

Martha Kaelble

Interview at Aberdeen Heights 8/4/2021

Martha Kaelble: This is Martha Kaelble, and today is the 4th of August, 2021. Today we are sitting at Aberdeen Heights, on the site that used to be St. Joseph's Hospital in Kirkwood.

Many Kirkwoodians I think remember it as St. Joe's. They called it St. Joe's. The hospital played an important part when my husband and I married and moved to town in 1957. The Sisters of St. Joseph had taken over the marine hospital on Couch Avenue a couple years before in 1954. The marine hospital had operated as a government-run facility, which treated the families of the men who worked on the rivers in St. Louis. So they were merchant marines, not military marines. Two years later, and in the couple of years that followed, our three children were born here at St. Joe's, and there were other hospital stays through the years, of course, for a surgery, and a broken arm for one of the children, and several emergency room runs. There were many visits out here because the doctor's offices were built up next to the hospital.

Fast forward about 50 years, when it was decided suddenly that they had developed too many hospitals in this area, and this led St. Joe's to close. Suddenly this choice piece of real estate came on the market, and the St. Louis area Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church, had been looking for a location for a retirement home. They bought the prime property and built Aberdeen Heights senior living facility, which opened almost 10 years ago, September 7th, 2011. My husband and I were among the charter members who bought into the project while it was still on the drawing board. We moved in shortly after it opened, and felt privileged to have such a nice place to call home. We could stay in Kirkwood, near our church, near our friends, and I just can't believe that we would have ever thought that we would end up living our retirement on the very same property where our family began, where our three children were born.