



## 2007 Sesquicentennial Oral Interview

### Karen Ann Lieske Sanders

CH: This is Cindy Higgins, and today is April 19, 2007. I am talking with Karen Lieske Sanders. Karen, could you tell us when you came to Eudora and why?

KS: I came to visit in Eudora because I met my husband up in Wisconsin where I lived. I had a horse at his brother's horse farm; it was an Arabian horse farm, in Hartford, Wisconsin. We met. We talked one summer when he came to visit. Then we talked another summer. Then we planned that I would come and visit him sometime in July that I came to visit him. Then I got to see the little town of Eudora and see what it was like. We continued to date. We married, and I moved down here after our marriage.

CH: What was your first impression of Eudora when you came? Are there some people you met? Things you saw?

KS: Larry knew another woman that he introduced me to, Melanie King, who lived out in Rose Acres. We would kind of double date with her and her husband, Lon King. They had a nice little place; she called it a ranchette, a couple of acres. They had a horse, some cattle. I was struck with how everyone had such a southern accent down here.

CH: In Eudora?

KS: In Eudora. Oh, my gosh. And they said "you all." I thought people in Alabama and Georgia would say "you all." I thought it was very southern. They all say "pop" down there and we say "soda" up there.

CH: When you moved to Eudora where exactly did you move?

KS: We were off Tenth Street and Fir. That is where Larry owned a house. That is where we moved. It was a very tiny little fixer upper, for sure. But very cheap mortgage □ anyone would die for a mortgage like that anymore.

CH: Later you moved out to the country.



KS: We were looking for a house. Our plan had been to find a house in the country because I had a horse. We could keep the horse out there. After that maybe we would have children. But instead, all of a sudden, I was pregnant. So we hurried the process a little more. We were looking for different places. We heard through someone at the gas station that his sister had a place for sale out in the country, so we went to look at it. And we bought it from them.

CH: How many acres do you live on?

KS: We were told 20. But it is anywhere from 17 to 20 acres.

CH: That is what we call Weaver Bottom area?

KS: It is the last house above Weaver Bottoms. We are up on a hill, and so when you go down the road, you are down in the bottoms area.

CH: Since you've lived there, have you ever had any flooding problems?

KS: Yeah. One time there was a really bad flood. I am not sure what year it was. The Coast Guard, no, the fire department from Lawrence came out, and they actually had a speed boat to rescue the people still living in the Bottoms, because you couldn't get past our road. At the very bottom of our property, it was all water. They came to rescue them. Our whole basement was flooded. It was very interesting.

CH: Are you close to the railroad tracks down there?

KS: Yes, we are real close to them.

CH: Do you hear the trains?

KS: We hear the trains all time but most of the time we block it out. When people come to visit, they say oh, my gosh, the train is right there. We haven't even heard it. We've just got so used to them.

CH: How about wildlife?

KS: We've had deer in our pasture. We've seen foxes. We saw a bobcat once. I think there was a woodchuck living at our neighbor's place and then something else like a woodchuck in a pond not too far from us.

CH: Did it ever cause any problems?

KS: No. We have cats around the house, so we don't really have problems with squirrels. When we first moved in there were thousands of black ring neck snakes. Occasionally, they are in the basement. I never, ever, ever, venture in the basement. They have been in the house twice. We have a woodburning stove, and I think we brought them in with the wood, which we never bring in wood ahead of time anymore. Every time they have been in house, my husband has not been home.

CH: If there is wildlife, they are hunters. Do you ever encounter hunters?

KS: Oh, gracious. Yes.

CH: What are your experiences with hunters?

KS: Well, first down in Weaver Bottom. What is the name of that river? It's like somebody died? There is a river down there and they are always shooting down there. Anytime on the weekend, you can hear gunfire all the time especially Saturday and Sunday afternoon. One time I was home alone it was five below zero it was freezing out. Two men came to the house with guns and said they needed help. I didn't want to let them in. Of course, they had guns. I didn't know who they were. They looked kind of rough. They said they knew my husband. But a lot of people know my husband. I told them they could have the phone outside. They were so cold they couldn't even dial the number. I let them in the house. I called my husband right away. They called their friend. My husband came home first and took them away. There's a lot of people hunting in the area. Sometimes they will go right down the road down there and start firing. So, Larry, will get out of the house and start screaming at them to move on.

CH: What's it like if you want to go for a walk?

KS: If I go for a walk, I try to go early in the morning because the people who have guns and like to shoot at targets aren't awake that early.

