



The People of Avamere Pod

Episode 1: The Las Vegas Life

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Thomas: Over 86,000 seniors and over 8,000 employees across seven organizations make up the Avamere family of companies. This podcast is dedicated to getting to know some of these incredible people. I am your host Thomas Cloutier. Welcome to the people of Avamere pod.

Thomas: This month we are celebrating women's history month, honoring the contributions and accomplishments of women. We are highlighting incredible women in history and within our company on Facebook. Follow Avamere health services on social media to learn more about these amazing women and their accomplishments. Today we have the pleasure of getting to know Cathy Arness, a resident at Avamere at Cheyenne, an assisted living community in Las Vegas, Nevada, with Tegan Dean our Director of Sales and Outreach. Through Cathy's active life, she has served in the military, ran a casino, and today enjoys joining tours of our assisted living community to show potential new residents the exciting life at Avamere at Cheyenne.

Thomas: Welcome Cathy!

Cathy: And welcome Thomas.

Thomas: Good to have you. Thanks for joining us. My first question for you today: Why did you choose Avamere here at Cheyenne as a place to live?

Cathy: Well, if you want the honest to God's truth, I never chose it. It came to me. I do not even know how to put this, and Tegan doesn't either, because we never met each other. I was going through a bad time. I had a death in the family. I was having a hard time making it by myself and this person who needed...Tegan and I didn't even know them. He brought me down here and he introduced me to her, and we

hit it right off. We liked each other. The only bad part was money. I did not have enough money to come in here but she and the man who brought me down here helped me with that because I am a veteran and they showed me how to get the money, legally that is (laughter between the Host and Cathy).

Thomas: Well, that is very good. Tegan you mind as well introduce yourself.

Tegan: Yes, Tegan: Direct of Sales and Outreach here at Avamere and this is a true story. We do not know who this guy was. We have never seen him again. I did not know him. She did not know him. I really don't know how that happened but it was a miracle and I am really grateful that she found home here with us.

Thomas: Absolutely. It was fate that you came through Avamere's front door. Well, thank you for sharing. At Avamere Cheyenne, you help Tegan, she mentioned how you like to do tours and help with those considering moving in. So, what do you enjoy most about that, about the tours and also what do you share with people on those tours that you give?

Cathy: When I came here and met Tegan, this was not Avamere it was Birkdale. We did not know each other and right away I was attracted to the friendliness of the place because that was what was most important to me. I had worked with people since forever. The people that come here, Tegan screens them really well and tries to get what is wrong with them and help them.

Tegan: Well, I use you all the time to help with that.

Cathy: Well...

Tegan: All the time!

Cathy: He does not choose me. That...

Thomas: Yes, I want to know, who is the better closer?

Tegan: Well, when I am feeling like I cannot get there, I pull Cathy in every time.

Thomas: So, it is a team effort?

Tegan: I say we need to put her on payroll. Yes...

Thomas: That is a possibility. There is a lot to talk about there.

Cathy: Well, I like the people.

Tegan: She loves meeting the new people.

Cathy: I have always worked in hotels where people think there is nothing going on but they are probably sicker than those here I have always done that and I wanted to take time for me to...What I needed was a place to move to. I had a house. I had to sell it because financially I could not keep it up and I do not have much family so I did not know what I was going to do and this man...Eventually somebody must have told him about me because he knew that I was looking for a place to stay. So he knocked on the door, one thing I know, I am not leery, I am not afraid...So, I answered the door and he said I hear you are looking for a place to stay. I almost fell out the door and I said yes I am. He said I think I have just the place for you. So, he brought me down here to Tegan and we talked. I do not think I was even here for two hours and I knew this is where I wanted to be. I love the people here. I got to tell you that. I do. I love them.

Thomas: If you do not mind me sharing, you did have an experience with Covid, correct? You had Covid – 19 at one point, do you mind sharing a little bit about that?

Cathy: Well, I thought I had the flu. I did not think I had Covid. Obviously, I did because Miss Wonderful here took a test and it turned out that I did have it.

Tegan: You did. You did have it.

