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Interview with Mrs. ^KCarl Holzhauser, German immigrant, in Wilmington, Delaware, November 13, 1973, by Steven Schoenherr.

Q Well, if you can just begin by telling me what you can remember about your family, and when and where you were born in Germany. When were you born in Germany?

A When was I born?

Q What year?

A 1903.

Q 1903?

A Yeah. In Holzhausen (sp?) by Leipzig.

Q Holzhausen by Leipzig.

A Yeah. Sachsen.

Q How big was your family?

A We were six children. And my father was in World War I...three years away...and I came over here in 1920--well, no, my brother came first. He came in 1923. He was younger. I'm the oldest from six. And he came over here first, and of course times were very bad over there. And I learned how to cook over there, and I thought, "I'm not going to go in service over here." It's so hard to work for people over there. You know, you had to get up 6:00 in the morning and this. So I thought I'd go over here. But I couldn't talk the language. I had a little bit of English. And I came over here in '24 at Christmas time, in December. Took me 17 days on the boat. I had...we had never seen a boat, where I come from. So I had to stay over Ellis Island to get off the boat. To get to Ellis Island I had to stay on that boat for Christmas. And...oh, I was homesick already then. I could have turned right back. And there was so many immigrants, very poor people...Jewish people, and all kinds of.... Well, and then somebody put me on a train with a great big ticket on to go to Wilmington. And one fellow in Ellis Island, he's supposed to be a pastor, a Protestant pastor. He was supposed to get in touch with my uncle here in Wilmington. He was my father's brother. And my brother was here already...my brother he was younger than I--he came in '23. They was supposed to meet me in Philadelphia. Well, they didn't. And I didn't know whether...I couldn't talk. I had a little English, but I couldn't get it out yet. So there was two Polish fellows, they were on the ship with me, and one talked Polish and German, the other talked Polish and English. The Polish and English had met the other one. So I could talk to them through that German talk, you know? And I asked them if they would put me on the Pennsylvania Railroad to go to Wilmington. And they said yes. And then, all of a sudden, the fellow that spoke English that was here--English and Polish--he changed his mind. Here I was in the railroad in Philadelphia...I couldn't talk and didn't know what to do. So all

of a sudden they came back. They changed their mind, and asked me if I'd pay for the suitcases to put up somewhere in these...you know where they...where you leave your suitcase and lock it up in one of these lockers...if I'd pay for it. Well, I didn't know the money. I had \$25.00 I had to have. I was going to give it back to my uncle. It wasn't my money. He had loaned it to me to get off the boat. So I paid for it. But they were honest and they didn't cheat me. And then they put me on this train. They had to walk me over to the Pennsylvania Railroad. And then I got here about 6:00 at night and... well, the day after Christmas. And I couldn't...I thought they would be here...yeah, I thought they would meet me there. They didn't meet me in Philadelphia; they didn't meet me here either. So somebody hollared, "Taxi! taxi!" And I thought, "Well, taxi is German; that's a taxi. I know what that is." And I gave him the address and I told him in German to take me there, and he did. And when he got to Vandever Avenue, Buena Vista Street, that's where my uncle's store was, I didn't want to get out, because I didn't like that store. I was told it's a big store, five people work in it. You know, in Germany that's a big store. Here was that little grocery store. I wasn't gonna get out--that wasn't the place. So then he went in, and here they had closed the store already to get me in Philadelphia at 8:00. See, they had that note from that pastor anyway. That must have been the note he asked them to come and meet me. Well, then I got out and so everything was all right. So on the way down here I didn't like it at all....Oh, those dirty railroad stations. We got flowers, and we got fountains in our railroads over there. I was raised in a different place. I would have gone home for anything at those days. And...well, then I got sort of used to it. It was very hard. I worked for him in the store...and in the house...and I think I got \$5.00 a week. Took me five months to pay for my ticket. Five months. When the five months were up I left, because I found...I went to night school to learn English, and I met a lot of German people there. And they were my friends. And I know what they made in service, you know, in other places. So I wasn't gonna work for \$5.00. And my brother, he worked for Bussey's (sp?)--he learned his trade there. He was a machinist.

Q What was your brother's name?

A Walter Herold.

Q How do you spell that last name?

