

**EI-862**

**ROSE GENSLER GOLDEN**

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**SHIP: THE ROTTERDAM**

**PORT:**

**RESIDENCES:**

LEVINE: Okay, this is February 26, 1997 and I'm here at the home of Rose Golden in Margate, Florida. Mrs. Golden came from Germany in 1921 when she was seven years of age. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. If you'd start at the beginning by saying your name when you were born and your birth date?

GOLDEN: Okay. Well, actually I—I was born on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1914. At that time my birth certificate said Rosa Zellermayer because my parents were married in Romania. Just had the Jewish ceremony and it wasn't until my father went into the service when I was three days old—it was the beginning of World War I—and at that time my name was officially—they got married again with a civil ceremony and so then my name became Rose Gensler.

LEVINE: Oh, Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: And uh—

LEVINE: How do you spell the—the name—

GOLDEN: Zellermayer?

LEVINE: Yes.

GOLDEN: Z-E double L-E-R-M-A-Y-E-R. There's an interesting story about that, but I don't know if you want me to go into that.

LEVINE: Yeah, sure. Go ahead.

GOLDEN: I had an uncle—my—my mother was one of thirteen children and she was the oldest, and her youngest brother was quite a character and he came over here. He got caught up in the Holocaust. He was in Siberia and all that kind of business, but anyhow, when he finally made it to the United States after he was in Israel for a while, he told us a story about that there was a very wealthy landowner who had a daughter. No sons. His name was Zeller, and a man who worked for him, name was—last name was Mayer, and they fell in love, his daughter and this man, and the only way the father would give permission, since he didn't have anyone to have the name sent down to, he—he said—he consented if they would call it Zellermayer. So in other words, everybody in the world who's Zellermayer would be related to me in some fashion.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. I see.

GOLDEN: Right. Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, so where in Germany were you born?

GOLDEN: Berlin.

LEVINE: And did you live in Berlin up until the time you were seven and you left for this country?

GOLDEN: Yes. Yes. Yes, I did.

LEVINE: And I know you were seven, but do you have—do you have memories?

GOLDEN: I have—I have memories like of Germany. Just things like to see Cinderella in this very large auditorium, and I mean it was actually—it must have been a very large place like a stadium because there were horses galloping across with the—you know, that kind of memories. Or like we had someone who worked for us who—my parents had a little story. Like candy and tobacco and that kind of thing, and we had an aunt. She took me, I remember to—it was Christmas and of course, we being Jewish, but she wasn't, they took—she took me and they had Santa Claus climbing in through the window. I remember being terrified,

screaming and carrying on. It was, you know, like ridiculous. And those are the kind of memories that I have.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Do you remember any ceremonies like around birth or death or—

GOLDEN: Yes.

LEVINE: Or marriage?

GOLDEN: Yes. As—

LEVINE: In Germany?

GOLDEN: As a matter of fact, my very first memory, which is pretty amazing I think is when I was—I have a brother who was part of a twin. It was a little—he's--he's still living, thank God, but his—the little girl died when she was six months old from malnutrition, and I can remember looking out the window when they left to take her to bury her. So I was just about two and a half years old at that time.

LEVINE: Oh.

GOLDEN: And I do remember that. I remember I have—my mother's cousin, who is still living, who's now ninety-six, who lives in Baltimore, and I've stayed in close touch with her. Who when she had confirmation, I guess it was, and I had on this little white dress and I had to get up in front of all these people and recite a poem or a little speech of some kind. I had also—I guess I was—my—after my mother, she was—like I said, she was seventeen when she left Romania and went to Berlin. Went back to Romania and married my father, but after she—they were living there, my father had one sister who came. They—she was single, and my mother had two sisters who came to Germany and they used to—they were all single and I was the only child and they would vie with each other on Friday's as to who was going to buy me the best present. And, you know, that kind of thing I remember.

LEVINE: You were being confirmed?

GOLDEN: I wasn't being confirmed.

LEVINE: Who was being—

GOLDEN: My mother's cousin, who is still living, who is now ninety-six.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. I see.

GOLDEN: Right, she lives in Baltimore.

LEVINE: Now, so your mother's—your mother came to Germany.

GOLDEN: She had an uncle there who's the father of this woman I'm talking about who was confirmed.

LEVINE: I see.

GOLDEN: They were very well-to-do people. I remember their house.

LEVINE: Oh, go ahead.

GOLDEN: I remember this—a beautiful big house and it would—there was an elevator in it. They lived in the entire thing and they had what they called a children's room, and I remember the maroon carpeting and it was this one room where they just--all they had in there were things for the children to play with. They also—their business was like pickles and smoked fish all that kind of thing, and it was right next—near where we had our little store. I used to send my brother over there to—loved pickles. I still do, and I used to send him over there to steal a pickle out of the barrel. He was younger. He had to listen to me. Is that the kind of thing you want me to talk about?

LEVINE: Yeah, that's—yeah, good. That's fine. That's wonderful. Now, your father and his family, were they in Germany for—

GOLDEN: No, no, no, no. No, they—

LEVINE: They also came to Germany.

GOLDEN: Only his one sister. Only his one sister.

