

EI-289/HAUSSLER

EI-289

MARIE H.A. BOETTNER HAUSSLER
BIRTH DATE: JULY 2, 1905
INTERVIEW DATE: 4/19/1993
RUNNING TIME: 32:22
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME
INTERVIEW LOCATION: LARGO, FLORIDA
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 7/1994
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

GERMANY, 1922
AGE 17
SHIP RECALLED AS "THE BALDWIN"

Oral Historian's Note: Mrs. Haussler is the wife of Henry Haussler, Interview EI-288. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 3/2/1994.

HAUSSLER: (tape starts abruptly) I think I was about fifteen. Because I left, I left the people I worked for because . . .

LEVINE: Okay. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Marie Haussler at her home. I have just interviewed her husband, Heinrich Haussler. And they live in Largo, Florida. It's April 19, 1993, and Mrs. Haussler came from Germany in 1922.

HAUSSLER: Yeah, I guess so.

LEVINE: When she was seventeen. So . . .

HAUSSLER: Sixteen or seventeen.

LEVINE: Sixteen or seventeen. Okay. So I want to say that I'm very happy to get to talk to you, and we won't make this too long.

HAUSSLER: I don't have too much to say. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Well, tell me your birth date.

HAUSSLER: Uh, let's see. The second of July, I guess. See, I forget. I'm really forgetful now.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, July 2, 1905.

HAUSSLER: Yeah, that's right, 1905.

LEVINE: And do you remember where in Germany you were born and where you grew up?

HAUSSLER: Well, it must have been, uh, Hannover. That's a, I came from the, where they speak a very good German. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh. And where did you grow up?

HAUSSLER: Well, I guess I grew up till, the same place. Mother and father lived down on one street, Querstrasse 30 or something. And I went to school down there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Was this a farming community?

HAUSSLER: I don't know.

LEVINE: Were there farms there?

HAUSSLER: No. This was a, I come from where they speak very good German, the highest, the high German, yeah.

LEVINE: Was this in the city or in the country?

HAUSSLER: Well, it was a little, it was in a city but it's, you know, a smaller city, you know. I didn't live in like Berlin or something like that, see. But I could walk to, I could walk to school one street up and one street back, and . . .

LEVINE: What do you remember about school there?

HAUSSLER: Well, if you didn't do as you were told you had to stand outside in front of the door. (she laughs) That was the punishment, you know.

LEVINE: So they were very strict?

HAUSSLER: Yeah, very strict, yeah.

LEVINE: And how about your mother and father? Were they

strict?

HAUSSLER: Well, I, we had to be good and all that. After all, she had a lot of children.

LEVINE: How many children?

HAUSSLER: Nine of us.

LEVINE: Nine. And what was your mother's name?

HAUSSLER: **Hermine.**

LEVINE: And her maiden name? Do you remember that?

HAUSSLER: **Hermine Zimmerman.**

LEVINE: Zimmerman.

HAUSSLER: Yeah. Because I remember my grandmother. Her name was Zimmerman, yeah.

LEVINE: What was your grandmother's first name, do you remember that?

HAUSSLER: That I don't know. I know I had, she had another daughter. Her name was Mariechen [?], and she was around twenty-one I think, at that time that I knew of.

LEVINE: Your mother's sister?

HAUSSLER: That was, well, yes. It must have been.

LEVINE: Your aunt.

HAUSSLER: Yeah. It was my aunt, yeah.

LEVINE: Well, uh . . .

HAUSSLER: My grandma was seventy-five when she passed away.

LEVINE: Would you remember any things that you did with your grandmother when you were a little girl? Do you remember visiting her?

HAUSSLER: Well, yeah. We visited her once in a while. And we had to be good. (she laughs) Grandma was strict. But we made out all right.

LEVINE: Did she ever tell you stories? Do you remember anything like that?

HAUSSLER: I don't know. I think she, we were, grandma had her little apartment, and we were pretty well on our own, I guess, you know. We had to be good.

LEVINE: Do you remember your grandmother doing anything in particular when you think of her, that you think of

her doing?

HAUSSLER: No. It's, she lived in a very small apartment and I don't know. That I don't even remember. See, I was so young, really, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, do you remember your aunt? Did you ever do things with her?

HAUSSLER: Well, she lived with her, with her grandmother, you see? She lived in one place down there. This was on the farm somewheres. And I knew the farmers.

LEVINE: What kind of farm was it?

