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KARL LEONARD
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GERMANY, 1924
AGE 9
PASSAGE ON "THE MOUNT CLAY"

PHILLIPS: This Andrew Phillips and I'm speaking with Karl Leonard on Tuesday the 29th of August, 1989. We're beginning this interview at about a quarter to eleven in the morning. Mr. Leonard, I think, is from Bavaria, and your year of immigration was?

LEONARD: 1924.

PHILLIPS: 1924. All right. Could you start, Mr. Leonard, by, for our identification, telling us what your name is, the country you immigrated from and what year you immigrated?

LEONARD: All right. The country is Germany, but the State is Bavaria and, uh, the place in Bavaria was Ansbach, A-N-S-B-A-C-H. And we left there November 20th for Hamburg and the ship actually, by the name of Mount Clay, left Bremerhaven, uh, we left, in other words, in the winter of 1924.

PHILLIPS: And what year were you born?

LEONARD: 1915.

PHILLIPS: Could we go back, please, to just some sense of your early life in your town, what sort of house you lived in, for instance.

LEONARD: All right. The house that we lived in was built about 1732, which I found out to be the same year that George Washington was born. And, uh, it was a very heavy built house and the, it was three stories and we lived in the house for a number of years until we left for the United States. The landlord was a, was George Snider [PH] who had been taken prisoner by the British in World War One in the early part of the, year of the war, and he was our landlord, who knew English frontwards and backwards because he spent all that time in a prisoner of war camp in England. And when we went back in '64 he of course took us around to all the places that I had almost forgotten.

PHILLIPS: Can you tell me what your father did for a living?

LEONARD: My father was an electrician for Seaman's Electric Company of Nurnberg, Bavaria, Germany, but he also started his own business. He had a motorcycle factory for a number of years at the time we left. He also started the first movie theater the town ever had, but he left those behind. It was impossible to get any payments at that time for something like that. We had no time to sell the business, so he just left them.

PHILLIPS: Can you tell me a little bit about your early life in Bavaria, what kind of things you did as a child, something about your school days?

LEONARD: When I was about a half a year old I spent most of the time in a hospital near my grandmother's house and they watched over me for three and a half years that I spent at the hospital. Then when I got better I went to school early. At that time they allowed you to take a test. If you were ready for school at four or five you could

start in the first grade, and so I did start early. And, uh, we had, they boyhood was fairly normal. I mean, there was no, nothing unusual. At, just before we were ready to go, I used to tag after our mailman who had a brother in Chicago. And he used to tell me about, stories about the Indians walking down Michigan Avenue in full headdress. Of course, when we arrived we found that this wasn't quite so, but amazingly I went to school and became friends, right pals, with a full-blooded Cherokee Indian. And, uh, it must have been rather odd to see a Bavarian kid with a Cherokee Indian going down the street as friends, but that was part of the story.

PHILLIPS: Before we get to your actually arriving in the United States, I'd like to get a little bit more of a sense of what life was like for you back in Bavaria, a sense of the kinds of things that your parents did, uh, the feeling of the town, what you remember of that. For instance, you were born after World War One.

LEONARD: Yeah. Well, no during.

PHILLIPS: During. Okay. What year were born, again?

LEONARD: 1915.

PHILLIPS: 1915. I'm sorry. Okay. Can you, I mean, you probably don't have many recollections of the war, but you probably have recollections of what your parents experienced, because they must have spoken about it. Can you share some of that?

LEONARD: Well, of course, my dad was involved in the war. He was a German soldier in the kaiser's army. And he served on about every front possible, and he was wounded three times, once so severely that they threw him on a cattle car, into a cattle car, with dead and dying soldiers, and hauled him back to Germany. But he

recovered from the ordeal, and while he was recovering, it seemed like he told once that he, as a young soldier, was foolish enough to volunteer as a spy. And so for three or four months he served as a spy which, I think, came to the attention of the authorities on Ellis Island and they decided to hold us for five days and nights and check the story out to make sure that we were eligible to enter the United States. So they checked his war record, found that it was normal except for that incident, and considered it okay and we were passed on.