CH: What are they hunting for?

KS: The guys that came to my house one time said they were hunting for squirrels. It was five below zero. I don't think squirrels leave their nest at that time in the morning. They do target practice down there a lot. All the stop signs down in Weaver Bottom will have 30 holes in them. You will see bullet casings all over. Over by the bridge, they shoot at the garbage in the river a lot or trees. You will see a lot of casings on the bridge.

CH: There's no policing of that, right. It's a free for all.

KS: I think it is mostly a free for all.

CH: What are some other things that you notice living in the county that, say, people in town don't ever encounter or notice?

KS: Well, it's really nice and peaceful out in the country when they are not shooting on Saturday and Sunday. Usually Monday through Friday it's nice and quiet. Our whole property is lined by trees so usually by summer, late fall, and early spring, people can barely even see house. They can't see us walking around. We can't see them. It's really nicely isolated. It's all green. We get lots of birds. We get maybe 20 different varieties of birds.

CH: Since you've lived there, you've worked as a nurse in Lawrence for a lot of this time?

KS: Yes, I have worked as a nurse in Lawrence the whole time I've lived there.

CH: You've also had time to be active as your two children, Mandi and Callie went to school. So, what are some activities that you've done with the school?

KS: When I first started at the school, there wasn't a PTO there at all for the grade schools. Brenda Clark started one, I think, when Mandi was either in first grade or second grade. I joined it as a member. I helped her with a lot of things. I helped her with the first book fair. Then I got more and more involved and then I was the president for a year or two, I think, then a vice president for a year or two. Then I moved up to junior high, and when Mandi was in junior high, Kim Schulz and I were the president for both the years our kids were there.

CH: Was that PTO?

KS: That was Eudora Middle School booster club when we got into junior high. In high school, I helped out with the Eudora High School booster club. And for two years, helped out, and for two years, I was the president.

CH: What are some activities the booster club did during the times you were active in it?

KS: The booster club at the junior high level, you have to run all the concession stands and you have to buy all the product that you are going to sell there. We used to go to Sam's club and buy all the product. You had to be there at every football, basketball, track meet. All those games, so you always had to have someone open it. Usually Kim and I opened it because we were stay-at-home mothers, and we had the time to get up there. And then you always had to have someone close it. A lot of times I would stay and close it especially if my daughter was involved in the sport.

CH: In the high school, it was pretty much the concessions plus?

KS: In the high school, it was different because we didn't have to run the concessions stand per se. Instead at the football and track meets, there was a little stand in front of the concessions, so you mostly grilled. You did the hamburgers, the sausages, and we sold a lot of paraphernalia, all the clothing you sold, especially at the high school. You did the sweatshirts, sometimes hats, jackets. So, you sold all that. You had to be at the football game probably about an hour and a half, to two hours, before the game started to get all the tables set up and merchandise put out and everything ready to go.

CH: Isn't one of the special things you've been in active in is the book fair?

KS: Oooh, I have loved the book fair.

CH: Can you give us an idea where you get the books? How many people it takes to work it?

KS: In the beginning, when Brenda [Clark] started it, she went through Scholastics for the book fair. Then we tried another book fair, I can't remember the name of it. We liked that because that one was through a woman who actually lived here in town so we

were able to get the merchandise easily. But then that book fair merged into Scholastics. So, I helped all the way through grade school with that. When Mandi went into junior high, I still helped with the grade school because eventually Callie came in. We did some at the junior high level; I helped with that probably about 10 to 15 years. I really, really enjoyed that the most because you got to know what the latest books were, what the kids were interested in. What the kids like to read, what their favorite books were. They gave you a synopsis on some of the books so then you got to know more. I liked it.

CH: What are some genres of books that you noticed that the students did like?

KS: For awhile they liked all the scary books. Then, for a while, the girls liked all the little, not Bobbsey Twins, books, little girlfriend books. They are always little friends. The boys always liked football. Then they went to baseball. Then they went to the big trucks for awhile. Then they went to the video games. There was some book we sold that gave keys to how to play the video games. They loved that. They always liked the books that would tell what happened through the year, the Ripley's Believe It or Not type things, they liked. Then the Harry Potter series came through. The kids loved that or anything close to that. They also had dragon books and more science fiction type books that were real interesting. All the books are good, though.

CH: That's great. Since the time you came to Eudora and now, what are some changes you've noticed in Eudora, good or bad?