A H-e-r-o-l-d. That was my maiden name. He died. And anyway, he helped me, and I worked for Jewish people. They talked German. And they were very nice to me. But did I have to work there! And I got \$10.00 a week, which was much better. So then they asked me if I do the washing they give me \$2.00 more. Well! I did. Well, it was all right. I was young; I could do it. So I met more girls, and they all were two's and three's in one place, big places. I was alone. I thought, "Oh, I'll see." A year and a half later I changed again. And I went to the Kadepladens (sp?)....And of course, I had cooking in my background, and...but they had a colored girl. I didn't go there right away, because I didn't work with colored people, and I

was a little leery--I didn't know shall I or not. So three months later they...went after me, and after I was there, I changed my mind, I went to them. And that colored woman was nice to me...was more than a mother to me, she was so nice. She was the cook and I was upstairs. And they had a boy and I was supposed to help them with the language, and upstairs...and all that family they took me like their own. And I'm still in touch with them. So, that was really my immigration. And I got married in 1931--no, 1933. My mother came over in '27...the family...the rest...my father came over here in I think '26. And a year later the rest of the family came, five of them. And we helped them to get on their feet. Everybody got a job. They all got a job, and we had some American people...we were friends...they were jealous. They said, "These people come over here and they take our jobs." The jobs were there, but they wouldn't take them--they wasn't good enough for them, you know. We worked anything to get ahead.

Q What did your father work as?

A Well, my father had it very hard. He was a molder, iron molder in Germany. And they had eight hours already over there. You know, he had a good job and he belonged to a union there. But we wanted him...we knew, you know, it was easier over here. After I came over I thought, "Well, if he comes, he'll get something." So he worked at...I can't tell you any more where he worked. Somewheres down on...way down Vandever Avenue somewheres. Well, he was so unhappy there. He said there was all these Polish fellows, they'd get up in the middle of the night and go to work, because it was piece work. And my father couldn't keep up with this any more. He thought, you know, his eight hours and that's it. So he was very unhappy. He was going to go back home. Well, then my uncle got him a job and he worked for the Wilmington Provision Company, . . . where they...the meat slaughter place those days, where they killed pigs, and...

Q Provision Company?

A Yeah, Wilmington Provision Company. And he stayed there 'til he finished.

Q He liked it better there, huh?

A Oh, yes, he was more satisfied, and he got his wages, and his eight hours, you know, it was changed that way. So...my mother got very sick. She died of cancer in '31. She wasn't here very long. And there was a little brother left. He was only eight when my mother died. But they're all married, and they're all happy. And that's it, I guess.

Q Where did you first learn about America? I mean, when did you first want to come over?

A Well, you know that World War was so long. And we had my father's brother here. My father's brother was here. And once in a while he sent us a \$10.00 bill.

Q What was his name?

A He was Otto Herold.

Q That was your father's brother?

A Yeah. And he had that grocery store. And he was married and he had no children. And money was so scarce for us over home. You know, \$10.00 meant a lot to us here and there. Of course he didn't send enough...if we could have gotten more....So I thought always, if I could go over there and sort of help him a little bit. So that's why I wanted to come over. I didn't want to go in service. I had a year of cooking, and I stayed another year there as a cook in a great big beautiful place in Leipzig. And I thought maybe I can get along over here, and I did, and I made out pretty good with my....

Q Now, how did you get the money to come over...to pay for your passage?

A My uncle gave me the ticket. It took me five months to pay for it. I told you, they took the \$5.00 out every time and they didn't give... I had no money for five months. And my brother didn't have any. He got I think \$12.00 and some pennies when he was in Bussey's...he was going through his trade. Well, he had to pay board, \$10.00 board. And he had only that little bit of money. And then he had finished his trade, and he was getting paid--I don't know how much he got, not much, maybe \$20.00 or so, I don't know any more. So when I had left my uncle, he gave me \$10.00. I thought I was the richest woman, you know. So then those people paid me too. They paid me \$12.00. And in time...oh, the first year was very hard. I gave what I could back home, you know. I knew they needed it more than I did. And then of course these girls had different clothes than I had. My gosh, I had these high-topped shoes and home-knit socks and stockings yet, you know, and....So, in time everything changed, and....

Q Did you have any trouble with the language at first? How long did it take you to learn?

A It didn't take me too long. I had a little bit home. We had a teacher, and he was a prisoner in England, and he could talk pretty good English. And before I left my brother had gone already, in '23, and he said he'll help me a little bit to get ahead. So when I came here to the night school, they told me I can go in the advanced class. See, in school I came out more, because home I couldn't talk to nobody, hardly, because nobody talked English. And since being in service I had to talk English...so it helped me to get ahead quicker. And in school, I loved it in that night school--oh, that was heaven. And I wrote little articles and papers, and they were published. And we had little games. I still got my books from that.

