

THE HOME ON THE HILL
Growing Up At An Orphanage
By Philip Gerard



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PREFACE

There is a story in every being for every life is a drama. Occasionally a personal story unfolds in memorable style and becomes part of our literary heritage enriching others because of the shared experience, rare insights and stunning revelations.

Some personal writing explodes from the author as if his life had been lived and destined for the printed page. Others are reluctant and reticent authors who know that they too will share their intimate lives with interested readers but they have to be wooed. Eventually they submit and their private lives become public. They open their minds and memories and what is revealed is sometimes poetic, poignant, and inspiring or startling and sensational.

I was not destined to do my personal story, nor did I have a compulsion to share my experience growing up at the orphanage. I seldom talked about it until I was approaching my 70th birthday.

I always needed a catalyst in almost any major decision I made. My move to tell my story came thru an invitation I received from an old friend, Lois Gunzberg, a gifted writer

and composer who was editing a unique monthly called "Dear Mollie," started by her mother after whom the publication was named.

The contributors to this monthly were an odd lot from around the world who were interested in sharing their personal experiences thru memoirs, poetry, letters, short-story or anecdotes. The contributors and readers were fiercely loyal to "Dear Mollie" and slowly a cult grew around this precious publication and their proud publisher.

Invited and encouraged to contribute by Lois, I ventured on in my new role as first person story-teller and found the highway clear and inviting. I was going back in time and passed thru dark tunnels until I entered a period of the past which opened up in my mind's eye bright and clear. The characters I wrote about were as vivid as if I were back with them over 50 and 60 years ago.

I could not believe all this was possible since I had been totally removed from the place and the people I write about. Yet when I decided to do this series on growing up at the Orphanage, it was as if a camera had recorded all the

scenes of the past, in which I was the principal player, for the single purpose of playing back these events when I had need to recall them. So I found myself writing from a script that I had lived which was now on film in my mind with images more vivid and sharper than any movie apparatus could project.

In writing of my personal experiences, I relived these early years. I enjoyed the renewal of friendships. I was moved by the reminder of a romantic episode. I was amused by some of the characters I contended with and I was pained by the memory of the deprivation of love and of family. However, the distance of time has given me a capacity for compassion and understanding which I lacked in my earlier years when I felt a deeply rooted resentment toward my mother.

Today I know something I never told her. It took courage and it took love for her to put us into the Hebrew Orphan Asylum. She did so because she cared and she never stopped caring. I wish I could have told her this but I didn't know it at the time. Curiously enough, she did not need this reassurance. She knew she had done the right thing and she never wavered. She was a remarkable lady and a courageous and devoted mother.

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For some of us it takes a life time to learn the truth but living is an unending process of learning so I feel rewarded, for in writing this memoir, I have discovered the majesty of my mother who thru her selfless loved found a home for her children where they could be nurtured and protected. In her heart she never left us and, now looking back, we never left her.

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DEDICATION

The most influential person in my life is my wife, Lillian, with whom I have shared all my years after leaving The Home in 1936. We were married on July 19th of that year and proceeded on a journey that had been full of struggle and growth, of pain and joy. Together, we have accomplished much. We faced all challenges -- won most and lost some. We have been partners rooting and working for each other. When on occasion one failed the other, it served only to remind us of what we really felt and meant to each other.

At our best, we were the reflection of our mate and what we have given to each other. We have never stopped growing for our mutual interest in the vitality of life, of art, of love and of family is deep and doubled by our own intensity. I could not have lived the life I have or fulfilled myself as a person without Lillian. These memoirs could never have been realized if my wife had not encouraged me to write almost 50 years ago.

If I were to write a dedication and I am, it is to Lillian whose love sparked the beginning of a new life which she helped mold and as a partner led me to the fulfillment

of a film career and to the joys of a family. She is the Best - the Brightest and the most Beautiful.

My daughter Jennifer is a renaissance person with a broad background of knowledge and scholarship in the arts and in the classics. However her prime interest is her child and her husband. All else follows except the occasional special project which attracts her attention, her sharp mind and skills. A demonstration of this process was her response to me after she read the first chapter of these recollections. She reminded me that she alone was to edit the material. I was delighted for Jennifer's judgment and sensitivity sets her apart and makes her the special person that she is.

My son, Richard, an honor student of Robert Penn Warren's at Yale and a member of the New York Bar was a source of constant encouragement in the recording of my recollections and a cautious counsel concerning the laws of libel.

Like she has all her life my sister, Pauline, took on the arduous chore of typing a manuscript from my raw drafts and illegible notes. She did this with utter delight for which I am eternally grateful. Pauline was the first to see and to react to these vignettes. Her comments were invaluable for she shared these days with me. Her approval was a final confirmation that my camera eye was in sharp focus for she was there and had seen it all.

THE EARLY YEARS

No one really knows the child's world not even the child who lives it and years later tries to recall the early days of pain and suffering and sometimes, for the more fortunate ones, the tender love or the benign neglect. I remember fragments of my childhood, the early years which passed so quickly yet what remains is vivid and painful and indelible part of my being although I've spent my life trying to put the past behind me. It's a fruitless struggle for one eventually has to make peace with his parents if he is to find peace for himself. He has to accept his parents with all their faults and failings if he is to finally accept himself as a fallible human being - which in fact we all are.

I've wasted much too much time and energy in denial when wisdom, insight and compassion could have saved me years of hurt and repressed anger which I tucked away deep-deep in my being for as a frightened child I could not permit these feelings to erupt. I built an interior coat of armour to shield me from the hurt that comes from the love that is yearned for by the infant growing up and denied in a family fraught with problems

of poverty and illness. I never realized how much I missed the love of my mother. My father died when I was 8 and our family (there were 4 children) was broken up with the younger siblings boarded out to a foster family. My older sister and I lived with my mother in a east side flat on 7th street, on the 5th floor, with a common toilet in the hall for all the tenants. Despite the setting, which is historically referred to as the east side slums, I remember our apartment as being immaculately clean. My mother had a cleanliness phobia and we were bathed regularly in the kitchen sink. I went to school in neatly washed shirts and my sister was always groomed in her crisply starched, midf-blouse. I think the rent for the 3 room apartment was \$10.00 a month. My mother was living off a widow's pension and a small check which came from her brother, our uncle, who lived in Chicago and was considered the rich one in the family.

The days on 7th street weren't bad at all. I was 10 years old part of the street gang, baking mickies in the street, which was our year-round playground for stick-ball, immaies, johnny-on-the-pony and other games of the day. I had a girl friend, the younger sister of

of my sister, Pauline's best friend. Her father was the neighborhood custom tailor and they were considered well off. I enjoyed our friendship which years later I recalled with fondness when by chance she met my future wife and gave her a personal gift which she still has today - over 40 years later. I remember my school days on 5th street and I guess I did fairly well. My mother expected us to behave - school was important to her for years later she went to night school to improve her English and her reading. She spoke German and Roumanian and she was fluent in Yiddish. But English was most important and she was determined to master it and she did. My mother was a stern disciplinarian. She was basically kind and tender but she was short-tempered and easily frustrated. I did not understand it at the time, but I now realize having four children with my father's erratic income became an overwhelming burden for my mother. He worked as a jewelry salesman and later as a baker. My father was a union man - I know this as a fact - for I remember attending a baker's union meeting with him when I was 5 or 6. I remember

the building and the meeting hall. It overlooked the lake on 110th street and Central Park and after the meeting we walked into the park. It was 1920, the park was safe and so was the world, according to Wilson. I remember too that my father liked his schnapps - liked it a bit too much. This really was his downfall. He probably took to it as an outlet for the problems he encountered in dealing with family life - too many children and too little funds - especially when illness hit my mother and she was hospitalized. The children were farmed out to various aunts during her convalescence and then we would come together again-always in a new apartment. We seemed to be on our way up the immigrant's ladder for I remember before my father died we moved into a swank apartment house on 163rd street and Sherman Avenue in early 1922. This was an elegant part of the Bronx - just off the Grand Concourse and not too far from Jake Ruppert's new baseball field which was completed that year and was to become the famous Yankee Stadium.

Sherman Avenue was our family's high mark for from that point on it was downhill all the way. My father took ill and died in 1922. Once again the kids were distributed to various aunts around the City. Pauline and I were

moved out to Brooklyn where my father's sister owned a two story building which housed her only daughter, Brooklyn's first lady dentist, her own husband as well as her daughter's, 4 cats and several avaries of birds including some rare South American species. It was an odd household with a Chekov touch. Most of the day, as I remember it was spent drinking tea. The family was quite well off. They owned the building which had 3 stores on the street level and one tenant above us. My Aunt Mollie, who wore a bandanna and smoked a cigar, ran the household like a tight, sloppy ship. The place seemed always to be in need of cleaning which she tended to. She did all the heavy work. In the winter she shoveled the snow off the sidewalks and the coal into the furnace and throughout the years she cared for her family, her cats and the two of us. My cousin, Helen, had her dental practice at home so we were cautioned to keep quiet during the day when her patients waited in the parlor outside her office. The parlor was bursting with plant life which was a special interest of my cousin, the dentist. Her husband, who looked like Teddy Roosevelt and never worked a day in his life, was a graduate of Cornell and its Law School but his principal interest was keeping a daily record of the N.Y. Times financial pages which he filed away meticulously

in his basement library. He was working on his own system to beat the market which he was playing studiously with his wife's funds. His system obviously wasn't working too well for he lost her entire savings long before the '29 crash.

I remember these years vividly for we were transients in this household and felt it keenly. There were some pluses - My cousin loved opera, played the piano, spoke French beautifully and her husband was impressive. He had the manner of the gentleman, dressed in style, with the air and the voice to fit the image. Aunt Mollie was a lovable character but unfortunately she died of a stroke and my mother came to the rescue and decided to take us with her and opened the apartment on 7th street.

It's curious, but I look back on the few years we lived on 7th street as happy days. We had little - there were just the three of us and we were a tight little family. I don't recall missing my father who had died one year before and my younger brother and sister were really strangers to me. They were living with a foster family on Staten Island and seemed quite content. We would visit them occasionally. It was an all day outing and the trip provided the excitement of an adventure for we took the subway and the ferry and finally a trolley ride before arriving at the home

where we visited briefly. I have little recollection of the reunion with my younger brother and sister but I do have a picture of Staten Island in those days and it seemed like a distant land. The countryside, the little houses and the people were all very strange - so totally different from the busy, grimy and noisy world of East 7th Street.

I guess it was this tempo which as a child I found so agreeable. Second Avenue was a major thoroughfare lined with theatres, movie palaces, restaurants and shops to please the tastes of the mixed mass of Eastern European immigrants who lived below 14th Street down to Houston Street which were the boundary lines of my small but exciting world.

St. Marks Place on 8th St. was really the center of my universe for it contained places of special interest like the popular meeting halls and exotic restaurants as well as the famous neighborhood steam-bath. Although I did have a few kids as street friends, I preferred to discover and explore the neighborhood on my own. I would take off and wander under

the 3rd Ave. El walking along the grey streets and peering into strange shop windows. There were numerous pawnshops on the Avenue and the windows were full of a variety of precious and rare merchandise all marked for sale and I wondered who bought these things. To me they were museum windows which housed collections to be admired. The end of my journey usually brought me to 14th Street where a Penny Arcade attracted my attention. I wandered through this amusement center and looked at the mutascope machines and the mechanical lady Fortune Teller who was always in motion while a phonograph blared away a popular tune. I seldom had any money in my pocket so there was no temptation to take in the wonders of this fantasy land. I was content to view it all as an outsider. I never did discover the marvels behind each of the machines and the variety of games available to the pleasure seekers who frequented this popular Penny Arcade.

Another landmark in my journey through my East Side wonderland was a building which housed Hammacher

Schlemmer, the famous old New York specialty store which has since become chic and fashionable .

But back in 1924 it was an old fashioned and reliable specialty shop patronized by those who could afford their high quality merchandise. Few Eastsiders were their regulars but the carriage trade came to them from all parts of the City.

Eventually they would close, move uptown and change their image to please the uptown trade. I would wander about Cooper Union and wonder about the cloistered world that was enclosed in this formidable structure. I knew nothing of its history but I was awed by the architecture and sensed it had a solemn place in our rag-tail community.

Third Avenue was an extension of the Bowery and the beaten and the battered who fell into this world were often seen crumpled at the entrance to a tenement or saloon or even asleep on a busy street corner in mid-day. I turned away from the sight of these drunken and defeated souls for it would upset me to see such misery. What was even more painful- no one seemed to care. Adults and even police walked

by these human wrecks without stopping to see if perhaps they needed help. Eventually I too turned away - But I was young, yet I cared, so it distressed me and I avoided the Bowery scene. It was too painful and I had already experienced pain at a much earlier age so I wasn't about to be seeking the sight of it on the sidewalks of New York.

First Avenue was a totally different scene. This was the world of the pushcart and they were lined solid along each street curb selling every variety of food, fruit and vegetables as well as notions and clothing. Actually 1st Avenue was an open bazaar, an early day super-market - the forerunner of our modern day shopping centers. My mother occasionally sent me out to shop and I remember bringing the items she asked for and returning with an aluminum milk pitcher filled with a quart of milk for \$.05 laddled from a great can. I would proceed to swing the pitcher in a circle demonstrating some law of gravity for I never lost a drop of milk while I displayed my dexterity.

I enjoyed gaping at the street vendors pitching their wares. They were hardworking and serious merchants and the competition was keen so they cajoled or amused you but always with the intent to entice you to purchase their wares. They had their regulars but the difference in profit or loss came from the bargain hunters who shopped the street with a keen eye and a sharp ear. Here was the City as a symphony of super salesman and boisterous buyers and for me it was joyful bedlam. I looked at it as a game and I was rooting for a winner. I found my pleasure in simple interests since there were no funds in my family for pocket money. I was a regular at the library and went through all of Tom Swift, Frank Merriwell and Horatio Alger. I did get to the movies once a week and this became a ritual I looked forward to with keen anticipation. The program at the local movie house featured a half-hour serial which continued from week to week and always ended with the hero in a most perilous predicament.

Elmo Lincoln and Jack Mulhull were the stars of the series. I remember how I agonized over their

perils each week waiting for Friday afternoon to see them escape from the clutches of the villain but only to end again in another deathtrap. I had to see my hero emerge victorious so I never missed a Friday matinee at The Star. I managed to raise my movie fund by taking a neighbor's child to school each morning for which I received ten cents a week which covered the cost of the movie and left me with a few pennies for my favorite indulgence at the local candy shop. Pick-a-penny chocolate with a pink center and win a valuable prize. I kept spending my extra pennies hoping for a pink center but I never did pick a winner. However, the excitement and the expectancy seemed to satisfy me so I didn't feel too badly about not winning a prize. Thinking about it now, I don't recall any of my friends ever winning either so I am not too sure it wasn't my first experience at a con game.

One of my most vivid memories in these early years was the excitement of the presidential elections in 1924

which pitted John Davis, the Democrat, against Calvin Coolidge. Politics in those days touched every home for the local leaders were an extended family where the poor looked to the elected representatives for all kinds of help especially when a member of the family was in need. I got caught up in the street meetings and loved the excitement of the band and the passion of the speakers. I listened to every party speaker denounce the opposition and appeal for the vote of the audience for his party - I was 11 years old and it seemed very important to me not to miss any of the big street meetings so I heard them all including Norman Thomas who through the years ran regularly as the Socialist Candidate. I think I liked him best, although I never heard or saw Mr. Coolidge or Mr. Davis. I guess they skipped our neighborhood as they stomped the American scene.

