

Betty Avera - 8-24-23

Wed, Nov 01, 2023 2:40PM • 23:41

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, refuge, broomfield, stay, living, james, worked, fort collins, years, babies, colorado, call, evicted, dogs, share, car, gave, experience, apartment, girlfriend

00:01

So good afternoon. This is Marrty Dormish. I'm at the refuge cafe with my friend Betty Avera and we are going to be doing an interview today for the Friends of Broomfield History. And it is Thursday August 24, 2023. And so I'm going to ask my friend to introduce herself, talk about where she's from originally, how old she is, if she likes to share. And when she came to Colorado, what and whatever else you'd like to share Betty.

00:35

My name is Betty McCoy, a real McCoy is my maiden name. And I wear it proudly because it is part of history. And I was born in West Virginia, and my family moved to Washington DC when I was about five years old. And I grew up in Washington, DC and Maryland.

And I lived there most of my life until I was about 40 years old. And then I started traveling to different places. I met my second husband and he was from...He had been in the Navy for 32 years. And we were married for almost 35 years before he passed away.

And I really miss him.

Marrty 01:30

What was his name?

Betty 01:35

Robert Clayton Avera.

Marrty 01:36

Now I'm sorry, I pronounced that incorrectly. So it's Avera?

Betty 1:40

Yes. A V is in Victor e r a.

It took me, he coached me for a week to get it right. {laughs}

Marrty 01:51

You can coach me.

Betty 01:55

And I have nine children. My youngest is James Avra. He was adopted when he was three. He was my youngest daughter's son, and she got killed in a car accident. And I adopted him when that happened. And he's been a blessing in my life. And I was living in Texas and I wanted to be with him in my last years because I knew he would take care of me.

02:34

But he's with a young lady that's very selfish. And it didn't work out too well. And he got when I came up to stay with him. He brought her in to stay with him too. So we, we got evicted from the apartment that we were in in Fort Collins. And this was during the pandemic. They weren't supposed to evict people. But they, he had already got permission for me to come and stay a few weeks with him and everything. And then I went home and stayed for a while and came back. And when I came back in March, I came back on March 5, they came up with an eviction notice on the same date that I came back.

03:27

And we ended up being in the car for two and a half almost three years. And James had a friend that had this electrician's job in Utah and he promised them he would help them, he promised James that he would help him get straightened out so we went to Utah with him and he stole quite a bit of stuff and ended up just leaving us there stranded, no vehicle.

04:03

He got us to use all of our money, no money, no nothing. And we were just stranded there James and his lady friend got into a fight and James got locked up for 15 days and that left me and the dogs there at a hotel by ourself with nothing. So I didn't know anybody to call but the Refuge and my close friend Ninette Bishue. And she started working on getting me back to Colorado. And she was able to do that. And then Jen, she was with Almost Home, and she was able to find me an apartment and the Refuge, helped get me into an apartment and I think I'm doing real well now.

05:00

I love Marrry and the people here, they have been so kind. And I think they're the closest friends I've ever had in my life. And this is an amazing place.

Marrty 05:12

That's very kind of you to say, Betty, thank you.

Betty 5:15

Oh, it's true.

Betty 5:16

I think a lot of you as well. Yeah. Good.

Marrty 5:18

Would you mind talking about just a couple just to back up to give some people a little bit more context on your life? Would you, would you mind sharing how old you are?

Betty 05:26

I'm 80 years old, eight years old.

Marry 05:28

Okay. And we're sitting here in our office and you have your walker here with you.

And you mentioned your your babies, you have two dogs, two dogs, telling everyone about them?

Betty 5:43

Well, I call them my babies. They're part Pomeranian and Poodle. And they, well, if you see me with them, you can tell they're my babies.

Marry 05:55

And what are their names?

Betty 5:57

Gus and Sassy.

Marry 5:58

Gus and Sassy.

Betty 6:00

My little girl is black. And she's maybe a foot long. And Gus is all white. And he's probably a little over a foot long, but he's much heavier than her. And they are spoiled rotten.

Marry 06:22

Babies.

Could you also give us a little background on how you ended up in the Broomfield area? So you were in Fort Collins, you were evicted from an apartment there? And then how did you find your way down here?

Betty 06:37

Well, James was driving around looking for places to be able to be able to park and everything. And he is seemed to find some places here that the police didn't harass you or anything. And the outreach from the Refuge apparently contacted him and gave him information on the Refuge and everything. At that time I was in Nebraska with a young lady's parents. I was helping her mother clear out her mother's home so they could sell it. And I was up there for a week. And then when they came back and got me they told me about the Refuge and brought me here and I loved it ever since. We, they had a big round table at one time for me and all my buddies that are between 60 and 80.

Marty 07:32

And what do you call your table?

Betty 07:36

The bank robber gang {laughs}

Marty 07:40

and other things, but I like that named the best cover game.

