

EI-292

CLARA HONOLD

BIRTH DATE: JULY 26, 1920

INTERVIEW DATE: 4/20/1993

RUNNING TIME: 58:51

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

INTERVIEW LOCATION: DUNEDIN, FLORIDA

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 8/1994

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 4/2009

GERMANY, 1927

AGE 6

PASSAGE ON "THE ALBERT BALLIN"

PORT OF EMBARCATION: PORT IN GERMANY

RESIDENCES: GIENGEN

ST. ALBANS, NY

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Clara Honold at her home in Dunedin, Florida. And it's April 20, 1993. Clara came from Germany in 1927 when she was six years old.

I'm very happy to be here.

HONOLD: Thank you for coming. I'm thrilled. This is exciting.

LEVINE: Well, let's start at the beginning. You can give me your birth date and the place where you were born.

HONOLD: I was born in Giengen, Germany, which is a very little town, and it wasn't touched by the war at all. And

the town is very famous for the Steiff stuffed animals. And I was born on July 26th, 1920.

LEVINE: And if you were to spell any German words, proper words, places and people.

HONOLD: All right.

LEVINE: Okay. So, now, the town, did you live in the same town for all of the time?

HONOLD: Yes, Giengen, G-I-E-N-G-E-N.

LEVINE: Okay. What do you remember about Giengen, besides the fact of what was manufactured there?

HONOLD: Well, the one thing I remember especially is the kindergarten that I attended. And in Germany you don't start first grade until you're seven. So I was in this class from three through six, and it, it was a charming little town. The thing I remember especially was that the house I lived in was on the edge of the town, and the command from my parents was that I was to come in from outdoors every evening when the sheep passed at the end of the street. And back in 1952 I was telling this when I was there visiting to a friend that I had to come in when the sheep passed exactly at

five o'clock. And 'lo and behold, as we were talking, here come the sheep at the end of the street. And we all looked at our watch, and it was exactly five o'clock. So that tradition had not changed one bit.

LEVINE: Do you remember the house you lived in?

HONOLD: Very much. It was a very large house. It had, it was three stories, and it had fourteen rooms. And I remember I went up to the third story one day when I was small, and it had bars on it, and I stuck my head through the bars, and I couldn't get my head back. So it took a lot of work to get me back in.

LEVINE: What were all the rooms used for?

HONOLD: Well, we had a very spacious living room, and that was locked, and it was only used for special company. And especially at Christmas Eve, it was where the Christmas tree was set up, and we would only enter after supper. The tree was already up, and since we used candles my father would light the candles, and the tradition then was that there was no Santa Claus that came, but an angel came. And we waited for the angel. We kept looking out the window and looking for this angel, who did come. And then asked us to

perform. We had to either sing or recite a poem, and that was our Christmas Eve. After which, of course, we had a sled, a huge sled, that was pushed. It was not drawn by a horse, but it was pushed by my father. But all three of us could sit in the sled, and we'd go to church that way, that evening. Christmas Eve.

LEVINE: Were the candles actually on the Christmas tree?

HONOLD: They were actually on the Christmas tree. And to this day when I go over there to visit the relatives still have real candles, and they are just lit for a little while, when everyone gathered and you watched the tree, and I'm sure that they make sure nothing happens. But it's still tradition not to use electric lighting, but the candles, which is very impressive.

LEVINE: And, out of curiosity, how did the angel tell you to perform?

HONOLD: Well, she came into the room and, of course, asked if we were good children. Then we were not able to open our presents until we had performed. ( she laughs ) And, of course, we had a lot of things to give and say because we had learned so much in kindergarten.

LEVINE: How was the angel dressed?

HONOLD: Oh, she had wings and a white, a white garb. So she looked like a real angel. And, of course, she'd go down the stairs, but we'd look out the window and hopefully see her disappear. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: So, and what kind of gifts do you remember?

HONOLD: Well, they were always practical gifts. And I remember the one gift I received was a knitted sweater, and I was very angry because my cousin got a knitted sweater, too. And hers were buttoned down the front, while I had to put mine over my head, and that bothered me terribly. ( they laugh )

LEVINE: Now, did you actually buy things for other members of the family at Christmas?