LEVINE: Was he born in Germany, or he—

GOLDEN: My father?

LEVINE: Yeah.

GOLDEN: No, in Romania.

LEVINE: They both were.

GOLDEN: They both were.

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh.

GOLDEN: My mother was born in a little town called Piana Mikuli [PH] and my father was very well educated, for a man of that—at—in those days. He could speak five languages. Unfortunately, he died when he was just forty-seven, but he—

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

GOLDEN: It was Abraham, but he changed it officially to Adolph when he was—when he moved to Germany. Either he changed it, or they changed it for him when he went into the army. Anyhow, actually the story goes that my mother was sort of engaged to somebody else, but her father wrote—my father had been hired as a tutor because there were all these children. There were thirteen children and he used to get a tutor to come to his place to teach the children.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: And my father happened to be that man and my grandfather thought he was the perfect husband for his daughter, so he made her—in those days, a father could tell them what to do. So he insisted that she come back to Romania and meet my father and they—they were married in Romania, and like I said, just a Jewish ceremony.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: Until after I was about two years old, when they finally legitimized it, as far as the German's' were concerned.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did they become German citizens, do you know?

GOLDEN: Well, he was in the army, but whether they were citizens, I don't know. But he was in the army.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh, and do you have any memories of World War I? Any personal recollections [unclear]—

GOLDEN: Well, the only thing—the thing that I—and I don't know how much of it I remember, how much of it I've heard, is that it was during the war and I was just—like I said, I was born at the beginning of World War I, and there was not enough food. My mother would tell—told stories about how my brother would cry. He wanted some milk and they didn't have milk, and that's how the—the little girl died when she was six months old from malnutrition. So things were pretty rough, as far as food was concerned. I did go to school there for one year.

LEVINE: Do you remember that?

GOLDEN: Oh, I remember, like I said, childish memories. I do remember the school room and I remember the teacher.

LEVINE: Do you remember how it compared with school later, when you were here?

GOLDEN: Not really.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: Not really. When—when—when I got here, it was after the World War I and there was a lot of antagonism towards Germany and the kids used to torment us and run after us and holler “Deutsch, German,” make fun of us and I was miserable. I hated—we lived in New York for five years and I hated it. The worst five years of my life.

LEVINE: Really?

GOLDEN: It was—yeah, well, it was tough getting accustomed to being—not being able to speak English, etcetera, etcetera, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. How about religion? Was your family religious in Germany?

GOLDEN: They were religious to the point of where most of us are here today.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: They kept kosher. I wouldn't say they were overly religious. They worked on Saturday.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. What was your mother's name?

GOLDEN: Anna.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

GOLDEN: Zeller Mayer.

LEVINE: Oh, Zeller Mayer, right. Yeah.

GOLDEN: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay, and let's see. When you were born, you were the oldest child?

GOLDEN: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay, and then the twins?

GOLDEN: Yes, and then the twins who were just two years younger. And then I have another younger brother, but he was born in the United States. That was my mother said, the first thing she was going to do when she came to the United States was to make an American citizen.

LEVINE: Oh. [Chuckles]

GOLDEN: So—and he's wonderful. He's my—very wonderful person.

LEVINE: Good. And how about grandparents? I guess you didn't see them too much.

GOLDEN: Well, I have no recollection of seeing my grandparents at all in Germany. My father's parents came to the United States about two years before we did, and so I knew them but not until we came to the United States. My mother's parents—see, with all those children—of course, a lot of them had died by then. So they—they still had like three children in Romania and they had three children in the United States, at the time that—when I grew up and my parents—my mother hadn't seen her parents, as hadn't—her two sisters hadn't seen them for many, many years and they were very anxious for them to come. So they wrote and told them that I was engaged to be married and since I was the oldest grandchild, it was—they should come to the United States. I wasn't engaged. I didn't even know my husband at the time, but it was a way for them to—they—they were torn between leaving those children and coming to these. They did come.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: They brought me a beautiful pair of silver candlesticks, which I cherish.

LEVINE: Oh.

GOLDEN: And they—they did live to see—now, did they or didn't they? My—it was wonderful having them here. We particularly loved my grandfather. He was a very sweet old man. I once—

LEVINE: What was he like?

GOLDEN: What was he like?

LEVINE: Or any experiences with him.

GOLDEN: He was very—yeah, well, he was a very kind, loving, great person. At the time that they came, we already lived in Baltimore, and we had a—a bar. We had a confectionary store and then when Prohibition was lifted, it became a bar and we had—we lived in the back of the bar and I remember my grandmother was—oh, she was very bright and very nice person, but we just adored him, and she was so jealous of him. And we would all—we'd come and we would always run over and kiss him and then we'd kiss her, as a duty sort of thing, but with him it was—and I remember once asking him in Yiddish, “[Yiddish]?” “Grandpa, do you love me?” and he looked at me and he said in Yiddish, “You foolish child, what a stupid question.” You know, something to that effect. So it was wonderful knowing them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: And he died long before she did, and I was with her when she died. Oh, I could go on and on, I've had such a very full life.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: So many different experiences.