Betty

Yeah. They wanted me to be the head of the head of the gang. I'll go in first and all the men would follow me.

Marty 07:54

So tell us about your vehicle that you were in. So you said about three to three and a half years. Is that accurate?

Betty 8:00

Yes.

Marty 8:01

So what vehicle did you live in for three to three and a half years with your your son and his significant other?

Betty 08:08

It was a Ford hybrid. I don't remember now exactly what make it was. But it was a 2012 hybrid, which we could run the air conditioner and the heat in the wintertime. And a lot of people didn't like it because we ran the air conditioner and they were always somebody in the car with my dogs. And there's some people caused a lot of problems because of that. And but, you know, my family was in that car and it was keeping them cool or warm in the wintertime. So I didn't think they should have any problem with it. I didn't.

Marty 08:54

Those people that were criticizing you because you were running the car?

Betty 08:57

Yeah. Yeah. But it was a hybrid, so it was able to do it without running gas. Yeah, because it had its own system of recharging the battery and things like that. A tank of gas would last just over a week. We got good gas mileage out of it.

Marty 09:22

So this is a four door sedan, right? And the three of you and your two babies?

Betty 09:29

Three adults, for two and a half years.

Marty 09:33

How did you, how were you able to sleep in that car?

Betty 09:36

Well, I have to basically sit up and sleep anyway. So it was no problem for me just sitting there leaning back sleeping in the backseat but everybody else had problems, but I didn't.

Marty 09:51

Yeah, because you said your son I think had some back issues?

Betty 09:55

Oh yeah. James has feet issues and he I had, he was on a public bus in Fort Collins, and it broke a power steering belt and went off the road and hit into trees. And it broke two vertebrae in his back. And he already had trouble with his feet and his lower back anyway. And so he, at that time, he was working two and three jobs. And he was doing real good on his own. But then after he had that accident, he could not work.

And I don't even know if the doctors released him released him to work yet.

Marty 10:43

So how did you, I guess five, I should say you five, make ends meet those three year / three and a half years?

Betty 10:51

Well, James was real good about walking the dog.

I get my Social Security and everything. So that's what we lived on. But it costs so much to have to go buy fresh food every day, you know, already made. It's unbelievable. You try to economize the best you can. You know, but it's not easy easily. At the end of the month, we ran out of money about a week before pay day. And Refuge was always good to us about helping us with anything we needed.

Marty 11:30

What about when the weather got really bad? What happened?

Betty 11:33

Oh, when weather gets real bad. They have a program that would help people living in their cars or outside or whatever. And they would help us get hotel rooms to stay in while the weather was real bad, which was wonderful. I mean, sometimes we get to stay in a hotel almost all winter. And that really helped a lot.

Marty 12:02

What what do people take for granted about something as simple as like taking a shower?

Betty 12:10

Oh, it was so good to be somewhere where you could take a shower whenever you wanted to. Because when you're in a car like that you can't go take a shower whenever you want to. I joined Humana. I got Humana insurance. And then they gave me this silver slippers card to where I could go to the community center and take a shower but they didn't want to take me over there every day to shower so I could just do the best I could.

And the refuge put sinks out at the places where there is they had that negative places where you called Safe Parking where we could park and they put little sinks out there so we could at least wash your hands after going to the Porta Potty.

Marty 13:09

that was some of our other partners in the community that run those lots. But yeah, that's that was a nice Yes. It was really nice. It's better than just being in a random spot. Right with your car.

Betty 13:21

Oh, yes, we once we got that spot. We stayed there, for what? Two years, I think.

Marty 13:30

And then what was it that was the catalyst? You talked about your trip to Utah. But what was the catalyst then that ended up finally getting you back into housing. As you see it?

Betty 13:45

James's girlfriend she had went back to her parents, and I was just tired of her mental attitude.

And so once they did this, and he got put in jail and I got to come back to Colorado, I figured they needed to be on their own for a while or do whatever they needed to do. So that's when I agreed to go into 55 and above housing.

Marty 14:23

Tell us about your new community that you're a part of where you live.

Betty 14:28

Oh, well. There's a lot of nice people there, seem to be real nice. They love my dogs. George says they have they have, what do you call it, that love them want to pet them and everything when they come out so that there's people waiting for him to come out such that they can pet him and say hello to him.

Marty 14:56

And who is George? Just so everyone knows.

Betty 14:59

George Davis is a very good friend, and he helps me a lot. He walks my dogs, and he comes over and has dinner with me otherwise I wouldn't eat dinner. And he's very helpful. He takes me to my doctor's appointment, and things like that. He's become a very close friend.

Marty 15:24

And what's his living situation?

Betty 15:27

He's still living in his car.

Marty 15:30

And he's been off and on in a car and then outside, right?

Betty 15:36

Yes. Yes.