KS: The hugest change is that we've exploded in population. We were just a tiny little school. Tiny little high school. Tiny little junior high school. Now, we are exploding. We had to build West. Then we built the new high school, which is now the middle school and then we built the new high school that is the present high school and now a bond issue is coming up pretty soon to see if an entire new grade school will be built. It's exploding. We used to be more the small older part of the city where there was all different houses and all different income levels. Now, it seems that we are building a lot of houses for the middle income levels and some for the higher income level, especially out by C&S and the Meadowlark subdivisions. The one by the middle school is going in that huge subdivision there.

CH: So if there are more houses and there's more schools, do you think the town itself, its infrastructure, the businesses, have kept up with it?

KS: I think it is having a hard time keeping up with it. With the more people coming in, they have more demands. I think some of them are from bigger cities and they want more things done. But I also think the school has improved 100 percent. When I first came here, I know a lot of people complained that our math skills weren't up to par or their kids had trouble when they went to college keeping up or kids didn't go to college when I first came here. Now, it seems a large majority of the kids are going to college or are considering it. And, the math skills have gone up greatly. And we are offering a lot more at the schools for the kids to do, a lot more subjects.

CH: How about the downtown area? When you first came here what were some stores you might have gone to?

KS: When I first came there, the downtown area had C&S, so the grocery store was there. The post office was there and everyone would go in the morning. For awhile, they had a donut shop there that a lot of people would go to and have a donut, coffee, a drink, juice, and sit around and talk. It drew a lot of people into that area. Now, the flower store left, which is really sad. And, there was the hardware store, which Larry went to all the time down there to pick up things. And now the hardware store is gone. The grocery store moved out. So, it is kind of spread out a little bit more now. People still are always down there it seem to get their mail. There is not much to hold them down there any more.

CH: You and your husband through the years, if you were to go out on the town, where would you go?

KS: Lawrence. We usually go to Lawrence for a movie or for a restaurant.

CH: How about if you would go out to eat in Eudora? What is a restaurant in the past or one now that you would go to?

KS: We have gone to Cutters a few times. We like their barbecued turkey and also they have really good catfish there. I have gone for lunch a few times at Jasmines and then the place on the corner.

CH: The tearoom?

KS: The tearoom. I love that. I have gone there with the girls there several times, more than any other place, and I love that place.

CH: Do you dress up when you go in?

KS: OH, yes. I try on every hat, every tiara, every boa they have, every scarf. They have some very fancy sunglasses there with rhinestones all over them. Those are my favorites.

CH: Anything special you like to order at that place?

KS: I love any special they have. And their desserts are absolutely to die for. That place is wonderful. It's a very girly place. I brought my dad in there once and he felt uncomfortable but other men are in there, so.

CH: I am going to wrap it up here in a second. So that's going out and doing organizations. Through the years, what sort of recreational things have you been involved in for fitness reasons?

KS: I used to always go out swimming a lot at the swimming pool with the kids when they were little. I always went up there. I like to walk a lot so I like to walk around the city to see all the new developments going on. I used to be with the Sunflower Fitness. I was there for years. I really, really enjoyed that. Then they closed it up. It was nice to have some place you could go to rain or shine, cold or hot. Also, I like it when it is organized because it makes you go in and actually exercise.

CH: Did you take exercise classes or use their exercise equipment?

KS: I liked the exercise classes. I think it was Monday, Wednesday, and Friday they had the step aerobics. We always had different teachers as the years went by. But it was really fun. They taught us Pilates, yoga. So we learned a little bit of variety. There was a nice group of girls. We could always talk about what was going on in the schools or CPA picnic. The Oktoberfest here. We talked about how the kids were doing in school or if bingo was going on for PTO or prom going on in the high school. So it was nice.

CH: Are you involved in any current exercise in Eudora?

KS: Right now there is a program at the really, really old high school [10<sup>th</sup> Street and Main Street] that meets on Monday and Wednesday. Arlene Kindle teaches it and so does Melanie Johnson. That is really fun to go to. I also like to walk on my own around the city or go with people. Or I like to go by myself with my dog.

CH: We are going to conclude the interview here. Is there anything you would like to say in recognition of Eudora's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday?

KS: This is a wonderful small town to live in. It is ideal because it is between Kansas City, which is huge and you can do a lot of things there, and Lawrence, which is middle sized but you can do a lot of things there, movies, shopping, a lot of things going on at KU. We go to church in Lawrence. But Eudora is situated ideally between these other places. It is nice to have the small town atmosphere but you have available large town things to do, too. I think it is a wonderful variety here.

CH: Thank you, Karen, very much. This concludes our interview.