

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
ANNE K. LESKO
Physical Therapist, U.S. Navy, World War II
2013

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Lesko, Anne K., (b.1918). Oral History Interview, 2013.

Approximate length: 1 hour 7 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

Anne K. Lesko discusses her service as a WAVE in the U.S. Navy during World War II as well as her early life and career as an art dealer after the war. Lesko outlines her training at Hunter College in the Bronx [New York] and the National Medical Center [Walter Reed National Military Medical Center] as well as her service at Philadelphia Naval Hospital. She mentions additional training in New York when the war ended and recalls experiencing VJ Day at Times Square in New York City. Lesko highlights some close friends she made during her service and briefly explains her role as a physical therapist. She describes her career as an art dealer with several firms following World War II and gives an anecdote about being replaced because she was a woman.

Biographical Sketch:

Anne K. Lesko (b.1918) enlisted in the Navy as a WAVE in 1942. Lesko served for 2.5 years and after receiving training at Hunter College [New York] and the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, she was stationed at the Philadelphia Naval Hospital.

Interviewed by Linda Hagen and Vicky Pondell, 2013.

Reviewed by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Abstract written by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Interview Transcript:

[Tape 1]

Pondell: This is an interview with Anne Lesko, who served with the Navy during World War II, and it's being conducted at the Wisconsin Veteran's Home at King, at the following address: N2665 County Road QQ, King, Wisconsin, 54946, on the following date: January 14, 2013. The interviewer is Vicky Pondell [sp??] and Linda Hagen [sp??]. So, Anne, how would you describe yourself? I know you love to dance and I know you love to travel.

Lesko: Yes, and I'm a female. How would I describe myself? I don't know.

Pondell: Intellectual? Do you like to read?

Lesko: I read a lot, yes, and I do like to dance but I haven't any partner for some time. Um, I used to paint but I don't do that anymore.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: I like to travel. Went to Europe several times, and to Hawaii.

Pondell: Wow. Where in Europe?

Lesko: Italy and France and England.

Pondell: Do you remember what year?

Lesko: No I don't, not off-hand. It was some time ago, now.

Hagel: What was your favorite place that you've traveled to?

Lesko: Pardon?

Hagel: Favorite place that you've traveled to?

Lesko: Well, Paris particularly. London, and we went up to Scotland to Edinburgh from London. And in Italy we spent most of the time in Tuscany rather than in Rome.

Hagel: What did you like about Paris that was so memorable?

Lesko: That was my most favorite trip. It was just delightful. You learned about all the places that you heard about before, you saw the places.

Pondell: I'm just going to set that right there for you.

Lesko: —the lid.

Pondell: Okay. You can set it right on the desk if you want, or right on the shelf. Whichever is easiest for you to grab.

Lesko: Okay.

Pondell: What year were you born in, Anne?

Lesko: 1918.

Pondell: And your hometown; can you tell us a little bit about the area, when you were born? I'm sure things have changed.

Lesko: Well, yes. I was actually born on a farm near—south of—north of Fond du Lac—south of Fond du Lac.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: And I lived there until I was eleven years old, and went to a little one-room school there which was about a mile away. And, during the good weather I would walk all the way down there. Then we—my father built a house in the little town of Brownsville, which was near there, and lived there for the rest of my life.

Pondell: Okay. And did you leave there then to go into the military?

Lesko: No. Actually, I went to Milwaukee after I graduated from the university. I went to Madison, went to the University of Wisconsin.

Pondell: Very good. For what?

Lesko: Actually it was related art.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: Got a bachelor of science degree, and came back to Brownsville and one of my friends said, "How about going to Milwaukee today?" [laughs] So her brother took us to Milwaukee and we found an apartment and we just started living there and working. And then from there—I went into the Navy from there.

Pondell: How long did you work then in the community before you went into the Navy?

Lesko: Oh must have been about two-and-a-half years.

Pondell: And what were you doing?

Lesko: I was working at Sears in training—a training job, which I never—I trained for two years, I think. [laughter]

Pondell: It wasn't your cup of tea?

Lesko: It wasn't my cup of tea.

Hagel: So, your education then—so you went all the way through school?

Lesko: Yes.

Hagel: And you got a higher education then?

Lesko: Right.

Hagel: What about your parents and your family? Do you have brothers, sisters?

Lesko: I have two brothers but they were eight and eighteen years older than I. So we weren't too close. And then—what else? My father died when I was in Chicago. I went—when I came back from the Service I went to Chicago after a couple of years in Milwaukee.

Pondell: Okay. What did you do there?

Lesko: I worked all my time there in the Merchandise Mart, and my most common job was taking care of the showroom for a New York firm selling paintings--European paintings.

Pondell: Wow.

Lesko: Which was fun. We sold to decorators and interior—furnishing homes.

Pondell: Very nice.

Hagel: Cool.

Pondell: What year did you go into the military, Anne? Where did you leave from?

Lesko: I left from Milwaukee in 1942 and I was in the service for two-and-a-half years.

Pondell: And where were you stationed?

Lesko: I was stationed in Philadelphia Naval Hospital.

Pondell: And—

Lesko: I went actually from—I went to boot camp in Hunter College, which is a suburb of New York. The first time I saw New York City was walking down Fifth Avenue—marching down Fifth Avenue on Armistice Day, which it was called then.

Pondell: Sure. Mm-hm.

Lesko: It was fun.

Pondell: What was boot camp like back then?

Lesko: Well, we just did a lot of marching and I don't really remember what we did. I was thinking back on it. I don't know what we did.

Hagel: What did you do in the Navy?

Lesko: I was—well, they allowed us to ask what branch we wanted to be in, and I said the hospital corps and physical therapy. So, I was sent to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland where the Presidents go.

Pondell: Yup.

Lesko: And I was trained there, and then was sent to the Philadelphia Naval Hospital to participate in the program there.

Pondell: Very nice.

Hagel: Anything you remember any particular stories about your experience in the Navy when you were stationed there?

Lesko: Well, I had—one of the things was they didn't have barracks for the women so I stayed at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel, which was great. [laughs]

Pondell: Yes.

Hagel: Yes. Did you have hotel service, too? [laughter]

Lesko: No I don't think so. But I had a roommate and we were lifelong friends. She was from Virginia. And she was very outgoing and she'd stand on a street corner and she'd start talking to people, you know? So, she was very interesting to be with.

Pondell: I bet. Uniforms that you used to wear. Different from today, I would assume?

Lesko: Yes, I guess so. I don't know what they are today to tell you the truth, but they were just Navy skirts and jackets.

