

Jane Lepak Interview, May 2015

J: June

L: Jane

Interview starts 1:39

J: Hello.

L: Hello, I'm calling for Jill Hofer.

J: Yeah, this is June Hussey actually. I'm stepping in for Jill. Is this Jane?

L: Yes it is.

J: Hi Jane, nice to meet you.

L: Nice to meet you, I just wanted to let you know that we're under a tornado watch so I've got the TV on mute and there is a storm coming our way but I've got my car under the building and I'm just fine so I thought we might just might as well go do it. I think it's going to come here in the next hour or two so we can get through this just fine.

J: Yeah, this should only take 15 or 20 minutes max.

L: Ok.

J: Great I thank you so much, first of all, for agreeing to share part of your story with us and with others who are thinking about making a change in their lives. That's the whole purpose of the call is really to hear your story and how the process of making the decision went for you and what your life is like now that you're living in a retirement community. So I'm sure that someone mentioned that this is a call that's being recorded, right, you know that?

L: Ok, sure.

J: Ok, so that's nothing to worry about I just wanted to let you know and if you should happen to say something that you didn't want on the transcript just say scratch that and we'll be happy to scratch.

L: Ok, I'll do that.

J: Ok, sounds great. So you are Jane Lepak, correct?

L: That's right.

J: Ok, good and tell me when did you first move to The Fountains at Canterbury?

L: I moved here October 2 of this year.

J: Ok, so within a year.

L: This past October, 2014.

J: And where had you been living, just prior?

L: No, it was 2014 because that's when I was here over the holidays. It's terrible I'm getting my years mixed up.

J: That's correct, so you've been there about half a year then, right?

L: Yes, since October.

J: And where were you living before that?

L: I was living in my own home. I was just widowed it was four years in November. So I had just been a widow four years and we had a large home. In fact I just wrote out the final bills on utilities you know the gas and electric just today, just this moment I wrote them out because I sold the house. I closed on it. It's wonderful. And then I had another house, I had a rent house and I closed on that before I moved in October and then I waited until I got in out of the house that I lived in and had an estate sale there. And then they staged that home and we put it on in December and I closed on it last week. It's wonderful and so relieved.

J: Congratulations.

L: Oh yes and that's what got my attention. When I was looking at many different places what got my

attention was that to make the move was that I was paying very high taxes on both of those homes that I owned, very high insurance because you know we're in tornado alley here so I was paying very high insurance because I had to have several roofs put on my house and the upkeep was just phenomenal. And I thought the trade-off would certainly be nice, even though I didn't know what it would truly be I had to put it on paper and figured it out. I also watched other friends who had moved to other places and I benefited from watching their experience, you know, what they had done.

J: How many communities did you look at before you made your decision?

L: Well I was thinking about that today because I thought you might ask me. I had a stack of about four or five brochures you know and really in depth brochures and I went and ate a meal with them and I did different things just like I did here. The thing that appealed to me here was that every month there is a series at The Fountains at Canterbury called Neuro Night and you have a light dinner, anybody can come, the public is invited, they have a light dinner in the library and then you go in and listen to a series by some physicians from the University of Oklahoma. And different ones come each month and they talk about the brain and processes in the brain and my profession had been in counseling and therapy. So it's very, very interesting to me. And I still go even I'm a resident now and I still go. I invite people from my church and I certainly have enjoyed that and that really gave me a feel of what it would be like to be here, you know, before I knew anybody here really. So that was a good beginning for me.

J: What were the kinds of things that you were looking for when you were considering the move? What were on the top of your list of must haves for the place you moved to?

L: I had a list and it kind of changed as I began to look. I wanted covered parking. I wanted underground parking which is what I have here. I wanted covered parking mainly because we have storms with hail here in Oklahoma. We have at this particular location we have a beautiful view and I wanted a lake view and I did get that. And I wanted a certain amount of space because I wanted to have an office in addition to a master bedroom and so I did that. Those were things on my list. I wanted a full kitchen. Some of the places I'd looked at didn't have a full kitchen and even though I don't cook that much anymore because I live here and the food is good but I wanted a kitchen in case I needed it. I wanted an oven and the whole thing. Some places don't have that, you know they just don't.

J: How much have you used it?