Thomas: I am glad you found out. Yea...

Cathy: Well, I did not believe it, even after I found out. That is the bad part. I am just startled but I had it. I was fortunate enough not to get it as bad as some of the people that live here.

Tegan: I referred to you as superhuman today because I said were ninety-one years old and survives Covid and came out really without a hitch. It was amazing for me to watch.

Cathy: Well, like I said I thought I had the flu and yes I am ninety one. Did I think I was going to be here at ninety-one? I do not think so (laughter amongst Tegan, Thomas, and Cathy).

Cathy: Because I was in the military and I made it through that and a couple of not so good marriages and I had wonderful children and I love it here. I do. I like the people here. There all...I do not think there is bad person here.

Thomas: Well, it sounds like we have took awfully good care of you!

Cathy: And I am just so glad I met Tegan. He helped me a lot. So now we are going to open our own hotel (laughter amongst Tegan, Thomas and Cathy). Do not I wish, uh? I would let you stay for a few nights on your own.

Thomas: Yea, yea well I love to join you at your new hotel. It sounds lovely. So...Well, let me ask you this question. I would like to get to know you a little bit more. You just shared something about your life. So, tell me three fun facts about yourself.

Cathy: I like to play bingo, which I have not done in a hundred years but I do play it here. I wish I like to exercise but I do not (laughter amongst Tegan, Thomas and Cathy). I think we are extremely lucky all of us that live here that we have a roof over our head and plenty to eat and everybody helps everybody else. It is not a stuffy, stuffy place at all. It is a fun place.

Tegan: So, I told Thomas a little bit about your background in Vegas because it fascinating to me about the hotel industry...

Thomas: Love to hear about it.

Tegan: All the great things that you experienced here before coming to me.

Cathy: Well, I came here in January 1961. I worked in four hotels. I had never worked in a hotel before. So, my first shot was the Stardust, which was a huge hotel back then. It had a thousand rooms and not enough help, but it was also owned by a lot of unsavory characters, which made it even more interesting and fun. We liked all that. After that, there was a little hotel across the street called the Thunderbird and Joe Wills (I do not know if you have ever heard of him) but his daughter was a movie star. Her name was Don Wells and she worked in (I am trying to think of the what the name of the movie is) but...then after that...Don had got most of these properties that Howard Hughes did not. After that, I went to the Frontier hotel which was wonderful and a beautiful hotel (why they tore it down I will never know). The strip was one of the prettiest places I have ever seen. It is not as pretty now as it used to be but I am hoping someday before I die that the strip goes back to what it was. It is not so crowded. It does not have the giant hotels that five and six thousand rooms and there is absolutely without a doubt no entertainment here anymore. When the corporations bought the hotels that was the end of the showrooms, the bands, all the people that made this a great city. That is all gone now and I hope that someday it all comes back because I married a musician and there was always the entertainment lure. It was just great. It was not expensive. You could not even get a room on a weekend. It is not like that anymore. It is almost as if Las Vegas has hardened a little bit in order to make along but it is still a great place to live. You know who lived here and who ran this part of the country. They were just as good as you were because if you did not do anything to bother them they did not bother you.

Tegan: So, I was not alive in this time, but Cathy really claims that the mob was really in Vegas.

Cathy: The mob was here and almost every place, Stardust had a thousand rooms at that time—now this was 1951 and the mob owned the whole place. I did not even know what mob meant.

Thomas: That is unbelievable.

Cathy: I just came out of the military and I am thinking to myself—boy these guys are really rough and tough but after I got to know them I could not even believe they were bad guys because they weren't.

Thomas: Well, like you said just stay out of their way in you are in good shape, right?

Cathy: Well, a little bit of an example what a mob person would do. When I when I worked in the thunderbird hotel, you had a bank, you know, you had to count down when you had to check down checking people in and checking people out. Well, one night my bank was short \$100 and I started crying because I thought Oh my God I going to get fired and I had three little kids to support. So, the pit boss came over and asked what is the matter Cath? What are you crying about? I said I'm short \$100 in my bank and I what to do. He walks over to the crap table and takes a \$100 chip, tosses it in the air, and says there you go Kathy. Now, you still have your job. Are you happy? I said I am thankful. Thank you. Now, that is the kind of things that made it so special here. Nothing was so important that those guys could not fix, and I mean that.