PHILLIPS: How do you think they would have found out that he had been a spy?

LEONARD: They, uh, telegraphed for his war record.

PHILLIPS: Why would they do that?

LEONARD: They must have been suspicious about something because as I found out later there was no reason for them to hold anyone that long. They used to pass them within the day onto the United States unless they had some kind of a disease that, or sickness that might prove to be a stumbling block. And since that wasn't the case, they must have been checking on something, but they did check his war record.

PHILLIPS: What was the, uh, what was your schooling like in Bavaria?

LEONARD: It was a school where the boys and girls were separated. The girls went to one school on the other side of the, separated entirely, as a separate school would be, and so that we

had nothing but boys on our classes. There were no girls. And that's the way we were brought up. I remember the school was known as Karoling [PH] School and it was quite a change, when coming to the United States, when everything was co-educational, even in the grade schools. That was quite a change from the early beginning.

PHILLIPS: Why did your father and, or your mother, decide to leave Bavaria and come to the United States?

LEONARD: That alone is a little bit interesting because my dad was approached by old war cronies who said that my dad, they addressed my dad and said, "You area strong pillar in this town, and you could be every important to us. We represent the new party, the German Democratic People's Party." Which later became the Nazi party, and with Adolph Hitler at the head. But my dad already knew that Adolph Hitler was involved because of my Uncle Fritz who had marched with Hitler in 1923 in Munich on that ill-fated day, that Hitler ended up in Landsberg [PH] Prison in Munich, and my uncle was held for a couple of days, and since he was fairly young and foolish they sent him on his way and told him to forget the, this foolishness. So that's the reason. My dad turned these people down. They kept bothering him. Every so often they stopped at the house and they kept bothering him. And finally they said, "You'll have to come to terms with this party sooner or later." And my dad saw the handwriting, and he said, "I've had enough of this." And my brother and I, he says will never serve in the German army like he did. And that's, that prompted action, coming to the United States.

PHILLIPS: That sounds like a fairly extreme thing to do. The pressures on your father must have been considerable to force him to want to leave his home.

LEONARD: There was all kinds of incidents that now that I don't remember much, but I know he was under extreme pressure to come to terms with this new party.

PHILLIPS: Can you remember any specific incidents that occurred?

LEONARD: No. I don't remember that, although I would come home from school and I'd see some older kids were putting the cross, the crooked cross on the walls. That's the Nazi emblem. It's called, in German, hangenkreutz. And, uh, the crooked cross, or hooked cross is another name for it, actually. And these appeared all over the walls, the buildings, and so on. Even, we had a jail that I had to pass from school and the walls showed that, too, indicating a lot of unrest and pressure.

PHILLIPS: Did you see any of these young people putting these crosses on the walls?

LEONARD: They were, yes, I did see some of them. They were usually in the fifteen. sixteen year old and seventeen year old age. And, uh, of course, myself being in the younger group, we were told to pay attention to the new order of things.

PHILLIPS: So the atmosphere at this point was fairly tense among the city. There must have been some splitting within the society, people beginning to take sides.

LEONARD: The, uh, Communists, the German Communist Party was very active and the attempt was to neutralize them with this new party led by Adolph Hitler. And, uh, and also keep in mind that 1923 is the year that everything went busted, economically speaking. And, uh, I remember my mother having to, uh, get a big purse and put a lot of paper money into it just to buy bread and the essentials. That was 19232, a bad year of turmoil. We couldn't get into the first allowed, well, they allowed so many people to come to the United States from each country, but we did get into the one in 1924, barely, at the tail end, and that's why

we left in such a hurry, because we were all anxious to come to the United States.

PHILLIPS: What about, excuse me, friends of your family, other people that you knew, perhaps relatives, were they going through similar problems?