Marty 15:39

He, how old is he? George?

Betty 15:40

73. So he'll be 74 December.

Marty 15:47

Okay. So you've shared a lot and been through a lot. What are some of the lessons from the last three and a half years that you've learned that you want to share with those who might be listening?

Betty 16:02

Well, I really, really don't know. I still wish my son was with me, but I couldn't handle his girlfriend. So that is out. But um, just watch your money and watch your situation and just be careful not to get pushed into a situation like that.

When they evicted us like that, James went straight to the Attorney General everything and they weren't allowed to do it. But they'd already done it. And we'd already kicked up and got out of the apartment. Nice. Oh, yeah, you can stay into your rent's up and all like that. But we had already rented a storage place and packed everything up and gotten out.

Marty 17:00

We call that a pre-eviction or self-eviction where people don't want that on the record, so they leave and that makes it easier.

Betty 17:10

They actually come to the door with the sheriff saying that we were evicted. We had to get out in 24 hours. They actually did that. And then, but it wasn't legal. They weren't supposed to.

Marty 17:29

That sounds really hard. Did you ever think before like you said, you grew up in West Virginia, or grew up in DC born in West Virginia, lived in different places. Did you ever think you'd be in a situation where you were living in your car?

Betty 17:43

No. No?

Marty 17:46

Did you have a particular perspective of people who lived outside or in their vehicles before you yourself were in that situation?

Betty 17:53

No, because, you know. I know that there's, there's a lot of people that are in that situation, because of drug problems, and alcoholism and things like that. But there's help for them, you know, and they really don't have to stay that way unless they really want to. But I care about people. And I've always been a caregiver.

And that's why it's been hard for George to take care of me [laughs]. I give him problems sometimes.

But ah, just watch your finances and watch the people you're around to make sure that things don't happen to you to cause a problem like that.

This was, I guess, a combination of just the way things happened, me coming to stay with him. And then his girlfriend moving in with him and everything, it was just too many people in the apartment. But he had already gotten permission for me to come and visit him and everything.

But I don't guess they didn't take that into consideration. The young people in those buildings didn't like to see an old woman on a walker.

Marty 19:17

What's your experience of Broomfield been like?

Betty 19:23

My experience in Broomfield has been wonderful. This is a great little city. The people here in Broomfield have been nicer to me than anybody or anyplace that I've ever been. It's been exceptional, and I love Broomfield, Colorado.

I will stay here until the Lord takes me.

Marty 19:47

Glad you found your way here.

Betty 19:49

Yes. So am I.

Marty 19:50

Is there anything else that you'd like to share? It could be about anything, it could be a life experience or life lesson or anything, that you just want to make sure people know about you and your story?

Betty 20:00

Well, I like to travel, I like to go to different places and experience different things. But I'd been in Texas for over 12 years and the heat there had gotten to me, I just could not stand the high temperatures. And so once I come up here and experienced the weather here in Colorado, I couldn't stay there any longer. Yeah. I've lived in Florida, Nevada, Georgia, Tennessee.

Marty 20:35

And that was because your husband was in the Navy. You said?

Betty 20:39

Well, no, not necessarily. This was after he retired. But um, I didn't travel overseas with him or anything like that. So...

I met him when he came home from Iran to retire.

And he had his retirement services over the bar where I worked. And throw him a big party. And made cold cuts and everything like that. Had a lot of food and free drinks and everything. And it was a pretty big party.

Marty 21:21

Yeah, I could see you throwing a big party. Were some of your kids there?

Betty 21:30

No, at that time when I met him, they were still little.

And when I married him, he tried to find all my children and get them together for me, and take care of them. And he took very good care of all of us.

Marty 21:50

What do you think your husband would say about your last three years, three and a half years, about what you've been through?

Betty 21:57

Oh, he wouldn't like it at all.

Marty 22:02

Yeah, I bet I bet he'd be proud of you that you've been so resilient.

Betty 22:05

Oh, yes. Yes, he would. He would be proud of that.

But I didn't think it was that bad. To me. It wasn't that bad. I couldn't take a bath when I wanted to or have clean sheets when I wanted to. But other than things like that, I enjoy being in close contact with my family. That means a lot to me.

Marty 22:41

Well you are a very strong person.

Betty 22:45

Thank you.

Marty 22:46

What are some of your favorite jobs you've had over the years?

22:53

I've worked as a secretary, payroll clerk. I worked as a bartender, cook, waitress. I can manage restaurants.

I really don't know if I have a favorite as long as there's other people around that I can talk to. It's always my favorite. I enjoy people.

Marty 23:23

Yeah, That's very obvious.

Betty 23:24 Thank you.

Marty 23:27

Well, thank you for your time today. But yeah, I think we've covered a lot of ground and grateful that you were willing to share part of your story with with Broomfield

Betty 23:35

Well, thank you for asking. I really appreciate it.