

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Niles Police Department

Personal Experiences

O. H. 507

LEONARD B. HOLLOWAY

Interviewed

by

Stephen G. Papalas

on

July 5, 1982

LEONARD B. HOLLOWAY

Leonard B. Holloway was born in Niles, Ohio to Mary and James Holloway on December 7, 1915. His family is one of the most prominent in Niles and has roots back to the American Revolution. His grandfather, Leonard L. Holloway, was known as the "colonel" and had fought in several major battles of the Civil War before successfully running for mayor of Niles. Bert Holloway, an uncle, built what is Niles' public works system today. Finally, Leonard B. Holloway himself served as Niles' Director of Public Services under Mayor William Thorpe from 1972 to 1976.

Holloway graduated from Niles McKinley High School in 1933. In 1938, he graduated from Western Reserve College with a degree in Mortuary Science. From 1938 to the present, he has owned and operated the Holloway & Son Funeral Home.

He and his wife, Jane Woodcock Holloway, have raised two children, Leonard B. Jr., age 42 and Joyce D. Lukz, age 34.

Holloway, who once served as a councilman-at-large from 1962 to 1964, is presently a member of the First Christian Church. He is active in many other organizations including Mahoning Lodge #394, the Niles Chapter of Select Masters, Al Koran Shrine and the Niles Kiwanis Club, as well as the Boy Scouts of America.

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Niles Police Department Project

INTERVIEWEE: LEONARD B. HOLLOWAY

INTERVIEWER: Stephen G. Papalas

SUBJECT: Police department, racial tensions, family background, police officers, KKK riot

DATE: July 5, 1982

P: This is an interview with Leonard B. Holloway on the Niles Police Department for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program. The interview takes place at 611 Robbins Avenue at 10:20 a.m. on July 5, 1982. The interviewer is Stephen G. Papalas.

Mr. Holloway, I am going to begin first of all with your family background. Can you tell me what you remember about your family as far back as you can possibly go? I am speaking about your descendants, where they lived, and where they came from up until you were born.

H: I can recall my grandfather very well. He, of course, was head of the funeral home and I spent much time in my boyhood around the funeral home. I recall granddad very well. They had the home first downtown. It wasn't a funeral home that it is known as today. They just had an office down there on State Street and they ran a livery out of the back end of it; I spent much time there.

P: How about your great-grandfather, what can you tell me?

H: My great-grandfather came from Lisbon where my grandfather also came. He was granted a track of land of 160 acres outside of Lisbon where my grandfather grew up.

P: Then they moved here?

H: Yes.

P: What about your early childhood? What is the earliest that you can remember?

- H: I recall back to when I was four years old and my father bought me a pony. My father had a man who worked for him; they called him Kelly. I don't know if they ever really knew what his right name was. I understand he came to Niles and had no place to stay or to live; he had no family so my father gave him a job at the livery. He is the man who took care of my pony. From what I have been told by people who knew, he watched over me more than he did anything else, and made sure that I got on my pony in the morning. He took me around on the pony.
- P: As far as schooling is concerned, what schools did you go to?
- H: I started school at Jackson School on Warren Avenue. We lived on Sheridan Avenue at that time and I went up to fourth grade at Jackson. Then we moved to Woodland Avenue and I was enrolled in Roosevelt Elementary School. I finished Roosevelt and then went to McKinley Junior High School and on into Senior High School where I graduated in 1933.
- P: How many students graduated with you?
- H: I'm not sure, Steve, but I do have the commencement program at home. I believe it was 189.
- P: What do you remember as far as your teachers, maybe your favorite teacher?
- H: T. Craig Bond was at the high school and was the speech teacher. He was one of the finest gentlemen that I have ever met. I recall him more than anybody else.
- P: What were your favorite courses?
- H: Mathematics. Mr. Teifel taught mathematics while I was in junior high. Alice Gilbert taught algebra as I went into senior high. They were both very fine teachers and that was my favorite subject.
- P: I want to go back a little bit before your high school days. This might even be before you were born. I interviewed a lady named Ida Ellis; she mentioned when she was young that she could remember a Holloway Livery.
- H: At that time the livery was located at the corner of Pine Alley and Park Avenue which later became the location of Sammy's Service Station, and that occurred before I was born.
- P: That today would be where the United Cigar is in the parking lot, across from the restaurant.