Thomas: Yea...

Cathy: But, you know, it is like everything else, you learn to live with what you've got and I knew all of these people in the mall and never had a problem. It was just a great place to live but everything went on as usual and I met Tegan and then everything did not go off...

Thomas: Everything is better when you meet Tegan. Yea, everything is better. Well, let me ask you a question. Tell me a little bit about your family.

Cathy: I have a daughter. I had two boys that were killed in accidents.

Thomas: O I am sorry to hear that.

Cathy: I have a daughter left and it was a rough time. I am not going to tell you I had a rough time I did. My boys were both 15 and 17 and both of them were in separate accidents neither were their fault. So, I ended up in a psychiatrist place. That was the most fun of my life. It was like that one movie One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest but here I am and I will probably be here for the rest but I will go with her wherever she goes she has to take me.

Thomas: Yea she does. So, what is your daughter's name?

Cathy: Michael Ann.

Thomas: What does she do?

Cathy: She stays home and has fun with her dogs.

Thomas: O wonderful, wonderful.

Cathy: But she is in her 60s. You know, she is not a kid anymore.

Thomas: She is always your kid though, right?

Cathy: Well, once you have a child life changes.

Thomas: I am living that myself. I have a four-year-old and a one year old at home.

Cathy: O you can bring them over here and I can take care of them.

Thomas: Hey, they are all yours. They are a handful. So, you can watch them for awhile. No, I have two daughters they are fantastic, but they will always be mine, even at 60 years old, I am sure.

Cathy: One of the jobs I had after I got out of the hotels. I was 14 years as an executive in a hotel. Well after I there, I went to work. I did not have to go to work but the girl called me Anne she was married to a guy in the Air Force two she was an orthopedic surgeon. She is a radiologist who needed someone to take care of her little boy and he was two years old. That was the job of a lifetime! Oh my God did I love him but they still live here. He's got a pretty good practice now.

Thomas: I bet. I bet.

Cathy: I stuck with him for about four years and he went back overseas. I kept those two little boys—Jake and Joey. So, I can take care of your kids I'm a good nanny.

Thomas: I'm going to bring them. Don't from tempt me with that. I would bring them with me. They are fantastic but parenting it is a beautiful thing it's a lot of work but I look forward to the weekends with them.

Cathy: You know, what it isn't a lot of work. It is just a lot of fun because you know you are creating something that will last forever and that is a good thing.

Thomas: Yea. Absolutely.

Tegan: You know what, Thomas, Cathy has done more for me then I could ever do for her.

Thomas: Yea. Let's talk about that, Tegan.

Tegan: I do not know if you know that I lost one of my children to an accident and we definitely have a bond in that way. On the tough days, I definitely know that if Kathy can get to this point, keep a pep her step, find perspective and still manage to stay happy I know I can too.

Thomas: Yea.

Cathy: but you have to work at it it does not come overnight. When you lose your child that is been awful thing. It is but hey I am ninety-one.

Thomas: Well, you have each other to lean on, right?

Tegan: Yea, we lean on each other, we do, you and me.

Cathy: O we do and...

Tegan: You are doing great.

Cathy: And you know what? She does not want me to tell you this but she cries real easy and I can make her cry (laughter amongst Tegan, Thomas and Cathy). Because when she told me I had Covid I said get out of here. I said you must be dreaming or something. I said look at me. She said Kathy I have seen the test you do have Covid. I said I don't believe that I'm just going to look for another place to stay, but you know I'm still here and I did have it.

Thomas: Yea, well, I I'm sure glad you recovered from it and everything's going better for you. Well, you clearly have led an exciting life. So, tell me what...

Cathy: That is not the end of my...

Thomas: So what accomplishments are you most proud of?

Cathy: that I joined the military. I was in for three years. I was 20 years old, came from a small town in Pennsylvania and did not know jack from nothing but you know what I made a damn good sailor.