HAUSSLER: Well, they, well, with the people I knew, they're the ones that had the farm, and my grandmother must have rented from them, see. That's what it was. Yeah. And my aunt, she was a little, eh. She was a little slow and, you know, didn't have too much pep. But I remember her, though. I don't remember my grandmother. Yeah, my grandmother was about seventy-five, I think. And they lived in, on the farm there with, these people owned all that, and I remember going through the, through the cow pasture, you know, if I wanted to go, you know, out. You had to go out,

you know, out of the place, and go down the stretch where we, the cows were. (she laughs) I remember that.

LEVINE: And what was your mother like?

HAUSSLER: My mother was really nice. I'd say mother tried hard to be good to us, yeah.

LEVINE: And your father? What was his name?

HAUSSLER: Well, they, some call him John, but it was Johann.

LEVINE: Johann. Uh-huh.

HAUSSLER: But later on they called him John. It's a little shorter, see.

LEVINE: Yeah. What did, what did your father do in Germany?

HAUSSLER: Well, I don't know what you would call it, but he was working on the road and they had, fixing the road. They had stones, big stones, and had to hammer them in, "Steinsetzer" they called it, see? Yeah, that's what my father's doing. I remember that. Yeah. So, we had a pretty good bringing up. We were a lot of kids. But when, because I worked on, because we went to night school, you know, to learn English.

LEVINE: That was after, when you came here. But I mean when you were still in Germany. Talk about that first.

HAUSSLER: Oh, well . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember what you knew about America before you actually came here? Had you heard anything when you were, you know, a girl in . . .

HAUSSLER: No, I don't know. Did I have relatives? Oh, my aunt. This must have been during the war around 1914. She must have been already over here, see. Because we met her later, see. And then, of course, after a while we, after I got off the boat . . .

LEVINE: Well, first let me ask you, when you were, when you came to this country, you came by yourself.

HAUSSLER: All by myself.

LEVINE: How was it that it was decided that you would come?

HAUSSLER: Well, I guess nobody wanted to go, and I said, "I'll go."

LEVINE: You mean, your aunt wanted someone to come?

HAUSSLER: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you picked . . .

HAUSSLER: And I was the only one. I said, "Gee, I'd go." So I did.

LEVINE: Do you know why you wanted to go?

HAUSSLER: Well, I wanted to get away from there, I guess. And I wanted to go to America.

LEVINE: Now, is this the same aunt that was your mother's sister, or this was a different aunt?

HAUSSLER: Uh, no. I don't think it was my mother's, that was my mother's sister. But it was the lady where they rented, Grandma rented her apartment from, see. That's who that was.

LEVINE: Oh. And you called her 'aunt,' but she was really . . .

HAUSSLER: She wasn't my aunt, no, no.

LEVINE: She wasn't really your aunt.

HAUSSLER: No, no.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And so she wanted somebody to come to

America. Do you know why she wanted someone to come?

HAUSSLER: Well, I guess she figured, no. She didn't face all. She just figured she'd like to get one of us girls. And mother says, "Someone come to America." And, "Anybody wants to go?" And I says, "I'll go." Nobody said they want to go. I says, "I'll go." So I did. Yeah, I got on the boat.

LEVINE: How did you get to the boat? Do you remember how you got from . . .

HAUSSLER: Well, they probably, somebody took me. And then I met some people from Milwaukee, and they sort of looked after me after that because, you know, I was just about sixteen.

LEVINE: Sixteen, seventeen.

HAUSSLER: Well, just about barely sixteen, you see. And so they went to Milwaukee. She had a daughter and a son. And we met there, and I stayed with them together most of the time, see. Yeah. They looked after me, and after a few years they came to visit my mother, see. And, which was nice. And I still get in touch with some of the daughters, because the

daughter's mother, she left her first husband when she was thirty-seven, I think.

LEVINE: This was the woman who was on the boat?

HAUSSLER: This other one, yeah. And so anyway, that's how the whole story goes.

LEVINE: Wow.

HAUSSLER: And they looked after me, and they would see to it nothing happens to me. And I've went to Milwaukee with them. And later on they came to visit us at home.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

HAUSSLER: Mother was very pleased, yeah.

LEVINE: Did your mother know them before, or you just met them on the boat?

HAUSSLER: No. We met them on the boat.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, did you take anything with you? Do you remember anything that you brought with you to America from Germany when you came?

HAUSSLER: No. I think all I had was a pile of suitcases and

lost all my, you know, my clothes and picked it up again.

LEVINE: How did you, how did that happen? Tell me about that, about losing your clothes.