- H: That would be right across from the restaurant where that livery was. Later they moved down the alley where the United Cigar is now.
- P: Was that after it burned?
- H: Yes.
- P: I am sure you remember seeing the horses run down the street after they got out of the livery because it was burned.
- H: I had heard stories about it. Many of the old-timers when I was young recalled it vividly. That is the only thing that is hearsay from what I know.
- P: If you could remember now when you were walking down Main Street when you were about ten years old, what year would that be?
- H: That would be 1925.
- P: What do you remember about Main Street? Do you remember any of the businesses or any of the merchants down there or businesses at that time?
- H: Yes. There was on the side of where the Dollar Bank is now, there was Robenstein's and Brooks & Jones Clothing Store. There was a shoe store right next to it.
- P: This is all on the east side?
- H: This is all on the east side. There was a drugstore along there. Across the street there was a hardware store. There was a furniture store; of course the theater, the Butler Theater was there. In fact, the whole block on both sides were taken up by stores.
- P: Do you remember anything about the police department? Who are the policemen that you might recall?
- H: The earliest that I remember was Dickey Neiss. I recall Chief Linc Rounds. That would be as far back as I can recall. Louie Moche was on the police force. Charlie Berline was patrolman and later became the chief. Levit Newhart was the merchant policeman who was employed jointly by the city and the merchants downtown to check on their stores at night.
- P: What do you remember about Dickey Neiss?
- H: He was a big man. Everybody respected him and looked up to

him. I think it was because of his stature. He was a very big man, but he was always good with the kids.

P: Did you ever have any personal experience with him that would make you say that?

H: No, I never did. I never had anything, thank the Lord. I never had any run-ins with the police.

P: What about Lincoln Rounds? What kind of man was he?

H: I never got to know him personally, being as young as I was, but from what my father-in-law said, he was a fine and upright man. He did his job excellently.

P: Did you ever hear of a policeman, Lt. Jack Barrett?

H: I have heard of him, but I do not know him.

P: How about Windy Dick Whitticker?

H: I have heard of him, but I didn't know him. I believe Barrett, who you mentioned, later became sanitary policeman for the city of Niles. He served for a short time as sanitary policeman.

P: Do you recall any experiences with your grandfather Leon L. Holloway as mayor?

H: No, he was mayor before I was born.

P: I know. Did anyone ever mention anything to you about him?

H: Yes. They mentioned what a fine mayor that he was. He conducted the city business in a businesslike manner and he did an excellent job at that. He served two terms.

P: I have a small problem in that era now because there is a gap in the story that I am writing about the police department and some of the mayors. Right at the time when he was a prime motivator, behind the establishment of the police academy and the abolishment of the marshal's office, I can't find anymore information. The Daily Times does not have any articles and the Warren Tribune for some reason will not print anything on Niles for a few years. I am trying to find out what some of his accomplishments might have been as mayor.

I know as councilman he was extremely conscientious. He was also chairman of the finance committee and so forth.

I haven't been able to find out what some of the things were that he did as mayor.

H: I can't help you, Steve. I don't know.

P: Just at the time that the idea of forming a police department, he came forward with police statistics in the era and the crime rate in Niles and some of the problems that were existing. He was a prime motivator behind the police department and unfortunately, I can't find anymore.

What about afterwards, when you were born? Could you remember your grandfather at all in his later years?

H: Yes. I remember him.

P: Tell me about his personality?

H: He was a very stern individual. He was all business. He usually wore a black suit with a white vest and a white necktie and a white shirt. He had white hair and a white moustache which he kept immaculately trimmed. As I said, he was all business. He didn't put up with any fooling around. I used to spend a lot of time at the office, but grandad always made sure that I didn't get in the way or that I was never anyplace that I shouldn't be. That, I mean, by being inside of where they prepared the bodies at that time, of any that that they were able to bring in.

Most of them in those years were done in the homes. Bodies were not brought out of the home until the day they were taking them to the cemetery to be buried. The preparation and the calling and the funeral was usually all at the deceased's residence.

P: Did they embalm them there in the home?

H: Yes. They had--they always took out to the house--a cooling board. I don't know why it got that name, but that is what it was referred to. They carried that into the home and placed the body on that and they did their work, such as it was back in those days.