Pondell: How about the food? Can you remember the food that you had? Did you have good meals or were they kind of like bad?

Lesko: They weren't bad. They were in a production line, you know. And I remember we had baked beans for breakfast. [laughter] Which I happen to like.

Pondell: Good for you.

Lesko: And they had iced tea which was great. I don't know what they put in it, but it was different from any iced tea I ever had.

Pondell: Well that's good. Were the days long? Did you have to get up real early and work all day?

Lesko: Well they didn't seem to be too long. I don't remember when we got up. I don't think it was too early.

Pondell: Okay.

Hagel: So did you work with wounded soldiers then?

Lesko: Yes. We gave massages and heat and strengthening exercises, that kind of thing.

Hagel: Did you have a lot of badly wounded soldiers, do you remember?

Lesko: Well yes they did, but we didn't probably see many of those, you know.

Hagel: So you worked with ones that were physically able to recover from their injuries, basically?

Lesko: Yes, mm-hm.

Pondell: Did you have a leave then at all in you two years? You know, like—

Lesko: I had a leave to come home one time, yes.

Pondell: What did you get to do?

Lesko: Well it was just with my family, and that was when I was still living in Milwaukee, you know, so I went back to the apartment with the girls for a while. Then I asked for an extended leave and it didn't come through, but when I got back to Philadelphia, my roommate met me at the train. She said, "You got your leave! Let's go to" --we went to Williamsburg, and enjoyed a week—not a week—several days there.

Hagel: Yes, I love Williamsburg.

Pondell: That's—yes, I do too. That was really a nice area when I was out there. Let's see. Let me see what else we have here. So, you got out of the military what year? Do you remember? You were in two-and-a-half years? You said you—

Lesko: Two-and-a-half years, yes. I don't remember just what day I came out.

Pondell: Okay, but when you came out then you came—

Lesko: Actually, I was actually discharged to Great Lakes before I came home, but it was only for about a month. And then I went back to the apartment because some of the girls were still living there, which was great.

Pondell: And what did you do after you got out of the military?

Lesko: Then I—I don't remember. I know I must have worked in Milwaukee. Then I know I left Milwaukee to go to Beloit to live with one of the girls that had been in the apartment, and went to work in a furniture store as an interior decorator, which I didn't know much about. [laughter] And so, after a year I thought, "Well maybe I should go to Chicago and learn more about interior decorating," so I did. I didn't know anyone there and didn't have any money particularly, but I went. And in the first week I found an apartment—or rather, a room in a beautiful residential home and my roommate became a lifelong friend.

Pondell: Nice.

Lesko: Then I found a job the same week in the Merchandise Mart with a manufacturing company, and I found actually a night interior decorating course, which I didn't spend too much time with though. But all that happened in the first week I was there—

Pondell: Wow.

Lesko: —which was really something.

Pondell: So the interior decorating course, was that through a university or just like a tech type school?

Lesko: No, just a—just a lady had maybe a dozen students and it was that kind of thing.

Pondell: Okay. So after you did that, how long did you work then in interior decorating for?

Lesko: I never did any interior decorating actually.

Pondell: Oh you didn't?

Lesko: No.

Pondell: Okay. So—

Lesko: Except at that furniture store.

Pondell: Okay. And how long were you there?

Lesko: Just a year.

Pondell: Just a year? And then where did you move on from there?

Lesko: Then I went to Chicago from there.

Pondell: Okay. And what did you do in Chicago?

Lesko: That's when I went to work in Merchandise Mart.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: And as I said, I went to work for a manufacturer for a while, and then got a job with several different showrooms, then finally landed in—getting this showroom manager for a New York firm.

Pondell: Hmm, very nice.

Lesko: Which was great, yes.

Pondell: Yeah.

Lesko: It was nice.

Pondell: So then, did you move to New York or the—

Lesko: No.

Pondell: —you just handled it in Chicago?

Lesko: No, they sent samples of their paintings to our showroom in Chicago.

Pondell: Okay. And were you there then for how many years? Quite a bit?

Lesko: I think about—yes, about five, ten—no, five or seven years. Something like that.

Pondell: So after then?

Lesko: Then I—what did I do? [pause] I’m blank. [laughter]

Pondell: That’s okay.

Hagel: That’s okay.

Lesko: [pause] I was trying to think of what I did after that.

Pondell: Did you stay in that area or did you move?

Lesko: I was trying to figure out how I came here.

Hagel: Were you ever married, Anne?

Lesko: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Hagel: Okay.

Lesko: I married in Chicago. I met a man in Chicago. He came to our showroom with a chess set that he had manufactured, and at the time I was working for someone who had sold stationary items to thirteen different states. And I told him that actually we don’t take one item; you know, we take a whole line of things. So, I suggested he go down the hall to somebody else, and he left his card. And the next day I called and I said, “Did you get situated?” And he said, “Yes, he took the line—or, he took it.” And I said—he said, “I owe you a lunch.” [laughter] And that was the beginning

of my romance. [laughter] Anyway, but we didn't marry for about five years. We dated for five years before we got married.

Hagel: That's a long time.

Lesko: Yeah.

Pondell: So then you guys—did you stay in Chicago?

Lesko: That's just a blank with me.

Pondell: That's okay.

Lesko: The period between Chicago and here.

Hagel: It'll come to you.

Lesko: That's peculiar.

Pondell: Well, let's see what else we can think of here.

Hagel: Did you leave the military after two and a half years because you wanted to or is that when the war ended?

Lesko: The war ended, yes. So they discharged us.

Hagel: Okay, so you didn't have an option of staying in?

Lesko: No. We had an option of where we wanted to go. We could have gone to California instead of Great Lakes, but it would only have been for a month or so. I went to Great Lakes because it was close to home.

Hagel: What was it like when the war ended? When you guys got the news that the war was over?

Lesko: Well, this was interesting. We were in New York City so we went down to Times Square on VJ Day.

Hagel: Did you see that famous kiss?

Lesko: Yes. [laughter] I didn't really, but that really was something. People still remember that. It was something.

Pondell: Describe that a little bit more. That—you're the first person I've talked to that actually was at Times Square on VJ Day. That's pretty exciting.

Lesko: We went—we were still at—we had gone back to some more training in physical therapy and we heard the news of course when the war ended, and all we thought about was going down to Times Square, and we knew that it would be quite an experience.

Hagel: So what was going on down there?

Lesko: Just a lot of people.

Hagel: A lot of noise?

Lesko: A lot of noise.

Hagel: That must have been exciting.

Pondell: Kind of like New Year's Eve celebration now, I suppose.