HAUSSLER: Well, it was a cheap suitcase, I guess.
(she laughs) It opened up on me. And I didn't have much clothes then, just a little. But anyway, there was (?) of people. They, we rode back and forth, you know. And, because they looked after me on the boat, see. So, which was nice. And then later on they wrote to Mother and they said they'd like to come. I've forgotten where we lived then. They would like to come. Oh, Milwaukee. They went to Milwaukee, see. And they had, they had two daughters and a son.

LEVINE: Well, let me ask you this. When you got off the boat, do you remember coming into New York on the boat?

HAUSSLER: Uh, we had to go to, when we got out of the boat we had to go to this, is it Ellis Island?

LEVINE: Yes.

HAUSSLER: Ellis Island. And we were the last one, and after, after we got off while we were there, they closed Ellis Island. That was closed, yeah.

LEVINE: What do you remember about Ellis Island?

HAUSSLER: Oh, you sit there, you know, on the chair. And somebody comes along and throws you a pear, an apple. But they wanted money, see. (she laughs) I remember that. Because we didn't have too much money, you know.

LEVINE: You remember being examined?

HAUSSLER: Oh, yeah. We, yeah. We had to go through that, yeah.

LEVINE: Was that difficult?

HAUSSLER: Uh, it wasn't bad, no.

LEVINE: Do you remember . . .

HAUSSLER: Of course, we didn't speak any English, see? I got off the boat. It was a two week trip, lousy, though. And the food was, oh! Well, you got sick to your stomach, see? (she laughs)

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

HAUSSLER: And when we, anyway, when I got, oh, yeah. When I got out of Ellis Island finally, when they made me get out, they called the taxi. My aunt wasn't there. This was in Utica, New York.

LEVINE: Now, wait. How did you get, did, nobody met you at Ellis Island?

HAUSSLER: No.

LEVINE: So what happened?

HAUSSLER: Well, my aunt didn't get any notice, see. They didn't give her a notice that I was coming.

LEVINE: So how did you get to Utica?

HAUSSLER: Oh, they just put me on the train.

LEVINE: Taxi, taxi. No. They put me on a taxi, and then I went, the address, see, my aunt's address. And then the taxi driver rang the doorbell, and there was my aunt. "Oh!" You know. She wasn't expecting me like that, see. But they took me right down there to my aunt, yeah, the taxi.

LEVINE: You must have gone on the train, and then you got a taxi from the train.

HAUSSLER: Probably, yes.

LEVINE: To your aunt's house, and your aunt was surprised.

HAUSSLER: To Utica, New York, yeah, yeah. She was surprised, you know. She didn't know. And it was so nice, it was nice. And then, of course, after a while, you know.

LEVINE: And what did you do? Do you remember your first few days or weeks? Do you remember things in this country that struck you as being very different from what you were used to in Germany?

HAUSSLER: Well, yeah. (she laughs) My aunt, my, it was my grandmother. My grandmother and her daughter would be my aunt, see, the younger one. And we, she, well, that's (?). The (?).

LEVINE: When you first came to the United States, when you first came to this aunt, to this woman you called Aunt Louise, do you . . .

HAUSSLER: Well, I got, I got a job. I got a nice place to do

housework. And by that time I was anyway almost fifteen or sixteen, and I got a lovely place. I got the pictures here from they, they were so good to me.

I was doing housework. I had the whole, I had an upstairs and I, veranda, or what do you call it, a porch upstairs. And so, I had to cook. I was just very young, you know.

LEVINE: Did you know how to cook?

HAUSSLER: I must have because I had to get the dinners. She'd buy one big roast a week, and then I had to make something else every day from that big piece of meat, see.

LEVINE: How many people were you cooking for?

HAUSSLER: It was just two people, but once in a while they had their, uh, relatives there, their daughters and granddaughters. But I had, I had the upstairs apartment all by myself, and I had to, you know, keep the place clean, and I did the cooking. And that's just, I was really . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember, do you remember any German dishes that you knew how to cook?

HAUSSLER: Well, not too much, I don't think. (she laughs) I don't think I did too much cooking. Well, down there she'd buy a big roast, the lady. I got pictures of it, where I was. And she'd buy a big roast, and then the, every day we did something else with it, see. You didn't eat the same thing, you know, maybe cut it up or make stew out of it and things. I wasn't really knowing that much about cooking, no.

LEVINE: So how long did you work there? A long time or a short time?