A STAY IN BROOKLYN

Although as a youngster growing up in New York I lived in Manhattan, the Bronx and Brooklyn, my recollections are most vivid of the time I lived with my Aunt Mollie in Boro Park, at 15th Avenue and 44th Street. I must have been about 6 years old when my sister, Pauline, and I were taken in by my aunt, shortly after my mother took ill. We stayed on for about 2 years and during this time I discovered the far reaches of Brooklyn all the way out to Coney Island which I recall we reached by taking the Culver line, elevated train, out to the last stop - Coney Island. I think this ride, looking out on the rails from the window of the lead car standing alongside the engineer in his enclosed motor alcove, was more exciting to me than walking the boardwalk for the first time or mingling with the masses. I don't recall swimming in the Coney Island surf and I don't think we did, for I can't remember owning a bathing suit until much later and then it was only a pair of tights. But I do recall the Culver line and remember taking the ride several times, for the joy of seeing the train speed along the tracks while I fantasied that I was in

command of the Culver Line Coney Island Special speeding the train of wooden passenger cars on to Steeplechase and the wonders that filled that funny place.

My Aunt, Mollie, was always busy, much too busy, with her varied chores in her own household as well as with her various tenants, to worry about me. Cousin Helen had her dental practice, so I was free to roam the surrounding regions.

Although Boro Park was a developed community of neatly framed two family, box type houses, there were still some working farms in the area not too far from where we lived. I would wander off and pick tomatoes in season and remember being chased and screamed at which didn't keep me from returning for further visits to our local farmer.

City life in the early '20's had an appealing quality, especially for children, which has disappeared from the modern scene. The police, in those days in Brooklyn, rode their beat on bicycles and were great friends to all the kids. The milkman made his rounds with his

horse-drawn wagon and often took us along for a ride. At eventide, the lamplighter went around with his long stick lighting up the street lamps which cast a luminous glow and gave the street an eerie look.

Although my aunt and her household were reasonably comfortable, she owned the building, had several tenants and her daughter was a practicing dentist with patients who turned up regularly, she nevertheless, was extremely frugal - a reminder, I believe, of the hard times they had in Lumza, old Russia, before they emigrated to the States in the early 1900's. Her first husband had died and she remarried here after arriving with her young daughter, Helen, who had finished her gymnasium studies in Russia. Aunt Mollie was industrious. She worked as a mid-wife and was ambitious for her daughter and saw her through Columbia University Dental School, quite an achievement for a young Russian immigrant. My cousin, Helen, was an extraordinary beauty, raven hair, deep brown eyes which lighted her lovely face when she smiled. What I remember best of all was her bell like voice which

had a delicious accent. The sound of her voice was like a bird's song to me - She had a lovely laugh which was light, lilting and contagious. I enjoyed her and liked her immensely. Aunt Mollie, although she was gentle, was also a bit intimidating, for she carried the heavy burden of this busy household and seemed worn out by the day's chores and her hard life. She still had family in Russia and she worried about them. She often sent packages to her relatives - brothers and sisters and their children. I think she must have been the oldest of the 8 or 9 siblings and only 3 got to the States so she saved and pinched her pennies and managed to send whatever help she could to those who stayed behind.

I remember sitting with her at the window one day as a fruit cart went by and some bananas fell off the wagon in front of our building. She gave me a sharp look and a knowing nod and off I went to snatch the bananas for our table. Over the years I have often wondered about this incident - picking bananas off the street - but I now realize that part of her never left Russia.

I seldom received any pocket money from my aunt or my cousin. What funds I accumulated for my own pleasures and needs came from my first job - I was 7 or 8 years old and was the runner for the local drugstore which occupied the corner store of my aunt's building. I guess the proprietor felt obligated to my aunt, his landlord, to use me for errands so I soon was his regular messenger after school and would call neighbors to the store telephone which was the community phone. Few folks had a private phone in their house in those days.

When the store phone would ring, the pharmacist I think his name was Mr. Goldberg, would answer and then give me a name and an address up the street and I would dash off like a winged messenger calling on the designated neighbor with the important news that he or she was wanted on the phone at Goldberg's drugstore. I would receive a penny or two for my services and sometimes even a nickel. I accumulated my savings which I used for my weekend movie and I guess the rest went for the usual playtime pleasures of the young of those days - marbles and immies, spinning tops and rubber balls for stickball - the all

American game on the streets of New York in the early '20's.

The movies were still a novelty so it was a real treat to be taken out to an evening show. The first film I recall was a Mary Pickford picture, and it may have been "Daddy Long Legs." My cousin and her husband, who preferred the opera, decided they would see America's sweetheart at the local movie house and for some reason I was privileged to go along. I enjoyed the experience of being part of the adult world as much as the movie. I thought Mary Pickford had a tomboy quality and liked her a lot. I saw several of her pictures and also became a fan of Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess. I was in agony when Lillian Gish was on the ice floe rushing over the falls in "Way Down East."

In the summer time the movies were shown in an outdoor theatre adjacent to the enclosed theatre so that the customers could see the films in the comfort of the cool summer evening. I too sought relief from the oppressive heat of the summer nights and often would climb to the top of a giant billboard located opposite the open-air theater and there perched on top of a sign saying "I'd

Walk a Mile for a Camel," I viewed the top half of the screen of the Garden Theatre which played all the newest attractions. I missed a good deal of the action but I did get to see the stars whenever, there was a full face close up. I guess this limited viewing was not worth the risk of a 40 foot fall, for I gave up my seat on top of the billboard early that summer.

THE HOME ON THE HILL

By Phillip Gerard

I remember the election night of 1924 vividly for it was the last time I would roam the streets of New York and enjoy my private world on East 7 Street. While the street fires burned late into the evening and gangs of kids paraded the neighborhood chanting slogans and singing campaign songs, my mother was at home making plans for us which would change our home, our lives and shape our future. The next morning the news boys on the corner were hawking their papers and shouting headlines "Coolidge Wins" but I wasn't listening to street noises. I was preoccupied with what I had just heard from my mother. She told my sister and I that we would be going to the Hebrew Orphan Asylum where children from families of single parents, who were economically pressed or from broken homes, or orphan children, were placed by the Jewish Welfare Board, which was serving the welfare needs of the Jewish community in New York City.

This period remains vague in my mind for I can't recall the events that followed or my feelings although I know I

was comforted by the knowledge that my sister would be with me. She was older and had already assumed a protective role.

I didn't know then and still wonder just what the critical events were that prompted my mother to turn us over to the care of the Jewish Welfare Board. I think it was her concern for us that brought her to this decision. She had no funds of her own, received little help from her family and the few dollars that came from her widow's pension hardly covered our daily needs. She worried about our schooling, our health and about our future. She probably felt the institution would protect us, care for us and give us some special opportunities that she could not provide.

I never felt abandoned by my mother for I knew she loved us but I did feel a sense of estrangement which continued through the years.

Before leaving for the institution my mother took us to a children's clothing store on 1st Ave. and 5th St. where she purchased new wardrobes for us. I remember passing this street daily on the way to school and looking at the knicker-pants suits on display in the window and admiring one that had caught my fancy but I never dreamed that I should have

it. My mother permitted me to make my choice of a suit and I pointed to the one in the window which in fantasy I had been wearing for sometime. My sister selected a blue velvet dress and when we put on our new clothing we looked as though we were children from the upper classes rather than from the lower masses. I don't know about my sister, but my spirits were lifted for this was my first suit and I was pleased with the gift and felt rather special.

Shortly after, dressed in our handsome new outfits my mother took us to the offices of the welfare agency. We carried no clothes with us but I think we had a package of fruit. We were left with the social worker who explained to my mother and to us that we would be going shortly to the Reception House of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum. My mother kissed us, cried and left us. It was early in December, 1924 when we arrived at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, a sprawling formidable six-story red-brick building with turreted roof tops covering the 2 square block area between 136th St. and 138th St. and Amsterdam Avenue and Broadway. We were taken to the main building which was awesome in size and design.

in the private staff dining room where the food was excellent. I know about all of these advantages because some years later, I too became a counselor and a student at City College.

The most memorable member of the staff at the H.O.A. was Lionel J. Simmonds, the Director of the institution, who was known to us as L. J. or The Colonel. He was an intimidating figure with a massive tight-skinned balled head and a sonorous voice which made anything he said sound like an urgent pronouncement.

Colonel Simmonds was the ultimate symbol of authority and discipline. To most of us who knew how punishment ruled our world, he was an ominous figure. Although I never experienced a confrontation with L.J. or received his physical discipline, I knew that he was a hard hitter and for those who broke the rules he could be painfully harsh. I saw him slap boys and girls with the full force of his massive being. He would also let loose a tongue

lashing that was equally stinging.

Looking back I must acknowledge that many restrictions were lifted and new privileges granted during L.J.'s long tenure. When he first took over as The Director of the H.O.A. physical punishment was excessive and cruel. By the time I left the institution all this had changed. The atmosphere within "The Home" was relaxed and friendly. The uniforms of the past were gone and we wore garments of the day. The girls in attractive dresses and the boys in slacks or suits.

L. J. was responsible for most of these changes which made life more agreeable for all of us. He was also responsible for my becoming a counselor, although I did have an excellent record of service thru the years. I was a monitor and later became a captain of several dormitories. Counselors tended to put much of their responsibilities on their captains who in performing these duties were learning and maturing.

Lionel J. Simmonds came to the Institution as a young boy on arriving from England at the turn of the century. He spent long and hard years growing up at the "H" and later was to become one of The Orphanages most distinguished alumni.

He worked his way up to a counselor and went on to a career in social service after graduating from the Columbia University School of Social Work. He returned to "The Home" and became its Director in the early '20s and stayed on until the institution closed in 1941.

Among other distinguished alumni were Edwin Franko Goldman celebrated band-master and composer and Sol Schwartz, who left the "H" in the early 20s, became President of RKO Theatre and later head of production of Columbia Pictures. The most eminent alumni, however, is Art Buchwald, distinguished humorist and journalist. I did not know Buchwald at the H.O.A. since, after a short stay at the Reception House, he was farmed out to various boarding homes and returned only for the

summer camping season. Buchwald, writing about these early days says, "I went from one boarding home to the next and was totally confused. At camp I was pummelled by my fellow campers regularly, that's when I decided to become a humorist.

Fifty years later I met Art Buchwald for the first time at lunch at the Oak Room at the Plaza. We were three, Peter Stone, a mutual friend, and one of Hollywood's most successful screenwriters whose film "Charade" I was handling for Universal Pictures at that time.

Art Buchwald had joined Peter at this luncheon. They had known each other for many years having met in Paris where they were struggling young writers, Buchwald working on the Paris Herald-Tribune and Stone developing his first screenplay.

The talk, at the table, was mostly about the theatre, film and politics and the barbs were

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bright but I wasn't listening for my mind and thoughts were back in those early days at the "H" wondering how it was for Buchwald growing up away from home. I was far removed from the Oak Room, for I was thinking about the 1,000 kids in the dining room at the "H" and not a single Maitre D.

A TOUCH OF LIFE, LOVE AND LOSS

After four weeks of quarantine at the Reception House of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, we were officially released and welcomed into the main body and the "main" building of the institution, located on the four square block area between 136th and 138th and Amsterdam Avenue and Broadway, just opposite the old Lewisohn Stadium.

We called it "The Big House" since we looked out from our confinement in the Reception area on to the great playing field where 1,000 youngsters streamed out of the huge red buildings to assemble, parade or engage in freeplay after school.

The "Main" building of "The Home," as it was affectionately referred to by the alumni years later, was six stories high shaped like the letter "H" with two long and towering arms jutting out into the open field area.

Within these extensions were the dormitories, housing 600 boys on one side and 400 girls on the other. The connecting link contained the Synagogue and the dining hall where the children ages 6 to 17 sat in groups of 10, at rectangular

tables. A hierarchy of monitors and captains along with a staff of 40 semi-professionals, mostly men and women attending college were responsible for the daily schedule of activities. ^{day} The/started with the rising bell ringing resoundingly and promptly at 6 A.M. throughout all the dormitories. The next 30 minutes was a bedlam of motion, sound and activity beginning with showering, dressing, bed-making and finally clean-up and inspection. Then, off to breakfast for the usual bowl of oatmeal, cold coffee-au-lait with loaves of freshly baked bread. There was always plenty of bread at all meals which provided a good filler.

Following breakfast, we returned to our alcove of lockers and gathered our material and equipment needed for school and then filed into the synagogue for our daily religious service which was conducted in the tradition of Reform Judaism. We were not required to wear "Yamalkas" and the Hebrew we read from the prayer book was limited to the solemn prayers and the Torah readings.

We entered the Sanctuary silently. It was a very

solemn place for us since we were reminded that we were in the presence of God. The organ music, the choir, the stained glass windows and the Tabernacle containing the Torah Scrolls created a spiritual world which was full of mystery and wonder.

I know this awesome setting affected me in my early days, however, I became less awed and more cynical as the years went by and finally these morning rites became a routine ritual.

From the synagogue, after our daily blessing, we were sent off to school. The younger children attending the lower grades went to P.S. 192 which was located at the orphanage. Included among the pupils were children who lived in the surrounding neighborhood.

The older children at the H.O.A. were dispersed among Junior and Senior High Schools in the immediate area and as far off as the Bronx. I initially attended DeWitt Clinton High School at 59th Street and was later part of the first graduating class - June 1930 - of the new building on Moshulu Parkway in the Pelham Bay section of the Bronx. It was a long and often adventurous journey, taking the I.R.T. subway to the last stop on the Broadway line and

then a 20 minute walk across the Van Cortlandt Park golf course to Moshulu Parkway and the beautiful campus of the new DeWitt Clinton High School.

We were given 10¢ daily for our carfare and 15¢ for lunch. We would buy a sandwich and glass of milk for 10¢ and save the extra nickel to buy a dessert. Before we commuted to the Bronx and attended the local schools we would occasionally take the long walk home and save the fare for pocket money. We used our own savings for the neighborhood movie house or for a very tempting treat of yesterday's pasteries from a corner bakery. A nickel was worth a bag full of old napoleons, eclairs, tarts or a few other delicacies which were certain to send one to the infirmary before the week was out. A lot of pleasure went with the pain. I ended up at Mt. Sinai for an emergency appendectomy performed by the celebrated surgeon A. A. Berg. I lost my zest for yesterday's after my hospital experience.

We were expected to return promptly after school unless we were given special permission to participate in some school function or athletic event. After dinner there was a play-hour for the younger children while the students of the upper grades were required to do their homework in classroom or study halls.

The rules were strict and rigid and the discipline severe.

We adjusted to the requirements especially after testing some of the rules and suffering the consequences. There were many among us who were not so easily tamed - the wild ones - and they endured all kinds of punishments - physical or the denial of privileges. Some were banned from the weekly movie, and others were kept in on days of outings and visiting. Those who cooperated and performed thier duties diligently were permitted to go out on Sundays and visit family or friends.

As the years ~~passed~~ these rigid rules were revised, relaxed and liberalized. Visits to the outside world, which when I first arrived at the "Home" were limited to monthly priviliges, were now weekly outings and on special occasions overnight visits could be arranged.

