haven't made use of it yet because I came here with a bunch of unread books and my daughter and my sister brought me books when they came down and so I have a big pile of books that I'm working my way through. But I will be using the library. I'm a library person. I like libraries.

J: That's great and again it's another place you don't have to get in the car to go to.

L: Exactly, exactly. Actually in all the places that I've lived in my life, there have been many; one of the very first things I do when I move to a community is get a library card. And I did not get a library card for Bridgeport because I have a wonderful library in the building so I don't need to go anywhere else.

J: That's great, that's great. Alrighty, let's see, here's a big question for you, what advice do you have for people who are in the position that you were in let's say two years ago "maybe we'll move, maybe we won't, not really sure" what advice do you have for those folks?

L: I think they should look around and see what's out there. You know check out places and learn the kinds of questions to ask on the phone. I found that I was running around unnecessarily when I found out things like some places don't have a kitchen so I learned to ask that question right away and then I didn't have to have the wear and tear of running over to see the place. So as you work your way through the process I think you learn what to ask to see, don't have to look at everything, you narrow it down right away to the places that have the features you're looking for so it's a look around and I would also say try it out. The three days that we spent here that really convinced me because I could not really visualize my day to day living. I couldn't figure out what would happen after I wake up in the morning. I just couldn't imagine the whole day. And once I spent the three days here I had a real good feeling for it so I recommend it very much.

J: That's great advice and usually I ask if folks felt they moved the right time and it sounds like you just really couldn't have done it any sooner or any better. You really did all your due diligence and you guys didn't really play that process over years and years.

L: I think it would've been better if we had done it a little sooner. My husband's health was failing and he had some health issues but I think one of his biggest problems was the isolation and that was the main reason that we were looking for a place to move to so that he would have more social interaction. So I'm very sorry that it took us a while but then I got sick and so I couldn't do any more of that looking into and running around. And it took a while, I was sick for about four years. When I finally got to the point where I could start driving around and being on the phone for an extended period you know with someone. I think if I had not been ill we would've done this probably two or three years sooner.

J: Wow, well I'm so glad you chose the Watermark and I'm so glad that you offered to have this phone call.

L: My pleasure.

J: I really appreciate it. People like you really make the place tick and hum. We're lucky to have you.

L: Oh thank you very much. I'm lucky to be here.

J: Oh thank you. I will send extra thanks to Connie and to all your sales team and everybody for being a place that makes you feel at home. It sounds like a better bang up job with this winter situation already so I'll pass that along.

L: You're great.

J: And thank you so much, I sincerely appreciate your time and I hope you have a great day.

L: Thank you very much, Jill. Nice to talk to you.

J: Likewise.

L: Bye-bye

J: Bye-bye.