L: Not much. I've enjoyed it when I do though. I used to teach cooking in part of my life and so I have been a good cook in my life and so I've turned the oven on twice since October. But I've enjoyed it. I baked for a resident who wasn't feeling well and I took her something and you know those things. It's nice to have it handy. I was trying to think of, but I certainly enjoyed the view and I enjoy, like with this storm warning coming, that I can go put my car in. I have an awning covering right by my place but then I also put my car down under the building when there's a storm and I have a place there. And there's a storm shelter there too for the residents and that is so good. One thing I was going to say to you unsolicited but I thought I'd like to say it is that I looked at great big facilities that had huge amounts of residents and I looked at really small facilities and this is kind of in the middle. We have 88 residents in our independent living and it's just the perfect size. The people are so friendly and so kind and I love the staff. But also the residents have just been very gracious to me.

J: Well that's nice to hear. I've heard other people say the exact same thing too about the size. Go ahead I don't want to interrupt you.

L: I wanted a place where I could swim because I love to swim and I must admit to you I have not been swimming yet because I was waiting on them they were going to do something about the water. What they had in the swimming pool here was not something I can tolerate and so they changed it and now I'm dedicated to getting myself in that pool. Strangely enough a friend of mine she swims out here even though she's not a resident, she's a member of what they call the club, she stopped me in the lobby the other day in the front you know and she was talking to me she said this is the most spotless clean pool she has ever seen in her life. She's just dedicated, she swims here three days a week and I thought now

that's a sign that I've got to get with it. But I'm busy in the community. I do things in my profession; serve on two boards and things like that. So I don't take advantage of all the goes on here you know because I am still busy and active.

J: Right.

L: But there's a lot to do and I try to look at the calendar each month and pick out the things that are just really important and circle them for myself so I won't miss that.

J: Good. Take me back to before your move and give me sort of a compare and contrast between your life then and your life now.

L: I was thinking about when she talked to me and she gave me this kind of letter with your name on it and all that I was laughing to myself because I'm going to be 76 in August and back in the 50s it seems like that's when I remember the song for what it's like now the song was called Easy Street, I want to live on easy street. And this feels like easy street to me. A lot of the things that my children were concerned about – my safety and my living in a large house alone – those are no longer an issue at all. And I just feel at peace about this place you know? Besides it's just an easier way to live for me, just totally.

Totally. I had a huge amount of upkeep there and I didn't live in even half of the house you know when I started to really look at it but what most got my attention was the money that it was costing me.

J: Yeah:

L: And when my husband was alive I, you know typical for me anyway, I didn't notice those things, he took care of all that. So when it fell on my shoulders I began to see in the fact that I was alone you know when I would be at church and then the kids would know I was at church from five to six on Saturday evening and then they'd be calling, "Did you make it home? Are you ok, did you make it home?" They were just concerned about me and then they didn't even want me to be there by myself. Oh and one other thing that got my attention was that first year after my husband died I really had a severe broken arm and I realized that I was going to have to be alone and it was kind of a scary time. My daughter came in stayed with me and I had two surgeries and I realized that I didn't really want to be alone like that so after he died I looked at gated communities that just had cottages in them and I thought "no" because I'd still be alone and I'm not alone here. I can choose to be alone and I like my privacy but I have total confidence in that if anything happened to me I'm able to get help immediately and that just makes a huge difference, huge difference for me.

J: How do your kids feel about where you are?

L: Oh, they're wonderful. Let's see I have eight children. I have four children of my own and I have four stepchildren. And almost all of them have been here. Two of them live far away so they haven't been here yet but everybody just is so happy. I have such a beautiful place it really is beautiful. And I don't know if this will even, you can just edit all of this out, I mean, you know, but I got to do this whole thing. I redid the whole place and it's just beautiful. It really is. It fits me you know? It's the colors I love and it's the things I love. I've never really, I've remodeled but this is like building your own little place. I have a million-dollar view and that's what I call it, the view out to the lake and last night I was watching television in the big living room and I have French doors that look out to the lake and I have six windows that look out to the lake in the living room. And a little rabbit came up, we have a greenbelt here and it's absolutely beautiful and this rabbit just came right up to my door and just peeped in. One of the residents told me he was driving out and he saw a deer. I didn't realize we had that but we have quite a bit of greenbelt and they keep it all beautifully trimmed but there is some that is just kind of beautiful wild things growing and then there's iris blooming and the birds that you watch out by the lake are just magnificent. It's just, I take pictures. I took pictures in the winter and you know all of the different seasons. I love that. It's just a beautiful setting to live in, to wake up to.

J: Yeah, I heard about the goose that comes and lays her eggs every year.