Lesko: Yes. [laughs]

Hagel: That must have been really exciting.

Lesko: Mm-hm. Then I decided to come here—oh, I know. Now it's beginning to come back. My husband and I decided finally to move to Brownsville where I had been born, and we rented a house there, and this was—this maybe went on for oh about five, six years? Seven years? And he was the one that was the artist. He did all the painting. And that's—his main job was—that's what he did in Chicago; he painted. And so I set up a little gallery in my basement, but that didn't work too well. There was a little bank building—two-story bank building that was being rented out. It wasn't being used anymore so I decided to rent it and put the paintings in there, which was nice. We had a nice gallery. And in the meantime I got work at the public library, so Hank would sit in for me at the gallery when I worked at the library and other times I would be at the gallery. And so it was nice living.

Pondell: Very nice, yes.

Lesko: And then I think my sister-in-law said, "You know, they're doing a lot in Mayville." Which was a town near there. They rented a three-story brick school house, high school. Real big building. And they had artists there. Each one had their own room. So, it was a quite a place, she said, "Why don't you go there and see what it's like?" And I did and I took some pictures of his stuff, and they said, "Oh, we'll take it all." So that was great. I got rid of the gallery and took the stuff there. And that was great until they finally couldn't get a loan to continue it, and the owner who—was just not very—didn't want to work with them particularly, so the

whole thing went broke, which was too bad. So I took the paintings back home. But actually I was able to sell them all before I came here, which was good.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: And then my husband actually died before I came here, and I think after a couple of years I decided to come here.

Hagel: Was your husband a veteran, too?

Lesko: Yes, he was. He was in the Army. This is sort of interesting. A niece of mine—a grand-niece from Minneapolis—was here a couple of weeks ago. She teaches seventh grade and she had me do the same sort of thing for her students.

Pondell: Really?

Lesko: She videotaped it.

Pondell: Nice.

Hagel: That's cool.

Lesko: We didn't go quite extensively into it. Mostly just the service.

Pondell: Yeah.

Lesko: Or what it was like when I was a youngster.

Pondell: Mm-hm.

Lesko: It was sort of interesting.

Hagel: Going—looking back at your time in the service when you were at that hospital, is there any one particular memory that stands out? Think about that time that always pops into your head. Is there anything in particular?

Pondell: Good or bad.

Lesko: Good or bad, yeah. No I can't think of anything really.

Hagel: Not really, okay.

Pondell: When you went to school, you said it was a one school house. How many grades were together?

Lesko: Yeah. There were seven grades that was there, and then I went from there—I remember we moved to Brownsville I went for one year to another one school—one-room schoolhouse, and then I went to a religious school for fourth through eighth grades.

Pondell: Oh wow. Okay.

Lesko: That was in the same little town. Then from there I went to an academy in Fond du Lac to go to high school.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: The Winnebago Academy.

Pondell: Did you have to wear uniforms?

Lesko: No.

Pondell: No?

Lesko: No. It's still going. They moved into—this was in a small building in the interior of Fond du Lac, but they moved out into a big local area there now.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: Much bigger than it used to be.

Pondell: So when you say academy—

Lesko: It was really just a high school.

Pondell: Like a private school?

Lesko: No not really, except that it was conducted by ministers.

Pondell: Okay. I know the Jesuits are real—don't they have a lot of different areas down in Fond du Lac?

Lesko: Yeah.

Pondell: Yeah.

Hagel: What made you want to join the military?

Lesko: Why did I want to?

Hagel: Yeah, why did you go into the military?

Lesko: Well, my brothers were not eligible. One was a teacher and one was a farmer. And I thought maybe I could represent the family, but I also thought I'd see new faces and new places, which is why I did it.

Pondell: Just looking over to see if there's anything else.

Hagel: Yeah. You said you liked to dance. What kind of dancing did you like to do?

Lesko: All the old band music mostly, and my husband didn't dance. [laughs]

Hagel: Do you go to the dances here that they have here at the home?

Lesko: Do I what?

Hagel: Do you go to the dances that they have here at the home?

Lesko: No not really, because my husband didn't dance. But in fact, when I came here, I took dancing lessons at two different places, actually.

Pondell: I remember that.

Lesko: Yeah. I was trying to get you to go, I think.

Pondell: Yes. Yes, you were. [laughter]

Lesko: It was fun. In fact, one of the fellows who was at the head of the first group I went to, was with that group that came on—when we had the party here—

Pondell: Military Ball?

Lesko: No, the other one, the prom.

Pondell: Oh, okay.

Lesko: There were some dancers here.

Pondell: Mm-hm.

Lesko: And he was one of those. He was one of the teachers. And he found me just before they ended and he was going to ask me to dance, and of course then it was over.

Hagel: Darn. [laughter]

Lesko: Yeah.

Pondell: Well, we'll have to get—you'll have to go—we're going to have a Sweetheart Dance—

Lesko: Yeah?

Pondell: —and you'll have to come.

Lesko: Yes.

Pondell: And we can—even if we're girl/girl, we can still dance.

Lesko: Well that's right.

Pondell: There we go. The Justman [??] Band is going to play.

Lesko: Yeah, they're great.

Pondell: Yes they are.

Lesko: You know, the Justman's used to live in—near Brownsville and folks were—they knew my folks well, but they didn't know me because I wasn't living there.

Pondell: Okay. You'll have to come—come listen to them.

Lesko: Yeah, they're great.

Pondell: Mm-hm. When you were going to school, Anne, was there just one teacher then for everybody?

Lesko: Yes, there was. It's amazing. I don't know how they did that.

Pondell: Okay. And your school day, did it—like, you started in the morning and did you have a recess, and tell me like your school day.

Lesko: Well, we went—I remember I went home for lunch, or dinner we called it then.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: But then it I guess we went back.

Hagel: How far was the school from your home?

Lesko: Oh just about four blocks.

Hagel: Oh so it was close?

Lesko: Close, yeah.

Hagel: So it wasn't a long walk like—you hear stories, people say, "I walked two miles to school."

Lesko: No—right.

Pondell: Uphill.

Hagel: You weren't one of those, huh? [laughter]

Lesko: Well, on the first one I did walk a mile.

Hagel: Okay, so that's pretty far.

Lesko: Out in the country, yeah.

Hagel: Especially in the wintertime.

Lesko: Actually I didn't want to go to school when I first supposed to go, and I hid down in the basement of this two-story country school, and—my folks actually said, "Okay, you don't have to go." Which was something. [laughs] So, I didn't go until a year later, but then they—before long they put me into the second grade because they figured I'd learned enough. [laughter]

Pondell: You know how to get your way out of going.