The week-ends were generally reserved for play. Sports were the central focus in this private world. We were exceptional athletes for we honed our skills in a fiercely competitive atmosphere on the playing field, the baseball diamond and the basket-ball courts.

We were free to let loose our energies and our frustrations and achieve our triumphs. We turned out championship baseball and basket-ball teams year after year competing with institutions like the Leake and Watts Home for Boys, The Colored Orphan Asylum, The Brooklyn Hebrew Orphan Asylum and other agencies caring for children who came from broken homes.

Even the six year olds were caught up in the liberating spirit of sports and fielded a football team called "The Baldies" since all heads were clipped clean as required at that age.

The girls also had their athletics and were enthusiastically involved in their play and games. But, we never played together for segregation was the rule and a way of life at the "H". We were separate and apart in all activities except on special projects and special social occasions when dances were arranged for the older boys and girls.

So clandestine meetings became part of the challenge of growing-up at "The Home". These moments of escape for the adventurous among us offered an excitement that added to the discovery of strong sexual feelings that are part of the adolescent years.

Some of us met briefly in a hall called "Lovers' Lane" outside the dining area where friendships grew in whispers and hands were held in the first joy of adolescent love.

Living so close to the tantalizing allure of the opposite sex and denied the ease of casual contact that comes from freedom and choice, I, like others, felt deprived and sought these secret rendezvous, reaching out for every opportunity to meet in places off limits, in dark halls or under stair-walls where we could embrace each other with the passion of youth despite the fear of guilt and punishment.

I fell in love early and often. First Margie, then Tessa and Elsie. There were others but there was one whose memory never left me. I sometimes have difficulty recalling her name but not her face.

She was truly beautiful and this rare quality came from the inner person which gave her a look that was unique. She had a lively smile that lit up her luminous eyes and gave her a radiance which was part of her even when she was subdued. She had a special glow which I felt was for me alone for

she was truly devoted.

I look back now, 50 years later, and wonder was I crass and casual with this lovely creature whom I embraced at will and possessed.

I knew she loved me dearly but I was too young to grasp the depth of her feelings and her worth until years later, long after we had gone our separate ways. The H.O.A. had become part of the past. I had little contact with those whom I shared my early years except for an occasional visit or call at my office from one of "The Boys" as we referred to each other in those days. So it was rather startling when a voice from the past, someone I hadn't thought of or talked with in over 25 years called. She was one of "The Girls" -- Tess -- and as she said, she was just passing thru town searching for and reaching out

to those she had known in her youth for news of childhood friends.

I could share little with her but she had much to say and chattered away about people I had forgotten totally so I was indifferent to her gossip when suddenly she struck me with her line "Had I heard about my old flame Frances?" She had had an unhappy marriage, divorced - was ailing when she settled in Florida. "Yes, she died last week."

I don't remember the rest of the conversation and I am not sure I said good-bye to Tess as I hung up. All I do remember was that I was deeply moved and felt a personal loss as if some part of me had died, too.

It was only then that I realized how rare a person she was and how much she gave to me in those days of growing-up.

How cavalier I was - how vain and how very young. She was mature at 18 while I was still a boy acting a role - the romantic adolescent - playing at life. She was already a woman prepared to move into life. She had more courage than I had; understood more than I did. She gave more than I could give her. She had more to give.

I look back now and know I must have hurt her deeply when I went my own way. But, I know too, that it was my innocence that turned her aside. Shortlyafter, she disappeared. Now I know that part of me never stopped loving her.

I KNEW THE WARNER BROS. WHEN....

By Philip Gerard

One of the rewards for youngsters at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum was the opportunity to share in a broad cultural life available to those who sought it or earned it.

The institution was located across the street from the Lewisohn Stadium, and we were privileged to attend the summer concerts. The seats were 25 cents but we were the guests of the management.

I remember as a young teenager hearing Oscar Levant play Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" which became a feature of each summer season during the years to follow. I also saw Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis dance and heard Paul Robeson sing.

These summer nights, under the stars at the Lewisohn Stadium, were glorious events. The music and the open sky gave one a sense of freedom evoking fantasies which vanished with the night and our return to "The Home" just across the street.

Music was a major activity at the H.O.A. where the marching band of 80 pieces was trained by the illustrious band leader, Colonel Knox. The band, under his expert direction, won national contests held annually at the old Madison Square Garden.

Colonel Knox was a gentle man of considerable dimension. He had extremely high standards and developed some outstanding instrumentalists, including James Smith who joined the New York Philharmonic under Leonard Bernstein, where he was one of their leading trumpet players; Al Godlis, a brilliant trombonist, was recruited by Stokowski for the Philadelphia Symphony and later was hired by Toscanini for his NBC Symphony. Sidney Kiel made his mark as 1st clarinetist with the Metropolitan Opera orchestra.

Writing about these star performers reminds me that I played 3rd trumpet with this group and was totally out of my class. Colonel Knox was extremely kind to let me stay on with the band hoping I would surface with a sound or some hidden talent - but it never happened. I was the most tentative trumpet player

that ever blew a blue note. I think they kept me on because I looked good in the uniform.

The H.O.A. band had a national reputation and we were invited to play at various public functions, to concertize at hospitals and other institutions and to parade on patriotic holidays.

We enjoyed these outings since they took us to new environments where we were entertained by our hosts with lavish luncheons and delicious deserts.

We always wore our blue full-dress uniforms and we were a most impressive group. When we paraded on Riverside Drive on Armistist Day or Decoration Day we would receive a rousing reception from the street lined crowds. Our marching music - from Sousa to Goldman - was electric. We seemed too young to be blasting out such a big sound with a beat that captivated the crowds.

Music was a major interest for us as spectators as well. We were invited to hear the Edwin Franko Goldman Band perform on the Heights campus of New York University

in the Bronx and on the Mall in Central Park.

These were wonderful evenings. Goldman was a distinguished alumnus of the H.O.A. and a colorful musical showman. He had great style and a great band. He often played numbers which called for the participation of the audience by singing or whistling. He created a sense of drama around each number.

I recall one of the stars of these concerts, a brilliant cornetist who played "Carnival in Venice" with such skill he left the audience of 5,000 cheering. They also cheered Goldman whose presence seemed to be the magic behind the music.

For me the most exciting experience of those days was going to the Broadway Theatre. On Friday nights a group of us would be chosen to go to LeBlanc's cut rate ticket agency. It was located on the lower level of the Times Square subway station. Here we picked up our tickets for a current play. LeBlanc's, which was the most successful ticket agency in the City, had arranged

as a courtesy to make these tickets available to us free.

I was fortunate to be selected for this special privilege on numerous occasions. I remember seeing The Marx Bros. in "Animal Crackers" and being delighted by the zanny characters and their outrageous antics. I was enchanted by the music and the romantic glow of Vivienne Segal and Denis King in "If I Were King." I recall Eve La Galliene in "The Cherry Orchard" for this great lady of the theatre gave a memorable performance which left its mark on me. I saved my playbill programs for years.

Music, dance, theatre were offered to some of us but the movies were for all of us on a weekly basis. We saw the best of films under the best of circumstances.

The Warner Bros., Harry, Sam, Albert and Jack chose the HOA and its 1,000 residents to benefit from their charitable activities. They did this without seeking personal publicity. They wanted to bring some joy to these children. Their first project provided

every child in the institution with a magnificent Chanukah gift. The gifts were carefully chosen and each child was invited to pick his preference from a list of exciting gifts which included wrist watches, ice skates, sweaters, brief cases, baseball gloves and other dandy items.

The Warner Bros., who made Chanakuh our favorite holiday, now made a major contribution to the Hebrew Orphan Asylum. They sponsored the building of a gymnasium with all the facilities and equipment including one of the finest sound and projection booths in town. The Warner Bros. who had just introduced Vitaphone, the first sound system in the film world and installed this newest equipment in our gymnasium building. They also provided new pictures weekly from their local film exchange so we had a first-run theatre at the "H" and each new film was like a local premiere.

I saw many of the early sound pictures courtesy of the Warner Bros. One of the earliest I recall was John Barrymore and Dolores Costello in "Don Juan".. Barrymore was at his best but Dolores Costello, his wife in private life, was so ravishingly beautiful,

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the great profile faded in her presence.

The Warner Bros. in Hollywood and around the world were known for their gory ganster films; I remember them for their kindness, their devotion to the children at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum and their generosity to that institution.

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I MET HIM AT THE OAK ROOM!

by Philip Gerard

As a youngster, I always thought City College was an extension of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum. We were located directly across from the main campus and the Lewisohn Stadium where the City College football, baseball, lacrosse and track teams practiced and played.

The boys from "The Home" were invited to see these games weekly. We sat in the City College rooter's section and cheered along with the students although, as I recall, there was little to cheer about for the C.C.N.Y. teams were dismal except for basketball under the celebrated Nat Holman. He turned out championship teams year after year throughout his long reign at the College. I remember seeing one of the great quintets of those years composed of Art Musican†, Frank DePhillips, Lou Spindell, Philip Weissman and Frank Trupin.

Fate plays odd games for some 30 years later Lou Spindell, a high school teacher, and Philip Weissman, a psychiatrist, became friends of mine. I recall their

sitting in my living room replaying the highlights of their college basketball days.

We felt very much at home on the City College campus for not only were they our neighbors, they were also our benefactors. We would stroll the campus and visit the Great Hall. We were invited to all athletic events and to Lewisohn Stadium for the concerts by the Philharmonic and finally numerous City College men were our counselors. They lived with us for the period of their undergraduate days and many stayed on to pursue graduate degrees.

I'll always remember one of these City College men who was an exceptional counselor. Allie Drieband was 5 feet 5 inches and weighed about 250 pounds. He played center on the Varsity football team and was a powerful defensive star.

In a game with their arch rival, either Manhattan College or Fordham, my memory is vague on this, but not on Drieband's spectacular play. I can see him running now. He picked up a loose ball on the 20 yard

line and ran the length of the field to score. The City College fans roared with joy and laughter for Drieband looked like a barrel rolling down the field. Where he got the speed to sprint 80 yards is a mystery to this day.

Subsequently Drieband went to Law School and then left "The Home" to join Frank Hogan's office as an Assistant District Attorney. He remained with the D.A.'s office for years and continued to counsel alumni from the H.O.A. and help those who got into trouble with the law.

There were several other counselors from C.C.N.Y. and most were helpful and dedicated. We felt comfortable with these men for they were serious about their work and their duties both for the college and for "The Orphanage." They were privileged to be counselors for they had many advantages. They had their own rooms which were furnished attractively as studios. They received monthly salaries and took their meals

in the private staff dining room where the food was excellent. I know about all of these advantages because some years later I too became a counselor and a student at City College.

The most memorable member of the staff at the H.O.A was Lionel J. Simmonds, the Director of the institution, who was known to us as L.J or The Colonel. He was an intimidating figure with a massive tight-skinned bald head and a sonorous voice which made anything he said sound like an urgent pronouncement. Colonel Simmonds was the ultimate symbol of authority and discipline. To most of us who knew how punishment ruled our world, he was an ominous figure. Although I never experienced a confrontation with L.J. or received his physical discipline, I knew that he was a hard hitter and for those who broke the rules he could be painfully harsh. I saw him slap boys and girls with the full force of his massive being. He would also let loose a tongue lashing that was equally stinging.

Looking back, I must acknowledge that many restrictions were lifted and new privileges granted during the L.J.'s long tenure. When he first took over as The Director of the H.O.A physical punishment was excessive and cruel. By the time I left the institution all this had changed. The atmosphere within "The Home" was relaxed and friendly. The uniforms of the past were gone and we wore garments of the day. The girls in attractive dresses and the boys in slacks or suits.

L.J. was responsible for most of these changes which made life more agreeable for all of us. He was also responsible for my becoming a counselor, although I did have an excellent record of service through the years. I was a monitor and later became a captain of several dormitories. Counselors tended to put much of

their responsibilities on their captains who, in performing these duties, were learning and maturing.

Lionel J. Simmonds came to the institution as a young boy on arriving from England at the turn of the century. He spent long and hard years growing up at the "H" and later was to become one of the orphanage's most distinguished alumni. He worked his way up to a counselor and went on to a career in social service after graduating from the Columbia University School of Social Work. He returned to "The Home" and became its Director in the early '20s and stayed on until the institution closed in 1941.

Among other distinguished alumni were Edwin Franko Goldman, celebrated bandmaster and composer, and Sol Schwartz, who left the "H" in the early '20s, became President of RKO Theatres and later head of production of Columbia Pictures. The most eminent alumnus, however, is Art Buchwald, distinguished humorist and journalist. I did not know Buchwald at the H.O.A since, after a short stay at the Reception House, he was farmed out to various boarding homes and returned only for the summer camping season. Buchwald, writing about these early days, says, "I went from one boarding home to the next and was totally confused. At camp I was punned by my fellow campers regularly; that's when I decided to become a humorist."

Fifty years later I met Art Buchwald for the first time at lunch at the Oak Room at the Plaza. We went three; Peter Stone, a mutual friend and one of Hollywood's most successful screenwriters, whose film "Charade" I was handling for Universal Pictures at that time.

Art Buchwald had joined Peter at this luncheon. They had known each other for many years, having met in Paris where they were struggling young writers, Buchwald working on the Paris

Herald- Tribune, and Stone developing his first screenplay. The talk, at the table, was mostly about the theatre, film and politics and the barbs were bright, but I wasn't listening for my mind and thoughts were back in those early days at the "H"... wondering how it was for Buchwald growing up away from home. I was far removed from the Oak Room, for I was thinking about the thousand kids in the dining room at the "H" and not a single Maitre D.

A GENTLE GIANT

When I entered the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, I found myself part of a dormitory of eighty boys ranging from ten to twelve years of age. We were an assorted lot with a common background of broken homes and shattered families. We were all so young, the turmoil of our lives was hidden in our inner being so that we could cope with the demands of our new environment.

For me, in the early days, it was a strange and frightening world. On the surface I wore a smile for all but inwardly I was fearful and easily intimidated. But I soon realized in the comradeship of our group one found oneself safe and secure.

Instinctively I knew, to survive with a minimum of pain, one must obey the rules, be the obedient boy and hopefully good things would come my way and they did.

Early in my stay I had the good fortune to come to the attention of a recently arrived counselor, Murray Sprung, whom we all called "POP" for he had the qualities of the ideal father, especially for those of us who were fatherless.

"POP" Sprung was a massive man. He was 225 pounds of solid muscle, in a five foot ten inch frame. yet he was the most tender person I have ever known. His presence reflected power and authority yet he was full of love.

Ours was a love affair from the moment we met, at least it was for me. For I found in him the father I had lost and he gave me the warmth and affection of a son.

"POP" had a few favorites among the boys in my group and we vied for his attention which he shared equally but in my heart I always felt and hoped that I was his number "ONE" for he was mine.

Murray was a law student at St. John's University in Brooklyn, and was finishing his law studies when he joined the staff at the orphanage as one of the senior counselors.

He had a quality of command without ever threatening. He was respected by the younger and older boys and by his peers for he displayed compassion and strength in all circumstances.

"POP" Sprung was a natural leader and inspired confidence and admiration. He could be tough and took no nonsense but he was always fair.