HONOLD: Oh, no, no. We would, we would make things, yes. And especially in kindergarten, we would make things. And we would, that's how we would spend evenings, making things. And I know all year long I would even sit in the park near the house, and I made little stars out of wool, and these stars had to be then sewed together. But I made blankets and scarves that way,

and I've worked at that all year.

LEVINE: Well, getting back to the house, could you describe the rest of it, beyond the special parlor?

HONOLD: There was what we would call a Florida room, for instance. And it had a stove in the corner, which was probably all that was available, you know, the stove. But it was made out of tile, and it radiated a lot of heat into the room and into the next room. I remember this room especially, and it had sort of a niche in the corner with a bench, a round bench. And we would sit there evenings, and my father would play the violin, and we would sing every evening, sitting in this little niche. And I remember my mother putting apples on top of the stove, and when they were soft and ready to eat, why, then we'd all come to the table, and that was our treat. And I remember the kitchen especially. I had double pneumonia once, and in the kitchen the way we were bathed was, there would be a big metal tub in, put on a stand. And when I had pneumonia, I was put in the hot tub, in this tub, in hot water, and my mother would pour cold water down my back. And I remember that so, so explicitly, because it was so shocking, but it supposedly took care of the

illness.

LEVINE: What was your mother's name?

HONOLD: Clara.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

HONOLD: Simon.

LEVINE: S-I-M-O-N?

HONOLD: S-I-M-O-N, yes.

LEVINE: And your father's name?

HONOLD: Herman.

LEVINE: And your brothers and sisters?

HONOLD: I had a brother, and he was also Herman, Herman Max.

LEVINE: So, okay. And now the rest of the house.

HONOLD: Well, my bedroom was right next to the, next to the kitchen, and I remember this well because my crib, and I was in this crib a long time, was against a wall. And I had many diseases. I remember having chicken pox and all these childhood diseases, and I had to spend a lot of time in this crib. But the wonderful

part was that being related to the Steiff family there were a lot of these stuffed animals for me to play with. And if you'll go into my living room now, you'll see a whole chest with the stuffed animals. So we, and in kindergarten, oh, we had huge animals to play with. Like bears to sit on, and all kinds, lions. And I remember the giraffe, with its long neck. We had so many of these animals in our daily life. And another thing that comes to me right now, my mother did her washing in the kitchen or in the laundry room. And then we took this laundry, and there was a river going down in back of the house called the Brenz, B-R-E-N-Z. And we would take the laundry there and rinse it out in this river. So . . .

LEVINE: Did your mother have running water?

HONOLD: That I don't remember. I really don't. I doubt it. I doubt it very much. And I don't even remember, I know the outhouse was in the house, but I'm sure we didn't have running water.

LEVINE: So do you think there was like a pump at the sink, or do you think you had to go someplace and bring water

home?

HONOLD: I'm sure there was a pump at the sink, because I don't ever remember having to bring water in. I'm sure there was.

LEVINE: And anything else about the house? What was it made of?

HONOLD: I think it was stucco. And the man that bought it is still living in it. And he told me, while he's a painter, he's only painted it once since we left, which is a long, long time.

LEVINE: So you went to school starting at age three?

HONOLD: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Could you recount anything that you remember about the kindergarten?

HONOLD: Very much so. I even still have some of the artwork that we did. We did a lot of artwork. And this, of course, is educationally the thing to do, because it causes your muscles to develop and eye-and-hand coordination, which is just great for developing for your future learning. And I know one time the teacher

who was a deaconess, and she was a, Sister Martha was a very loving, very wonderful teacher. And our class consisted of sixty children, and the one teacher. So we would consider that impossible to handle, but she did. And I remember they had a tall stool in the corner with a dunce cap, and if you misbehaved you had to stand in the corner. And I can remember having had to do it, too. But I remember one day my, she brought us all some bananas, and it was the first time I ever tasted a banana. And I remember that so, so, extinct, succinct . . .

LEVINE: Distinct.

HONOLD: Distinctly, yes. And one thing we did was we had our rucksack or knapsack, and every day we would walk up the mountain. And in our knapsack we'd have an apple, and when we'd get up to the top of the mountain we could, we could eat this apple. And we would walk up holding onto a rope with loops on it, and when I started my school I initiated that, too. I used this rope to take my children for walks through town, walk to the library. And it was very outstanding to have people see us walk with this rope. And it was such a safe way to take children to any place. And if you

tell a child to hold on, they won't let go. So we were able to cross Main Street and go many places in town, just from this simple little idea that was mine when I was in kindergarten.

LEVINE: Well, I want to talk about the school and the kindergarten that you developed here.

HONOLD: All right.

LEVINE: But we'll continue with German part of your story.

HONOLD: All right. I remember just before we were leaving they had a picture taken of all the, all the children. And it was out on the front steps. And do you know to this day every five years this group meets. And I have been going to their, I have been going to their reunions, and in two years there'll be another one. And they have a whole week of celebration, and it's just marvelous. The last time many of the students, especially the boys, were killed during the war, and they would go to the cemetery and honor them on one day. And, yes, there are a goodly number of the students still living, and it's such a wonderful experience to meet with them. And they honored me greatly the last time. They always start with a big

dinner on Saturday night at the local hotel, which is called The Lamm, and it's run by the Honolds, so it's still in the family. And when I arrived I had very little time to get to the dinner, so the town sent their chauffeur and the town car to pick me up at the airport, so I saved a lot of time. And I know that the beginning of the dinner, the president of the group, the first thing he said, "Our Clara has come the furthest, and our Clara is with us, and we're so pleased." And then he said, "Would you have something to say?" Well, I had to get up and in my dialect German I greeted them and told them a few things, and they were so amazed that I still know the language. So I had a lot of praise and attention, which certainly lifts your spirits.

LEVINE: You were the only one who came from the United States?

HONOLD: Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: So how many of them are there around?

HONOLD: Well, at this point, what they've done in order to make it a fairly large event they, if anyone's moved in to town, and they're born in the year 1927, they can come, and then they can also bring their husbands

or wives. So it's a large gathering, and it's done the week of the children's fest, so that you, oh, it's a wonderful week. There's, on Pentecost the German people always go up into the mountains, because that's the religious celebration when Jesus went up into Heaven.

LEVINE: Do you remember doing this when you were there?

HONOLD: Yes. And do you, yes. And do you know we each had our own streamer, and they always have a maypole, and you brought your own streamer. And I remember mine, and I know we had it for years here, but it sort of disintegrated because it was probably rayon and silk. And I remember having it for years and years, and we would contribute our own streamer to the maypole, and they still do that.

LEVINE: So you would have your streamer, and you would go up the mountain?

HONOLD: Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: Holding the streamer?

HONOLD: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: And then you'd put it on the pole?

HONOLD: No. It would be on the pole first. It would be put on the pole, and you would march up to the mountain holding onto your streamer.

LEVINE: Were they different colors?

HONOLD: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Everyone had a different streamer. And it was all of cloth or material, you know, ribbon, a wide ribbon. It was at least four inches wide.

LEVINE: And they were all plain, one color, solid colors.

HONOLD: No, no. They were all different colors. Everyone had a different streamer. And they still do it, and when I experienced this recently again, it always renews and refreshes your own early years of experience.

LEVINE: Were you a religious family when you were growing up?

HONOLD: Yes, yes, we were. And there's a big cathedral in the town, and it has two big steeples. And my great, great-grandfather is given the credit for rebuilding the cathedral because it had burned back in the 15th Century. And he was the minister of this church, and

it was his task to rebuild it. So he's given a lot of credit in books, in the church itself his picture is hanging on the wall. And I know one time they had the celebration of the towns, or the church, the Nine Hundredth Year Celebration of the church or town. And they said that the Hommel family was most outstanding in the town. And they're still there.

LEVINE: What denomination is the church?

HONOLD: Well, originally it was Roman Catholic, and when you go in you still see all the statues that a Roman Catholic church would have. But then in the reformation, which was in 1517 it turned Evangelical. The, it's Lutheran now. But you would think you were walking into a Catholic church.

LEVINE: Do you remember your grandparents?

HONOLD: No, no. They passed away. I think I can vaguely remember my mother's father, but the others had all passed away.

LEVINE: Did you have any extended family in the immediate area?

HONOLD: Uh, very much so. My mother was one of five. My

father, I think, was one of nine. So it was a large family.

LEVINE: Can you remember gatherings, family gatherings?

HONOLD: Yes, very much so. And I remember one, we were gathered around this round table and I crawled onto the table and there was a hot water kettle on the edge of the table, and I made it come down, and it went down on me. So this I don't forget. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: What would the family do for fun or enjoyment?

HONOLD: Well, I think even with, this is true today. Do a lot of walking. They still do a lot of it. And one thing that's really wonderful is this little town and others around in this province of Württemberg, where the town is located. The stores all close to this day at twelve noon on Saturday, and nothing is open on Sunday. And right after noon, after lunch, people would take their children. You'd see them with their baby carriages, and just walk, walk up the mountain. And the children would all be along. And this was one of their biggest pastimes, to just walk out into nature. And I always appreciated the fact that the togetherness of the family, and I still appreciate the

fact that the stores were closed, and when I went to my last reunion, why, this was for a whole week, they kept the stores closed. They just would open, say, for a morning, so you could buy the bare necessities, but they kept the stores closed. They just would open, say, for a morning, so you could buy the bare necessities, but they kept the stores closed, so everybody could celebrate.

LEVINE: Was there a harsh winter where you lived?

HONOLD: Oh, yes, very much so. This little town is not far from Stuttgart and the Black Forest, and the winters are harsh. I remember, as a matter of fact, I still have my scarf, my wool scarf, that I used to go sleigh riding in. And this was the highlight of, when your father took you and your sled and you went sleigh-riding, and everybody was there.

LEVINE: Now, this was a sled that your father would push, or?

HONOLD: No, this was one, just a small one, that you could sit on, just one person, sit on. And you'd go down through the trees and down the mountain.

LEVINE: What did your father do?

HONOLD: He was a bookkeeper for the Steiff company. And what was remarkable was when I went back for this Nine Hundredth Year Celebration I was permitted to be on the podium and on the front row. And a woman came up to me and she says, "You just look like my boss, Herman Honold, that I have worked for." And I said, "Well, I am his daughter." ( she laughs ) So they have been very good to me, the town. They have honored me tremendously, yes.

LEVINE: How was the decision made for you to come to America?

HONOLD: Well, Steiff was, because of the Great Depression, Steiff was laying people off, and because of the fact that there was no possible future for my father, they decided to come to America and try the life here.

LEVINE: Do you remember what they thought or what you thought before you actually came, what you expected?

HONOLD: It was hard to even anticipate because we, we had no one. We had a cousin in New York that I guess we did correspond, but we were not in any way close to, and it was hard to know ahead of time. But what happened to us was that we had this huge house and just before we were leaving Giengen my folks were able to sell the

house. So we had a large sum of money with us, which of course they put into the bank, and it was real security for us. But this money did not last very long because in 1930 the Crash came and we lost every bit of it, every bit of it. And that was the same year that my brother had diphtheria and died. So we had, we had . . .

LEVINE: Real hardship.

HONOLD: Very much so, yes, very much so. But I to this day admire my parents for their strength and their stability, and there was never a dead end street for them.

LEVINE: Can you remember what your mother packed to take with you?

HONOLD: Yes, I do. It was a huge box, a huge box. I would say at least ten feet by ten feet. It was very high, too. It was wooden, and everything went into this wooden box. And I know she took a set of dishes that were given to her at her wedding, which was in 1919, and things were very scarce at that time. And I still have that beautiful set of china. It was a twelve cups and saucers and plates, and a beautiful coffee

pot and sugar and creamer. And they brought it all over in perfect condition. And I know what went in on top were our featherbeds. And do you know we kept those featherbeds. They felt good in New York. Until we got to Florida. And then we didn't feel we wanted to keep them here, so we packed them and sent them to Germany. ( she laughs ) But they were the same featherbeds.