P: I bet embalming techniques have changed incredibly.

H: Oh, there is a vast difference. If my grandfather could see the way we do this today, I know he would be amazed. We use an electric machine. I am sure everybody today uses an electric machine to embalm. Of course, that was unheard of back in those days.

P: How did they do it then?

H: Many times the only embalming that they did was injecting a solution into one of the arteries. Usually at that time it was the axillary artery from what I have been told. The axillary, which is under the arm . . . Bodies were not presented to the family and the public as they are today. The preservation was not near as what it is today. Therefore, many times the bodies became, maybe, dark and couldn't be held too long, particularly if it was summertime.

P: What were some of your personal experiences with your grandfather? Do you remember them?

H: I recall that every Decoration Day my grandfather lead the parade. It was a big parade. In the morning the parade went to St. Stephen's Cemetery. There was always a car or two that took care of the GAR Veterans. That was the Civil War Veterans. There was always a lunch at the old First Christian Parish out here on Church Street for all of the GAR Veterans and anybody connected with the parade. Then after the lunch they all paraded to Union Cemetery for services there.

Grandfather had a white Arabian horse. I was designated to take care of the horse while the program was going on in the cemetery. This was much to my delight because I would ride the horse up through the cemetery where the program wasn't being held. I always looked forward to that.

Other than that, I recall him when he was home. He lived on Arlington Avenue. My grandfather always walked to his office every morning and walked home for his lunch, walked back after lunch and walked home when the day was over. People said they could almost set their clocks by the time he came by because it was precisely the same time.

At home he was sitting in front of the fireplace as I recall having the fireplace going. He was sitting there reading his paper. He always retired early in the evening. He arose early in the morning. He was a quiet man at home. He was a good homemaker along with my grandmother.

P: How did he get the title of colonel?

H: It was an honorary title. It was bestowed upon him after he came out of the Civil War. He was an infantry man in the war. He served three months with the 19th Regiment of the Ohio Volunteer Infantry before he joined the 76th Regiment Company-M where he became a regimental adjutant. He served



under Generals Grant and Sherman and saw Battle of Rich Mountain during the West Virginia Campaign. He was at Ft. Donelson, Shiloh, Corinth, and Vicksburg. He participated in the battles at Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge, the seige in Atlanta and the March to the Sea. The March with Sherman's Victorious Army was in South and North Carolina. After that upon his discharge, when he came back to Niles the title colonel was bestowed on him as an honorary title. He never was a colonel in the Army himself.

- P: From my readings he was tremendously respected by the community because of the Civil War. That was one of the reasons anyway. He was also a man who didn't mince words and was very strict. He was conscientious about everything that he did.
- H: Exactly.
- P: He was highly respected.
- H: That is how I remember him and from what people have told me who were close to him and knew him and did business with him, they had the same thing to say about him.
- P: Don't you find it interesting that he went into the Civil War when he was sixteen years old?
- H: No.
- P: What experiences he must have seen. I understand he went in as a drummer boy?
- H: Yes, he did.
- P: Ruth Holloway is your cousin, right? She explained to me that when he had first gone into the Civil War in battle, his horse fell on him and broke his leg. Do you remember that story?
- H: I have heard it, but I don't know the exact details on it.
- P: I understand that they were going to sever his leg and he wouldn't let that happen.
- H: Yes.
- P: He made them set it right there on the field and he did pretty well.
- H: Yes, he did considering back in those days there was not as much medical technology as we have in these days.

P: What year did the colonel or Mayor Holloway die?

H: 1925. He was stricken in his office and was taken home where he died two days after. His funeral was held in the McKinley Memorial. It was the only service in Niles to ever be held in the McKinley Memorial. It was the only place that would hold the crowd that attended the funeral. He lay in state in the memorial on Sunday morning and services were held Sunday afternoon.

P: How old were you at this time?

H: Ten years old.

P: I want to advance to the period after that. Do you remember anything about the Ku Klux Klan in Niles?

H: Vaguely. I recall that the streets were vacant. Our ambulance was running continually. From what my father said, all of the action was up on North Main Street where the General Electric Plant is now. I saw none of that of course because I wasn't allowed to be up there.

P: The National Guard came into the city?