LEVINE: Well, let's—

GOLDEN: But that's not what you're interested in.

LEVINE: Well, let's—we'll go kind of—

GOLDEN: Go back.

LEVINE: Chronologically. What—is there anything else that—that comes to your mind regarding those seven years in Germany?

GOLDEN: In Germany. I remember my mother's youngest brother and sister coming to Germany to visit. They were just teenagers at that time. Since my mother was the oldest and these were the youngest, there was a big age difference. I remember them taking me to a park and they each held me by a hand and they bought me a little paper bag with cherries and I can—you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: I remember that. Is that the kind of thing you want?

LEVINE: Yeah, sure. How about playing, do you remember what you played with as a child?

GOLDEN: Well, I had a lot of dolls.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

GOLDEN: I remember having them—they were forever taking me to have a picture taken and for some reason and now I know what the reason is now, but I couldn't explain it to them, I used to cry. I used—I—I thought that if they took my picture, I was going to go into the picture and I wouldn't be anymore, and I didn't realize that until after I grew up, the reason that I was crying.

LEVINE: Wow.

GOLDEN: Uh—

LEVINE: How about why your father and mother decided to come to this country at the particular time they did?

GOLDEN: Well, things were pretty bad in Germany and my father had a sister who had been in the United States for a very long time, happened to be a wonderful person, as was her husband. And they had money and they brought the family over, and they had already brought my father's parents and they had brought this aunt. My father's sister, who had come to Germany when she was single, had in the meantime gotten married and they brought her and her husband and baby over. And then my—the family had by that time, they weren't in Germany anymore. They had left Germany, and they—my father had a brother who was here, so it was just—and Germ—things in Germany were very bad after World War I.

LEVINE: As far as economically, is that what you mean?

GOLDEN: Economically.

LEVINE: How about anti-Semitism, was—did—was that in evidence?

GOLDEN: Oh, I wasn't—I would not have been aware of it at my age.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: I don't remember any incidents that would tell me that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Okay, so—

GOLDEN: I remember the trip to—

LEVINE: Good.

GOLDEN: Well—

LEVINE: To the port?

GOLDEN: To the port.

LEVINE: Okay.

GOLDEN: We had to stay in a hotel for one or two days waiting for the ship to come in, and one of the things—it sounds—it's silly, but I remember so vividly is seeing they had like a breakfast in the lobby and the only thing that was in the breakfast was a great big bunch of bananas. I had never seen a banana and I was so intrigued with it, and I—I couldn't—I kept pestering and pestering until finally they—I did get a banana. I can still taste that banana. It was like a wonderful experience. And that—you know, that's the kind of thing that I remember, the—and I remember on the ship, things that happened, if you want to hear about that.

LEVINE: Yes, I do. The—this breakfast was in the hotel lobby?

GOLDEN: Yes, in the hotel lobby and the only things in it was a—a big bunch of bananas. That's it. Yeah.

LEVINE: And did—did you know it was a fruit when you first saw it?

GOLDEN: I had no idea what it was. I was just completely overwhelmed with curiosity, I guess, as to what it was, and then when they told me that it was something that you eat, I just—I guess I was kind of spoiled because I had all these aunts when I was little, who—and I sort of got my way with everything. So that I guess my first few years were pretty—in some ways were pretty wonderful.

LEVINE: Yes. Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: So—

LEVINE: And then I guess the war just economically—

GOLDEN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Deflated everything. [unclear]

GOLDEN: Yes. Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay, so then you got—now you were—on this questionnaire you had put that the port of departure was Rotterdam.

GOLDEN: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: That was also the ship?

GOLDEN: Now, according to what I found in my Roots book. I looked it up.

LEVINE: Okay.

GOLDEN: After I spoke to you.

LEVINE: Okay, so the—what about the—the passage on the Rotterdam? What do you remember about that?

GOLDEN: Well, the passage was pretty bad. We—well, as I said, my aunt and uncle were wonderful and they brought us over, but we came in steerage.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that?

GOLDEN: Well, I remember that it was—it was pretty bad. The food was awful and I remember one day, you know, the German word for a dog is “hund,” and I for some—something apparently happened to me before I went on this trip that scared me. I was deathly afraid of dogs, which lasted well into my adulthood, and this guy came over to my mother, and Black Market. He asked her whether she would like to buy a “hune.” A hune in Yiddish is a chicken, but I thought he was saying a hund, and my mother, you know, whatever, paid him under the table and she got—but I thought she was buying a dog and I got—again, I got hysterical. I was like so afraid because I was scared to death of dogs.

LEVINE: Oh. So she bought a chicken on the ship?

GOLDEN: In Black Market. I mean, the food was so bad and this, I guess they made some money under the table. They were able to steal one, I guess out of the kitchen. I mean, I wouldn't be able to explain to that to you, but I do know that she bought it, and I only remember it because he said a hune and I thought he was saying a hund. So.

LEVINE: And, let's see, do you remember when the ship came into the New York Harbor?

GOLDEN: Yes, and—and there was a lot of excitement onboard with everybody, you know, seeing the Statue of Liberty and the usual excitement for coming to a new country. I don't remember too much about the passage itself, except the couple of things that I've told you, but I do know that at that time in Ellis Island we were kept there for almost a week, which was unusual and it was because there was a smallpox scare.

LEVINE: Oh.

GOLDEN: And even though I already had four vaccinations, they gave me a fifth one.

LEVINE: Where did you get the vaccination?

GOLDEN: On—on, at Ellis Island on wherever they kept us there.

LEVINE: Oh.

GOLDEN: We all had to get vaccinated and then they kept us there for, like I said, almost a week and I remember my aunt, the one who brought us to this country, and an uncle—well, I'm not going to go into detail about how they were related because that's not important. They would come every day in a little motorboat or something. They weren't allowed to come in, so we would stand out on—on the deck, I guess and look down. I remember looking down and they would come every day to visit and they would call up to us and we would answer.

LEVINE: Wow. Now—

GOLDEN: And that—they came every day.

LEVINE: For that week you were on the ship? Were you—

GOLDEN: Not on the ship.

LEVINE: No, on Ellis Island.

GOLDEN: On Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

GOLDEN: On Ellis—no, we got off the ship and we were on Ellis Island and all that—and there all that time and like I said, they came to visit every day

and we would talk through the—and I was skinny. The—the only thing that was pretty about me was my hair. I had real long pretty hair.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: Which my aunt immediately when we came here said, “Little girls in America can’t have long hair.” I realize now that it was because there was a lot of nits and lice and stuff. Do you want to hear that story?

LEVINE: Yeah.

GOLDEN: How she took me—well, that was after we—okay.

LEVINE: Well, let’s finish with—were you in the hospital buildings, do you remember, in Ellis Island?

GOLDEN: I wouldn’t be able to tell you for sure.

LEVINE: yeah.

GOLDEN: I—I would guess so because we were being kept like quarantined.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and do you remember anything about Ellis Island? Impressions or memories about how—how the people treated you or anything—

GOLDEN: Well, there were no bad feelings about it, so I guess everything was okay.

LEVINE: Yeah. Oh. Okay, so then when—when you were dismissed, do you remember when you were told you were free to go?

GOLDEN: Yes, and—and again, the same aunt and uncle came to get us and the first thing my uncle said to me was that I looked like a little green rat because I was so skinny and my color was bad. And like I said, the only thing that was pretty about me was my hair.

LEVINE: Huh.

GOLDEN: But—

LEVINE: Do you remember any first impressions?

GOLDEN: It was very—there was a lot of excitement.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: Well, my impressions were mainly with the family because they came to get us and they were very friendly and they made us feel so welcome, and we stayed with aunt and uncle in Brooklyn—in Flatbush, New York, and as I had said, my uncle was wealthy and he had a dress factory.

LEVINE: In Brooklyn?

GOLDEN: In—no, in Long Island.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: He had one in Brooklyn, too, but he also had one in Long Island and since my father couldn't speak any English, they—they moves us out to Glen Cove, Long Island, but you know, we were on the wrong side of the tracks, not on the wealthy side.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

GOLDEN: And they were pretty miserable years.

LEVINE: What did your father do then for work?

GOLDEN: He just helped out, like as a handyman to—

LEVINE: In the factory?

GOLDEN: In the factory.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What was the name of the factory, do you remember?

GOLDEN: No.

LEVINE: And was it in Glen Cove?

GOLDEN: It was in Glen Cove.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: The name of the people who owned it was Doleburg. [PH]Now, whether it was called Doleberg's, I'm not sure, but—but that's where—he worked there for awhile, and it really was not for him. And that's when my youngest brother was born there, in Glen Cove.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

GOLDEN: And I remember the day he was born, you know. He was born right at home. They came down and they said, "A little Rosala," because they said he looked just like me.

LEVINE: Oh, huh.

GOLDEN: So, yeah, they—that's how they told me that I had a little brother, that he looked just like me.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: And—

LEVINE: Did you start school right away?

GOLDEN: Yes.

LEVINE: And how as that with your—with the language barrier and—

GOLDEN: It was tough.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: But I was determined and I—I happened to be a very good student and I was very unhappy those first few years because the kids were—as I said, I was seven. They were all a year younger than me, and so I was pretty unhappy about that and when I was in the—finishing the third grade, my teacher said that if I wanted to, she would give me some books that I could study. Apparently, I must have told her that I was unhappy about being a year behind and she told me what to study over the summer, and when I came back in September, they put me in the fourth grade for like one month, and then they put me—they skipped me through the whole—I never went to the fourth grade. I went—I must have studied very hard and I went right into the fifth grade, and then I was happy because I was—had caught up with the other kids.

LEVINE: Were there—were the other kids also immigrants? Were there a lot of immigrant children in your—in your—

GOLDEN: No, no, no, and that's what made it pretty miserable because they would torment us with running after us and making fun of us because we were German.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: I had learned—I was speaking English, but broken English and I remember that with—really, I was miserable. It was not a very nice neighborhood, a very poor neighborhood and the kids weren't very nice.

LEVINE: Now, were they taunting you because you were German—

GOLDEN: Yes.

LEVINE: Or because you were an immigrant? If you had come from some place else, would they have taunted you as well, do you think?

GOLDEN: I don't think so. I think mainly I remember the German part of it.

LEVINE: Hmm. So—so you stayed there for—

GOLDEN: We were—we stayed in Glen Cove for approximately not quite two years and then they opened a little grocery store for my father, and he still couldn't speak English very well. And one of the stories that came down was that this woman had bought a few things and then she said, "How much is it?" and he turned around to look at the shelf to see, to find "how much." I mean, he thought it was another product.

LEVINE: Oh.

GOLDEN: So it made it very, very difficult. They—you have to give them so much credit, coming to a foreign—to a country that was foreign to them, not being able to speak the language and being able to raise their children and—it—it was very tough, you know, looking back. As a child, I of course didn't realize all that. We lived there—we lived in New York total five years between Glen Cove and Brooklyn and then the store burned down and it was at that point that we moved to Baltimore.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: Where my mother already had two sisters now, and my father had a sister, and the whole family was very close.

LEVINE: Okay. I think we'll pause here and let me turn over the tape.

[END OF SIDE A]  
[BEGIN SIDE B]

LEVINE: We're resuming here on Side Two. Why—do you know why the family settled in Baltimore? I mean, not your immediate family, but the family—

GOLDEN: Yes, because one of my mother's sister was married to a man who had cousins in Baltimore who encouraged them to come and he bought a *Sun Paper* route. That's the paper in Baltimore, the *Sun Papers*, okay?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: Okay. Then as my other uncles came there, everybody bought a *Sun Paper* route, including my father.

LEVINE: Oh.

GOLDEN: So all four of them had *Sun Paper* routes.

LEVINE: Oh. Now, what did that involve, having a—having a paper route or owning a paper route?

GOLDEN: Well, it so—it so happened that my father had one of the worst. It was very few papers, but it was a very large area, which entailed a lot of work because you had to walk blocks to deliver a paper, and I remember when I was a—we moved to Baltimore when I was twelve and I remember going with my brother who was two years younger, to help to serve the evening paper and I remember the kids again. We were—they would torment us or want to hit us. I would go into—the papers were delivered near a butcher shop and I would go in there and ask the butcher to lend me a knife so I could cut the rope, but actually I stood there with the knife like threatening the kids. [Laughs]

LEVINE: They must have been really mean.

GOLDEN: They were. They were very mean.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: And they were—they were hard times. They—they were.

LEVINE: And again was it—it was because you were an immigrant, a German immigrant, a Jewish person?

GOLDEN: Well, maybe the kids—

LEVINE: Do you know why?

GOLDEN: Probably a combination of the whole thing, but by that time I could speak English.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: And so could my brother. Because here I'm already twelve years old.

LEVINE: Right. How about your mother and father, did they ever become citizens?

GOLDEN: Oh, yes. They became citizens as soon as they could. When they were in the country for five years, they both became citizens.

LEVINE: Oh, okay, so—

GOLDEN: They were wonderful people.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and did they go to night school or how did they—

GOLDEN: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: Yes, they did. They went to night school. They became citizens. They learned to speak English.

LEVINE: Do you know how they felt about being in this country? Did they—did they want to become Americanized—

GOLDEN: Yes.

LEVINE: Or did they feel they wanted to hold onto some of the customs of—

GOLDEN: No.

LEVINE: No.

GOLDEN: No, the only thing they held onto were the family. They always stayed in very, very close touch with the family that was left behind. That was now none of—well, they—no, there was none. Well, it was—I guess there was family left in Germany up until the time that Hitler took over, at which time the ones that were left were either exterminated in a concentration camp. A couple of them got to Shanghai. The one who's living in Baltimore now who's ninety-six, they were in Shanghai for about five years before they made it to the United States. They were the wealthy family that helped out when—those are the ones that my mother went to when she left Romania.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Let's see. So, your father kept the paper route and is that what he—

GOLDEN: He kept the paper route for—see, he died when he was just forty-seven. So he kept the paper route, I would say for about five years or thereabouts, and then they—they opened a confectionery store on Pennsylvania Avenue. I don't know if you're familiar with Baltimore, but that's a Black neighborhood.

LEVINE: No.

GOLDEN: And you know, it's funny, my impression when—it wasn't until I came to Baltimore that I realized that you're not supposed to be friends with Blacks because in New York I had a little Black girl in my class and we became best friends. So it was a whole new way of looking things when we came here. Of course, my—my parents were—were great. I mean, my mother was the—way ahead of her time, I guess. We used to have a Black man that used to come in to help out and if we happened to be—he'd come whenever he felt like it, and he'd walk in and we were sitting and eating, and she would make a place for him at the table and have him sit with us. So I never felt any kind of—

LEVINE: This was in Baltimore?

GOLDEN: In—in Baltimore, right. So and they had this confectionery store up until the time that Prohibition was lifted, at which time they turned it into a bar and unfortunately, they had had a—my father had gone down to the basement to tap a barrel of beer or whatever you do with that, and the thing exploded. I guess they were making them so fast that they weren't safe. His wasn't, anyhow, and it hit him in the face, in the head and he did live for five years but it brought out—it started a cancer, or maybe he had the cancer and this aggravated it, and he took radium treatments at that time, and they told my mother that he only had one year to live, but he actually lived five years and then he died at forty-seven. And we still had the bar at the time that he died. Of course, I was all grown by now and I had gone into nurse's training, became a nurse. Do you want to hear about all of that?

LEVINE: Yeah.

GOLDEN: You do?

LEVINE: Yeah. So you—you went through school, went to nurse's training and became a nurse and had you met your husband at—by that time?

GOLDEN: I met my husband when I was working—helping out at the bar when my hus—my father had died. In fact, our song was Flat Foot Flugie [PH] with a Floy, Floy because I had several—there were like three different

fellows who were sort of after me. I sound like I'm bragging, but my brothers, my younger brothers used to take bets on who was going to win, which of the horses was going to come in, or something like that and, of course, then they kidded about it. They said it's because he had a car with a rumble seat that I chose him.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: Anyhow.

LEVINE: Well, do you remember anything about popular music when you were—when you were interested—

GOLDEN: Oh, sure, all the—sure. All the—I loved to dance. My husband couldn't dance because he was very short. He wasn't much taller than I am and you can see how little I am, and it wasn't until a few years later that I said, "Listen, you either learn to dance or we just don't go out to any place where there's music." So we did, we took dance lessons and he learned to dance and—and we loved it. It was all the songs that were popular at that time, in the '40s and '50s.

LEVINE: Do you remember any songs that particularly dealt with the—with people immigrating? That had to do with immigrants in this country?

GOLDEN: Can you mention some? My mind's sort of a blank. I remember a lot of songs, but—

LEVINE: Well, I know sometimes there were songs from the old country about immigrating and then they stayed popular here.

GOLDEN: Not really.

LEVINE: No?

GOLDEN: No.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay. How about—so what was your husband's name?

GOLDEN: Eli.

LEVINE: Eli, and let's see. Well, when you think of it now, when you think about coming here as a seven year old and—and what all that meant to you, do—do you—have you put it into a kind of perspective? Do you think immigrating to this country made a difference? It shaped your life in any way?

GOLDEN: Oh, of course.

LEVINE: In what ways would you say?

GOLDEN: Well, if they hadn't left when they did, when Hitler came in, we would—might have not survived at all.

LEVINE: Right.

GOLDEN: I have a lot of family that were lost, and those in Romania, too.

LEVINE: And how about just the immigration experience and its effect on you as a—as a person? Do think it—it made a difference in—in certain ways you are? Your personality or the way you conduct yourself?

GOLDEN: [Laughs] I happen to be somebody who loves people. I have many, many, many friends. Friends from way back when I was just a little kid in high school and we're still friendly and I made all these new friends here, and it's made me very tolerant.

LEVINE: Huh.

GOLDEN: I've had a lot of—unfortunately, you know, you can handle—I don't know if you have children or not, but I have three and I've had all kinds of stuff. I've had cancer. I've had a heart attack and all that, and I can handle that. That's okay, but unfortunately, I have children who've had very—my second son has a heart transplant. He's three and a half years now. Thank God, I've got my fingers crossed, he's fine. He's doing fine. He's walking around with somebody else's heart, and it's tough. I have a daughter who had polio when she was nine and two years ago they started what they call post-polio syndrome and she's walking with a walker. That's tough.

LEVINE: Hmm. Hmm.

GOLDEN: That kind of thing.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GOLDEN: But I'm able to roll with the punches and count my blessings instead of—look, it's either that, or get into a corner and shrivel up and—

LEVINE: But do you think—

GOLDEN: And I chose not to.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you think the—the fact of immigrating sort of allowed you to have that kind of ability to roll with the punches?

GOLDEN: Well, it's possible. Like I said, my parents were great people and encouraged us to be the kind of people that we—that we are. I would like to think is good people.

LEVINE: Can you think of any attitudes they had that—that they tried to instill in you and then maybe you did that with your children?

GOLDEN: Well, it's pos—yes, probably because—actually, when I graduated from high school in '32, it was during the Depression and we were told that there just were no jobs. I happened to be very lucky. I got a job. It was a terrible job, at Montgomery Ward typing. It was like so many words per minute you had to do then and add a bonus. It was like—it was awful, and that was really the main reason that I think I wound up in nursing. I didn't have a lifelong desire to be a nurse, but because of that, I went into training and after I'd been there for a few months—and our parents were very much opposed. They couldn't think that their daughter would go be a nurse and carry bedpans. That was the attitude of a lot of the people. So after I had been in for a few months, it was tough. It was hard. In those days it was very—

LEVINE: You went to school during the Depression? You went to nursing school?

GOLDEN: No, I went to—I started nursing school in '33.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: It was still the Depression.

LEVINE: Right.

GOLDEN: Right, and I graduated in '36 but we talked about attitudes. I came home and I told my father that I didn't want to stay. That I was going to quit the next day and he said, "No." He said, "If you start something, you finish it. I didn't want you to start, but you have started and now you have to finish," and he was very adamant about it. And of course he—I did stay and I did graduate with honors. Got the interns' prize and all that and I loved nursing. And—

LEVINE: Why were you wanting to quit, do you remember?

GOLDEN: It was—it was hard work. It was different than the nurses today. We really worked hard. We—we were supposed to work eight hour days and have school and all. It always wound up to be like fourteen hours

and they were very strict with us, and we had late leave once—one day a week and on the slightest provocation they would take away all the late leaves. If somebody came two minutes late or something, you know. So it—it was hard—it was hard.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: I actually—this again I sound—but you were interested in attitudes and whether some of it rubbed off. Because of the attitude of my parents, I guess, when—when I went down to apply for—it was crazy. My friend and I were walking home one day and she was telling me how much she wanted to be a nurse and her parents didn't want her to go into nurse's training, and—and at that point we must have gotten to the store and I said, "Hey, guess what? Irene and I are going to become nurses." I was just kidding. I didn't mean it, and it so happened that somebody was in the store whose wife did volunteer for the Two Sisters and next thing I knew, she came and told me that she had made an appointment for me with the supervisor at Sinai Hospital and I was embarrassed. I was nineteen years old and I was ashamed to tell her that I was just kidding, so I went down. I figured, "they're not going to take me, I'm too short." And the first thing I asked the supervisor was whether you had to be a certain height to become a nurse and she stood up her full height. Her name was Miss Savage and she was a savage, and she said, "Miss Gensler, we do not measure our nurses in inches." I remember that. but the next thing was that she said I couldn't come—I had taken business all the way through. I didn't have any sciences and she said I had to have some chemistry before I came in. So I should go to school, take chemistry, blah, blah, blah, but I want to come in in September. Now, this is like June. She—so she—she was—she says, "Well, go for a summer course and then go until February." In those days they had the midyear thing. "But I want to come in September," and by that point she was—she says, "Well, you go and bring me a year's worth of credit by September." And that was—she dismissed me. She was very annoyed with me. Well, I proceeded to Johns Hopkins and this is what I get, I guess, from our parents. Determination, and I asked whether I could get a year's worth of credits for a course in chemistry over the summer, and they were giving a course to some teachers who had had chemistry who were going to cover—they were taking a review course. They would cover about a year's worth of chemistry and if I was willing to go in with that group, I could, and I did. And I never worked so hard in my life as I did those six weeks and it was a Professor Gordon, a red-headed guy at Hopkins, and I know that when we finished taking our test the last day, I said to him, "I'm not going home until you mark my paper." And so he looked at it and he said, "It's okay," and I got a statement saying that I had a year's worth of chemistry. Well, when I took that back to Miss Savage, I think it carried me because she was a horrible person and she

treated everybody—but that sort of carried me all through my training. She always—I was treated special because she was so impressed with the fact that I had done this.

LEVINE: Wow, that does show determination.

GOLDEN: I'm bragging.

LEVINE: No, it's true.

GOLDEN: Yeah, and I got that from our parents.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: Right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: The kind of life that they led and that they taught us to lead.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh, and how about, do you think of yourself as German in any sense?

GOLDEN: No.

LEVINE: No, okay.

GOLDEN: No, when we took a trip and we were in the Black Forest near Germany, I refused to go in. No, I have very strong feelings, anti-German.

LEVINE: Anti, uh-huh.

GOLDEN: And the thing is that my parents stayed in very close touch, as I said, with their family and they didn't have any money, but they used to borrow like fifty-two dollars from the Free Loan something, Hias or something, and they would send that to the family and then pay back a dollar a week. Learned a lot from them and their attitudes, and then like I said, unfortunately, my uncle, the youngest brother who I remember as a teenager and then he's the one that was caught up in all that horrible stuff and was in Siberia for eleven years and was determined to live, and finally when—his wife Rosy said that they were willing to let him go because he refused to die, if we sent certain medications, and so my mother did. Sent those medications and he was released and my husband and I, for our twenty-fifth anniversary went to Israel and we met him and he fell in love with us and he—and he has family now. And he came to the United States and what a horrible thing happened. My

brother, my youngest brother put him up in business. His wife wanted to live in New York, so he opened a Laundromat for him, and what do you think happened? He came in. He was shot and killed. After going through all of that he was shot and killed. But he was a fighter and he—I guess he refused when they came into rob him, he refused to give them the money or whatever, but they killed him and he hadn't been here more than—a little over a year. So after going through Siberia for eleven years, that's what happened to him.

LEVINE: Oh, wow.

GOLDEN: Ah—

LEVINE: Do—do you have—do you recall any heroes that you've had in your life? People that you've really looked up to? I mean, obviously your mother and father. Or were there people perhaps in the news that, you know, sparked your imagination. Is there anybody that you can think of you that you maybe really admired or tried to be like or—it's a big question. Maybe it's not—

GOLDEN: It is a big question. I mean, I would—yeah, I would guess the people that all of us looked up to like Kennedy and—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: No, I—I can't really say.

LEVINE: And how about when the Second World War came, did that affect you personally in some ways, except for the fact that you did have family over there? But I mean, were you working—

GOLDEN: Well, sure.

LEVINE: In some war effort or—

GOLDEN: Well, I had—at that time I had started—I was married and I had started my family and I had my—my youngest brother and my other brother—both of my brothers were in the service. My youngest brother was stationed in China and we didn't hear from him like for months at a time and it was very, very disturbing, of course. We thought he was lost, but thank God he made it. Is that the kind of thing you're asking about?

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Did you—I was wondering if you worked at all in any kind of a war effort?

GOLDEN: No, because I had very small children at the time.

LEVINE: Children. And what were your children's names? What are your children's names?

GOLDEN: Alan is the oldest. Howard and Carolyn.

LEVINE: And you probably have grandchildren, too?

GOLDEN: I have seven grandchildren.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

GOLDEN: And my oldest grandson is married. That's a very interesting story, but I can—yeah, I could go on forever.

LEVINE: This is about his—your oldest grandson?

GOLDEN: My oldest grand—

LEVINE: Does it affect your particular story? I was going to ask you—the next question I was going to ask is what is your life like now, now that you're retired and—and you're not—your children are grown.

GOLDEN: Well, I've been retired—I have been retired, like I said, for twenty-two years.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: I retired because my husband wasn't well. I did not want to leave my work because I really loved what I was doing.

LEVINE: Why don't you say—I think you said it off tape before, what you were doing before you retired that you liked so well?

GOLDEN: Well, I was—I started a group in this—well, first of all, back in 1949 the *Sun Papers* had an expose of the terrible conditions in the mental hospitals and at which time I had a sister-in-law, my brother that's next to me in age—two years younger—had a wife who was in and out of the mental hospitals. [Sighs] Their kids and my kids are six years apart total. My youngest and my oldest and theirs are in between and all these times I would take the children because there was nobody else who was willing to do it and then I had all these six kids.

LEVINE: Hmm.

GOLDEN: Babies on through. Now, what was the original question? I—

LEVINE: What—what you were doing before you retired?

GOLDEN: So I became very interested in—[unclear] these expose came up in the *Sun Paper*, I got the bright idea to start a group that would do volunteer work at the mental hospitals, and I started a group back in '49. It was called the Golden Rule Guild. It was sort of they wanted to name it for me, but I didn't want that and so they said, "Well, how about the Golden Rule because that has your name, but it stands for something," and so that's—and it's still in existence.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

GOLDEN: And we've done some wonderful work in all the state hospitals.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

GOLDEN: And from that came—when I started to do school nursing, I started a group in the school. It was a high school and we did volunteer work at—with emotionally disturbed children. Not retarded, emotionally disturbed and it was—it was just a great thing because we would go out each month, and depending on the month—in October, it was Halloween. We'd take pumpkins out and help them carve them and November, Thanksgiving, December was Santa Claus with gifts and etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. And it was just such a great thing that the whole school became involved and when we went out at Christmas with gifts, it wasn't for the patients. It was for the patients—we called it Gifts for Giving and we allowed—these were chronic patients that had been there for many years and had been abandoned more or less by the family. And we would set up tables and have the gifts exposed with new boxes and gift wrapping and everything. And so my group was—first of all, in order to get more gifts, the gym department would have a game and the price of admission was a new gift. It had to be new. The home ec department, when we went out, would bake cookies and stuff and send those out. The music department would send down a choir to sing carols while we were doing our thing. The bus driver that we used to get a bus to go out there to carry all the kids and the—the kids were divided up into groups and they would take the patient and they would say, "Now, you can pick out two gifts to give to somebody. Who do you want to give? You pick out," and we had it divided by men's, women's, children, general. And then other kids would wrap those. After they picked it, they would wrap it and if they wanted it mailed to somebody, we would take care of it. If not, they just took it. It—it was just such a wonderful thing and that went on for years. We won a couple of state things from it and it was great. Of course, when I gave up school nursing, that was the end of the project. Nobody—it was a lot of extra

work and I wouldn't let the kids go during school hours. They had to go on Saturday because it had to be something they really wanted to do. And I had a wonderful experience with that with—at the end of the year I would have a cookout for the group. We called ourselves, the Group, and this particular night it was raining but we still—so I had them inside and during the course of the evening the doorbell rang, and this woman, and she said, "I'm sorry to disturb you, but I really have to meet the person who's had such an influence on my two grandchildren." Because the boy had been president of the group and then two years later when his sister came, she came and joined and she was president of it. They were—he became a psychologist. She became a nurse and it's—it was very rewarding.

LEVINE: Absolutely.

GOLDEN: Whatever I put into it, I more than got it all back and plus.

LEVINE: Wow, that's beautiful. Is there anything now that you can think of before we close about coming to this country and any of the—any of the ramifications that that has had.

GOLDEN: Well, I'm very thankful that my parents had the good sense to leave Germany when they did, and I don't even want to think about what my life would have been if they hadn't come.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

GOLDEN: And, except for what Hitler did to the family, a lot of my family is here and I have contact with all of them. I stay very close with all my cousins, and it's a very enriching, good experience.

LEVINE: Okay, that's a nice place to end. I want to thank you so much for a very interesting interview. I've been speaking with Rose Golden and we're here in Margate, Florida, and it's February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1997 and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]