Not long after he arrived, I attached myself to Murray and became one of his favorites. This gave me the privilege to visit his room where he lived and worked when he was not on duty with the children. His study was a wonderful hide-away for me for it was intimate and cozy and reflected his interests

and his person. It had a radiance and warmth. It was tidy and yet casual. The prints on the wall were carefully selected and revealed his interest in the law. His library was extensive and took up most of the wall space along with his desk and studio bed. As I remember some of the titles of his book collection, his preference seemed to be Dickens although he did have a variety of popular authors, among them P. G. Wodehouse and S.S. Van Dine, which I devoured.

His room became my haven, a second home which I was welcome to visit on my free time. Occasionally, I would tidy up or do some special errand for "POP" which made me feel I earned his affection but the truth was his warmth was there for me because of the man he was and not because of some puny chore I might have done for him.

In looking back on those days, over a half-a-century later, I realize now that the man I idolized was all of 23 when I first met him and to me he had the character and the wisdom of a sage.

Subsequently, I found the source of his humanity which was the essence of this man. A man who was fearless and could and did hand wrestle giants. He could also caress

a butterfly.

As I got to know "POP" Sprung more intimately, I had the privilege to be taken to his parents home, a brownstone in Brooklyn, as a guest for the Passover Ceremony.

On this happy, holy day the Sprung clan and friends gathered in a traditional, orthodox observance of the Seder Ceremony, conducted by Murray's father, a distinguished elder. He had the face of a prophet and wearing his ceremonial gowns he davened in Hebrew, none of which I understood. Yet the story of Passover came through to me more deeply than I have ever felt it since. Murray's father and mother were gentle and loving and gave me the same welcome and warmth that I first felt from him. They shared their home, their table and their very being openly and joyfully with all who came within their presence.

Here at 138 Keap Street, in the glow of a Sedar night I found the source of Murry's majesty. It was steeped in a family tradition observed by a people for over five thousand years.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The support staff that handled the 1000 children at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum was large and varied. Apart from the counselors, men and women, directly responsible for the daily activities of the boys and girls, a maintenance staff covered engineering, heating, carpentry, painting and plumbing; the housekeeping staff included the laundry, tailor shop, shoe repair, barber, and the kitchen staff consisted of a commissary, a bakery and a chef and his aides.

Besides these basic services, there was the infirmary and its medical and nursing staffs; the dental clinic and the ophthalmologist. It's ironic that we at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum who came from deprived and broken-homes had the best medical and dental care available equal to or even better than the care received by children from wealthy homes.

We were checked regularly and thoroughly by Dr. Samuel Averbach, a distinguished internist, who in his private practice had some of New York's leading citizens as his patients. His colleague and senior was Dr. William Friedman who also had a stellar status

in the world of medicine. Between the two doctors we were well treated and received the ultimate care.

The infirmary was staffed by a head nurse, Mrs. Evelyn Alexander, who was kind and efficient. There was a six bed pavilion for those who were overnight patients. Generally, the children came to the infirmary with their cuts and bruises or for their dose of cough medicine. High fever or mysterious pains would confine one to the infirmary for overnight observation.

On one occasion, I had an unexpected stay in the infirmary where, for the first time, I was given a tetanus shot. I reacted almost immediately and erupted with a severe case of hives that covered my body and left me in a state of misery. I haven't had a tetanus shot since.

Our dental clinic had two glistening operating chairs and the finest dental equipment. We also had two outstanding dentists, Dr. Jacob Novikoff and Dr. Edward Pullman, who split the week between them since they had their own private practices. I took Dr. Pullman's chair the first time I came into the Dental Clinic and stayed with him for the next 20 years. He received some kidding about

his name but never about his work, as he was a most skillful dentist and an impressive person.

I and others thought Dr. Pullman could easily have made it in Hollywood for he had the manner, the style and the look of a movie star. I am glad he stayed back here for he took such good care of my dental requirements.

Dr. Robert Kahn, our ophthalmologist, was a little man with a great reputation in his field. We were checked annually for sight and for any complications so that remedial measures could be taken early. There were a number of children in their early years for whom glasses were prescribed. Others, who had rare eye conditions, were followed regularly with corrective procedures.

This concern about health was remarkable considering we were wards of the state. When I was 14 I had an emergency appendectomy and was rushed to Mt. Sinai Hospital where I was operated by Dr. A. A. Berg the leading surgeon in the U.S.A. This was made possible because of an arrangement between the Hebrew Orphan Asylum and Mt. Sinai made in the mid-19th century, when the hospital was desperately

in need of funds. The H.O.A. turned over to Mt. Sinai a substantial gift and in view of this generous support at a critical time Mt. Sinai pledged to take care of all hospital requirements for all the children of the H.O.A.

Unfortunately, routine emotional problems went unheeded. Although there were social workers on staff, as well as a psychologist and a psychiatrist, they were unavailable for individual therapy. Perhaps, this would have changed in the post-war years when Freud became fashionable and "The Couch" was more than a place for petting.

One of the most colorful characters on the staff was Mr. Morris Greenspun, chief steward, responsible for all purchasing for all departments. He was a dapper gentleman with a shy manner and a voice that suggested he was in constant pain. He didn't really talk as much as whine. He was always immaculately dressed and one day I discovered why. It seemed he held two jobs. In the early evening when he had finished in

his basement office at the H.O.A., he would rush downtown to LeBlang's cut-rate ticket office in the Times Square station where he supervised the sale of tickets to Broadway shows. I met him head on one night when we were the guests of LeBlang's and were picking up our tickets. Mr. Greenspun smiled sheepishly as he sent us on our way to see the Marx Bros. in "Animal Crackers." Later I learned Mr. Greenspun was married to a member of the LeBlang family.

One of the most admired staffers was our full time librarian, "Ma" Stember, friend of all the children, she devoted herself totally to their needs and encouraged their reading. She inspired us to achieve intellectually and creatively and was one of the most important influences in the lives of the youngsters who passed through the H.O.A. I became aware long after I had left the Home that I had missed a wonderful opportunity to know "Ma" Stember. My contact with her was casual. Although I used the library, I didn't benefit from her counselling because I had other interests.

Today, "Ma" Stember, well along in years and living in a nursing home in Florida, is still idolized and often visited by those who sat at her feet in the library of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum.

One of the most influential members of the Boys Department staff was Johnny Karetsky, our coach and athletic director. Sports, especially basketball and baseball, were a source of nourishment and release for all of us. Coach Karetsky, an alumnus of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, was an all-star athlete. He went to the Savage Institute for Physical Education where he set school records in basketball. Later, he matriculated at Columbia University and here too he was hailed for his brilliant play. He went on to teach physical education at George Washington High School where he coached championship basketball teams and developed numerous players who later starred on their college teams.

Our coach got a good deal of his early coaching experience with the winning teams he developed at the

H.O.A. Being one of the alumni, Johnny had a unique understanding of the needs and the drives of the youngsters who came under his wing. He viewed them as his boys and gave them the consideration and respect they deserved but he also set high standards of discipline and performance. He had a talent for seeing the potential of each of us and developing it to the very utmost. He made the game in whatever sport we competed an engaging challenge and a rewarding experience.

Johnny Karetsky left his mark on all of us for he was not only a superb athlete and an exceptional teacher he was also a person with an admirable style and tone.- a splendid model for those who had the good fortune to play under his direction.

I am particularly grateful to him for all the pleasure I received through the years on the playing-field at The Home, but I am especially indebted to him for introducing me to tennis which we played on the roof of The Warner Bros. Gym. I gave up baseball and basket ball when I left the H.O.A. in 1936, but I took with me my tennis game which I continue to play and to enjoy to this very day, 50 years after Johnny first showed me how to hold a racket, and taught me the meaning of LOVE in a tennis match.

A character I'll always remember was Major May, the officer in charge of our Cadet Corps. When I first arrived at the institution in 1924, the Cadet Corps was an important activity in the Boy's Department and had been for almost 100 years. Every youngster, 10 years and older was outfitted in khaki uniform, with puttees or leggings, overseas hat and a rifle, vintage 1860. We were organized into squads, companies and battalions. The fife and drum corps and the band provided the marching music for our dress parades which took place every Sunday morning. On patriotic holidays, Memorial Day, July 4 and Armistic Day (now called Veteran's Day) the Cadet Corp, in full dress regalia accompanied by the Band and Drum Corp would march on Riverside Drive to the applause of thousands of spectators captivated by the tin soldiers and the martial music emanating from the band of little men.

We also had rifle drills during the week. I remember the barking commands of the boy captains, "ARMS RIGHT," - "ARMS LEFT." - "AT EASE."

All of the activity was planned and evaluated by Major May, a pompous and blustering Britisher who had seen service in World War I and subsequently in one of

the British Colonies. When he barked an order it was utterly incomprehensible. The captains tried to interpret him and some succeeded but often there was much confusion. Major May seemed to have a speech impediment or it may have been his military manner which was so officious it affected his vocal chords and all that came thru were imperious sounds. For most of us Major May soon became a charade, a ludicrous figure shouting into the wind.

The Cadet Corps which had been part of life at the institution for almost a century disappeared during Major May's tenure. I won't call the demise of the Cadet Corp Major May's folly, since other currents were running through the mainstream of American life, however, I always thought Major May was a minor major.

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OF FRIENDS AND FRIENDSHIP

by Philip Gerard

During the 10 years I lived at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum I had varied experiences and many encounters all combining to shape the fabric of my person and my psyche. One of the most important facets of my life in those years was the friendships I made with other boys at The Home.

From the very beginning of my stay, I reached out to those whom I felt were sympathetic. Others put their hand out to me and soon we had a small group that became a tight little family of friends who shared concerns and pleasures. However, as students we varied. Rube Bennett whom I considered my closest friend, had the highest I.Q. among the boys at The Home. We were in the same class in the lower school, P.S.192, located at the Orphanage. Later we attended the Speyer Junior High School considered an elite public school at that time. We continued on at DeWitt Clinton High School first at the old building at 59th St. and 10th Avenue and then we moved up to Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx where we were the first

graduating class, 1931, from the new DeWitt Clinton.

We spent the next four years working at out college courses and supervising the daily activities of the children assigned to us. We took out duties seriously and devoted ourselves to the care of the youngsters for whom we were responsible. We were awfully young to be handling the responsibilities turned over to us but we had been trained growing-up under others and had moved into leadership rolls when were in our teens.

We graduated from C.C.N.Y. with the class of 1935. Rube went on to the University of Chicago and received a graduate degree in Social Work. There he met and married Peggy, an attractive and resourceful mid-westerner and an ideal partner for the brightest boy from the Orphanage. They both went on to careers in social work with various public and private agencies.

Years later, Rube visited me at my office at Universal Pictures in N.Y. where I was Director of Advertising and Publicity. We talked about the old days at The Home and

then, he turned to me and said, "I admire you for having had the courage to go into the business world." It never occurred to me it took courage for I never planned it that way.

After I graduated City College, I worked as a teacher's aide on the W.P.A. and later for the New York Central R.R. in their freight department. I also sold used refrigerators unsuccessfully and then had a short stay on 7th Ave. working for a fabric converter who fired me for being overqualified. I finally found the film world by accident. Life has a way of working out one's destiny. Some of us were preparing for careers we never dreamed of. At least it happened that way for me. Rube was reasonably successful in his field, however, his comment may have revealed more about him than about me. In any event it seems the grass always looks greener on the other side but the viewer only sees the surface. My world was attractive and rewarding but the pressures were extraordinary. So it was not all that it appeared to be.

Later I heard from Rube who was now located in California working as a fund-raiser for the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital

and he wrote that his eldest son had been admitted to Harvard. My son was a year younger and entered college the following year. He was accepted at Yale.

It always titillated me to think about Rube Bennett and Philip Gerard of The Hebrew Orphan Asylum, class of 1931, whose sons matriculated at America's most prestigious schools - I was pleased not alone for my son but for his as well. I think this accomplishment says much about The Home and the opportunities it gave us.

Curiously, I did not hear from Rube after we left The Home but only on rare occasions.

Years would go by and then he would turn up and call. He was passing thru the City for the day. I never did get to call him when I was in California. The last time I heard from him was a call from Desert Springs where he had retired. I picked up the phone and heard his voice and was startled by his comment, "Phil - is that you? - I heard you died." I assured him I hadn't but was shaken by his bluntness. We had little to say to each other for it was quite clear he was relieved and left it at that. Subsequently, the mystery was revealed - one of our contemporaries had died that week and Rube had received a garbled message from a mutual friend.

Although Rube was my closest friend at the H.O.A., there were others with whom I shared equal interest and time. While they may not have had Rube's sharp mind, they had other qualities which were equally important like loyalty, sensitivity and courage.

My group of friends, who were all outstanding athletes, were a varied lot in their looks and style. They included Joe Simon, a freckled face, red head with a beaming smile; Lou Stromberg, a strong and lanky lefty with a natural starboard list; Louis Lingle, the handsomest and most gentle boy in the home; Phil Cowan, deft, dextrous and daring especially on a date; and Rube Bennett, steady, studious and no surprises.

We played basketball together as midgets and continued to play as a combination until we became the Varsity Team that represented the H.O.A. in inter-institutional matches with other homes for boys. Our record was commendable especially since we were engaged in so many other activities.

When the basket-ball season was over we moved on to baseball at which we also excelled. We all made the varsity

and achieved an enviable record against our competition which included the Colored Orphan Asylum; the Brooklyn Rebnaw Orphan Asylum; the ~~Leaks~~ and Watts Home and our own alumni teams.

Most of our group were in the band which required rehearsal time several days a week. Joe Simon played trumpet along side of me. I always felt that I was the least talented member of the band but now that I recall Joe I think he was my equal. However, he surpassed me in appearance for he was striking with his red hair and two toned blue band uniform with a reversible cape and an officer's cap.

Joe went to George Washinton High School and left the Home on graduation. His first job was with a carpet company in mid-town and I would see him for lunch occasionally. After the war years he moved to California opened a haberdashery^{shop} and nurtured a family. I haven't seen or heard from Joe since he left New York.

Lou Stromberg was unique in our group since he had several successful siblings who were much older than he was. Lou was the most gifted athlete among us. He was the only one who played for his High School varsity team. He

went to Textile H.S. and was one of the stars of the team in his Junior and Senior years.

On several occasions Lou would invite me to join him on a visit to a member of his family. His sister, a tall and handsome woman, was married to a mammoth of a man called Moe who owned a fish market in the 70's on the West Side.

We would arrive at the market and find both his sister and Moe busy with fish and customers. Lou would rush in kiss his kin and then introduce me. I shook hands and got a warm but wet welcome. We looked at the fish, watched the customers come and go and then waved good-bye and started our long walk home.

I often thought it rather strange that he would share this awkward visit. However it did please Lou, so I would readily do it again and I did.

One night Lou and I were given permission to go to a prize-fight at Madison Square Garden, then located at 50th Street and 8th Ave. One of Lou's brothers managed a boxer, a contender for the light weight crown. We were invited as his guests to see his protege battle another contender. This was the first time I had ever been to a fight.

We were seated at ringside and the characters around

us were a curious collection of men and women - all fight fans. They were intense about their feelings for their favorite fighter and were totally absorbed in the matches. They were also eager for blood. I found all of this painful and could not wait to get out into the fresh night air of the noisy city. Lou loved the garden scene. He felt very much at home with those around us and engaged in easy chatter and commentary.

The next time I went out with Lou we went down to the Lower East Side where we met one of his brothers who had just parked a sleek-looking limousine. He introduced me - I shook hands and then shook inwardly as I looked at his face which was peppered with pockmarks, ¹and I felt an intimidating presence. Lou's brother may have been as gentle as a pussy-cat but I was not about to test my judgment.

Later Lou and I went to a pool-room where, for the first time, I shot pool and played as if I were born to the stick. I enjoyed the game and was tempted to stay on except our curfew called back at the Home.

It was just as well that I didn't continue these visits for I could easily have fallen into this wayward world which had its temptations along with its traps.

Lou left the home and went into the dress business. I know little about his personal life for I never heard from him or saw him again. Almost fifty years later I read a brief item in "The Rising Bell," the H.O.A. Alumni Bulletin, reporting that he had just died.

Louis Langle was as close to me as Rube Bennet but for different reasons. Louis and I were very good friends from our earliest days at The Home. What brought us even closer was our relationship with Murray Sprung, our counselor and mentor. We were both his favorites and Murray showed no preference between us, although I do think that Louis and I were in a quiet competition for the No.1 spot with "Pop" Sprung.

We were always together either in Murray's room or off doing something for him. When we were very young we played together and later as we grew into our teens, we dated together.

Louis had wonderful qualities which made him a superb friend. He gave of himself and whatever he could share. He had a casual style and took things in stride. He was most personable and with his easy manner he attracted the most attractive fillys from the other side of our world. Eventually he picked as his permanent partner the most

beautiful of the group. Her name was Rosalind. They were married soon after they left The Home. Today they live in Florida. I haven't heard from them in all these years.

Phil Cowan's first name was Murray during his years at the H.O.A. He switched to Phil when he returned to the States after the war years. It has been suggested to me by mutual friends that Murray took my name as a gesture of friendship and respect but I never could fathom his motive for I was not as close to Phil at The Home as I was to some of my other friends. However, he was part of our group although from time to time he did create some problems for himself and others. He was very bright and sometimes, I think too clever or perhaps too sharp.

However, Phil was unique and he had a great deal of courage. He did what most of us would not have the gumption to do - go out on your own and cross the country by riding the rails. He did this and more when he left 'The Home' in the early '30's during the depths of the depression.

Cowan also went to Dewitt Clinton High School which in those years was considered one of the best of the New York

City High Schools. Phil was a good student but unfortunately he did not get the opportunity to stay on at The Home as a counselor and go on to City College as Rube Bennett and I did.

He never discussed this with me, but I am sure he must have been disappointed. Soon after he left, I heard from him from out west. He was enroute to California by freight train, as so many others were doing ⁱⁿ those days of despair. He wrote about his experiences in the strange cities and towns he was passing thru and the dangers he was confronted with riding the rails and coping with the railroad police. Eventually, he arrived in California where he found work as a phone salesman selling magazine subscriptions by phone. He went from one make-shift job to the next and just managed to survive. He decided California had nothing for him. He hit the rails again and was back in N.Y by the end of the year.

I saw him on his return. He had no special plans but he was writing. Phil had a flair with words and did write well. He talked about doing a play on our experiences at The Home, and I thought it would be a good idea to try so we met over a period of weeks either in my room at the H.O.A. or at a

room he rented for his living quarters on West 72nd Street. We had completed our first draft when Phil dropped out of sight. Some weeks later I heard from him and he explained he had been locked out of his room for non-payment of rent and the landlord had seized all of his personal possessions including our play. I assumed Phil intended to retrieve his wardrobe and our manuscript by paying the landlord the back rent. He indicated he was planning to settle this matter but apparently he was short of funds and put it off for weeks and then months and finally we never again discussed his lost wardrobe or our forgettable play.

Phil's next adventure was a brief marriage with a cutie from Canton, Ohio, which lasted until the outbreak of the war. He joined up and spent the next three years overseas. When he returned he called me at M.G.M. where I was on the publicity staff. I asked him to come over and he did.

We spent hours talking about his experiences and his plans. I told him about my service with the War Department as a civilian P.R. aide to a Colonel who was in charge of the morale incentive program for the Corps of Engineers in

New York. I had worked at 270 Chamber St. and had helped plan "E" for excellence ceremonies for companies producing products for the war effort. I also told him about our first child, Richard, who had been born shortly before VE Day.

The war had a marked effect on Phil Cowan. He had been in combat, was injured, and had suffered and endured the hardship of the embattled G.I. He no longer turned on the superficial charm and veneer of gaiety that marked his personality in prior years. He had become a serious and mature person who had mobilized his talent and set some important goals for himself.

He wanted to marry and have a family since he had been raised without one. He was also keen to break into the film world as a publicist, but he had no contacts. I offered to be helpful and suggested he call some of the people I knew at several film companies. He followed through promptly and found an opening at the newly organized Eagle-Lion Company.

Phil had accomplished his first goal quickly. Marriage would come soon for he never had any difficulty attracting attractive women. This was true in the early days and continued until he was fortunate to meet Frances.

She was a rare beauty and a devoted wife. They had two sons around whom Phil planned his life and from whom he received the greatest joy.

Phil's career now reflected his talents and his drive and he moved rapidly from one post to the next and soon he was Press Director at Metromedia, one of the leading independent TV, Radio and Communication companies in the country. whose President, a talented and widely

publicized executive, John Kluge, had ambitious plans to expand his company.

I was now ^{Eastern} Advertising and Publicity Director for Universal Pictures in N.Y. I would meet Phil Cowan for lunch occasionally and we would talk about our children and their problems. Although his were younger than mine, we shared similar concerns. We would also discuss our mutual interests in the world of film, press and television. Our time together was always too brief for we both had heavy schedules with appointments waiting for us back at the office.

Universal Pictures had become one of the film industries

most successful companies now that it was a subsidiary of M.C.A., headed by Lew Wasserman, acknowledged to be one of the most able chief executives in American Industry. It occurred to me while meeting with Phil Cowan that we ought to bring these two moguls together. Cowan agreed it was a provocative idea pregnant with possibilities.

One day, shortly after our luncheon meeting Phil called to tell me Kluge was planning to go to the Coast. I picked up on this cue and waited for L.W.'s next call which came methodically every morning at 10:00 A.M. (7:00 A.M. California time).

It was the custom for L.W. to call his executive group in N.Y.C. and to speak to each of them briefly to receive relevant news of the day. He included his overseas executives in this routine which was a herculean task but not for him. This was the MCA life line and his juices flowed with these reports. You learned to eliminate all small talk and social amenities. It was business and only business, yours and your competitors. A little gossip was welcome but it had to have a point which was the good and welfare of MCA and Universal Pictures.

I got around to Kluge's California trip as part of the next morning's conversation and Lew was direct about his interest in seeing him. I passed this on to Phil who advised Kluge of my conversation. He planned to see him and did.

I never did get a full report on what transpired but it was quite evident neither one was interested in the other except as good customers. Each went about building their own empires. MCA became the leading film studio and TV producers in the world. Metromedia expanded rapidly in the ensuing years and became one of the country's most successful communication companies. It's stock became the highest priced shares on the big board selling at over \$500 a share before it was split.

Phil and I had no great victory or defeat in this little plot but only the satisfaction of bringing these two tycoons together. Each of us had achieved a unique position in that we were close to these powerful men - the heads of our respective companies and leaders in the world of communications. We were both involved

in the creative planning for the marketing of our product. We
took satisfaction from our accomplishments but every new picture
and project was a new challenge so one could never let down.

You kept proving yourself all the time.

Not long after we plotted the meeting of the mighty, Phil startled me with the news that he had decided to leave Metromedia and move on to the coast. One of his sons had been suffering from asthma and the climate back here was complicating his condition. I admired him for his selflessness and devotion but I wondered about the wisdom of his decision. He had advanced to a high post at Metromedia and had earned the respect of his peers and of members of the press. California was a tough world to break into without an influential sponsor. We talked about some of the hazards but his mind was set. They were leaving for California as soon as he could sell his house which he did not too long after he first revealed his plans to me.

I gave Phil a list of my friends and business associates working in Hollywood. I told him I would talk directly to my counter-part, a Vice-President at Universal Studios, to see

if there was an opening for him with us.

Soon after Phil arrived in California he met with several Universal Studio executives including the Vice-President in charge of Advertising and Publicity with whom I shared a close working relationship. Nothing came of these meetings. He covered all the studios and found that because of poor business conditions most of the companies were cutting back on staff. He finally made contact with an independent publicity office and worked out a temporary arrangement which would carry him along until something more promising would turn up.

It was at this time I learned he had written to Lew Wasserman. He had not discussed this with me or even indicated he was contemplating this move until after the fact and I was offended. I thought he should have consulted me in advance since Lew Wasserman was the head of my company and if you're dealing on my territory, the polite thing to do would be to advise me of your plan. I may have been overly sensitive about the propriety of his action nevertheless it left me questioning his action and my reaction.

Shortly after this exchange I got a call from Frances with the news that Phil had gone into the Veteran's Hospital and was under going surgery. There was no other detail about his condition for she had none. A few days later Phil passed away. He was 51. He left his widow and two sons and his friend, the other Phil, who was saddened by his loss and who in death gained a new understanding of the meaning of propriety and friendship.

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"WOMEN WERE PART OF OUR SCENE BUT..."

By Philip Gerard

At the Orphanage we were surrounded by girls yet we were totally removed from them except on special occasions. In our daily program we dined together in the great dining hall which seated 1,000 children at separate tables. We passed each other in the halls enroute to the dining hall, the Synagogue and on way to school.

Some of the boys and girls attended co-ed high schools like George Washington but most went to all boys schools like DeWitt Clinton, Stuyvesant or Commerce or Julia Richmond and Wadleigh which were all girls schools. So there was little mixing of the sexes except at the monthly dance held for the older boys and girls in the Trustee's Room on Saturday nights.

I looked forward to these evenings for I enjoyed the pleasure of dancing. We were taught to dance as one of our activities and I found the grace of these movements extremely pleasing. I also had a sense of rhythm which made it easy for me to move with the music. I developed a style early and stayed with my basic steps for the next

50 years. I still enjoy dancing although I get to do it on rare occasions--perhaps once a year-- but I am still doing the same basic movements I learned at the H.O.A. and enjoyed at our monthly dances in the Trustee's room.

The girls at the "H" were an extraordinary mix. They came in all sizes, colors and looks. However, there was an elite group that stood apart. They were the bright and the beautiful and there were many of them.

My sister, Pauline, who was one year older than I, was one of the outstanding girls at the Orphanage. She was the captain of her group and won all the prizes for extraordinary achievement. She was accepted at Teacher's Training College and was promoted to the position of counselor in the girl's department.

Among her friends I remember a number of attractive women including, Betty Simon, Rose Ferber, Bertha Frankel, Lillian Garfield, Sally Chartek and the most beautiful of all Gertrude Friedman.

Through all the years I had a crush on Gertrude which remained my private affair. Gertrude had the most beautiful smile I have ever seen. Her lovely face had an angelic quality. When she smiled her wide mouth opened and sparkled and heightened the beauty of her being and the joy of her laughter.

She was older than I by about 3 or 4 years but I was infatuated by her ethereal presence. Over the years I kept in touch with her thru my sister who was her closest friend. After I left the institution I would see her occasionally at Pauline's or would visit her at the Bar Association where she was secretary to the Executive Director.

I knew Gertrude had a disappointing love affair when she left the Home which saddened her, however, she grew more beautiful with the years and finally married a simple and decent man who cared for her deeply. She had no children and seemed resigned to her fate. She continued her work at the Bar Association until she was stricken quite suddenly

Gertrude remains a glowing memory of femininity, beauty and grace much more so than all the Hollywood stars I knew and worked with during my 40 years in the motion picture industry.

Among my contemporaries there were also a number of attractive young women whose attention was bid for by my competitors, mostly my friends. They were as eager as I was to enjoy their company and share waltzing or fox-trotting around the room with them to the beat of the music from the records spinning on the mechanical turn-table.

I had my favorites and did quite well considering I was no shining star on the dance floor. There were others who were. They had the flair of an Astaire and could be found center stage cutting up and doing bits of business that caused a crowd to gather and gasp. I found their antics obnoxious and still do. Give me the old time rhythm of the reliable waltz or the soothing tempo of

a favorite fox trot anytime over the fads that send torsos twisting, arms turning and heads twirling. All the tricky dance steps that appear with each new season disappear with the dew. I still get a kick out of dancing to "Tea For Two." I'd rather swing and sway to Sammy Kaye, move to the music of Glen Miller or dance to Dorsey than go thru the gyrations called disco dancing.

One of my favorite partners at these monthly dances was a lovely young lady called Topsy Simmonds. She was the daughter of the Superintendent of the Orphan Asylum, L. J. Simmonds, whose family lived in a sumptuous apartment at the H.O.A. Topsy, who was about 15 years old at the time, had an older brother, Jules, who later went on to become a civil engineer.

Topsy and Jules were in an awkward position living at The Home in very privileged circumstances while surrounded by a 1000 children who were wards of the State. It was to their credit that they conducted themselves admirably in any contact they had with their peers at The Home. I

enjoyed dancing with Topsy. I remember her as an excellent partner. She was attractive not only for her looks but for her manner as well. She wore her hair in a boyish bob but she was extremely feminine. For a young teenager she had remarkable style.

I had several other favorites at these dances and recall the names of a few, Frances Leavitt, Lillian Brody and Theresa Foster. So I kept whirling thru these evenings to the tune of "S'wonderful" and other forgotten favorites.

The last dance of the evening was announced by the counselor in charge at 10:30 P.M. and the gaiety was gone as the music ended. We parted from our partners, passed thru the door and took our separate ways to our dormitories.

There was always a touch of sadness after a dance. Your spirits were high as you twirled your partner with abandon or held her tightly about the waist. As the evening progressed one felt released and, a heady feeling came over one as you went from one attractive partner to the next, dancing cheek to cheek, touching the sheer silk of the feminine attire or sensing the fullness of your partner's

bosom as you floated across the floor.

You remembered all these sensations as you lay in bed wondering about Frances, Lillian, Theresa. What were they feeling? What were they thinking? When would you see them next?

In our daily lives women were part of our scene but not intimately as we often craved. Mrs. Koslow, who had a son in The Home as one of the boys, was in charge of the dining hall. She was a warm and friendly person with a freckled face and broad smile which revealed a golden tooth that added to her charm.

I worked closely with Mrs. Koslow for a year as the captain in charge of the dining hall clean-up and got to know her as a special friend. She was most sympathetic to the needs of the boys and girls since she was directly involved in the experience of being a parent from a broken home and had her only child placed at the H.C.A.

I felt I had a loyal and devoted friend in Mrs. Koslow which helped to build my morale. I extended myself in every way possible when I worked with her for she inspired my affection and good will. I also felt a certain sympathy

for her since her working day was long and she had much to do. She had some difficulty with her legs and seemed to tire easily. I was aware of the hardship of hers about which she never complained, so I did all I could to ease her burden. Mrs. Koslow was a warm and loving person and I'll always remember her as a good friend and a woman to be admired.

There were other women who were on the staff and also had their children in The Home. Mrs. Geiler was a seamstress in the tailor shop with whom we were in contact when we had our clothing repaired. She was an extremely pleasant and helpful person. I remember her most vividly for her silhouette since she was on the short side and wore tight fitting garments which distorted her contours making her bosom and her backside bulge beyond reasonable proportions. It may very well have been the style of the times but it didn't suit Mrs. Geiler who was a sweet and simple lady who was devoted to all the children.

Years later when I was established in the motion picture industry as an executive with Universal Pictures, I met a

Mr. Geiler, of the Hallmark Releasing Corp., who turned out to be the son of our seamstress. I remembered him from The Home for he was one of my boys when I was a captain and later a counselor. Alvin Geiler was now one of the top executives at Hallmark and it was about 40 years since I had last seen him but I would have recognized him anywhere. I was struck by his face which had the same boyish look I had known when I was his counselor. Geiler and I talked about our mutual interests in the motion picture business and about our current activity. We never mentioned the past, The Home or his mother.

Another staff member with two boys in The Home was Mrs. Berger, assistant head of the Reception House. I was fond of her because she was a motherly type and you felt her concern when she talked to you or counselled you. She was a highly intelligent woman and her sons were two of the brightest boys in the institution. I didn't see her very often after her move over to the Reception House but whenever I did I felt I was in the presence of a friend. The other women we were conscious of were the counselors of the girls' dormitories whose presence we were aware of

at each meal since they walked the aisles of the dining hall like attendants. Some of these women were gentle and loving, others were tough and detached. As a group they were more intimidating than the counselors in the boys department. The boys sensed this and the girls revealed it.

Why this was so can only be speculated. Perhaps the authorities felt the need and the responsibility for protecting the virtue of their 400 female charges.

This policy may have worked on a superficial level but it failed on a deeper level for it was revealed later by many of these women that the rigid atmosphere of fear caused problems more complicated than that posed by the loss of virtue.

The director of the girls' department, Miss Ricca M. Kahn, was a symbol of rectitude. She wore the manner of the well born and had the air of a New England spinster. She had the look of an Edith Wharton character - correct, smug and unsmiling. Her voice was sharp-edged and her remarks were often cutting. She was detached and unfeeling. She commanded, expected and received an immediate and proper

response.

Miss Kahn was the model for her staff. Those who tried to emulate her often failed for the girls were in awe of Miss Kahn for she was authentic. Coming from ^{girls} others, the/knew these gestures were faked or fraudulent so they were indifferent or defiant causing frustration and sometimes fury among some of the less forceful counselors. Defeated, they often resorted to physical abuse which was more prevalent among the girls than the boys.

There was one among these women counselor; who stood out for her feminine allure. She was an extraordinary beauty and what she was doing on the staff confounded all of us.

Miss Newhouse was impeccably groomed and coiffured and seemed above the fray. But this was only an illusion for when crossed she could let loose her anger in a most violent temper tantrum which would leave one or more youngsters devastated. Miss Newhouse would recover quickly and her equilibrium would return along with her smile

and her sexuality. Later it was rumored, that this fascinating counselor was having an affair with the superintendent of The Home. I never did get to probe this rumor nor did I get to know Miss Newhouse intimately. I wish I had for I am sure I would have learned much from her.

We also came in contact with women when we left the home to commute to our high school classes. One of the most direct contacts with the opposite sex for me came in daily subway experience. Where being on the short side, I was crushed between buttocks and bosoms. I learned more about sex in the subway than I did at The Home or at school.

In my first year at Dewitt Clinton High School, I fell in love with my English teacher, Miss Appel, a young and beautiful brunette with a lilting voice and a gentle manner. I looked at her mesmerized throughout the semester. I listened to her with rapture and learned more about myself than I did about English poets.

Later I had a few encounters with young women who lived in the neighborhood of The Home. I remember meeting one at the Corner Ice Cream Parlor. She lived just across the street from The Home, at 138th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. She was bright and affable. We enjoyed each others talk and seemed to have a commonality of interest except she was much, much taller than I was. She also had authority and suddenly I was accompanying her back to her apartment where she lived with her parents. Her room was off the entrance hall to the apartment so we slipped into it quickly without her folks knowing we had arrived.

I soon became aware that I was not only a guest but a willing victim as well. My newly found friend took command. She had the size to do so, and we enjoyed a romantic interlude, until her parents protests broke the sultry silence.

I left as I came, slightly bewildered but

rewarded for my courage in accepting this unusual encounter.

The romantic highlight of the years at The Home was our annual New Year's Eve Ball held in the Warner Gym. for the older boys and girls. This event was planned for by a leadership committee of boys and girls who decided on the decorations, food, fee, music and all other pertinent matters that concerned this gala evening. I served on the committee on several occasions and we planned months ahead to make certain that all went well for all on this important occasion.

There were about 300 boys and girls above the age of 14 who were eligible to attend the New Year's Eve Gala. You were expected to invite a girl as your partner. For those who didn't invite in advance the committee paired up partners.

There was a fee that each of us was expected to pay to cover the cost of the evening which generally came

to fifty cents a person and this was expected to come from your personal savings. For those who couldn't afford the fee, there was a fund which provided for these circumstances. The refreshments for the evening were most important since apart from dancing, food was a major attraction. We would serve frankfurters, cold drinks, icecream and cake.

The music committee would pick the hit records of the year and arrange to play them thru the sound system of the projection booth. On occasion we would call our New Year's Eve dance a masked ball and request the participants to come wearing masks which they took off at midnite. For these galas, the Gym was decorated with colorful crepe and balloons and turned into a festive hall.

We would gather for our New Year's Eve Ball around 8:30 and enter the Gym which was now a glitter from the the colorful lights playing against the red, green, yellow

and blue balloons which were floating overhead. The music played thru the nite as we danced away the year. Each of us had filled out a dance card and every number was taken.

We didn't miss a dance and went from "Sweet Sue" to "April Showers" and "Vagabound Lover" with ease. There was a pause for refreshments but for those of us keen about dancing food was fruitless and a waste of time. The romantic setting added an allure to our attractive partners who had groomed themselves with seductive results. Woolworth perfumes took on an exquisite scent in this setting. Eyes were lined and cheeks heightened with the stroke of a cosmetic brush. Hair was coiffed in Parisian style by untrained beauticians who discovered their latent talent for the gala.

At midnite the lights in the Warner Gym were dimmed

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and then extinguished as the music of "Auld Lang Sayne" came thru the sound system. We joined in the music and our voices grew stronger and fuller as we sang out the old and greeted the new. We were as one - All 300 of us - as we hugged each other, kissed and then lifted our youthful voices in a roaring Happy New Year which resounded throughout the gym, The Home and the memorable night.

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VISITING DAY

In the early days of our stay at The Home, Visiting Day came once a month and we looked forward to this very special day with keen anticipation.

We spent Sunday morning doing a thorough cleanup of our dormitory and of all public rooms through out the Orphanage. It was not unlike being aboard a ship with the crew mopping and polishing for the officers' critical inspection. Everything was in its proper place. We sparkled along with the facilities since we were dressed in our Sunday best - knickers, a clean shirt and tie and highly polished shoes while the girls glowed in their cotton prints with ribbon bows in their hair.

We marched into the dining room in high spirits and there was a buzz of excitement in the air for visitor's day was full of promise for most of us. The menu on this day was special. It reflected a holiday spirit and it included chicken, corn, cranberry sauce, apple pie and milk. I still have a penchant for apple pie-but seldom have I come upon any that equaled the taste that I experienced from the apple pie made at The Home. There was one

other dish in which the chef excelled and that perhaps may be because he served so much of it. I am reminded of the meat loaf made at least twice a week. It was served like a bread loaf about one foot long and six inches high for each table of eight children. There were no shades of pink to this meat - just well done.- but tender and tasty. I have often thought that I grew up on meat loaf and in fact I did.

When lunch was over and if the weather was fair, we moved on to the playing fields and waited for our family and friends to appear. I usually joined my sister, Pauline, in the girl's playground for my mother was accustomed to meeting us there.

As visitors began to arrive one could witness the eager embrace of a child by a parent, the laughter of a group surrounded by friends and the tears of disappointment that came to those whose expected visitors did not appear.

My mother was always prompt and proper. She never arrived before the official time and always left on schedule. She never forgot to bring us a bag of fruit, nuts and raisins which my sister and I divided between us.

Fruit was a great luxury and we always shared whatever

we received with our bunkmates and friends as they did with us. We kept our gift packages in our downstairs alcove lockers where we stored our schoolbooks, coats and sport equipment. Each locker had a combination lock, the key numbers supposedly known only to the owner of the locker but this was not always so. Occasionally lockers were opened mysteriously or were broken into and gifts, food packages and money were taken. The temptation was great for those who were totally deprived, however, considering the circumstances, there was a minimum of delinquency and a great deal of giving and sharing.

On occasion, there were some other members of my family who would visit us. I had two cousins who were students at City College and they would come by, probably at the suggestion of their parents, and bring my sister and I a food package. I remember their visits for I was especially pleased to see them since I was proud of them and I would tell my friends about my college cousins who were star students across the campus at C.C.N.Y. Some of the inspiration for me to go on to City College as I did years later, must have come thru

their visits in my early years at The Home.

My cousin, Helen, the dentist from Boro Park, Brooklyn, whom I lived with as a child and adored, came to visit us on one occasion. I never could understand this apparent neglect and I nursed this hurt for long years after leaving the orphanage.

I believed she was truly devoted to my sister and to me. I assume she was put off by the trip - a long subway ride from Boro Park to The Home. Yet, there was a time when she came into N.Y.C. regularly for the opera. But that was when she was younger and full of love and life. Subsequently she had an arid marriage, her mother died, close friends moved on and she was left with her dental practice, her cats and her aviarys of birds.

She also had her husband who wa. a Phi Beta Kappa and an LIA, yet he never worked a day in his life. His principal interest was analyzing the daily stock market page in the N.Y.Times which he collected for years and stored away in the enormous basement which was part of the building that Cousin Helen inherited from my Aunt Mollie.

Years later I learned that all these copies of The New

York Times should have been used for burning for they were no help to him or my cousin. He lost all her savings in the stock market.

When my cousin, Helen, did come to visit us, the rules had been liberalized and we were permitted to go off the premises for the afternoon. I recall that we went to a movie, at the Gotham Theatre at 138th St. and Broadway, just around the corner from The Home. I don't remember the film we saw but I do know that Helen wanted us to enjoy the afternoon and the movie was my idea. Later we stopped at the local ice-cream parlor for a treat.

I enjoyed her visit and hoped she would come again but she didn't. Instead I went to see her. I didn't mind the ride to Boro Park. It was part of the day's adventure and I enjoyed the trip, especially when we surfaced from the underground and rode above the City on "the El".

My visits to cousin Helen, which in the beginning were exciting, began to become routine and then boring. I made the trip less frequently as the years went on and then stopped going.

I realized that my cousin, Helen, a rare beauty and a woman who was ahead of her time, was living a vacuous life. As a child I adored her and I felt she loved me. Now I saw how life had turned this lovely person into a gentle recluse who was more concerned with the comfort of her cats than her own. I found the distance between us grew with time so I held on to the memory of the early days in Brooklyn when she was my favorite and I was hers.

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THE NEIGHBORHOOD

By Philip Gerard

When I first arrived at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum in the fall of 1924, I remember how awed I was by the size of the surrounding grounds. I felt so small, so alone and so frightened, I was overwhelmed by everything around me. I thought it would take forever to find my way thru the labyrinth of halls and dormitories. I often feared I would get lost in the maze but one day the pieces all came together and then I knew I belonged.

From the very beginning our lives were programmed, our days scheduled and every hour was planned except for our free time which came to us in larger units as we grew older.

In the spring and fall of the year as teenagers we could walk the neighborhood in the early evening and enjoy the pleasures that came with discovery. In the summer, when we were not away at camp, we were often on Riverside Drive flirting with the teenage-flappers and sometimes capturing a tawny cupid. We were a timid group of boys new at this hunting game so we were awkward and aimless in our pursuit which produced much laughter and few lassies. However, th

chase was rewarding even though the results weren't.

Riverside Drive Park in those years was a meeting place for all the surrounding neighborhood. Young and old were drawn to the Drive to walk, to sit and to play.

A sunset on the Hudson was a glorious sight. With eventide we watched the lights come up on the Palisades as the sun dipped over the horizon. The moonlight sparkled on the river adding a romantic glow to this private little world we had discovered away from our home on the hill.

We kept returning to the Drive whenever we could get a pass to leave The Home and sometimes we did so surreptitiously. We were eager to bait some bouncing beauties or to see the armada of U.S. Destroyers come up the river which they did regularly in those days. When the fleet was in, the Drive swarmed with sailors in their whites which attracted all the eligible young ladies like bees to a hive. We would stand by admire the scene, and then leave for a visit aboard one of the latest dreadnaughts docked directly below.

We would return home weary and a little wiser for we learned that the U.S. Navy was not only in command at sea

but on land as well.

Although we were well fed, we seemed always to be possessed of ^agnawing hunger and took every opportunity to slip out to one of the neighboring eateries which dotted the perimeter of our restricted residence. My favorite food shop was the White Castle located at the bottom of the hill at Broadway and 136th Street. It was easy to get to. You could walk through a gate on our property which was part of a wrought iron fence that circled our world and then you stepped from our turf into a tiled and turreted hamburger stand which seated a minimum of 4 at the counter while others lined up to get their prize 5 cents hamburger on a roll covered with a slice of pickle. Through the years I have had hamburgers made in heaven and in more exclusive places like "21" and "LeCote Basque" but none has ever given me the succulent pleasure I received from the specialité of the house at the White Castle where I recall commoners were served with a cuisine fit for kings.

When we were in the mood for sheer indulgence and could.

afford the ecstasy that went with caramel sundaes, strawberry banana splits and tutti fruitte frappes, we walked to a landmark ice-cream parlor called the College Shoppe. Located at 139th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, our ice-cream parlor served as a convenient meeting spot for City College and Townsend Harris Students who came here to eat through the day and well into the night.

The proprietors were friendly and encouraged their regulars to stay on as long as they liked, and ^{they} did, hunched around the marble topped tables sipping their drinks reading their texts or just conversing with their comrades.

The parlor seats along the counter were usually taken by the wiz kids from Townsend Harris High School located directly across the street from the ice-cream parlor. At the time it was New York City's most prestigious school for gifted children. These eager youngsters would storm the College Shoppe at the break of school and consume the parlor's delights which were dazzling in their variety.

We became regulars at this meeting place and felt at home along with the High School and College students. When I became a counselor, I continued to visit the shoppe and

felt as if I had a stake in the place after the long years of patronage.

As the years went by I learned that our old rendezvous had been taken over by the son of Mrs. Koslow who supervised our dining room all through the years I was at The Home and for whom I had a warm regard and great respect.

The College Shoppe continued to flourish under Koslow and on occasion I would pass it by car or bus and catch a glimpse of the old haunt which seemed unchanged.

After many years I recently was impelled to visit the area and I was stunned and saddened to see the effects of the ravages of time. My favorite fountain and ice-cream parlor, The College Shoppe was closed. The windows across the store front were boarded up and it looked like a derelict whose life was over and whose battered facade covered a colorful past.

I knew the history of The College Shoppe for I had shared a good part of its past with other youngsters who were part of this world while being part of Townsend Harris, C.C.N.Y. or the H.O.A. Boarded windows ^{however grim} cannot blackout the warm memories of friendship shared around the sundaes of delight in the cordial atmosphere of our old ice cream parlor.

My favorite excursion on a pass from The Home was to walk up Broadway starting at 138th Street and leisurely stroll the streets which offered a variety of attractions and interests between the storefronts and the people. Upper Broadway was a middle class sanctuary lacking an ethnic look and reflecting all the signs of stability and solidity. The residents patronized their local merchants who flourished from the loyal support. Restaurants proliferated throughout the area and entertainment was readily available through a selection of small and deluxe motion picture and vaudeville theatres.

The boulevard of Upper Broadway contained a tree-lined center island where the locals could sit and sun. Trolleys clanged up and down the artery and the auto and bus traffic moved leisurely. So did the pedestrians promenade with an air of gracious good will.

Although there was a movie house on the corner of 138th street and Broadway called The Gotham, I preferred to walk to the RKO Hamilton at 145th street for there I could not only see the newest hits from Hollywood but the best of vaudeville as well.

I became fascinated with vaudeville at an early age and ^{became} ~~have~~ addict ever since. At the RKO Hamilton I discovered Clark and McCullough, a unique comedy team; Georgie Price, a sophisticated satirist; Block and Sully, predecessors of Jack Banny and Mary Livingston; Buck and Bubbles, hilarious hoofers, and a gang of other gifted guys and dolls.

Later I discovered The Palace and cut school regularly Friday afternoons to catch the opening of the new show. For twenty-five cents, I sat in the 2nd balcony and applauded Fanny Brice, Georgie Jessel, Eddie Cantor, George Burns and Gracie Allen; W. C. Fields and his cue stick; Sophie Tucker and Jack Pearl and his lady stooge. These performers, who today are remembered as the greats of the past, worked diligently at their craft and gave unselfishly of their talent to win the approval of this show-wise audience on whom it seemed their fate and their future depended.

If you made it at the RKO Hamilton you were on your way to the Palace. If you made it at the Palace, you were made, for you were now a star among stars.

I was an enthusiastic fan of some of the great acts of the time. I even got to know some of their routines and their

stories. Lou Holtz, a connoisseur in the story telling class of comedians had as his favorite character a Mr. Lapidus from Chicago, a custom tailor who spoke with an elegant yiddish accent and made all his customers look like the best dressed cripples in town.

Lou Holtz was a hard act to follow or to imitate. I gave it a try for friends and found Mr Lapidus produced laughs for Holtz but not for me. Years later, Myron Cohen came along and succeeded at the Palace with his colorful characters whom I knew were direct descendants of Mr. Lapidus.

One of my favorite routines was the Dr. Cronkite sketch by Smith and Dale, the legendary Sunshine Boys. Dr. Cronkite meets Mr. Smith and says, "I am Dr. Cronkheit ." Mr. Smith says, " I am dubious." Cronkheit replies, "I am glad to meet you Mr. Dubious." and they are off creating hilarious confusion designed to lay you in the aisles. Shaw and Lee were of a different style and tempo. They conducted a running reparte throughout which they did a soft shoe shuffle. They never looked at each other while they exchanged lines like, "Where were you born?" Shaw ... "In a Hospital." Lee, ... "Why were you sick?" (laughs) Shaw, ... "When were you born?" Lee ... "Between 7 and 8." Shaw, ... "that's too many in one bed."

(Laughs-sometimes) This routine continued on a flat and funny key while the two comics, under-playing their wit won the affection of the audience with their relentless barrage of inanities.

I loved the world of vaudeville for you were in the presence of great performers and you felt that you were close to them even from the 2nd balcony where you were sitting on top of the world.

I felt a personal tie and kinship for the vaudevillians whose acts I caught at the RKO Hamilton and who provided me with so much pleasure. I knew them as an ardent admirer and loyal supporter. I would root for them and follow them from the RKO Hamilton to the Palace and sometimes ^{to} places in between.

Years later, when I was Eastern Director of Advertising and Publicity for Universal Pictures, I had an unusual reminder of my enjoyable hours at the Palace. Universal Pictures had just produced a film on ^{the} life of Lon Chaney called, "A Man With A Thousand Faces," starring James Cagney. As part of the world premiere promotional activities we brought Cagney to New York City to attend the opening night which took place at the Palace Theatre, now exclusively a movie palace. The

stayed with it throughout the camping season. It was a new experience for me and I enjoyed the graceful movement, the quick reflexes and the style of the sport. It was a challenge and I was determined to master the art, for fencing is an art, especially when taught by a master. We had one in our instructor, Mr. Roth, who fenced for Columbia University, where he was an undergraduate student. He encouraged me and I persisted and before the summer was over I felt fairly comfortable fencing with foils.

The fencing enthusiasts were a small but loyal group. We met daily and put on our fencing jackets, gloves and masks and worked out by competing with each other in improvised matches. Later in the season we would give a fencing demonstration to the campers. None of us ever became fencing stars or was it likely that any of us ever fenced again, but the experience was invaluable especially the time spent with our instructor, Master Roth, who was a true champion not only as a fencer but as a person as well.

There were many memorable facets to our camping days

and the water-front remains a favorite scene. Here we escaped the midday heat and enjoyed the pleasures of boating on placid Stahahe. The dining hall also comes to mind as a preferred place in our camping experience for here we shared a continuous indulgence of surprises from our creative and resourceful chef. He seemed to get as much pleasure in giving pleasure as we did in feasting on his favorite recipes. The Home was never like this. French toast for breakfast and all cuts of beef, steak, lamb, chicken, turkey and a variety of fresh fish for lunch and dinner. The vegetables were from local farms and came to us freshly picked. The desserts where what desserts should be, creations to be admired and enjoyed. These were puddings and pies of all varieties as well as cakes, ice-cream and all the fruits of the season.

The beauty of the setting of Camp Wakitan was extraordinary. It nestled on the lake side of Stahahe waters and was surrounded by the lush countryside of the lower Catskill Mountains. We blossomed along with nature.

We walked the trails, studied leaves and wild flowers, picked apples on the Harriman Estate in Arden, ate by camp fire on overnight hikes and slept under the stars.

We had our counselors with us wherever we went. They were a different breed from those who supervised our activities back at The Home. The summer counselors were less strict and more friendly. They were generally younger except for the specialists like the head swimming counselor, Jessie Greenstein, a graduate student majoring in chemistry who later became a distinguished professor at Harvard. Our drama coach was J. Edward Bromberg, then a young actor and later one of the most respected members of the Group Theatre.

The others were young college students eager to to get away for the summer and earn some money. They couldn't have been paid very much for in the '30's money was scarce and you were fortunate to have a job.

Of all the camp counselors who worked at Wakitan during the years I was a camper, I remember ^{most} vividly

J. Edward Bromberg and Leonard Bershad who later became known to the mass audience of movie and theatre goers as Sheldon Leonard. Both were distinguished by their exceptional talent and presence. Later they were to become personalities of prominence in the entertainment world. One with a long career in theatre, film and television, the other with a brilliant career in the theatre cut short by the cruel McCarthy who destroyed lives and careers without concern.

Leonard Bershad, 6'-3", a strikingly handsome undergraduate from Syracuse University, was our swimming counselor. He also doubled in dramatics and it wasn't long after his Wakitan days that we read of him appearing on Broadway as Sheldon Leonard in "*Hotel Limon*". Later he made his big success in "*His 500 Wonders in Time*" and shortly after he went to Hollywood where for the next 25 years he was cast as the classic New York gangster. Later he moved on to television where he produced and starred in the Danny Thomas Show. But, he never gave up his film career. From time to time he would turn up on

the big screen still playing the coarse character with a dangling cigarette coming out of one side of his mouth and a New York accent from the other. The fascinating part of the film character Sheldon Leonard created is that in life Leonard Bershad is a perfect gentleman with impeccable speech and an elegant manner.

Part of Bershad's duties at Wakitan was to plan our Camp Fire nights when we would gather in a great circle around a roaring fire, under a deep blue sky studded with silver stars, we were entranced by the magic of Kiplings' poetry recited by J. Edward Bromberg, our drama coach. He had a magnificent voice which he used like a musical instrument. He took us on a journey and brought to life all the characters and drama the poet had envisioned. We knew little of poetry but we loved these recitals.

Leonard Bershad would also read from his favorite authors and would leave us in awe. Finally our camp director, Murray Sprung, would always end the evening, as the fire dwindled, with a heart rending version of "The Shooting of Dan McGrew," which he recited with rare

eloquence. "Pop" Sprung was an attorney by profession but around the camp fire, the ham in him sizzled and he emoted in grand style.

We were overwhelmed with all this talent and the emotions evoked by the stunning beauty of the stage set which nature had provided as a background for our camp fire scene.

The blazing fire roared thru the evening and the giant pines were silhouetted against the deep blue sky. The full moon lit the world around us and caressed the lake below. When the crickets call came crackling thru the night we knew our camp fire was coming to an end. Soon we would be off to our bunks and the sound of taps would echo thru the camp site as a curtain came down on another day at Wskitan.

One of the most exciting times of the camping season was the closing week when we engaged in our Blue and Maroon War Days. The campers and counselors were divided between the two colors and the competition ran day and night until the closing camp fire when a final count of points was made to determine the winning team.

The color competitions included every sport. We participated in volley ball, baseball, basketball, track swimming,

boating, and canoeing. It also included daily inspection covering the care of cabins, bunks and campers.

The final night was celebrated with a songfest around a roaring Camp Fire. Here each grup sang songs especially composed for the competition. The judges listened attentively and then allotted points which were tallied to the running totals.

Feelings were intense during each event of the Blue and Maroon war days. All of us were worn but high on this final night. The camp fire burned brightly as we sang our fighting songs which echoed across the lake and around the countryside. We cheered our own and our competition. By the time the final results were announced we were spent, exhausted from the exhilaration and excitement of the week long war days.

We were all Winners for we had enjoyed the competition and the ceremonies. The tensions were gone - the partisanship was past. We were once again all campers at Wakitan sharing the same concerns and looking forward with some apprehension to our return to N.Y.C. and to our HOME on the hill at 137 St. and Amsterdam Avenue.

We came home from our stay at Wakitan bronzed and buoyant. Our bodies were strengthened by the waters of Stahaha and our minds were sharpened by the wonders of nature. The year ahead looked promising especially with the knowledge that we would return to our tribal land and join the Wyandottes, Seminoles, Mohawks and Iroquois at Wakitan on Lake Stahahe next summer.

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RELIGION - FAITH - AND IDENTITY

By Philip Gerard

Although there were 1,000 boys and girls living at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum which was sponsored by the leaders of the Jewish Community including such distinguished families as the Warburgs, the Guggenheims, the Strauss and the Dreyfoos, I lacked a sense of Jewish identity. I don't know about the other children, but it took many years, perhaps until after "The Holocaust," before I first discovered what it meant to be a Jew and how proud I was to be part of this embattled people.

At the Home we attended services six days a week and on the seventh we went to Sunday School. The Jewish holidays were observed as special festivals with all the rituals and ceremonies the tradition called for. The Hebrew Union Prayer Book was the guide for the American Jewish Reform movement and for the services conducted in our synagogue.

On Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Passover, many alumni returned to the orphanage for a homecoming reunion. The halls were filled with eager faces searching old friends who found each other in warm embraces. After their animated

greetings, they attended the services which had more meaning for them than they did for us.

Our daily prayers, which were read mostly in English, did not move me. The only service I recall that had a spiritual tone for me was The Kol Nidre prayer on Yom Kippur Eve. At this sacred hour one felt a sensation of awe encompass the sanctuary and envelop the congregation. The Kol Nidre chant came from the soul revealing sins, offering repentance and seeking forgiveness. It was rendered with lyrical beauty. It recalled the pain and joy of the past year. It held out promise and hope for the future and it offered blessings for all.

Our services were conducted daily by Lionel J. Simmonds, Superintendent of The Home, who had a rich voice and impeccable diction but lacked the reverence of a distinguished rabbi. We listened to our lay leader every morning of the week and on Friday evening and on the Sabbath. This routine became a boring ritual without meaning, inspiration or faith. Whatever formal religion was intended to achieve, it didn't seem to be working, at least not for me.

There was one aspect of the services which I do recall with a feeling of pleasure-the music-which continues to be part of my Jewish experience. I cherish the music that was part of our Sabbath and Holiday Services for it was memorable. The rich voices of our choir of 30 boys and girls filled the sanctuary with joyful sounds of praise and devotion. The clear lyric tones of the young soloists inspired the congregation to join the full chorus in the blessings and in "El Kelohanu" and other traditional hymns that have been sung through out the ages.

I would leave the High Holy day Services with a warm glow, for my Jewish soul had been touched by the fervor of the moment and the glory of the past. But, then it was gone - until the next year.

Although Hebrew School and Sunday School were obligatory and I attended regularly, I never did succeed in mastering Hebrew which kept me from being Bar Mitzvahed. My only accomplishment in my religious education was my reading of an excerpt from the writings of Rabbi Hillel from the pulpit during the confirmation ceremony of my Sunday School class, June 1929.

As I look back on those years, I must confess the daily services and the Sunday School discipline did have an impact on me, for the writings of some of the great Rabbis, and the Ethics of the Fathers, set forth a guide to living and values to live by that have remained, "Like Frontlets before my eyes."

My favorite of these precepts, which comes from Rabbi Akkiba and which I learned at the age of 12, is, "If you are not for yourself who will be for you? If you are only for yourself, what are you? If not now, when?"

I know I learned my ethical and moral values from my Jewish training at The Home, but I forged my Jewish faith in the fire of life and I found my Jewish identity in myself.

H. O. A. ALMA MATER



1

Close-by where the Hudson's water
Gleams the live-long day,
There enshrined in love and glory
Stands the H. O. A.
There we learn to march forth boldly
To seek the good and true,
H. O. A., your sons and daughters will
Live to honor you.

2

Whatever tasks our paths may lead to,
How high our place may be,
We'll always love our Alma Mater
And serve her faithfully.
Honesty, Obedience, Ambition
Deep graven on each heart,
Shall be found unwav'ring true
When we from here shall part.

Up At Good Old Wakitan

(Tune: "On the Road to Mandalay")

On the shores of Sag Saahabe,
In the hills of Ramappa,
There's a spot that's waiting for me,
And it's there I long to go,
Where the wind sighs in the pine trees
And the call of birds rings free,
Come ye back to Camp Wakitan,
Come ye back to Saahabe,
Up to Wakitan come ye,
Where the life is fine and free,
Can't you hear the roll-call sounding
For the trip to Saahabe?
Step as quickly as you can,
Pack your kit for Wakitan,
For we're off for jolly camp-days
Up at good old Wakitan,
From the bugle's call at seven,
When it rouses sleepy claps,
Till we crawl into the blankets
At the rolling sound of "Taps,"
With the sports of lake and campus,
We fill the days of glee
Up at good old Camp Wakitan,
On the sparkling Saahabe,
At Wakitan soon we'll be,
There the days from care are free—
Don't you yearn to get a-going
On your way to Saahabe?
We'll be ready to a man,
For the call to Wakitan,
Let's be of the jolly camp-days
Up at good, old Wakitan.

WE WERE A PRIVILEGED GROUP
IN AN UNPRIVILEGED WORLD

Looking back on the decade of my life spent at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, I realize now that it was marked more by enrichment than deprivation. There was so much that I experienced in those years which I could never have known living at home. The one and only need not provided for was the love that could only come from parents.

In the beginning I felt devastated by this loss. Although generally the supervisors were kind and your peers were friendly, there was a chasm in which you existed alone while the child's world around you whirled with activity. You moved in and out of it but your sense of loneliness persisted. It lessened as you were absorbed into the group and became a permanent member of this extended family of 1,000 children.