Lesko: So then [speaking at same time].

Hagel: You said you grew up on a farm until you were eleven? What kind of farm was it?

Lesko: It was a cattle farm.

Hagel: Cattle?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: Wow.

Lesko: Yeah.

Hagel: So you raised beef basically?

Lesko: Yeah, mm-hm.

Hagel: Had a lot of good steak in your house?

Lesko: Mostly milk.

Hagel: Oh, a dairy farm. Like a dairy farm.

Lesko: Dairy farm, mm-hm.

Hagel: So, did you like—did you drink the milk right from the cow? Did you like it? I hear sometimes I hear people talk about drinking the warm milk.

Lesko: They didn't—no.

Hagel: No? [laughter]

Pondell: I did that once.

Lesko: Did you?

Pondell: Not good, no.

Lesko: No I don't think so.

Pondell: No.

Lesko: The cats used to like it.

Pondell: Oh I'll bet. So if you went—you went to the farm, or you lived on the farm until you were eleven—

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Pondell: What did you do—did your family sell the farm then?

Lesko: No, one of my brothers took it over. My oldest brother took it over.

Pondell: And did the whole family still stay there then? Or you left then and your—

Lesko: No.

Pondell: —brother got it?

Lesko: No, my father built a house in the little town of Brownsville that we—

Hagel: And then that's where you stayed after that?

Lesko: That's where we stayed, yeah. Went to school from there.

Hagel: Do you know if your farm is still in your family?

Lesko: No, it was sold about ten years ago I'd say. It had been in the family since the 1800s actually.

Hagel: Oh wow.

Pondell: You said you back to; your brothers are eight and eighteen year's difference. Are they older--

Lesko: Yeah.

Pondell: —or younger?

Lesko: No older.

Pondell: Older?

Lesko: Older, uh-huh.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: Yes.

Pondell: So you were the little baby girl?

Lesko: I was the baby girl. [laughs]

Pondell: Did you get pampered a lot then?

Lesko: I don't remember that I did. [laughter]

Hagel: The brothers didn't say?

Lesko: I probably just took it for granted.

Hagel: Yeah. Your brothers didn't say, "Anne has it so much easier than we had it."

Lesko: Yeah.

Pondell: When you got out of the military, Anne, did you stay connected with any military services or organizations?

Lesko: Just—no, no. Just with the girl who had been my roommate.

Pondell: Okay. Did she stay in or did she get out at the same time?

Lesko: No she got out at the same time. She was in x-ray.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: And she's no longer living either.

Pondell: Okay. Have you attended any reunions? Whether it's for school or for family reunions or for the military?

Lesko: No not actually.

Pondell: No?

Hagel: As a woman going into the military in World War II, did you have—I know you chose the hospital corps. What other options might you have had? Do you remember any other choices you could have had besides the hospital?

Lesko: Well, different things in the hospital, like this girl was in x-ray.

Hagel: Did the women all just basically serve in the medical field?

Lesko: The medical field. It seems like it. I don't remember—recall well.

Hagel: I was just wondering because I don't think I've met a World War II female veteran that wasn't some medical field. I was just wondering if there were other options for women.

Lesko: Yeah, I don't—

Pondell: I don't—they never went into the trenches really, did they?

Lesko: I don't think so.

Hagel: No. But some people were—could have been like file clerks or office people.

Lesko: Yeah.

Hagel: But I never run into any of those. I just run into ones who were nurses or—

Lesko: Yeah, I don't remember either.

Hagel: Okay. I was just curious about that. Julia Child always says she was a file clerk during World War II, so I was just wondering. [laughter]

Pondell: One of the last questions here, Anne, is—it says, “Joining the military, do you feel that that changed your life in any sense?” Did it make you stronger or—

Lesko: I think I was more outgoing.

Hagel: Looking back, knowing what you know now, would you do it again?

Lesko: Yes.

Hagel: You would. Okay. That's good to know.

Pondell: I wish I would have too if I could have made it through basic training. I've heard that's pretty rough.

Hagel: I know. That's me too.

Pondell: You don't remember it being rough though really or anything?

Lesko: Mm-mm.

Pondell: I hear the guys now when they talk about it it's like, oh my God; they just about died going through it.

Lesko: Mm-hmm.

Pondell: But yours wasn't that bad?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Pondell: Maybe you're one tough cookie.

Lesko: I don't know. [laughs] Are you doing this with several people or?

Pondell: Mm-hm.

Hagel: Mm-hm.

Lesko: That's good.

Hagel: It's going to be an ongoing project that we'll try to interview as many people we can, especially the World War II veterans. I think it's important we do this because, you know, history has a way of watering things down like in text books and stuff, so it's nice to hear people's personal experiences before it gets watered down in the history books.

Lesko: Right.

Hagel: At least that's my opinion.

Pondell: I guess that's it, Anne, really. Other than, just, you know, if there's anything that sticks out in your mind that you want to kind of stay out there so that your family knows of different things, or even history. You know, if there's anything that you can think of that it wasn't that way or whatever.

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Pondell: School was good for you?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Pondell: Sounds like life was pretty good for you.

Lesko: It was.

Pondell: Did you find any hardships really? Because I mean like, life couldn't have been that easy back when you were growing up. I mean, now we have wash machines and we have phones and we have cell phones.

Hagel: Cell phones.

Lesko: Of course we didn't know about them at the time, so it didn't matter particularly.

Hagel: Yeah.

Pondell: So when you were growing up, did you even have a phone at all?

Lesko: Yeah.

Pondell: Did you?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: Yes, we did. At first it was on a country line I think though. You know, when there were several people on the line?

Pondell: I remember those.

Hagel: I remember that, too.

Pondell: Yeah. I had a friend who had a phone that had—it was a payphone in her house.

Hagel: Wow.

Lesko: Oh really?

Pondell: Yeah.

Lesko: That's unusual.

Pondell: Yeah. I'm trying to think of what other things you would have encountered.

Hagel: If you were born in 1918, you must have some memories of going through the Depression. How did your family—

Lesko: No, actually—

Hagel: —struggle with that?

Lesko: No, actually we didn't seem to—it didn't seem to bother us as far as I know, because it must have been close to that time when my father built a house, you know?

Pondell: Maybe being farmers, you guys had your--

Lesko: I think that—I think that makes a lot of difference, yeah.

Pondell: Yeah.

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: Can you remember a time—well you did more dairy farming—

Lesko: Yeah.

Hagel: Do you remember like crops failing or times when the farm struggled because something didn't go right for the season?

Lesko: No. No.

Pondell: How about diseases or anything like that that would have struck a lot of people?

Lesko: No.

Pondell: Nothing like that either?

Lesko: No.

Pondell: When you were growing up, what car was the car to have?

Lesko: What was what?

Pondell: What was the car to have when you were growing up? Like, the Model T or—

Lesko: Oh yeah. We had a Model T, I remember.

Pondell: You did?

Lesko: I remember there was a place in a little town called Mayville where there's a railroad track on the little hill, and for some reason or other the car would not go up that hill and my father had my mother and I get out of the car so we could get up the hill, which is strange. I can't imagine it now, but. [laughter]

Pondell: See, those are the kind of things that we don't know about, so little things like that. If you think of those kind of things--you know, like cooking even. I mean, did you guys have refrigerators? I don't know. Did you have actual refrigerators or were they more ice blocks and things like that, when you were growing up?

Lesko: Yeah. It seems we've always had a refrigerator.

Pondell: You did. Okay. And meals were probably darn good back then.
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Lesko: Because I don't remember having ice blocks or anything.

Pondell: Okay. And everything I suppose was pretty much homemade.

Lesko: Yes, right.

Hagel: What did you do for entertainment in your younger days? Did you go to the movies?

Lesko: Not too much.

Hagel: So what did you do for entertainment? For fun?

Lesko: I don't know, we could maybe played games or something.

Hagel: Okay.

Pondell: Do you remember any of the games that you might have played? I mean, just so we can date back to, "Oh yeah, I remember that!" Can you remember like, were they board games? Can you remember any of them or when you were playing outside, I remember when I was little we played kick the can.

Lesko: Oh yes. Mm-hm.

Pondell: I mean, did you have games like that for you guys to play?

Lesko: Yeah. Mm-hm. I don't know any others.

Pondell: Because you lived on a farm, everybody that's on a farm, did you have the big tire swing? Where you swang [sic]—

Lesko: No.

Pondell: —on the tire? You didn't?

Lesko: No. No.

Pondell: Oh my goodness. You must have been a very hard working family then.

Hagel: That's probably why they survived the Depression.

Lesko: I remember we had a goat once—a nanny goat we called it—and I remember it was—I must have been quite young. And my folks saw the goat coming around the house when I was outside and they called me in and in and said, “It might hurt you.” Which was sort of strange.

Pondell: Yeah. How about winter? You know, now—even when I was younger, snow was so much higher and stuff.

Lesko: Oh yeah.

Pondell: When you were growing up, how were your winters? Did you have a lot of snow or it wasn’t that bad?

Lesko: I don’t know that it was, but I guess just took it for granted, you know?

Pondell: Mm-hm. Do you remember big snow hills, you know? I remember growing up and we had those antenna things—

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Pondell: —on the cars. Do you remember big snow banks or no not really?

Lesko: I don’t really, no.

Pondell: No?

Hagel: Going back to your time in the military, you worked in physical therapy?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: Whose command would have you been under? Were you under like the nursing department or was there a separate physical therapy department that you were under, or who was in charge for the people that—

Lesko: I think there was a nurse in charge.

Hagel: A nurse in charge?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: And then who—who—how did you know what to do? I mean, I know you took training.

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: In physical therapy. But when people would come in, how would you know what to do for them?

Lesko: I think probably the nurse partitioned them out, you know, and told us what to do.

Hagel: Okay. So you were following the direction of the nursing department, basically?

Lesko: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Hagel: Okay.

Pondell: Okay.

Lesko: That's it?

Hagel: I guess so.

Lesko: Okay.

Hagel: I can't think of anything. Maybe later if you think of some other stuff, just let us know, or if we think of other questions we might want to ask you, we'll contact you.

Lesko: Okay. All right.

Hagel: This is our—you're our first test case here, so.

Pondell: Here's a couple of ones too, and it says—Anne, maybe you don't have an answer, but if you do, what would you want people who listen to this interview to know? You would say that you've had a good life, or if you don't have an answer that's fine. Here's another one. It says, "How is your life different now? How are you different now?" Like, going into the military, and you kind of answered that one; that you felt it brought you out more?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Pondell: Here's another question. When you went into the military, did anything surprise you when you went into the military? Or what didn't you expect when you were in the military?

Lesko: No, I think I just took it for granted, whatever came.

Pondell: Okay. Were women respected in the military back then?

Lesko: Yes I think so.

Pondell: Okay. Okay. All right.

Lesko: Okay.

Hagel: All right. Thanks, Anne.

Pondell: Thank you very much.

Lesko: You're welcome.

[break in recording][End of Session][00:40:20]

[Tape 2]

Hagel: We're going to start now. This is an interview with Anne Lesko, who served with the Navy during World War II. This interview is being conducted at Wisconsin Veteran's Home King at the following address: N2665 County Road QQ, King Wisconsin, on April 23, 2013. And my name is Linda Hagen. Okay, Anne.

Lesko: Okay.

Hagel: You want to describe yourself and what your life was like before you went into the military?

Lesko: [Reading] Okay. I was born on June 18, 1918 on a farm south of Fond du Lac. I had two brothers; they were eight and eighteen years older than I so we didn't have too much in common. I went to school in the one-room schoolhouse a mile from my home for the first four years, then we moved to a new home in Brownsville and again I spent the next four years in another one-room schoolhouse. I don't remember much of my childhood except that it was pleasant. At Christmas time the school children all sat in front of the church facing the audience and we gave recitations and sang songs. After that we were given a bag of fruit, nuts and candy. My friend Eleanor from across the way went to the University of Wisconsin, so the next year I asked my dad if I could go. He hesitated at first saying it would cost a lot, but finally he gave his consent and come fall off we went. I thought I wanted to study being a dietician but changed that after the first year to a related art in the home ec school. I kept a diary and it seems I spent an awful lot of time having fun, but I did manage to get through the four years to get my bachelor's degree. I had no plans for my next year, so when my friend from across the street asked whether I wanted to go to Milwaukee, that her brother would drive us there, I said yes. We found an