Q Was this the old Wilmington High School?

A Yeah.

Q Do you remember any of your teachers?

A Yeah, but...oh, what was that old lady...Miss Connoley...she was the first one. And she used to come to see the Holzhausers--that's how I

remember calling her. And there was Bob Lemuhler (sp?), and Miss Burnett. I think those were the main ones...and there was a Mr. Baumgarde (sp?), a Mr. Baumgarde, who was very nice too. We had good times there. So I went about a year...night school, whenever I could get off, you know, from the place, the one in....And I got along, because I had to. I worked for the...they couldn't talk German to me...and the cook, that colored cook, she was very nice. She laughed a lot. "Lunch is ready, lunch..." and stuff like this. And they still teased me. So....

Q Did you have any trouble over here from the people who were already living here...because of your German accent, or because....

A No. Oh, no.

Q Did they treat you badly, or...

A Nobody did.

Q Did anyone take advantage of you?

A No. No. People were nice here. Very nice. I got so adjusted that I would never go back. I went home I think about eight times already, but I'll never stay home any more. Well, my place is in the Russian zone, now, so...

Q East Germany?

A Yeah. I can't go back. I been in it. They're nice. But I wouldn't want to be back there any more.

Q Do you remember anything about Ellis Island?

A Yeah. That was a dreary place. Oh, it was terrible. Before we came in with the ship we had to get all undressed right outside the limit somewheres and look for lice and everything. Stuff like this all happened, in those days. Then you go to Ellis Island and you stay in line and some of them were kept back--they had sore eyes or something. But I came through all right. I came out all right.

Q And from Ellis Island you took the train...

A Yeah, I was put on a train--I don't know what ticket any more. It was a big ticket...had it on all the way home.

Q Where did they put that ticket on? Was that put on you...

A In Ellis Island.

Q In Ellis Island? After you went through the lines?

A Um hmm. I was released, you know, and this one goes with that group and this one goes with that one. So they put me on the train.

Q Can you remember your first impressions of America?

A Yeah. I wanted to go back.

Q You weren't very happy at that time.

A No, I wasn't happy. As I said, it looked dirty to me, those railroads and the back yards where the railroads went, because I was used to a different scenery at home. We used to have railroad trips...my, there was beautiful. But here, oh....It took me some time to get used to it.

Q Did anything else strike you as unusual or different, right at the beginning?

A No.

Q The food, or the money...

A Yeah...well, the money. I didn't have any here for a long time. But the food was different...well, because we didn't have so much food, you know. We went through that war over there, and through the inflation in '23, and so we didn't have much. Well, food here I could eat, and I always thought, "Gee, if my family be over here, they can eat all this too, if they want to." It was easier, in the food line, especially. So I had rented a house when they came... with an old lady...she sold out and she got out of the house and went away with the furniture and everything. And then my people moved in and they made out pretty good until my mother got sick... got very sick then and she was sick for a year. And then all the money went to her again. I quit my job for a whole year to take care of her. But that's all there was...

Q Do you like Delaware?

A I love it here. I love it.

Q Have you traveled any in the United States...to any other states?

A Yes, I think I've been almost in every state. I don't know, we just were up in Nova Scotia. And I've been in California three times, and well Pennsylvania and all these...Maryland...I have a sister lives in Maryland. We go down to Easton a lot. I love it down there, too. Where else have I been, Carl, in the United States...I don't even know any more. You've been around more than I.

(Husband) I think you've been...

I've been in Nevada...in the gambling city, you know. And...well, we took tours, several tours. And of course I've been in the Caribbean, and tours....Carl and I, we've been home...

(Husband) You've done your share of traveling.

We've been home several times, too. See, my first husband died and I

married my first husband's cousin. So we went back to Germany quite a bit. And we were in London, England. I like London, England... and Switzerland, Italy. I've been all the way to Sicily...I've been pretty good around.

Q Would you like to live anywhere else if you had a choice?

A No. I'm very happy here. There's no place like here, right here. We got a nice porch. We watch the boats go up and down. And that's it.

Q How long have you lived in this house?

A Six and a half years now. I married in '67 to Carl Holzhauser. Before I lived in Colonial Heights. I had my own home, too. My first husband...I met him in night school. He was just as poor as I am, and we started and managed to buy a home...and it was our very own...we didn't have children.

Q What did he do for a living?

A He was a carpenter foreman for Fortunato. He did very well. So...

Q Can you remember anything about your uncle's store where you worked? Apparently a lot of Germans shopped there?