Soon enough I was running right along with the rest of the boys of my years and having as much fun as the best of my peers. I learned quickly that there were rewards for performance and excellence and I reached for the top. Sometimes I stumbled but most often I came up with some recognition which was worthy of the effort. To this day I don't

know what motivated me to reach out and look up but it was this course that eventually led me to my leadership role at the Home and earned me a captaincy of a dormitory and later a position as a counselor which provided me with the opportunity to take my degree at C.C.N.Y.

I guess it was simply ^a matter of survival and I chose to do it in style or at least my way and it worked for me from the very beginning. One of the very first special privileges given to me in the early years was an outing I was selected for on a Saturday afternoon at the Hotel Ansonia.

I was dressed in my one and only knicker pants suit - I was given a freshly laundered shirt which seemed to go well with my tweedy costume. My tie was much too long for my torso so I stuck most of it into my trousers. My shoes glistened and so did I. I was going to a birthday party for a 13 year old whose name was Yehudi Menuhin.

He did not know who I was and I didn't know who he was. The Jewish Welfare Board had been called to provide some children for a birthday party for a child prodigy who happened to be on tour and in New York playing an engagement at Carnegie hall at the time of his birthday. His parents wanted their child to have a birthday celebration like other children and

invited 10 of us to share this special afternoon with Yehuda, the birthday boy and his sister Hepzibah.

I remember this occasion, for it was a most gracious gathering. We were treated with the utmost dignity. Yehuda Menuhin, despite his celebrity status, known to him but not to us, was one of us - warm and friendly. We had a wonderful time during our brief stay. We enjoyed each other - the birthday refreshments and this very special experience. We shook hands on parting as though we were old friends. As we left each of us was given a gift. We never met again but I have heard Yehudi Menuhin in concert many times over these many years and his music has always had something very special for me.

Of all the activities I engaged in at the orphanage in the early days, baseball was by far my favorite. I excelled at the game from the very beginning and seemed to have a natural talent at bat and in the field.

At first we played softball and in this league we sharpened our skills and prepared ourselves to move on to the big time and the real game on the big diamond. I started out as a 3rd baseman and handled the hot corner with style

although I made my share of errors and suffered terribly on every misplay. Later I moved on to left field and doubled as a starting pitcher. Although I had a strong throwing arm my baseball career was made by my keen eyes which served me well as the No.3 hitter in our line-up.

When I made the varsity baseball team as a young teenager I felt I had achieved my ultimate goal in life. I was now part of an elite group of young athletes and was respected for my skills and my performance. I worked hard and played hard and saw the results which taught me some lessons that carried over into my later life.

I not only played a lot of baseball, I was also fortunate to see the great teams of these years, John McGraw's Giants and Miller Huggins' Yankees.

I became a N.Y. Giant fan before I saw them play. The charisma of the cast of players from Coogan's Bluff captured me from the glowing reports I read in the sports pages and from the picture cards that circulated among the kids of my time.

Although I was intrigued with Tris Speaker, Coose Goslin and Ki Ki Cuyler, my team was the N.Y. Giants and my favorites

were Frankie Frisch, Bill Terry and Freddie Lindstrom.

My friends at the Home were equally divided in their preferences for the Giants and the Yankees and their partisanship seemed as intense as mine. There was only one diehard Dodger fan in our group and he was a lonely soul for in those years the Dodgers had taken a long lease on the basement of the National League.

One of the great joys of the summer was our regular outings to the Polo Grounds and to the Yankee Stadium. Not only did we thrill to the play of these great stars but we were also indulged with the delicious treats that were part of the great American pastime. You started with a bag of hot peanuts and then worked up to the incomparable Stevens hot dog smothered with mustard followed by a chilled root beer and then another hot dog. On a day like this the upper stands at the Polo Grounds was like being in heaven especially if the Giants had a winning day.

On these outings to the Polo Grounds and the Yankee Stadium we were the guests of the owners of the teams. The management of these clubs were conscious of youngsters like ourselves living in institutions and unable to attend the games and see the teams that preoccupied their interest. The

owners extended these invitations and played host to thousands of children annually without seeking publicity or honors. They were not only good citizens but good businessmen as well for we became devoted fans and remained loyal throughout the years. I remember on a few occasions walking up to Coogan's Bluff, at 155th Street, on a late afternoon after school and sitting on top of the Bluff where you could look across the oval outside the Polo Grounds and see left field. If you sat around long enough you could see Irish Mueul make some great plays. From time to time you would hear the crowd roar and you knew a stunning play had been executed or a base hit had been scored. If the crowd really exploded you knew a power hitter had pummelled one into the stands.

I never sat in the bleachers at the Polo Grounds. I guess the management thought we should get a better view of the play so we were always seated in the upper stands which was a great place to be for the Polo Grounds was a boutique of a ball park and one had a marvelous view of the scene below. You were on top of the world and on top of the play. I saw George Kelly, Roger Hornsby, Travis Jackson, Carl Hubbel and

Mel Ott and each was a great ballplayer, not only a star, but a stylist as well. Win or lose you were seeing artists at work. They were like a great ballet corps - they moved, they soared, they sparkled.

My favorite player was Freddie Lindstrom. He was an all-star third baseman and a power hitter. When the Giants needed a centerfielder to replace Musoul, Lindstrom moved over and before long he was the best in the league. The greatest play I ever saw in baseball was executed by Freddie Lindstrom who picked off a prodigious drive into the deepest corner of centerfield by running with his back to the ball and without turning lifted his glove an' with a back handed sweep speared the speeding ball just short of the wall. He made it look so easy. His nonchalance as he walked off the field to a standing ovation reminds me that this is the mark of true greatness in any artist and I've seen it since in Olivier, Nureyev and Dimmagio.

The Giants were an important part of my adolescent years and they left me with some wonderful memories. Years later I was truly saddened to see them leave New York for San Francisco. They were my Giants and now they were gone. With them went

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baseball as far as I was concerned. I would take my young son to see the Yankees but I went for his pleasure and for my hot dog.

Through the years my Giants were good to me, and I remained loyal to them. I have never seen the San Francisco Giants play for I would not break faith with the memory of the real Giants who not only won pennants for McGraw and the affection of millions of fans but remain a legend for all who love baseball - The Great American Pastime.

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FAMILY

By Philip Gerard

The only family member I was close to during the 11 years I spent at the Hebrew Orphan Asylum was my sister, Pauline, with whom I went to The Home in November 1924. My sister was only 1 year older than I was but I looked to her as a mother figure and she took this role ^{as} as long as I can remember.

Pauline grew to her full height 5-6 before she was 10 years old which gave her a premature look and manner of a teenager long before she reached those years. She also had ^{an} instinctive maternal sense and even when we lived with our mother before being placed in The Home, she took responsibility for me in my daily routine and played a protective role. She did the same for our younger brother Bill and sister Helen when they arrived at The Home some years after we two settled in.

Helen and Bill were boarded out to a foster family in their earliest years. They may have lived with us briefly before our father died, but I have no recollection of them in a family setting. I had heard that they had

been placed in an infants' home and later in a foster home.

The first memory I have of Helen and Bill was of a trip my mother, Pauline and I took to Staten Island. This was my first ferry boat ride and for me it had all the pleasure and excitement of an ocean crossing. The Staten Island Ferry ride remains to this day one of the most rewarding outings offered on the New York scene.

After we arrived at the St. George pier we took a trolley to the end of the island where Helen and Bill were living in a pleasant cottage with their foster family. We picnicked in the countryside, enjoyed a brief visit and left before nightfall for our Eastside flat on 7th St. off 2nd Ave.

The next time we saw Bill and Helen was when they arrived at The Home five years later. There was a great gulf between us for although we were siblings, we had not lived together. We did not have the daily experience of sharing the sensibilities of siblings or the caring for each other that children feel in a family situation.

However, each of us knew instinctively that we had a deep bond. Bill and Helen looked to us for guidance and support when they ran into difficulty and they ran into plenty. -

They had come into The Home from a different background than we had. They had been raised with a certain independence and freedom in their Staten Island home. They weren't prepared for the new rules and restraints imposed by the orphanage.

My sister Helen was a beautiful girl full of spirit and artistic talent. She was like a lively young filly who refused to be broken. I remember on a few occasions when I was a captain and later a counselor, Helen would be singled out in the dining-hall by the meanest of the girl counselors and given a vicious thrashing. I would observe this across the hall and I would be furious but frustrated on how to deal with it. I could not interfere directly yet I knew whatever the cause for this corporal punishment, this cruelty was not justified. Later I confronted the counselor with some harsh comments which may have relieved my hurt but not Helen's.

My brother Bill also was the victim of some sadistic monitors or captains among the boys and occasionally from an overzealous counselor. Bill, who had been raised away from his family, tended to be a loner. He was on the quiet side, not much of an athlete and reticent about most things. However, he was stubborn and would find himself in difficulty with the authorities on small issues. I remember one occasion when he was ordered to do something by one of the young captains and Bill for his own reasons either defied the order or moved too slowly to please the young man who had given the command. The exchange that followed was most painful to me and certainly to Bill. I recall this scene vividly for I was infuriated by the actions of a contemporary of mine, Charles Polon, who was disciplining my brother by inflicting a brutal beating. Polon was a powerfully built seventeen year old and a football star at Commerce High school. His role of authority as a captain in the monitorial system gave him the misguided notion that he could assault his charges at his whim. I saw this incident close up and was at a loss about how to deal with Polon. Should I invade his territory and challenge his authority. I

should have but didn't partly because in a showdown I would have had to engage him in a physical encounter something I instinctively shied away from.

I have always felt that in this instance I let my brother down. I could rationalize my restraint but I am not sure Bill could or did.

My relations with my siblings varied. To Pauline with whom I grew up and who was my protector thru the years, I felt close. I saw her daily in the dining hall and we would meet regularly for a few moments in a corridor outside the girls' locker room. Pauline played the mother role to all of us. For me she was also my banker. Whenever we received any funds from any member of our family, which happened on rare occasions, Pauline would hold the funds for all of us. When we needed some extra money we would ask her but she was a reluctant banker for she held on to our money as if it was the last we would ever have. I had some lively scenes with her about my money which eventually she would relinquish - but grudgingly.

She turned out to be right for our funds were limited and scarce. We once did receive a handsome gift from our

Uncle Joe in Chicago, who was considered to be the prosperous member of my mother's family. He sent each of us \$10.00 which thru Pauline's astute management we spread thru the year. We didn't hear again from our Uncle Joe until I became a counselor and Pauline had left the home. Like all big spenders he came on hard times during the crash and the subsequent depression years.

My mother remained the center of our family life throughout the years at the orphanage. When we were very young she came to visit us ^{on} the regular monthly visiting day carrying her shopping bags loaded with food - fruit, cake, cookies and sometimes chicken and a special treat of mine - latkes (potato pancakes).

When the rules were liberalized and we were permitted to leave The Home, we visited her at a small but neat apartment she lived in on East 4th St. between Avenue A & B. Later she moved to an apartment on East 2nd St. and here again she placed her sparse furniture and her few belongings in a neat arrangement. The apartment always had a clean scrubbed look. The floors were shining, the furniture freshly polished and the cutglass vases sparkled.

My mother taught us the importance of cleanliness which she must have learned from her parents. It left its mark on us for to this very day I see these values in my personal life and when I visit my sister Pauline, I see it all over again. Her home, furnished much more elegantly, reflects the same preoccupation with orderliness and neatness. In our personal habits dress and manner we again reveal our mother's influence and training.

My mother also made us aware early of the importance of education. Thru her direction we discovered the public library and became avid readers. She expected us to do well at school and our report cards were examined carefully. When we left for the orphanage she went back to night school to improve her English.

My mother was an excellent cook and could make much out of little. Her recipes combined the best of Viennese and Roumanian cooking. She had some favorite dishes or at least they were favorites of mine and they included compote, braised beef, pot roast, baked apple, blintzes stewed chicken, potato pancakes. However, we did not get to enjoy these except on rare occasions. Our daily diet

was lean and weekly we consumed bushels of bananas which were delicious with sour cream. Another staple was noodles and cottage cheese. I never lost my taste for these combinations and even today find them a special treat.

My mother was born in Austria then moved to Roumania. She came from a middle class family named Burg who for generations had been in the brewing business. She arrived in the United States with two sisters and a brother in the early 1900's. Several other brothers and sisters remained abroad.

My father who arrived in this country about the same time, married my mother shortly after they met thru her sister, Fanny, who had married a nephew of my father's. My father, who was much older than my mother, came from Lumza, Poland, then under Russian rule. He was trained as a surveyor and served in the Russian Army which for a Jew was unusual since pogroms were still a routine practice of the cossacks.

I have a family photo of my mother and father and the 4 children ages 3 to 8 / ^{in which} We look like the all-American

family, 4 beautiful children with their proud and handsome parents.

I don't remember sitting for this photo. I think it was taken during one of the interludes in the early years when my mother was not ill and we were all together for a very brief time.

My mother, I have been told took ill immediately after the birth of the first child, my sister, Pauline. Subsequently there were relapses as the other children arrived.

My father, who had worked as a surveyor in his home country, had a difficult time finding work here. Among his jobs he was employed as a salesman of semi-precious stones. I remember seeing some of these beautifully colored stones at home. Later he became a member of the baker's union and worked as a baker in a basement bakery. He would leave for his work in the middle of the night and come home in the middle of the day. I remember him at his work wearing a white uniform and white cap using a long wooden shovel on which he would place kneaded challah bread and then thrust it into an intensely heated oven.

My father was a loyal union man and I recall attending

a union meeting with him when I was about 5 years old at a hall on 110th St. off 5th Ave. overlooking the lake in Central Park. After the meeting he stopped to have a schnapsee at a local saloon. He liked his schnapsee and some of the family say he liked it too much.

That was a long time ago and I am not about to make any judgements about my mother or father except to say they had a hard time and so did we. They were new in a strange country. They had hopes but little help. They tried to build a home and a family but life was cruel and their courage withered in the face of illness.

After my father's death my mother tried once again to establish a home for us. My sister, Pauline, and I left my Aunt Mollie in Boro Park and rejoined my mother in her attractive little apartment on the 4th floor at 215 East 7th Street. Here we bathed in the washtub daily and used the common toilet located in the public hallway.

It was a happy time for us for we were together again, my sister, I and my mother, and we enjoyed our family life as well as our community life. We had many friends. We used the local library on St. Marks Place and attended

the famous
Boys Club around the corner at 8th St. and Ave. A.

My mother was dependent on a small widow's pension and a monthly check she received from her brother in Chicago. She was extremely proud and would not look to any of her other relatives for help. I think she deliberately avoided seeing her two sisters, my Aunt Fannie and Aunt Pauline, because of this peculiar pride. She wanted no hand out and no sympathy.

The door closed on our 7th St. life suddenly when my sister and I were told by my mother that we were going to the Hebrew Orphan Asylum. It was clear that she could not cope with the costs of raising two children on her meager income. She also knew that growing up for us called for more than she could give and she wanted us to have more than she could give.

She gave us more than most parents for she never stopped loving us and never stopped being concerned. In looking back on my mother's devotion, despite the fact that we were separated most of the time, I realize that she thought she gave us less than we deserved but I know now we should have given her more than we did.

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