LEVINE: Did this huge box go with you on the ship?

HONOLD: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: Was it, your father, because the company was closing, so he didn't feel that he could find something else there.

HONOLD: Not in Germany, because they had a severe depression, very severe. It had already started earlier, and it was unbelievable. And that's why Hitler even had a chance, because of this depression. And Giengen, of course, was a rural area, and you always, I remembered taking a metal can and going for milk at a certain point. So, you know it wasn't the poorest area like the cities would be, but still there was, there was poverty.

LEVINE: Do you remember leaving Giengen?

HONOLD: Yes, because it was with a lot of flair. They had the town band and the town choir come to the train station. And everybody was there. It was with a lot of flair. And I remember this so distinctly.

LEVINE: Now, were there many people from the town leaving for America at that time?

HONOLD: Not at all, not at all, and they thought we were, we were going into the land of unknown. They really discouraged us from going because they just thought America was so far away.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Then when you last, where did you, where did you embark from?

HONOLD: It was either Hamburg or Bremerhaven, in the north part of Germany. And I remember the long train ride we had, and then we boarded this ship, but do you know my mother made a lot of preparation for our trip. I remember a seamstress coming into the house and sewing

clothes for me, and while some of them were made out of used clothing, I had a beautiful wardrobe. And I remember this so distinctly, the beautiful clothes that I got. And then my aunt, who went to the boat with us, bought me a brand new pair of shoes, and I was so proud of these shoes.

LEVINE: Do you remember what they looked like?

HONOLD: Yes. They had a strap, and they were black. And they were a little fancier than the shoes I usually wore. And the thing I remembered about these shoes was that while everyone was so very sick on the boat, I never got sick. And when we got off the boat I had worn these shoes out completely. They were useless afterwards.

LEVINE: How many days were you on board ship?

HONOLD: Oh, at least ten or eleven days.

LEVINE: And you actually wore out a new pair of shoes?

( she laughs )

HONOLD: I wore out a new pair of shoes. And, I tell you, I had the best time. The boat, the trip was so stormy, my mother never got out of her bed the whole time, nor

my father or my brother. He was up a little while, but he had to go to bed, too. But I never got sick. So they had ropes strung along the decks so you could hold on, because it was so very stormy. And then these big waves would come over and just drench you. And I had to go down many times to the stateroom and change my clothes because I was so wet. And I remember one thing, they didn't even have the dining room open, it was so stormy, and people just didn't go for their meals. So I was able to go to the chef, and he would give me things to eat. I could go many times. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Can you describe some of the clothing? I mean, when you got here, was the clothing that you had like the clothing that the children in your, say, your age, were wearing here, or was it different? Do you remember that?

HONOLD: That I really couldn't describe. That I really couldn't compare. But I remember the low waist and then the pleats, and I remember this particular one with the low waist was a check, a black and white check, and it had a big bow on it. I remember that. And also I had a knitted outfit that was blue, and I

wore that a lot. I just loved that, blue and white.

LEVINE: Do you remember the name of the ship?

HONOLD: Yes. It was Albert Ballin, Albert Ballin.

LEVINE: And you didn't travel steerage on that ship?

HONOLD: Oh, no, no.

LEVINE: You were in . . .

HONOLD: We had a cabin, but that was not very comfortable because we had ordered four beds. It was a bunk type thing, but they only gave us three, three beds. So my brother either had to sleep with me or, and, you know, the beds on a boat are not very big. They're very narrow. So that was quite uncomfortable.

LEVINE: Do you remember any other escapades aboard ship?

HONOLD: Well, not really. There wasn't much going on, because it was so stormy. But I think just being able to move myself from one part of the boat to the other, and holding onto this rope and getting, getting drenched was unforgettable. And, of course, it was horrifying to my mother, ( she laughs ) but there was nothing she could do about it. And since I was not sick, why, I

proceeded to keep going up to the deck.

LEVINE: Were there other people aboard ship besides German people?

HONOLD: That I don't remember, and I don't recall meeting anybody, or anybody that I met.

LEVINE: You were able to speak German. Did you speak any English at that time?