A No, no there wasn't many Germans. No, no. He had...my uncle had married an American woman and I think it was her people's store before that. It wasn't...that many Germans there. I worked...I did the housework for them, you know, the washing and the cooking, and she was in the store. I couldn't talk the language too well then. And, oh, I'd be in there if I could, you know, to see what was going on, steal some nuts--I loved nuts. And, well, it was a grocery store... about everything you could find. It wasn't a big store. But he had made it so big that I thought, gee I'm going somewhere. It wasn't. So...well, as I say, we all went in service, the girls, and boys, one worked as machinist and the other one...my youngest brother, he quit high school and went down to Bellanca, was working down there, and my father didn't even know it. He was that ambitious. And he left for the National Guard, my younger brother, to go to Rockford Island at that time...the 198th Regiment. And he never came home any more. He stayed in Oklahoma. He married a girl there. And between the two of them--she was a teacher and he became a teacher--they both, you know, went through school in Oklahoma. They live in Alexandria, now. And he became a doctor--he worked himself up, that man, and made up with his high school on the Island, and went to college, and...And the other brother, he's retired. And one of them, he died already. And my father died. Well, my mother died in '31, and my father died in 1950. So we're all here.

Bellanca
Fairmount
factory

Bobcat

Q Did you join any clubs or organizations?

A Oh, yes, my husband belonged to the Wilmington Turners (Turners) (?), and he liked gymnastics and he was an instructor...through the Holzhauser families... they were related...through them he went in there, and we had some nice

times there. And that's all the clubs we really went to. And we had quite a few picnics our own. You know the 23rd--the "23'ers" we call them, I don't know...they all came in around '23, those young fellows. And we made it sort of like every year we got together...all these... they married...these fellows all married, and their families...and then a big picnic those days. Most of them are dead, now. Time goes.

Q Do you get together for a picnic every year or so?

A We did. We did. And now that's all gone. It's all over.

Q Do you belong to the German Club?

A No, I don't. My sister does, but I don't. I never belonged to the singing club, but the other one I did. And they didn't belong to the other one, so we were separated there.

Q What do you think about the things that are going on now in America, this Watergate Affair, President Nixon...

A Well, I don't know what to think of it. I think it's a dirty shame that it had to happen. I like our President. And I think he was betrayed, somehow. I just believe in him. I don't care what happens. Somebody did dirty tricks, and it's too bad it had to happen. So I don't know what to think about it. I hope he clears up and he stays. That's the way I feel about it. I don't know. I think there was too much money in that party. That had too much money to throw around, and some of them just got crazy about it and didn't know what to do with it, and they just spent it that awful way. So I hope everything gets cleared up.

Q Do you remember any other Presidents that you liked since you've been over here?

A Oh, I voted for Roosevelt that time, and I liked him very much...in the beginning. But when he parted my country I would've never voted for him. I hated him after that. What he did to my country...made a Russian zone out of this, you know, Germany...parted it...made it in two parts...that was an awful thing he did. He was all right in the beginning. As I said, I voted for him. Everybody thought he was fine. But that trick...umm umm. We have to pay to go to Germany where my husband's people live, and then I had to pay to go to my own...had to have a separate visa and everything. And then the Russians aren't bad in my country, over there, in that Russian zone. It's the Germans that had nothing...now they're big because you know they put them on top of something. And they say it's getting better now. I was over there in '65. They say it's a little better now...so those Germans I guess are the ones who've taken over now. But I liked that open... like to see it like it used to be, but it isn't. But Roosevelt did that.

Q Did you have a hard time during the Depression, in the 1930's?

A I was here. I came in '24.

Q Yeah. Remember the Depression...after 1929?

- A Oh, did I have a hard time then...when the stock crash came and everything? Well, my husband was out of a job for a while. He followed the lumber trucks wherever he could. We were both ambitious and I started to help out and worked in these homes, you know, where they...and we made out. It wasn't too hard. I mean, if you're willing to find work, you can find it. That's the way I look at it. You can do anything. And I did. And I used to sew for people. And well, as I say, you forget all about it...it's all over.
- Q Well, that's about all the questions I have.
- A Well, that's it. That's my life.
- Q Do you have any other general comments about your life here in America that...
- A Well, I hope I live a little longer. I like it here. I'm really... I enjoy it. There's nothing wrong with this country. Of course, as I say, we get a lemon here and there that wants it. But I don't think the President is a lemon. I think he's done pretty good what he's supposed to do. It's the other people....
- Q O.K. Well, thank you very much.