LEONARD: Some of the probably were going through even worse. As a matter of fact, many of the uncles, aunts, and relatives later on came to the United States in the years of 1927, '27, 28, most of them came to the United States.

PHILLIPS: Because all of these people recognized that there was tremendous turmoil unfolding in Germany and, in fact, probably going to get worse. Was that why they came?

LEONARD: Yes. The whole upheaval of 1923. with so many parties trying to get control of Germany, made it almost impossible to exist because the war reparations that were forced on a defeated Germany were so impossible that the governments, the German governments that were formed one after the other fell due to not being able to provide even a living standard for the Germans.

PHILLIPS: Was there much anger amongst your parents, or friends of your parents, relative to those war reparations? Were they angry at Britain for imposing such strict--

LEONARD: My parents were more concerned about our serving possibly in the, uh, another war, and wanted to get us all out to the suburbs of Chicago where my aunt had already established herself thirty years before in the 18, late 1880's.

PHILLIPS: Why had she left?

LEONARD: That I never, I never discovered why she had left, except that I would imagine that the dream of going to America was, had been strong even in those years. And she established herself as an American businesswoman and held much property and seemed to be doing real well, owned sheetmetal businesses. The whole families, they owned buildings, commercial, private, houses, and so when my parents came to the United States they listened very carefully to what she had to say, because she seemed to have done all right and they thought that's a good policy to follow.

PHILLIPS: Okay. So let's talk about you actually leaving Germany. Can you recall when your father actually made that decision and told you that he was, in fact, going to leave his home and travel to the United States?

LEONARD: My dad had one time made the decision to come to the United States before, it was in 1914. However, he changed his mind. He was single then. He would have come to the United States by himself to the same suburban Chicago area where other relatives were. But for one reason or another he changed his mind and stayed on and he was in the military almost within the year and, uh, then the plans were changed. He got married, I arrived, and so forth.

PHILLIPS: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

LEONARD: I have one brother. He's a businessman down in Phoenix. Uh, the sister died of the flu epidemic in 1919.

PHILLIPS: Okay. So tell us about actually leaving your home. Was that a traumatic experience for you?

LEONARD: At first it was because my grandmother, whom I adored, who had raised me, practically, from small on, couldn't go along, or didn't want to go along, or had just decided not to go to America. And, um, that kind of upset me at first. I had hoped that she would go with us. But, uh, finally after other things that entered into it, I accepted the change and looked forward to coming to the United States.

PHILLIPS: Tell me about actually leaving. Tell me what happened.

LEONARD: Well, we packed all our stuff, what we could. We gave everything away to relatives, grandmother, whoever, whatever we could, we felt we couldn't carry, because we could only carry two large coffers of items. We had two that were, we packed everything that we felt was necessary, and carried that with us.

PHILLIPS: Can you perhaps explain a little bit more fully that sense of urgency that you felt and your family felt and perhaps you as a young person didn't quite understand, but you must have picked up that atmosphere that you had to leave Germany quickly. I don't quite understand why you had to leave so quickly. Could you make that a little bit more clear?

LEONARD: Well, it's the quota system which you either took advantage when they let you or you might not go at all if you didn't go under the quota system, because there were so many more people that wanted to go, it was almost like a sinking ship because the economy had deteriorated to such an extent and everybody was afraid of the Communists taking over, so the turmoil, this made it anxious for a lot of people to leave. So we grabbed our turn when it came, and it was late 1924.

PHILLIPS: So there was fear of both the Communist Party, perhaps, taking over, and fear of the impending rise of the National Socialist Party.

LEONARD: That's correct. And they would have probably made sure that people would not leave. And so there could be a possibility that or with those parties in power, that the United States would say no, we don't want anymore from there. They might be Communists or Social Democrats of the Nazi party.

PHILLIPS: And so it was under this, in this atmosphere, that you rushed off because of the quota system, basically.

LEONARD: Certainly. We left everything behind we could. The two businesses were left without any remuneration and much of our worldly goods, you might say, were left behind. We just took what we felt was necessary, mostly clothing and bedding and some heirlooms. And that was it.

PHILLIPS: So that indicates to me that your father was very, very concerned. It was a crisis situation.

LEONARD: Right, because he figured he wouldn't get another chance like this. And of course there had to be a sponsor and the people, our relatives in the suburbs of Chicago, they sent, they had to send us the money and also say that we had a place when we came, for them, that we were not destitute and on the streets.

PHILLIPS: Do you know how much money they sent?

LEONARD: I think it was very, for those times, I think it was about two hundred dollars because converted to German money that would be considerable.

PHILLIPS: Can you tell me about the trip over to the United States, actually

leaving Germany now and travelling to America.

LEONARD: The, uh, ship, Mount Clay, was an old, very old ship. This was right after World War One and Germany did not have very many, very many ships to haul passengers. So this, as a matter of fact, as it turned out, it was quite a bad ship as far as leaks and what have you and concern. When we hit a storm in the mid-Atlantic, after we passed the mid-Atlantic, it was very scary. The, uh, height of the storm, all volunteers were asked, my dad among them, to come to the bulkheads and man the ropes to hold back the waves that were towering over the boat. And, uh, the women were crying, the kids were crying, and the water was sloshing all down the gangway. We were in the, uh, Third Class Steerage below, just one floor below the deck. And, uh, years later, as a matter of fact, in recent years, I discovered that we had taken the same route and gone over the Titanic just twelve and a half years later after it sank. Because we pulled into Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, after the storm. The storm lasted for about a day and a half, including night.

PHILLIPS: Were you frightened, as a little boy?

LEONARD: Certainly. But I was sicker than I was frightened, and that created some problem. All of us were sick except my brother. For some strange reason he didn't seem to be affected.

PHILLIPS: Then you pulled into Halifax. Were you glad to see Halifax, I bet?

LEONARD: Yes. I had never seen the New World. Here I took a look in the distance and I saw a rocky shore. I realized that this was a different land than I was used to. I saw no trees. I saw large boulders on land. We didn't come too far in so we just saw the outskirts. And, uh, of course, now that I had read about it, and new about

it, I realized that it was, Nova Scotia is the same almost as Maine, with it's rocky shoreline and land.

PHILLIPS: And then you sailed south to New York harbor?

LEONARD: New York. And we arrived there a day later, which was about December 1st. And then we were transported by tugboat to Ellis Island and on the second of December. And we stayed there till we left by train on December 6th.

PHILLIPS: And while you were there, as you explained earlier, you were detained for some period of time, for five days.

LEONARD: Yes. Yes, we were separated. My dad was kept separate and then my brother and I stayed with my mother upstairs on the second floor.

PHILLIPS: What memories do you have of Ellis Island?

LEONARD: The memories are fairly pleasant. The food was something I had never dreamed about. It was remarkable. Except that the appetite from the ship journey was a little bit off, but we recovered within a day or two and ate like we had never been fed before, because the food was a remarkable change from what we had when we left. Because things were really in the turmoil in--

PHILLIPS: Can you give us an example, a specific example of what it was like before and what it was like at Ellis Island, what kinds of food you were eating?

LEONARD: I don't believe we had seen much of beef. We hadn't seen much of fruits, hardly at all. And, uh, we dug into apples, bananas. I just went crazy over bananas. And, uh, oranges. This was food we hadn't. we hadn't even seen.

PHILLIPS: You hadn't experienced bananas or oranges, for instance?

LEONARD: No. Not at all. This was all new to us, and we really dug in.

PHILLIPS: And did you meet other children there, other young people?

LEONARD: We did, but it was almost impossible to, you could play tag with them, you could do things like that, that everybody knew, but the language difficulty precluded much correspondence with other kids from other nations because we had no idea why they didn't understand us, and they couldn't understand why we didn't talk their language.

PHILLIPS: I suppose there must have been, or were there some Germans around to speak with?

LEONARD: Hardly any. There were hardly any on board. There were some older people, when I say older, I remember one that was thirty-three years old, and he became a butcher in Chicago and my folks stayed in correspondence with him, and my aunt also. Uh, otherwise there were no kids that we knew of that could speak the same language. That's how mixed up the people were. You see, we weren't removed en-masse from the boat where there were probably a lot of Germans and kids too. Since we were held for five days, we were in a totally new bunch od people, probably Italians, Bulgarians, almost any nationality you could think of.

PHILLIPS: Were you afraid, at that point, that maybe you'd have to go back to Germany?

LEONARD: There was a time that I would question my dad and I know he was disturbed and wondering, but the great day came when we were released.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

PHILLIPS: This is side two of our interview with Karl Leonard, Interview Number 416 [DP-42] continuing. It's 11:15. Um, the great day came and you finally got to leave Ellis Island. Tell us about that.

LEONARD: The, uh, the most we had seen up to that time was the, uh, Battery in New York City. Of course, I came back to New York City twice after this in the years following to find out where we were and how everything was situated, but at the time everything was a mystery, of course. And, uh, when that day came they, it was more like herding a bunch of cattle. "You go here, you go there." We had tags on us as to our destination. Ours said Chicago. And, uh, we left what I believe was Grand Central Station, I don't know the exact address. I've been there many, uh, several times since, because I lived in Brooklyn for a stretch later on. Uh, and from there we took a train to Chicago. On the way we saw for the first time as morning, we left in the early hours of the morning and, on the train, and as we passed Buffalo, New York, I called attention to my folks that every house seemed to have a small house next to it or in back of it. We just took it for granted that it was an outhouse. We didn't realize that these were garages. We had never seen a garage before. How would we know? But every house seemed to have a, at that time the houses were clapboard, mostly, siding, and usually painted white, although other colors were there too, but prominent. And, uh, in white, and we saw the small houses, and I thought that was rather novel that these were so big for an outhouse, but it

turned out they were garages. And most of them were single garages at that period. There was no such thing as two cars in one household. They were lucky enough to have one car. When we arrived in the suburbs we, my uncle was there. His name was Carl Gerber [PH], and the family owned the sheetmetal business, and he came down to pick us up in the Model T Ford. And since I didn't know one car from another, I thought it was the greatest adventure, because I hadn't seen, I had only seen possibly one automobile in Germany before, and very fleeting. But here we were travelling in an old Model T and I thought it was the greatest adventure.

PHILLIPS: And what did you think of Chicago when you drove into town?

LEONARD: Well, we went to the suburbs, of course. We took a Chicago-Milwaukee train from either the La Salle Street station, I think it was the La Salle rather than the other one. Uh, and so at that time we didn't see too much of the third rail, the electric, the El, elevated. And so, uh, we didn't get a chance to see much of that, but we soon came out into the Forest Preserve Land on the edge of Chicago and into the suburbs. And that looked every promising to us, because we were really pleased. We would have hated to have lived in New York, in Manhattan, because it was such a scramble there, and the tall buildings kind of overpowered our ideas of what it should be like. But when we arrived in the suburb, we though that was going to be our home and it was going to be quite good.

PHILLIPS: And then you, of course, had to go to school.

LEONARD: We arrived on a Friday, and I was in school on Monday. Good old Garfield School, where I didn't understand, it was right kitty-corner from my Aunt Gerber's [PH] house, and she took me over there and, uh, entered me in school right away. They thought it would be best, since I didn't speak one word of English, that I start with first

grade again, after I had already reached fourth grade. In some respects, I resented that, and for a while I couldn't adjust to the, uh, to the, I couldn't understand the language, I couldn't understand the teacher, and it was rough for a couple of weeks. But then my aunt told me some things, and she says, "I'll stay up with you at night. I know you're having a rough time, but I'll stay up with you in the evenings for two, three hours and teach you English." And by that time I was ready, believe me, because I was having a tough time. I said, "Yes. Let's go. Let's do it." And so, uh, it took me, together with, they had stacks of, my aunt had stacks of the comics downstairs in the basement. I went through those and, of course, from the balloons, even if I couldn't understand what the balloon writing was, I could understand the picture and the progress and I learned English extra from that, together with what my aunt was teaching me in the evening. It took me three and a half months, and I could, and I knew the English language.

PHILLIPS: And, uh--

LEONARD: From there on, of course, things went much, much better.

Then I, within two years lost my accent, and then I attained achievements in school such as English composition. I majored in that, and different subjects where I excelled, and they used that as an example what can be accomplished by, even though I had to learn the language by applying myself.

PHILLIPS: Meanwhile what were your parents doing?

LEONARD: Uh, they were doing just about-- (he laughs.) My mother was cleaning houses for people, washing floors, dusting, preparing meals. Anything for wealthier people. And my dad was taking on jobs, and when they petered out, he would look for another one. He had the most difficulty because he was slow in learning the English language, especially technical terms that were involved in his trade as electrician. But

soon he did maintain, he did get a job with the Western United, which is forerunner of Public Service.

PHILLIPS: And you aunt? Can you tell me a little bit about this rather impressive woman, what your impressions were of her?

LEONARD: Well, she seemed to have the right answers for us in everything, so we listened very carefully to her and, of course, she's the one that taught me English. Now, she had a, she had a broken accent that you could cut with a knife, it was that thick, but somehow she got the lessons across of learning English and that's all I needed. And then with the, with the ear that I developed, I had a rather sharp ear which later on turned into music, and I could just hear everybody, how they said words, and I followed them very closely so that within a two year period I even lost my accent.

PHILLIPS: And what was your interest in music?

LEONARD: That had been a lifelong interest in music, especially piano. And since I, and since I have both relative and absolute pitch, I can tell by sounds what tone it is, any kind of sound. And, uh, with sharp an ear, of course, that made it possible for me to learn the english language much better.

PHILLIPS: What about the time leading up to the Depression? How did your family fend?

LEONARD: We did, we did rather well. We bought a house within two years after our arrival and that's another story of how that was done. Again my aunt entered the picture. She said the boys would do better, you would all do better if you got a house and avoided ethnic areas where your own kind were in profusion. Don't do that to your two

boys. They will be better if they're in a neighborhood that's mixed. And that's exactly the way we ended up. We had a neighbor, we had neighbors that were American, we had neighbors that were Swedish, or second-generation, some first, some originally from. And, uh, we had quite a mixed neighborhood. And even Polish, Paul Kowalsky [PH] I went to school with, he was Polish. So we had, and a lot of Americans in the neighborhood. Thomas across the street, Wilson across the street, all English names.

PHILLIPS: And you met a Cherokee.

LEONARD: Yeah. At school. But he didn't live in the neighborhood we were in, but just the same I went to, at that time it was George Washington Elementary and, uh, that's where I, that's where I met him in, I think fifth or sixth grade.

PHILLIPS: Tell me a little bit about that?

LEONARD: Well, we just hit it off because we both had things that were unusual. What I discovered was that the Indians were, even at that time, were pretty well ignored. They were, they were not part of the, uh, parcel of the everyday life. They were sort of castoffs. Now, that doesn't mean that I was a castoff, because I had already mastered the English language and I got rid of my lederhosen and I was just like any other American kid. So I had no problem, but I could see that a lot of the Indians, kids, that were talked about, and here, the example, were isolated from society. Of course, I discovered later why. Because they did not fit in and do things like the rest of us. The thing that was different about me was that I fit in. I did everything that the other kids did, the American kids did, and so there was nothing different. And I could see the problem of the, of Frankie Bresette [PH], the

Cherokee Indian, he definitely had a problem. And, uh, even from early on I developed a, uh, for the underdog. I developed this thing. I always try to help underdogs, and I could see that here was a kid that was just kind of left out of everything.

PHILLIPS: Did he ever talk about that with you?

LEONARD: Not too much. He just took it for granted that was his lot in life. Indians are very stoical. Stoical, is the word, I believe. And they take whatever their lot is as that's the way it is. You can't change it, so, and we will not live like they do because that's not our style.

PHILLIPS: So during the Depression you didn't have such a bad experience? Is that so, let me ask, or pose the question, what was your experience during the Depression?

LEONARD: I went to high school during the Depression, the worst of the Depression, because the Depression didn't come until November of 1930 when everything fell apart. And, uh, most of 1930 was still good business. My dad was employed. Then came early '31, my dad was thrown out of work. It could be said that at that time that people, that foreigners who had come to this country, were in, because we knew others that were thrown out of work first. They were the ones that were first thrown out of their jobs, but pretty soon, of course, so many people were out of work. But we held on, and my dad being very smart went to, we had payments to make on the house. So he went to the bank. We had our mortgage. At that time there was no such thing as FHA and all the other things, because Roosevelt hadn't put those in force until 1933. 1934 and '35. Uh, so he went to the banker and asked, "Could I pay for an indefinite period, could I pay the interest on the house only?" And the banker agreed, and for two years my folks paid the interest on the house, but kept the house from being foreclosed, which was remarkable, I thought. And, uh, in, then in about two years, my dad got a job with the YMCA as stationary engineer,

which could be sometimes classified as a stepped-up janitor's job, although it was more than that. You had to know, you had to know how to operate machinery and pipes and controls and what have you with the plant. And, uh, from then on he started to pay on that. He bought a car the next year, and seemed to do just fine. And, of course, I learned a lot of lessons from the experience of the Depression because it didn't take me long to figure out how to smart out the economic situation in such a way that I stayed alive. There were days when I went to, on the way to school, I went to a bakery and got second day and third day bakery, for a nickel, a big bag full of rolls or whatever that they would put in the bag, and that's what we lived on sometimes. Fifty cents would buy a whole meal at that time, for the family of four of us. Fifty cents. Boy.

PHILLIPS: Okay. So let's move on to after the Depression, and tell us how you came to get to Denver. Maybe that's too big a leap.

LEONARD: Well, we were there for, uh, during the World War Two, we were there. I was, uh, I became, at first I started as an accountant for a large corporation. Then they, uh, they appointed me Time Study and Efficiency Expert for the plant during most of the World War Two.

PHILLIPS: Which plant was this?

LEONARD: Illinois Tool Works of Chicago. And, uh, I worked there until the end of the, until the end of the war. The next year we just decided that we would see a change of scenery. We heard about the West and we thought we would come to Denver. And for the most part it has been a very pleasant experience. (He laughs.)

PHILLIPS: I know that you have to probably go about now, right?

LEONARD: Well, soon, yeah.

PHILLIPS: Tell me, is there, we could talk a little bit more about that period between the Depression leading up to now, if you think there's something important to say in general information which might be of interest. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about, include?

LEONARD: Of course, I did, recently I counted up all the trades and professions that I had learned over that time and it amounted to eleven of them, which, eleven different trades and professions, which surprised even me, that I learned all that in that time. But you see the Depression does cause things like that to happen, where you think the more you know, the more jobs you know, the more things you can do, the more you're in demand. And I, well, there were different, some professions are gone. For instance, I became a furrier. I studied and worked with a furrier shop for two years under the owner, who taught me, and I could have gone into it except for one thing. Allergy took over, and that erased the idea of being a furrier. Before that I had been a song plugger. A song plugger is one who way back when makes songs popular by playing them in music stores, dime stores, as they called them then, and popularizing certain hits, hit tunes. My forte was the songs of Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire from their shows. I popularized those. Also the Golddigger songs of 1933. '34, '35, '36. And, uh, that was quite an outlet to do that. You had to be able to read music, which I was able to, and quickly convert it to your own arrangement, because these were the popular tunes of the day that people wanted to hear before they bought the sheet music, and that was the only way to sell it. From there I went into, uh--

PHILLIPS; Excuse me, you actually, you had to sing this, or play this?

LEONARD: I played it. I wouldn't dare sing, but I did play it.

PHILLIPS: Do you still play?

LEONARD: Yes, I do. I play with large bands, Glen Miller type bands. From there I formed my own band, at seventeen and a half. But I found out I couldn't play in some of the nightclubs at that age. And so, uh, my mother said, uh, which I found surprising, she says, "Why don't you tell them you're twenty-one? I'll back you up." And, uh, sure enough, if they called my mother, "Is he twenty-one? Can he come into this nightclub?" At that time we called certain ones "roadhouses". This was when, before, when Prohibition was still on, and you had to be every careful, you know, because of raids and what have you, if the raided the place that you weren't involved as an orchestra leader. And I did that for a while.

PHILLIPS: Were you ever in a club when it was raided?

LEONARD: Yes. (He laughs.) Uh, and three of them were burned to the ground because of the antagonism between the beer barons in Chicago. If they didn't use their beer, they would destroy it. Now, this was before it was legal. These were all, uh, speakeasys, they called them. They called them either speakeasy, if they were in town, and roadhouses if they were outside the town, along the road. And, uh, yes, like I say, three of them were burned to the ground because of the animosity of rival gangs which usually was the, uh, Capone and the, uh, Tooey Gangs in Chicago. And they owned all the places around, even around as far as Indiana, up to Wisconsin. So if you wanted to earn a living you worked for them or you didn't work at all.

PHILLIPS: What about the, what other jobs did you have, or did you learn, the trades?

LEONARD: Well, much, not too many years later, actually I learned the, uh, I went to accounting college. I took accounting in college and, uh, and then became an accountant. That would have been about 19, probably 1939, let's say. About 1938, '39, I became an accountant and went to work for the Illinois Tool Works. They had four plants around, even one in Japan, and one in Canada, plus two in the Chicago area. So at part of the time, I was also one month out the year I was an in-house auditor.

PHILLIPS: Okay. I'm just going to stop the tape for a minute. (Break in tape.) Okay, could you tell me, just describe a little bit about what you're going to do for me here.

LEONARD: Well, I like George Gershwin's music, so let's out with a song "Love Is Here To Stay." (Plays the piano.) (Break in tape.)

PHILLIPS: Okay. This is going to be "take two". We just changed microphones again. Once again?

LEONARD: Uh, I like George Gershwin's music, so let's start with "Love Is Here To Stay" from the Goldwyn Follies. (Plays the piano.)

PHILLIPS: Can you tell me a little bit about that experience, actually plugging some of these songs, how you'd go about doing that?

LEONARD: You mean as far as plugging the songs in music stores and so forth? Well, I could get there and I'd barely have time to look at the sheet music and play it. It's an, it's a technique that not too many of the '30s knew how to do. '20s and '30s actually were involved. By that time radio had taken over, phonograph records and so forth, and the song plugger became history. But by that time I had gone into orchestra work with the band also teaching music at different times.

PHILLIPS: Can you remember any of those old songs that you used to have to plug?

LEONARD: Uh, not too well. I don't have any, too many that I knew at that time because I've changed the repertoire pretty much over the years.

PHILLIPS: Why don't you just give us one more song, and then we'll call it a day.

LEONARD: All right. (Plays the piano.)

PHILLIPS: Okay. And that finishes our Interview Number 416 [DP-42].

LEONARD: Thank you for your time and patience.