Thomas: What made you join?

Cathy: Because I lived in upstate New York and it was a really small town and at this time there weren't many good jobs. The money was really bad. i was coming home from the movies one night and you know those signs where they put their hand and says the Navy wants you? I thought well there's what I'll do. Of course I did not tell my mother I did.

Thomas: O you did not tell your mother? What happen?

Cathy: My mother was furious, but I did well and I am happy I did that and that helped me get in here.

Thomas: Yea, it sure did!

Tegan: Yes that did help you get here. Tell Thomas about the story of the depression and the shoes.

Thomas: Yea I would love to hear about that.

Cathy: When I was a little girl maybe five or six years old I did not know anything from anything but Oh my God everyone was so poor not just me my sister or my mother but everybody was poor. I had a pair of shoes on and I was at the gate in the house where I lived and I saw a little girl up the street with nothing on her feet. Well, I did not think anything of it. How would I know? Maybe I would never have another pair of shoes. I called her back and I gave her the shoes and Oh my God she thanked me so much more and I went in the house. My mother said Catherine where are your shoes and I said I gave them too that girl walking down the street. She said honey we do not have any money for another pair of shoes. I said do not worry we will find a way and we did and I have had a pair of shoes ever since.

Tegan: That story makes me cry.

Cathy: Well, it was just that bad.

Thomas: What an incredible story.

Cathy: the depression is 20 times worse than what we're going through right now. With one exception I do not know how many people died back then but I do now, an awful lot of people. Back then there was no food we had food stamps, I know you've heard of that.

Thomas: Sure.

Cathy: Everything. Everybody was poor and we all shared. How wonderful was that?

Thomas: It is wonder to hear that.

Tegan: Is not that, we cannot even imagine, fathom that, right?

Thomas: No and it is certainly putting perspective on how things are and from my standpoint this has been a challenging year in many different ways for my family and for people by now but it does not sound like anything you went through.

Cathy: We think that we were bad off now? We have a roof over our head at least temporarily and food in our mouths. We did not have that back then. Everybody, I

mainly in Polish and Slavish neighborhoods. Everybody had a garden and everybody shared with everybody or we would never had made it and you know, did not think anything of it. Today that would never happen.

Thomas: It was needed, right? It was necessary and people working together.

Cathy: the depression was a because we did not know anything about depression per say now we have the TV that gives us all the news and everything what's going to happen today and tomorrow and that. We do not know what is going tomorrow but back then that was the main thing that we had enough food to eat. Everybody shared they had to or we would have never made it.

Thomas: Well, everybody out there listen to this...maybe we should share a little bit more, huh? Make the world a better place.

Cathy: We have to share, we just do!

Tegan: Yea.

Thomas: I agree.

Tegan: Kindness towards our neighbor.

Thomas: Well, my last question for you and I really appreciate your coming is here at Avamere we consider our team members and our residents' family. What does family mean to you?

Cathy: It is everything. When I lay down at night, I am so glad that I have people that I love and that love me and enjoy being around me because I know I am not going to be here forever. I sure would not want to be in a place where I did not have some of the wonderful people not live here. They all care about each other. How important is that? And they do. They share cloths, they share food, they share everything. When one of them goes where they are supposed to go, you feel it and you feel it for a couple of days. It is tough.

Tegan: We definitely have our own family, here don't we?

Cathy: Yes, we do.

Tegan: We definitely do.

Cathy: If everyone around this building moved away, we would still be OK because we have each other.

Thomas: That is fantastic.

Cathy: That is fantastic.

Thomas: I agree. I agree. Well, Cathy thank you so much for joining us today. It was a pleasure getting to know you. Tegan a pleasure as always to see you my friend.

Tegan: Likewise.

Thomas: Thank you Kathy for joining.

Cathy: Thank you for having me on your little screen here (laughter amongst Tegan, Thomas and Cathy).

Thomas: Thank you to our to our listeners for tuning into the people of Avamere pod. Follow us on your favorite podcast platform and follow Avamere health services on Facebook to keep listening in.