L: I think there's more than one, I really do. The other day the sprinkler system, see I don't have to worry about sprinkler systems or anything like that anymore. But I have a sprinkler system right outside my

patio because I have two small patios and my unit here and my apartment. And one of the sprinkler systems had broken and it made a puddle and this mama goose and all of her little goslings I guess came, or I don't know birds well enough to tell you but it was a beautiful bird and the little babies came and they all drank out of that puddle and it was just so much fun to watch. I'm not out there all the time but sometimes I go out there and I eat, like I bring lunch in from that, you don't have to, I don't eat all the time at the dining room and sometimes I bring it down, they pack it up for you and I bring it down and put it on a pretty plate and sit on the patio. It just almost makes you have goosebumps at sunset. It's just beautiful, it really is.

J: Wow.

L: And it's fun to show it off to my friends because they're all in different stages of making this decision and one of them is moving here and I told her, "This is just another chapter in your life and it's a new journey." And she said, "I need to talk to you every day so I won't chicken out." Because it is scary to do this, it's really frightening. And you don't know what to expect and they're all so kind but you wonder, "is it going to fit for me?" And we had wonderful, The Fountains at Canterbury has a wonderful company that helps people move and it's called Senior Transitions and they did a wonderful job. It was just the easiest move I have ever had in my whole life. And my daughter helped me too. She helped organize everything. But it's, therapeutically for me it's like a letting go process. And you do let go, you have to let go of some things because I didn't have as much room here. But I just chose my most favorite things and it all fell into place. And I'm very happy with the way it turned out.

J: Did you have those moments where you were apprehensive about doing it?

L: Oh yes, one time I came out and took a trial weekend here you know and I came home and I said to the kids I had already kind of put my money down and I said, "I don't think I can do it." They said, "Mom we'll help you. You can back out if it's not a good fit." They were just trying to be on my side. And then I thought it over and I came back out and they helped me to meet some of the other people that were residents here because somehow I didn't meet people. It's just awkward when you first move in. It just feels, you just don't know what's going to happen. And it's just so different now but there's no way I can tell anybody that accept just to say I think the thing that kept me going was that I knew it was going to be beautiful. I got this picture in my mind that it was going to be a beautiful setting for my most treasured possessions and that I was going to be at peace here. And it has truly been that way.

J: How long did it take you to really feel settled in?

L: Well, you know as far as the physical part of it, that was just, it was put together so well I can't tell you enough. Of course I don't know that you all have that at all your different locations but that Transition company they did the whole thing. They hung all my pictures. They made all my beds. I have two beds you know. Of course I told them how I wanted them to be made and then the day I moved my daughter was with me and they unpacked everything, the Transition people. And they said, "Why don't you just go down and have lunch and just roam around the campus and relax and we'll take care of it." And when I came back it was all done. Now the mental and getting used to what goes on has been gradual. But initially I was moved in. It felt like I was in a beautiful hotel. And it still feels like a hotel. And I feel like the staff just goes out of their way to be helpful to you, you know but it feels like one of the fun things I do is, "Gee, I wonder what they have on the menu today?" You know and well a lot of times, here they have just a regular restaurant menu you can pick anything you want. If you want breakfast for dinner you can choose that, you can do anything. And they have the menu for the day so you can have any of those choices and a lot of times I just play with things like that and then they have a beautiful salad bar at night. I'm just learning about that and it's this many months down the road. There's just a lot of fun. And I have a real good connection with all the staff like the head of all the food services and I always compliment him on the things that I think are just really superb because some of them are just outstanding. And I do know what good food is and like I said I kind of taught it. I have taught it and done some television work with it and I've enjoyed it for years, cooking, and now I just get to enjoy. It's fun.

And you know I think I felt bad because I used to do all the family holidays but you know what? The children are doing them now and you know I think it's just wonderful. I gave away all the dishes and I kept my favorite pottery. And I gave away all the China and they have it and if they choose to do it and you know how they choose to do it is ok. I had to let go of that control of doing all the holiday things. And so far I'm enjoying that and then I have the family out here to eat and that is lovely, too, and I've enjoyed them very much. I'm more comfortable with it as time goes on, you know, but I have them out as guests or I've had friends out as guests and it's just really nice, really a nice way to look at life. Sometimes I have to pinch myself and I say, "This is good and you deserve all of this. This is great just relax and enjoy it." You know because sometimes, well you just carry a heavy burden, especially after you're widowed. Sometimes you feel like it's all your decisions and you don't know if you've made the right ones. But yes I had those funny moments where I felt like I don't know if it's going to work but you have to kind of do some positive self-talk and realize that yes it is and it is going to be beautiful and your things are going to be lovely. And you know I looked at cottages here. I looked at smaller apartments than I have. I have 1200 square feet here. But I looked at all different sizes and this one just fit perfectly and my two oldest children were with me the day I made the decision and we walked into it, it had just become available and we walked into it, it was vacant and my daughter was sitting in the windowsill and we were looking at the whole thing and the door blew open in the living room one of the French doors and she said, "Mom that's my step dad telling you that this is it." So I said ok because I felt it, I felt that way. I felt like it was a good fit for what I needed. I had that list of things I really needed and I didn't have to compromise and that was wonderful. I mean that's probably rare I'm sure people do but I was just very lucky and very fortunate.

J: That's great. I understand that you like to travel and you're on your way off to some great expedition this summer?

L: Last year before I came here I went on, well, I've done several trips because my husband traveled; we traveled all over the world. We did wonderful wonderful trips and last year, that first year after I broke my arm I was kind of out of commission and then I started taking short trips on bus things you know that are for senior citizens and I realized I could do it. And then I'd say to myself, "This isn't going to be like it was when you were with him. But you're still going to have a good experience." And I did. So last year I decided to take a cruise and that was a biggie. And I went on a Christian music cruise to, with Sandy Patty who is a wonderful singer and inspiration cruises with Holland America and we went to the Caribbean. But this year for my 76th, since I sold the big house and I thought, well, this is a good way to enjoy to reap the benefits of what I did by selling it, I'm going on a cruise to Alaska and I'm going with the Bill Gaiser music people. And I don't sing with them. Well, I sing along but I enjoy the concerts they have every day and they have devotionals every day. They have all that sort of thing that really is just what I love you know and it just makes it. And I've never been to Alaska. I have lived in Scotland and England and I've worked in Iceland and done some work internationally in several different places but Alaska is a spot I've never, I've just flown over it I imagine but I've never been there so it's going to be a wonderful trip.

J: That sounds like a good trip. So you lived in all those places in your work as a counselor?

L: I lived, actually I lived for almost a year in 94-95, the year the way I remember it, people remember it was the year of the bombing here in Oklahoma City. I was away. I was a late bloomer and I did an internship to get my master's degree from the University of Oklahoma and because I worked in my field of addiction therapy and addiction treatment, I worked in that field, I got a chance to do an internship in a clinic outside of Edinburgh, Scotland. So I did my internship for six months and then the clinic invited me over there to stay three more months so I was there nine months. And I always said I want to travel. But I want to be able to live in a place and I got to do it.

J: Fun.

L: And then after that then Louis and I did some work together. He was a psychologist and so we

complemented each other in our work. It was very complementary and so we got to present at international conferences in Reykjavík, Iceland and different places that we did our work like that. And it was exciting and it was good. And I had great adventures. You know I still have wonderful wonderful memories of that and wonderful pictures too. Oh one other thing that the kids did for me when I moved here that I wanted to tell you is they put all the pictures that I had of all the family and my life and the children and the great-grandchildren. I have 18 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren but anyway they put them all on a digital frame and it is absolutely wonderful. And I just flip that thing on and it holds over 1000. Right now I have 800 on there and it just revolves. It just keeps going and you never know what's going to come up next and it's in no order whatsoever so it's just like all kinds of wonderful memories. And beautiful pictures of the grandchildren at all ages. That solved the problem of pictures and too much stuff everywhere.

J: Right, good idea, that's a great idea.

L: Well, they thought of it and then all I had to do was get all the pictures I wanted and get it to one of my sons who works in the sports media department at the University of Kansas and so I would send him big packages of that as I was starting to move. And he said, "Mom I still have quite a few more to put on another disk for you." But that just absolutely is so much fun. I love turning it on and I have it on for company but I have it on on a day like this, too. It's kind of sweet, you know, and fun.

J: What a great housewarming gift.

L: Oh, isn't that a great idea, to have somebody do it for you like my son. I mean he put all that together so it was great.

J: Well, this is been a wonderful conversation, I don't want to keep you much longer but is there anything else that I failed to ask you that you wanted to say?

L: I don't know, I don't know. Some, this is personal between you and me, but I thought often if my precious husband was alive he would be doing some sort of psychological study on what a person goes through that comes to you like this. But let me tell you for the most part, the people I have met that are newcomers like me are very happy in time. It takes time though. It's kind of an experimental thing, it takes time. And I'm now a member of the Ambassadors group where I go around and make people feel welcome. If they feel like they need me to, I'll go in and take them and show them different places around here like where their mailbox is and I'll have a meal with them and things like that. I think that's very very important and I'm glad to be a part of that.

J: Well thank you for doing that. I'm sure that helps a lot of people feel at home.

L: I think it helps people and I think people tried to do that with me. Sometimes at the initial time when you're first here you don't quite know how to receive it. You're in overwhelm. You usually are at the beginning and then gradually you get used to it and you realize. You know one lady bakes a little mini loaf of bread. You get to choose what you want, she has different ones, and she just does that and she brings it to you and she'll say, I can remember she said to me, "Well I always bake bread for anybody that's new, what kind would you like?" And she told me the list and that was such a lovely gesture and I mentioned that to her in the Ambassadors group. She said, "Oh, that's nothing." And I said, "No, it's wonderful. It really made me feel welcome." And different people come and introduce themselves and I think initially you don't absorb it but gradually you do and they greet you in the hall. Like I said you can have all the privacy you want or you could be with people, it's whatever you choose to do. It's your choice.

J: Let me ask you one final question that I thought of because you are, as you said you're 75 years old, which puts you on the young side of the spectrum. For people who kind of have a hang-up about that number, the age you know, they think they're too young or they're not ready, what would you say to that from your perspective, since you've gone through it now?

L: Well I think there's many other aspects other than the numerical age. I think it's timing. It's where you are in life. It's what you think would work for you, you know. And I hate to say that I'm a person that

judges everything by money but when I wrote out a check for over \$4000 for taxes on those two houses that got my attention. You know those are the things that got me going. I thought this is ridiculous. I'm paying for this. The rent house wasn't making any money anyway. It was costing me money. And when I went to my financial advisor he said, this is what he said to me and this would be nice to use maybe, he said, "If you do this and you make this kind of move, I've known other people and you're going to feel like a bird out of a cage." And at the time I thought well, now that's one person who really thinks I ought to do this. Of course the kids were trying to be gentle and not really tell me what to do. But I knew they wanted me to. But over and above that that was a person that is a service person to me but also very good advisor and he does my taxes but he said he knows, he knows about my money and what I put in and want to get in and what I put out and all that and he said you're going to feel like a bird out of the cage and those words rang in my ears. And age wise I think it was more situation wise for me than age. Initially when I moved here I thought I was the youngest kid on the block but you know what, I'm not and secondly, the more I've gotten to know the people of all ages who live here the more I realize that they're just absolutely fascinating people. And just very, very dear people to me so the more you get to know them, it doesn't matter age at all, it's just that you get to know some lovely people with wonderful histories of what they've done with their lives.

J: Well on that note.

L: I don't want to paint too pretty picture but I'm telling you it's almost, like I said, easy street. It's just a good, peaceful feeling. And I sleep better and I just don't have the worries. Just stop and think today no more electric bills and that big house. I can just let go of that. That really feels good. I'm overjoyed it says final bill, yay!

J: Congratulations, worthy of celebration, yes. Well Jane I thank you so much for your time. I know I've taken a lot of it.

L: Where are you all located?

J: We're in Tucson. This is the home of Watermark Retirement Communities. We're based in Tucson, Arizona.

L: Well one of our treatment centers that I have not worked with, I have referred to, is Sierra Tucson. And then I have some other people that are good friends of mine from Wickenburg, Arizona. Do you know where that is?

J: Yes, I do, it's up on the west side of Phoenix.

L: And it's called the Meadows and that's a place that I've referred people to quite often. Anyway my dear, it's good to meet you and I hope I get to meet you in person. Amy told me, Amy Hall our marketing director she said, "Now we have to take a picture" and I said, "Well it better be on a glamour day for me." I'm going to have to really get dooted up to look good. And I hope if you've never been to this location, I really think you should.

J: I have been there and I love it.

L: Absolutely just a lovely, lovely place. It feels like a really beautiful, like a country hotel in Europe. It feels like and I've done that, I've stayed at places like that that are just beautiful settings and that's what it feels like to me. And some of my friends who live just right in the middle of heavy traffic and I wouldn't be happy like that. This place has definitely spoiled me so I'm hoping that the tornado doesn't do us any damage. I hope it stays around a while because I want to stay around a while.

J: I'll let you go see can deal with that and I hope you have a wonderful trip.

L: Well thank you, my dear, and it's good to meet you on the phone and whenever you come I'd like to meet you in person.

J: Ok, thanks Jane. Take care now.

L: Bye-bye.

J: Bye-bye.