HONOLD: Not at all. Not a word, not a word.

LEVINE: And how about examinations? Were you examined before you left Germany by the steamship company? Do you remember?

HONOLD: I remember my mother insisting that my brother and I get all our shots. That I remember. But that, that I don't recall. But I do think we had, we had physical exams before, examinations, before we left.

LEVINE: Do you remember the ship coming into the New York Harbor?

HONOLD: Very much so. We had to be up very early. It was dark. And we were, we were at the railing, and it was all so strange and fascinating. Yes, I remember that.

LEVINE: And what do you, what was your impression of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island?

HONOLD: Um, I don't think, I remember seeing it, but I don't know that I made any real impression. But in 1952, when I took a boat to go to Germany and came back, and again was up at the break of dawn looking out, then the remembrance of that first trip was fresh in my mind. And it was then that I cried my tears, of joy, of course.

LEVINE: How about Ellis Island? Do you remember going there?

HONOLD: Yes, I do, and it was because my father had a hearing deficiency that we had to go there and I think at that time anybody that had a physical problem had to be examined. And if it was hereditary, hereditary, why, they would not allow you in. They would send you back. And that fear was there that day, when we went to Ellis Island. And I remember sitting on a hard bench and my mother giving my brother and I a bar of chocolate, and my father had to go elsewhere, and I know there was fear, because the thought of maybe having to go back. But since this hearing problem was caused from an operation and not a family, yeah,

inherited, why, it was very soon that we didn't have to stay.

LEVINE: And do you remember ( she clears her throat ) excuse me, physically what Ellis Island was like while you were sitting on a bench waiting?

HONOLD: Well, it was very crowded, and just seeing all these people was frightening, too. It was a huge room. I just remember this huge room, and my brother and I just stayed on this bench to wait out our time.

LEVINE: And then when you left Ellis Island where did you go, or did someone meet you or . . .

HONOLD: Yes. This cousin met us, and they lived in Jamaica, which was not very far from the pier. And they took us to their home where we were, to occupy the attic, which was such a shock to us. Because, after all, we had lived very nicely. And to be given an attic for your lodging was quite a shock, and it was very uncomfortable. And I know the thing I remember most was we all began to itch. ( she laughs ) And then we found out that there were bed bugs, and we never knew there was such a thing as bed bugs. ( she laughs ) So, that I remember. And the bed was a metal bed. So

we didn't stay there very long. But, you know, that bed went with us. We rented a house, and we took that bed with us. And I remember it was, the paint was peeling off. And do you know, I remember painting it green, because that was my bed, and it took on a different character after that.

LEVINE: Would you remember your first few days or weeks in America? Do you remember anything that struck you, anything else besides bed bugs, that struck you as new and different?

HONOLD: I was given my first treat of ice cream, and I had never had ice cream, and I didn't like it. I didn't want it. ( she laughs ) That would not be true today. And also I remember getting a tomato to eat, and I had never had a tomato, and I didn't like it, either.

LEVINE: So then you and your family rented a house?

HONOLD: Yes.

LEVINE: And was that in Jamaica as well?

HONOLD: No, it was in St. Alban's.

LEVINE: And did you start school soon after?

HONOLD: Yes, I did. And, of course, I was put in first grade. And not knowing a word of English, it was, it was quite a shock. You know, I've got to retract that. Our move to St. Alban's was after we lived in the cold water flat in Jamaica. That was our first house. And I remember all we had was a furnace in the kitchen, and there was no heat in any of the other rooms. And the first school I went to was in Jamaica, and the first day I went to school I remember I had not seen any colored people before. And this was my first experience, to see negroes. And . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember what, as a six-year-old, how you interpreted that?

HONOLD: Well, I was quite taken because, shocked, really, because one of the colored girls in the class came up to me and admired my ring, and I remember it had a green stone, and she moved it, and she put it on her own hand. So I went home devastated because this was my ring, and to have it stolen off my finger the first day of school was not a pleasant experience. So I went home, of course, and told my mother, and she went

back to school with me. I remember holding her hand, and I pointed the child out to her, and she had the ring on her finger. And, of course, again, my mother didn't know any English, too, so she just took her hand and removed the ring off her hand and we walked away. Not a word was spoken. But that was quite devastating to me, that first day.

LEVINE: And how, did you have any experiences learning English that you recall in particular?

HONOLD: Not really. I've had many experiences since with children from other countries at my school, and it only takes about two weeks for a child to be able to interact with other children and learn words very quickly.

LEVINE: Were you among other immigrant children at that time?

HONOLD: No, no. Not at all.

LEVINE: So what did your father do, then, for work?

HONOLD: Well, he did anything and everything. I remember he went to a butcher shop, and I saw him come home with these big, high boots. And then he worked at a nursery transplanting plants which he was better at

because, really, our little town was in an area where there were lots of forests and there was lots of nature. So he felt better at the nursery, and he would try anything.

LEVINE: And your mother? Did your mother ever work?

HONOLD: No, not at first. I remember her going out and cleaning for people after a while because, really, there wasn't enough money coming in, so she would take on some cleaning jobs.

LEVINE: Do you remember your parents talking about, I mean, how did they feel about coming to this country?

HONOLD: Well, I remember my father not being very satisfied, because he felt they had given up too much to come here. But being of strong character, it just was a time of passing through, and it was not a dead end street.

LEVINE: So it seems like the first four or five years were different.

HONOLD: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes. And, of course, it was the 1930 crash coming. And my brother dying, it was very difficult, very difficult. And I remember after

leaving this cold water flat in Jamaica, we went to St. Alban's and we rented a house there. And, again, we had no furniture. I remember we won a chair at a church, at a church raffle, and do you know I still have the chair? It's memories, and it's in beautiful shape. I just had it reupholstered once, but that was the only chair we had. And the next thing that went into our living room was a piano, and then I started taking violin lessons. But the room was empty. We had beds to sleep in. ( she laughs ) This house was only rented, so that after a while their great desire was to own a home. And I remember the home we did get to own. My mother had been to church to a Ladies Aid meeting, and she was riding home with somebody in the car, and there was this house with a For Sale sign on it. And she says, "Oh, let's stop and look at it." Well, it was a house that had been foreclosed, and it cost about, it was priced at four thousand dollars, but it was completely redone. Everything was repainted, and I remember the kitchen floor had black and white linoleum. And my mother was so taken by this house she asked the man what it would take to acquire it, and he said, "Well, if you want this house you've got to give me a down payment." She said,

"Well, I have to show it to my husband first." And he, all my mother had in her pocket was a ten dollar bill, and that's what it took to hold the house. And I remember my father was sleeping, so she shook him and woke him up, and quickly went to see this house, and they acquired it.

LEVINE: How old were you about that time?

HONOLD: I was probably ten or so, yes.

LEVINE: So was that sort of a beginning of a change for the better?

HONOLD: Absolutely, absolutely. And we kept this house until we moved to Florida in 1956.

LEVINE: And that, was your father able to find good work after (??)

HONOLD: Yes, yes. Since he was a bookkeeper and good with figures, he was hired by the Continental Baking Company, and his job was to fill out the orders that came in. And he stayed with this company until he retired, yes.

LEVINE: Okay. So I want, we have about ten minutes left. I

want to get, is there anything else about your life in New York that's kind of a transition that you and your family made from Germany prior to moving down here that you would want to mention?

HONOLD: ( she pauses ) Um . . .

LEVINE: Did your parents become citizens?

HONOLD: Oh, yes. My father became a citizen very quickly. And I remember this. It was a big event, and we had a big dinner for all the people we knew. And I remember we didn't even have enough plates. So it was a big event. And then my mother became a citizen, and I remember the dinners she cooked and the friends she invited. So . . .

LEVINE: Were there customs that your mother and father kept, and maybe you do, too, today, from Germany?

HONOLD: Oh, I'm sure. Oh, I'm sure. I mean, like, we celebrated Christmas Eve rather than Christmas morning, which is customary in America. And we always had our exchange of gifts Christmas Eve.

LEVINE: And what was the church that you belonged to once you were in this country?

HONOLD: The Lutheran Church, and I still do. And, as a matter of fact, later in life I went to work for them as a parish worker, and I worked on Staten Island and Long Island.

LEVINE: So that you were actually, you were working. You were out of school and working before you moved to Florida.

HONOLD: Oh, yes, oh, yes, yes.

LEVINE: Well, then how did you and your family decide to move?

HONOLD: Well, St. Alban's, that's where the naval hospital was, St. Alban's went really completely, uh, the Negro people came in. And we were the last ones, really, to move out. And we felt, my father had retired, and we had this two-story house, and we felt that the house was large, and we had no friends left in the town or in the area, and so my folks had never been to Florida and neither had I, but they decided what they wanted was some warmer climate, and so we decided to move to Florida.

LEVINE: And once you settled here, then tell me about your career.

HONOLD: Well, I had always worked with children in the New York area, and since this was my God-given gift, I came down here, and I was here at a time when there was no industry, and there were no children to speak of. So I couldn't, I couldn't go back into my profession. So then I went into real estate, and real estate was good to me that, in such a way that I acquired my first property for my first school, and that grew tremendously so that in 1975 I acquired some more property and built up my school so that I started with three-year-olds and went up to eighth grade. But the early years were really giving to children what I had had in my kindergarten, and so many of the ideas and principles were initiated in my kindergarten and in my preschool. And it was outstanding in that people were very pleased at my philosophy and my handling of children that it grew by leaps and bounds.

LEVINE: Could you, it may be difficult, but as distinctly as you could, just give a few statements about the philosophy that you used in your school?

HONOLD: Yes. You know, the main push on parents is to have their children read at a very early age. And my philosophy is to give them some basic, some principles

that will stay with them for life at the early age. And I think children must be happy in their early years. They must experience real happiness and structure and security in the early years. And then when it comes time to teach the rudiments of learning it comes easier when they do it after they've had a foundation. And I often have used this example. You don't expect a flower from a plant right off. You have to cultivate and nurture and nourish the roots. And I always considered the early years in my school for children roots. And then the flower will come later if you've done right by the root system.

LEVINE: So really you were striving in part to make your children happy?

HONOLD: Oh, definitely. And I had established many events of tradition, like each spring toward Easter we would have a concert and an Easter hat parade. And decorating these hats grew to be a real event. And we did it in class for a number of years, and then the parents did it at home as a family unit. They would get together and decorate these hats. And then we'd have this parades of hats. And this was always the big event. Today when I see some of my former

students, I ask them what they remember most about my school, and it's always this Easter hat parade.

LEVINE: Well, I guess, I often ask what about your old age, but I guess that isn't an appropriate question for you. What do you see yourself doing in the next several years?

HONOLD: I retired two years ago, but right now I have a group of my former parents who had children in my school that are meeting to re-establish my school, at another location. And it is so thrilling and so exciting for me, and it's really going to materialize. And it's going to be on a farm again. I have always felt that animals and children belong together, and I've always had farm animals at my school. And my animals, I've had to move from my previous school. And they are now within a mile on a farm. And the new school that will be established will be on this farm. And it's just so thrilling that all these people, and they're all professionals, doctors and their wives. I have one professor who teaches teachers at the university. I have a man who is leading this who has his master's in business administration. And it's just so thrilling that these people who had their children with me want

to have this continued, perpetuated, really, for other children in town. So I am just so thrilled, and there is no such thing as retiring. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Now, looking back on your life and the fact that you started out in Germany and lived most of your life here, if you can think of yourself as part, what part of you is German and what part of you American?

HONOLD: Oh, America is everything. When I can I have patriotic programs at my school. My children know all the songs, the national anthem, and all the other songs that are patriotic. And I'm very American. But I cannot, I cannot neglect or overlook the fact that I had such a marvelous heritage, and a marvelous beginning. That was my foundation. And I must share this with others and pass it on.

LEVINE: That sounds like a perfect place to end. I want to thank you very, very much. It's been a pleasure. This is Janet Levine, and I've been speaking with Clara Honold, and we're here in Dunedin, Florida on April 20th, 1993, and I'm signing off.