H: Yes.

P: Did you see any of that?

H: Yes. I saw the troops downtown patrolling the street.

P: Would they patrol in pairs?

H: There were always two or more together. There was never one man by himself.

P: I understand they had set up placements in the city at various points. Did you see any of the machine gun . . .

H: No.

P: Any of the jeeps that they had or vehicles?

H: Yes. I saw those going by. They were using them for transportation. I, at that time, didn't know what they were. I did see them going up and down the street.

P: How long did they stay?

H: I'm not sure about that.

P: Later on in my readings in the newspaper, it seems that the east end particularly along Fenton and Mason Street were

hot spots in the community; a lot of crime occurred here. As a matter of fact, I have talked to some individuals who said a stranger was not allowed to pass through some of these streets for fear of being accosted or in times turned away. Do you remember any of those days? It would be in the 1930's and 1940's.

H: No, I don't because in the 1930's I had friends over in that area and I never had any problems. In the 1940's I was then in the funeral business. I never had any problems at any end of Niles as far as that goes, day or night.

P: Do you think that some of this could be an exaggeration then?

H: I am sure it is. We had ambulance service back in those days and we were called at all hours of the day and night to go, particularly in that section of town, and we were never afraid.

P: I talked to some individuals who said if you were from Warren or anything like that in many instances they just told you to leave.

H: I am sure most everybody in Niles knew us if we were in the ambulance or if we were in our other car. Maybe they didn't bother us.

P: You never saw any of this?

H: I never saw any of this.

P: I would like to know if you ever heard of Mayor Crow?

H: Yes, I heard of him, but I didn't know him personally. My father and he were very good friends.

P: A tremendous number of accomplishments were made during his terms in office. What have you heard about him?

H: He was an excellent mayor. He was one of the best that Niles ever had. He was a gentleman and when he told you something you could believe him.

P: What about Kistler after him?

H: I remember Mr. Kistler, but I didn't know anything about his administration other than what I have heard.

P: Do you remember Chief Berline?

H: Very well.

P: Can you tell me anything about him?

H: Mr. Berline, in my estimation, was one of the best police chiefs that Niles ever had. He ran the police department very efficiently. He was an honest man I know and he was a man of his word.

P: How many years was he here? Approximately what years were those?

H: I don't know. I recall he was still chief when he died. We buried him.

P: Matt McGowan followed somebody.

H: Yes. Mr. Berline died in 1954.

P: Matt McGowan took over after that?

H: Yes.

P: Do you remember Matt McGowan very much?

H: Yes, I remember Matt.

P: Was there anything interesting that occurred during his term in office as the chief of police?

H: Not that I recall. I was not that interested at the time to pay a whole lot of attention to what was going on as far as the police department.

P: You came into office later yourself as a service director?

H: Yes.

P: Under Mayor Bill Thorpe?

H: Right.

P: Was that 1972?

H: Right.

P: You more or less carried on a tradition that your grandfather started which was the councilman and the mayor of Niles at the turn of the century.

H: Yes. My father also served the city as councilman and safety director.

P: Who was the mayor then?

H: George Marshall.

P: You had an Uncle Bert Holloway who was the superintendent of the water and light utilities?

H: Yes, right.

P: I understand that he was self-educated?

H: Yes.

P: He took correspondence courses in this field.

H: Yes.

P: There was something about the service. He had a small amount of training there as a naval officer.

H: Yes.

P: That is rather interesting. He himself, Bert Holloway, was given credit for establishing the system that we have today here in Niles.

H: Right. He served for fifty-three years.

P: I want to interview you on your years as a service director if I may. When you came into the city, it was solvent financially?

H: It was solvent when I left also.

P: I was just going to say that. I find as chairman of the safety committee and councilman myself, before you left office your problem with the union and wage negotiations were minimized as far as I know. I understand that during the Thorpe administration you were one of the people who helped to minimize the problems. When people came in and negotiated with you, you had a way of saying this is the way and that is the way it more or less turned out. How did you do that?

H: Number one, I think we were good listeners. We listened to what they had to say. We took under advisement all consideration. We would not agree to give anything that we felt the city could not afford. We were adamant. We got along very well with them. We had some arguments and didn't see eye to eye on everything, but on the whole, we got along very well with the laborer and the employees there at the city.