HAUSSLER: Well, it was a short time, I think, because after a while, well, no, I was there quite a while I think, because I remember, because I met Henry when we were in night school.

LEVINE: Is that how you met?

HAUSSLER: That's how we met, yeah.

LEVINE: In night school.

HAUSSLER: Because he comes from a different, I come from Hanover. That's a very, they speak the very good German there, see, where I came from. Of course, I had to learn English.

LEVINE: But you never knew Henry in Germany.

HAUSSLER: No, no. I didn't know him, no. I just met him, you know, going to night school.

LEVINE: Do you remember meeting him?

HAUSSLER: Oh, yeah, once in a while. He had a girlfriend and, you know. (they laugh) But we got a little closer all the time, you know, met each other, and we went to night school together. And in three months we spoke good English. There was no question about that.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you liked about Henry when you met him?

HAUSSLER: He was a good guy, yeah. Of course, there was other girls crazy about him too but, eh, he thought he's better off with me, so we stuck together.

LEVINE: Wow. It seems like he was right, huh?

HAUSSLER: Yeah. Well, we knew each other for, well, we went to night school together too, I guess. That's how I met, you know. And my, anyway . . .

LEVINE: Did you go to night school when you were working for this couple, doing the cooking and the house . . .

HAUSSLER: Oh, yeah. We made three months. Within three months we graduated from it. And so . . .

LEVINE: Then did you stay working at that job? When did you leave there? What did you do after that?

HAUSSLER: I think, uh, well, after a while, of course, you know, later on we got married and I still went to the people and they all asked me to come and wash their drapes, the fancy drapes, and I had to wash fancy drapes and all that, you know. They just couldn't go without me. So I went there for quite a while, yeah. So finally, of course, I came 19, Mother and Father, they were, in 1957 they were, I can't remember now what happened there, because in '57, 19 . . . Eh, I guess I lost track of it.

LEVINE: Well, they came to the United States, did they, your mother and father?

HAUSSLER: Oh, yeah, yeah. They came later too, you know. Yeah. Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: And they settled in . . .

HAUSSLER: 19, um, I remember when Mother was, they, yeah. They, they came because they were, then I got an apartment for them, mother and father. There were six of them, see. My brother and mother and father and sister and brother, I guess. So there were six of them that I let come over then. So that's how that worked.

LEVINE: Did you send them money to come over?

HAUSSLER: I must have, somebody did, yeah. I must have. During 1925 Mother and Father and the rest of the children, you know, six of them, they came, yeah. And that's how, how things worked, worked out good, yeah. So Mother was happy and Father, at first I think they lived in Utica, New York. She had a sister there. My mother had a sister down in Utica, New York. And later on my aunt, well, she went through, she was just a kid, I guess, when the World War was on. And so, anyway, there was the six of them, see. And got an apartment for her, Mother and the rest of the kids, six of them, I guess. My brother, my brother is still alive. He's ill now. He's eighty-something, eighty-six. We're all in our

eighties now. There's five of us.

LEVINE: Yeah. Your whole family eventually came over then.

HAUSSLER: All of them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. When you think back on your early life in Germany, what are the things that you remember most?

HAUSSLER: Oh, well, I didn't, we didn't do good in school, or she'd make you go and stand outside for punishment, you know. (she laughs) So I remember that.

LEVINE: Do you remember any good times in Germany before you came here?

HAUSSLER: Well, we had Christmas always.

LEVINE: What was that like in Germany?

HAUSSLER: Well, it was, you got one, you got one, uh, not banana, one . . .

LEVINE: Orange?

HAUSSLER: Orange. Yeah. You didn't get much, because Mother didn't have the money, see? We got small (?), probably. Because when Diane, when I, after I got married and had a little girl, like, they sent, not

from Germany, it was a German girl, though. A great, big girl. Oh, she had several of them after a while, my own daughter. Yeah, because the relatives must have chipped in, Grandma, too. They were happy, Father too, they were happy, and had a better life here, see. But the Milwaukee people, they always, see, Mother said to the Milwaukee lady, couple, "Look after my little girl, you know." And they did. Oh, yeah. They were very nice. And they went to Milwaukee. They had, I think they had two girls that they're still, I still hear from them. They had two girls and a boy, I think.

LEVINE: Well, what was your maiden name?

HAUSSLER: Marie Boettner, B-O-A-T-T-N-E-R.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And you had just one daughter, you and Heinrich have just one . . .

HAUSSLER: Well, we, no. Yeah, I had a daughter and I had a son.

LEVINE: And what's your daughter's name?

HAUSSLER: Diane.

LEVINE: And her last name?

HAUSSLER: She's the one that got me started on this.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And her last name?

HAUSSLER: Diane, wait a minute. (she laughs) Hmm. I should know this. Diane Decker, yeah. She's the one that got me started on this.

LEVINE: Great, and I'm glad she did. And how about your son? What's his name?

HAUSSLER: Donald. He was thirty-six. He was married. He had one little girl and he was in business. He was driving a car one day, thirty-six and he had a, he had a flat, his back tire blew out and it killed him.

LEVINE: Oh!

HAUSSLER: He was thirty-six.

LEVINE: Oh, I'm sorry.

HAUSSLER: Killed him, right over the bridge. So, well, I got the little granddaughter, but she, she still writes now, but I'm, I haven't seen her for a long time because her, our granddaughter's cousin on the other

side, that would be Carol's sister's little girl, see. She and, let's see. There were, there were two girls that had a birthday. I've forgotten how it was. But I haven't heard from her now for, oh, no, Carol had a sister outside Rochester. And she has four children, I guess. She lived on a lake. And they go there every Christmas for holiday, see. Because the one girl is as old as my granddaughter.

LEVINE: I see, so they can be friends.

HAUSSLER: They're pals, yeah.

LEVINE: Well, now, do you have other grandchildren besides this one?

HAUSSLER: No, I have just . . .

LEVINE: You have one child and one grandchild right now.

HAUSSLER: Well, I have a grandson, that's Diane's, Diane's son, yeah.

LEVINE: And what's his name?

HAUSSLER: Hmm, Jeff, Jeff. Yeah. He's in Colorado right now, and we told him any time he feels like talking to Grandma and Grandpa he calls us, but we pay all his

way for calls. We send him some oranges, some grapefruits. Now, I don't know. After we ordered them the lady says they won't send them now until the sixteenth. That was last month, I guess. He hasn't gotten them yet, so I don't know what happened to the grapefruits. We're sending a quarter of a bushel, because half, half a bushel, probably.

LEVINE: Well, let me ask you something more about coming to this country. When you look back on it now, how do you feel about the fact that you came?

HAUSSLER: Very good, never had it so good. (she laughs) That's kind of, you know. And then, of course, Mother and Father they, let's see, that was in 1957, I think it was. I, they were still not actually, let's see, where did they live then? I let them come closer, let's see. Twenty, Mother was, they were '25 and '26, I think, when they first came they went, they started out in Utica, and then they came to Rochester, see. That's where they . . .

LEVINE: And so you did that too, right?

HAUSSLER: Yeah. Oh, yeah. I, what we did is, everybody was over here, see. What we did is we would see that

everybody pays, you know. Well, of course, I was the first one, so the first ones that came, well, they would, they would pay, see. And that's how we worked it.

LEVINE: They would pay you to stay, you mean?

HAUSSLER: Oh, yeah. Um . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

HAUSSLER: By that time I was sixteen, see? And I was over here, and then one after the other came, see? That's how they worked it.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, is there anything else you would like to say about coming from Germany or living out your life here in the United States?

HAUSSLER: Well, I think it was great to be here.

LEVINE: Well, good. Okay.

HAUSSLER: Because I was just, you know, a youngster when I was over there, and then it was the World War, the war.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the war when you were

there?

HAUSSLER: No, but I remember my aunt and uncle, they lived in Utica, New York, yeah. And she's the one that started it . . .

LEVINE: To have you come.

HAUSSLER: To have me come, see. Then, of course, then I let . . .

LEVINE: The others come.

HAUSSLER: The next ones come, see.

LEVINE: I see.

HAUSSLER: So after a while we were . . .

LEVINE: You were all here.

HAUSSLER: In 1925, I think, that's when Mother and, they were around, a different place up north, I think. Then they, I imagined Utica, see. In 1925 they all came, the rest of them all came here.

LEVINE: So in 1925, then, everybody was here.

HAUSSLER: Everybody came here, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, that's maybe a good place to stop.

HAUSSLER: Yeah.

LEVINE: I want to thank you very much. (Mrs. Haussler laughs) And this is Janet Levine and I've been talking with Marie Haussler, and I'm here in the Haussler home.

HAUSSLER: Henry gave you all the information.

LEVINE: Yes, he did. Uh-huh.

HAUSSLER: He's got more than I.

LEVINE: And I'm signing off on April 19, 1993.

HAUSSLER: That's it, yeah.