apartment the same day and two other girls from college joined us. We all found jobs and I went to work for Sears in their training department. Then came December 7th. After several months I decided to join the Navy. We went to boot camp at Hunter College in Bronx. The first time I saw New York City was in marching down Fifth Avenue for the Armistice Day Parade. I had asked for the hospital corps so was sent to the National Medical Center in Bethesda for training in physical therapy. After that was completed I went to the Philadelphia Naval Hospital to work. Because there were no barracks for the ladies, we were housed in the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in downtown Philadelphia with a lovely roommate who was my friend for years. After a year I was sent for more training in New York City. The war ended during that time and I was sent to Great Lakes Training to be released. Luckily after I got out the Milwaukee apartments were still there and I went there to live. After a short while I went to live with a former roommate in Beloit. I got a job as an interior decorator for a furniture store. I decided that I needed more training in interior design, so I decided to move to Chicago. In one week's time I found a room in a girl's club in a lovely three-story mansion, with a roommate who would be my friend for life, and I found a job in the Merchandise Mart. And I even found an evening course in interior design but I didn't stay with that very long. I bought my first car in Chicago but I didn't know how to drive, so I hired a company that had dual controls and was soon navigating the streets of Chicago. And for a year I drove to Wisconsin every other week and to relieve my mother's caretaker. My first job in Chicago was at the Merchandise Mart was with a manufacturer's representative and three salesmen who covered thirteen Midwest states selling stationary items. After three years my boss suddenly died and as I was driving home from the funeral I felt strongly that I wanted to take over the company. I knew there was going to be a convention in New York City in which all of the manufacturers would be present in one hotel. So the next I asked the three salesmen whether they would stick with me and they agreed, so I went to New York. And after a week's discussion, the manufacturers agreed to let me head the company. After a year we had made more money than the year before and one of the manufacturers had the salesman and myself come to New York City. We went to Poughkeepsie to the factory where they made Kem plastic playing cards, and after that he took me aside to tell me that the manufacturers had decided that they wanted a man at the head of the company and to go out making calls on the major stores. So I was out of a job. I tried a couple of different jobs and ended up with New York Graphics Society, a company which photographed museum art and made fine prints. Interior decorators would come into the showroom and select frames for the prints and then they would be shipped directly from New York. It was during this time that I went on several skiing vacations; two times to Colorado and once to Montromant [??] in Canada. Then I overheard a conversation in the elevator. Flora was going to leave Art Lore [??] to go back to Texas and they were taking interviews. I decided

to sign up and a young Italian gentleman came to interview ten of us. I got the job. I was the manager of a one-woman showroom. The company imported European framed paintings which I sold to interior decorators and furniture stores. It was about this time that I learned how to play golf and spent many an afternoon across the street from our building in the suburbs, playing golf with my old roommate and our husbands. For three years I took evening classes at a Religious Science Church, at the end of which time we were qualified to be spiritual counselors. The Religious Science Church had yearly conventions where the ministers come from all over the country spend a week giving talks. I went to several of these conventions; one to Hawaii, three to Malibu and one to New Orleans. Well in these classes we had the opportunity to speak in different local churches. The one Sunday I took a plane from Makesfield in Chicago to go to Fort Wayne, Indiana, gave my talk, had lunch and flew back to Chicago. After ten years, Art Lore decided to close the showroom, so my husband and I took a real estate course, got our licenses, and I sold real estate for seven years in Chicago. At the end of that time we decided to move back to Wisconsin where I was born. There I worked at the local library and set up an art gallery of my husband's work at a vacant small bank building. These were later displayed in a three-story school building where each artist had his own room. It was at this time that my husband's heart gave out. I gave a celebration of life dinner for him where people spoke and letters from around the country were read. A friend suggested that I take a look at the Veteran's Home at King. I liked what I saw. After getting rid of most of my earthly belongings, I moved there. Among other things, I attended a cultural change committee, where I was given the job of looking for ways to beautify the buildings where the members lived. We were lucky to find three sisters who painted beautiful murals. With the vote of members in each corridor a theme was chosen and during the period of a year, all of the buildings were beautified. After much badgering of the higher-ups, a small exercise room was opened and seeing regular action. I have the good fortune to have six friends visit me regularly. I've been in King now for nine years and I feel very comfortable.

Hagel: Okay. Well, that's interesting. Can I ask a few questions for you to expand on some of what you said?

Lesko: Sure.

Hagel: Okay. I want to find out about when you went into the Navy or when you decided to go in, what made you decide to join the Navy?

Lesko: Well, my brothers were not eligible, for one thing.

Hagel: Why were they not eligible?

Lesko: Well, one was a teacher and one was a farmer.

Hagel: Oh I see. Okay.

Lesko: In fact, one of the one's older I think, too. And I just decided I was trying to be patriotic. I thought it'd be fun to get to see new places and new faces.

Hagel: Okay. And what was it that you did in the Navy? I know you said you were in the hospital corps, but what did you do?

Lesko: Oh. I was a physical therapist.

Hagel: Oh. And so, you were treating the wounded?

Lesko: Yeah, mm-hm.

Hagel: In therapy after their injuries?

Lesko: Yeah, mm-hm.

Hagel: Any interesting—particularly interesting ones—

Lesko: No not really.

Hagel: —that you remember? Anybody that stands out that you remember? Any particular soldiers or?

Lesko: No.

Hagel: No? Okay, well. That's all right. It was a long time ago.

Lesko: It was.

Hagel: And how was your basic training? How—you said you were a physical therapist. What kind of training did you have to go through for that?

Lesko: Oh, it was at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and they guided us through the different techniques for physical therapy.

Hagel: Oh. Okay. Any—well, you mentioned that you made some—any of the Navy women that you worked with remain friends of yours? I know you had some that you said were friends.

Lesko: Yeah, but they're both gone now.

Hagel: Oh they are. Okay.

Lesko: Yeah.

Hagel: Well, that happens. One of those things.

Lesko: Right.

Hagel: What was the first—you were assigned to Philadelphia. Did you do your whole Navy career in the one hospital in Philadelphia?

Lesko: Actually yes, I did. I went to different classes. I went to New York City after a while to have some more classes, and then we didn't go back because the war had ended.

Hagel: Okay. And so you did your whole—when the war ended then, did you get out of the Navy or—

Lesko: Yeah, mm-hm.

Hagel: You did. Did most of the women get out at that time?

Lesko: I think so.

Hagel: And what did you think of Philadelphia?

Lesko: Oh I liked Philadelphia.

Hagel: Did you? I've been there once. I think Philadelphia is an interesting. Now it's kind of rough now—

Lesko: Yeah.

Hagel: —I think, but—

Lesko: Yeah, I think so. In fact, the hospital is in South Philadelphia, which is sort of a bad neighborhood.

Hagel: Yeah. Let's see. When you were first assigned to Philadelphia, can you describe how you felt like with your—the first patients that you had to do therapy on? What were your feelings or what were you thinking when you were starting your career in the Navy?

Lesko: Well I really felt good about it. I felt that I was doing something worthwhile.

Hagel: Did you have a lot of success? I mean, I'm assuming some of the men didn't respond to therapy as well as others.

Lesko: Yeah.

Hagel: But did you have quite a few that were successful?

Lesko: Yeah, regularly, uh-huh, and they were returned home or went back into the service again.

Hagel: Oh, okay. Well that's good. That's always a good feeling.

Lesko: Yes.

Hagel: I think when you have success doing something. Let's see what else. Oh, I wanted to ask you—and I don't mean to be jumping around but I'm probably going to jump around—I was intrigued by your comment about the one job that you had that you were replaced because they wanted a man to do it.

Lesko: Oh yes.

Hagel: How did that make you feel?

Lesko: Not so good. [laughter]

Hagel: I'm thinking as a woman I can imagine—I don't think that could ever happen today.

Lesko: No, and especially since we made more money than the year before, you know?

Hagel: Yeah.

Lesko: Anyway, it was okay.

Hagel: Well you know women have come a long way.

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: Like I said today, I don't think somebody could tell you that, oh we want you out because we want a man in.

Lesko: Right. Right.

Hagel: They would find another way to do it.

Lesko: That's right.

Hagel: But they wouldn't be so plain just to tell you.

Lesko: That's right. [laughter]

Hagel: So then you found another job?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: And have you always worked in like the sales with art?

Lesko: Yeah, pretty much so.

Hagel: And did you just fall into that or is that something you pursued?

Lesko: No, I sort of just fell into it.

Hagel: Yeah, but you loved it?

Lesko: Uh-huh.

Hagel: And then you also paint, right?

Lesko: I did, yes.

Hagel: And how did you get into painting?

Lesko: Well I had a roommate who was a good artist and she got me started in it actually, and I never got very good but I enjoyed it while I did it.

Hagel: I thought you were good. I've seen some of your paintings. I thought they were quite good. All right let's get back to the military because that's kind of what we're most interested in, is your military career. So you went into the Navy and you worked as a physical therapist in a hospital.

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: And you did—you took classes in places in the United States. Did you ever go out of the country during your Naval service?

Lesko: No. No the Waves didn't go out of the country at all.

Hagel: They didn't. Okay. And did most of the Waves work in hospitals?

Lesko: No. Actually they did office work in different capacities too.

Hagel: Okay. And why did you want to do the hospital?

Lesko: Well I chose it not really knowing what I was getting into, but I had to choose something and it sounded convenient.

Hagel: And you weren't squeamish. See, I'm squeamish. I would have run from the hospital [laughs] because I'm a squeamish person. And that never bothered you?

Lesko: No.

Hagel: Did you ever go home at night bothered by what you were seeing or—

Lesko: No not really because we didn't see the really bad cases, you know?

Hagel: Okay. By the time they got to you they were fairly healed other than the therapy part?

Lesko: That's right.

Hagel: Okay. Let's see. Can you describe a typical day in your Navy career?

Lesko: Well, we had—I don't really remember. We had—I think we had to be out of bed at a certain time and I think we had to go and do some exercise if I'm not mistaken, as a group.

Hagel: Every day?

Lesko: Yeah, I think so.

Hagel: Oh really? That's cool. [laughter]

Lesko: Right. And—

Hagel: What did you have to wear? Or what—I assume you had a uniform?

Lesko: We had uniforms, yes. They were skirts. We didn't wear pants in those days, trousers.

Hagel: I can remember that.

Lesko: Yep.

Hagel: When I was a kid, dresses to school every day.

Lesko: Yeah, right.

Hagel: So I remember that. So the women—did you have a hat like the nurses hat or—it wasn't a nurse's hat but something similar?

Lesko: It was sort of a little peaked hat.

Hagel: Okay. What did you and the other Waves do for fun when you were not doing your job?

Lesko: Well, my friend Minerva, who was my roommate, was very—very gregarious and we went—we didn't have to work weekends so we could take a bus or a train into New York City or back to Washington, D.C. and we did that quite a bit.

Hagel: Okay. That's interesting. So when you went to New York or Washington, what did you do there?

Lesko: Oh went sightseeing mostly.

Hagel: I like to sightsee too.

Lesko: Yeah. And going to good restaurants.

Hagel: So, let's see—anything—do you remember anything really funny that happened or that you can remember that—or did you experience something that you wished you could experience again?

Lesko: One time I was in the elevator and a man came in and we were the only two in the elevator and it was Frank Sinatra.

Hagel: Where was that? In New York I assume?

Lesko: It was in—at the hospital because—

Hagel: Oh, at the hos—

Lesko: He was appearing at the hospital.

Hagel: Oh how cool. Just you and him in the elevator?

Lesko: Yep.

Hagel: That's pretty awesome. [laughter]

Lesko: Yeah.

Hagel: So what did you do? Did you talk to him?

Lesko: Yeah.

Hagel: Did you? See, I would have been stuttering, knowing—I would have like, la-la-la. How did they feed you in the military, in the Navy? What kind of food did you eat?

Lesko: We had cafeteria style food.

Hagel: In the hospital? Is that where you would eat, would be when you were in the hospital?

Lesko: Yeah, right. And it was—it wasn't too bad. I remember I always liked the iced tea. I don't know what they did with it because it was different than usual. [laughs]

Hagel: Oh, okay. That's good. I like iced tea. I was just recently in the hospital in Arkansas and I liked iced tea, but I like my iced tea unsweetened, and of course in the South it's all sweetened tea, so after my surgery I was on liquid diet and one of the things that came on the tray was this sweet tea and I thought, "Oh, sweet tea." So I didn't drink it. Well the next day, the next meal that came, I had sweet tea again and I was pretty thirsty so I thought, "Well, I'll try it." It was really good and then I was really mad that I let that first glass go. [laughter]

Lesko: Right.

Hagel: Because then I didn't have any more and I got discharged.

Lesko: Oh shoot.

Hagel: Shoot is right. [laughter] So anyways, that was my experience in the hospital. And when you left the service, then you just went to work because you didn't do any more schooling, you just found a job right?

Lesko: No I just found a job, right. I went back to Milwaukee and—to the apartment where I lived before and went to work.

Hagel: Did you get any awards or citations or promotions while you were in the service?

Lesko: No nothing.

Hagel: Just stayed from beginning to end the same huh?

Lesko: Yep. [laughs]

Hagel: Nothing wrong with that. And you kept in touch with some of your fellow Waves for—

Lesko: Yeah, very good—

Hagel: A couple of them you said?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: But they've passed?

Lesko: Yeah.

Hagel: They have, okay. Did you have reunions with them where you would meet up every so often?

Lesko: Any what?

Hagel: Any reunions?

Lesko: No we never did get together.

Hagel: Okay. Oh you didn't, but you kept in touch through letters and telephone?

Lesko: That's right.

Hagel: If you were keeping in touch today it would be on *Facebook* and *Skype*.

Lesko: That's right. That's for sure.

Hagel: Wouldn't that be nice if you could do that?

Lesko: Yeah, right.

Hagel: Have you gone to any reunions? Any general reunions?

Lesko: No I haven't.

Hagel: You haven't. Okay. Do you wish you had?

Lesko: No I don't think so. I wouldn't have known too many people anyway.

Hagel: Okay. All right. Looking back, how do you feel about having been in the military and doing what you did?

Lesko: I feel good about it. I got a good education and I enjoyed what I did and I think it was worthwhile.

Hagel: Okay. Good. Let's see. When you went in and you said you didn't know what you were doing, what about what you ended up doing, was there anything that really surprised you? Anything unexpected that you—that you got into that you weren't expecting?

Lesko: No I don't think so.

Hagel: Not really? Okay. So nothing really caught you by surprise. You were pretty well prepared by the time you got there?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: Okay. Do you feel that your time in the service changed you at all?

Lesko: I don't know, probably.

Hagel: I suppose because the change is happening to you, you don't recognize it. Did anybody tell you they thought you were different after you got back?

Lesko: No.

Hagel: Your family didn't?

Lesko: No.

Hagel: Okay. Well. Anything else you want to say about stuff? You did a lot of traveling, didn't you, in your lifetime?

Lesko: Yeah.

Hagel: Any particular travel stories you want to share?

Lesko: I went—I didn't mention it in here but I went to Italy and France and England, Scotland.

Hagel: So a lot of European travel?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: Did you do anything in particular there? Is there a reason you traveled there or was it just for sightseeing?

Lesko: It was travel groups.

Hagel: Oh okay. Any particular place stand out to you? A place, if you could go back to one of those places, which one would you choose?

Lesko: Oh Paris. I think I'd love to go back there.

Hagel: And what is it about Paris that you liked?

Lesko: Well, you're sort of familiar with a lot of the things that are in Paris and so, it's sort of fun to actually see them.

Hagel: Anything else you can think of that you want to share with people as far as your story goes?

Lesko: No I don't think so.

Hagel: You don't think so? You grew up on a farm. What was a day on the farm like? You were a farm person, right?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: Yeah, that's what I thought. What did you do—you were the youngest I'm assuming, because you had—

Lesko: Yeah. We moved—

Hagel: —two brothers quite old?

Lesko: We moved from the farm when I was eleven years old.

Hagel: Oh, so you didn't really—

Lesko: I didn't really do anything.

Hagel: And then you moved into town. And what was the town?

Lesko: Brownsville was the name of it.

Hagel: Brownsville, Wisconsin?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: Okay. And what did your parents do on the farm? What was the—

Lesko: It was a dairy farm.

Hagel: A dairy farm. That's hard work. So did you get to do any milkings of cows or were you too young still?

Lesko: No.

Hagel: You were too young? So when they moved into town, what did your parents or your family do?

Lesko: Well my father was in insurance and actually he had retired from farm life, so he just had the insurance business.

Hagel: Okay. And your mom just was a housewife?

Lesko: That's right.

Hagel: I shouldn't say "just." That's a lot of work.

Lesko: That's right. [laughter]

Hagel: I should know better than to say a word like that. So okay. And then you went to school in Brownsville, graduated from high school there?

Lesko: I graduated from a Lutheran Academy in Fond du Lac.

Hagel: Oh, in Fond du Lac, okay. So Brownsville is near Fond du Lac?

Lesko: Yeah.

Hagel: And then you did not go to college? You just—

Lesko: Yeah, I went to the University of Wisconsin.

Hagel: Oh you did. In Madison?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: And what was your degree?

Lesko: Bachelor's degree in related arts.

Hagel: Oh yeah, I think you mentioned that.

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: And then that's how you fell into that sales then with the art stuff?

Lesko: Yes.

Hagel: I mean, you fell into the job but you gravitated towards the arts.

Lesko: I think so.

Hagel: Yeah. Well that's good. Let's see. And then—when did you get married?

Lesko: Actually—somewhere along the line there. [laughter] My husband had come to the showroom to ask whether we could represent his chess set, and I said no, that we didn't take single pieces of work. And so I told him to go down the hallway and somebody else would probably help him. So he left his card and I called him the next day and so he said, "I owe you a lunch," and so that was the beginning.

Hagel: Oh. So you were the salesperson and that's how he met you?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: See, I met my husband as a salesperson and I met him.

Lesko: Oh really?

Hagel: He was—he worked in a car dealership and he was the finance guy. So I financed my car and that's who I met my husband.

Lesko: Oh that's interesting.

Hagel: So we have similar meetings there. [laughter]

Lesko: Yeah, right.

Hagel: Let's see. So how long were you married?

Lesko: Thirty-eight years.

Hagel: Oh, and then he passed away and then you came here?

Lesko: Mm-hm.

Hagel: Yeah. What did you guys do as a married couple? You didn't have any children, right?

Lesko: No we didn't have any children. We did love golfing and visiting with friends.

Hagel: And traveling.

Lesko: And traveling.

Hagel: Did he—did you travel with him?

Lesko: My husband didn't travel—make any of those trips.

Hagel: Oh he didn't. Okay.

Lesko: He let me go by myself.

Hagel: Oh. That was good of him. I'm hoping to take a trip by myself soon, too. Sometimes you've just got to do it by yourself, you know? [laughs]

Lesko: That's right.

Hagel: All right. And what did your husband do?

Lesko: He was—he was an artist.

Hagel: Oh.

Lesko: And he painted constantly. He went to school one time and got a degree in dental work and as soon as he got the degree he came back and went back to painting.

Hagel: Okay. And was he very successful?

Lesko: No.

Hagel: No? Oh that's too bad.

Lesko: Right.

Hagel: But you know you pursue your passion not for the money but for the passion.

Lesko: That's right.

Hagel: All right. Well, if you can't think of anything else right now, I guess I don't have any more questions. I think we did pretty well.

Lesko: Okay.

Hagel: So if you think of anything else you want to add, let me know and we'll add it, but otherwise I think this went pretty well.

Lesko: Okay.

Hagel: Okay? Well thanks, Anne. I appreciate you coming back for a second time.

Lesko: You're very welcome.

Hagel: All right.

Lesko: The first time wasn't very successful.

Hagel: Well you know, we were new and you hadn't done it before, so the second time was better I think. [laughter] At least I hope so.

[end of interview]