P: You had a small problem with the police department at the time. Can you mention anything about that? Did they go on strike?

- H: No. There was talk, I believe, if I recall. Tom Scarnecchia and Mr. Thorpe handled all of the details for that.
- P: What were some of the conflicts inside of the Thrope administration? What were some of the problems that you also faced together?
- H: I think one of the biggest problems of Mayor Thorpe was the lack of cooperation with an all-democratic council. It is sad and I'm sorry to say that this not only happens in Niles, it is right now happening in the United States with our congress and the president. Many times I said to various councilmen who were on council, "You are elected by the people to serve the city of Niles, not just the democrats, not to serve the republicans, but to serve the city." It is regrettable, but some people are so narrow-minded that they can't come to terms with that. That was one of the biggest problems. They did not want to cooperate because the mayor was of the party other than theirs. Most everything that he presented and wanted to do there was strong opposition against, but through it all we maintained the solvency of the city of Niles and we had a plan that the delinquencies in the water and light department were minimal. We had a plan whereby those that were delinquent were on a paying basis trying to get caught up. We felt that the city was run in a business-like manner. We gave nothing away. We made darn sure that when all of these fellows went out they went out on city business. They were not on private property. Everybody was treated the same. When we went in we owed nobody anything and we don't now.
- P: Speaking of the people in the community, I was in college at that time and I wasn't paying any attention to this closely. I did later to city politics. The Thorpe administration is credited with being extremely honest.
- H: I would state my life on his honesty. In fact, that is the only reason I took the job of service director. I wouldn't take the job of service director under any mayor unless I knew he was unapproachable in every way.
- P: With the integrity that you people have in office, how did you lose the election?
- H: Politics is a funny game. You are probably finding that out. I don't know if people want good administration and honest administrations. I was appalled when I was in my first year as service director with the number of supposedly good citizens that came to me and wanted me to send the city workers to do jobs that I myself am paying to have done over all the years. I made the remark many times and of course I made it in a kidding manner that I must be crazy. I have been paying to get all of this stuff and people are

getting it done free. We stopped all of that. Naturally, you make enemies. At the time, some of the city workers felt that they could do better under another administration. I want to say this, the man who was president of the union is now retired from the city. He came to me and told me that they were very sorry afterwards that they did not vote for Bill Thorpe to be reelected. He said that he made a mistake. That is right. When that gentleman retired from that job from the city, he was interviewed by the Youngstown Vindicator. He was asked who his favorite mayor was. His favorite mayor was Carmen DeChristafaro. Then he was asked who his favorite service director was. He said Leonard Holloway. Personally I didn't like him and he said there were a lot of people who didn't like him. But when he put his hand across the table on any negotiation his word was gold. I am proud of that.

P: Do you think your grandfather as mayor of the community had his similar problems in his day?

H: I would imagine that he did. They would be much smaller because the city was smaller and the work force was smaller and there just wasn't as much going on as there is today. I am sure they had problems and they looked as big to them in those days as they do to us in this day.

P: Do you think that there will be anymore Holloways in the future to carry on the tradition that your grandfather started that you helped to carry out?

H: In business or in city government?

P: City government.

H: I wouldn't be a bit surprised. None of my brothers or sisters have been as active civically as I have, but that is very explainable. My one brother lives out-of-town. My other brother who lives in town has been employed out-of-town.

P: That is Jim?

H: Yes, Jim. My sisters both live out-of-town. I have grandsons that are not only interested in general business, but probably will continue as Holloways. I wouldn't doubt it if they take an interest civically as I have.

P: I would like to ask you if you have any advice to give to a person who comes to you and says, "Leonard, here I am. What are the responsibilities of the city mayor or service director?" What advice would you give them?

H: Be honest, do the best you can, and ask for God's help.

P: Thank you very much for your help. There is one thing I would like on tape and that is your business history. Could you give me any of that please?

H: We are the oldest business in the city of Niles; not only in the funeral business, but of any business in town. My grandfather, when he started, there was only one business that was older and that was Niles Firebrick. My grandfather started two years later. The firebrick is long gone and we still remain. We also had the first funeral home, what is now known today as a funeral home, in Niles that was located at 353 Robbins Avenue, which is the site of the present Macali Building.

P: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW