HOME KIDS

MEMORIES OF THE MARKS

NATHAN JEWISH ORPHAN HOME

Marks Nathan Oral History Project

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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

MARKS NATHAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

PROJECT COORDINATOR'S PREFACE

The idea for the Marks Nathan Oral History Project was first proposed to Mr. Favil David Berns and Mr. William Weisberg of the Marks Nathan Alumni Foundation by the Executive Director of the Jewish Children's Bureau in 1982, Donna C. Pressma. If not for the determined efforts of these two men, the idea may never have proceeded beyond that occasion. Eva Kriso, Administrative Assistant; Sara Leonard, JCB Public Relations Consultant and the Project Coordinator participated in the project from the beginning.

Mr. Berns and Mr. Weisberg introduced the Project Coordinator to Mr. Alan Mack, editor of the Echo newsletter, voice of the alumni. Though recovering from severe illness, Mr. Mack, and his wife Frieda, out of devotion to the alumni, were able to set the ball rolling by equipping the project with names, addresses, priceless photographs and rare documents. Special thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. Mack, Mr. Berns, Mr. Weisberg, and the officers and directors of the Marks Nathan Alumni Foundation.

The Marks Nathan Oral History Project was organized to give the alumni of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home, later known as Marks Nathan Hall, an opportunity to tell their experiences growing up in that institution.

Since World War II, the orphanage in America has become all but extinct. Today's adults and children usually have no idea what life was like in orphanages, which were once commonplace. Yet, millions of Americans once lived in orphanages or had close relatives and friends who lived in these institutions. From fictional accounts, the popular image of the orphanage is of a dark, institution with tall, iron fences meant to keep unwanted children from escaping. It is hoped that this publication will lead to a more thorough understanding of the orphanage era. This booklet will tell of only one American orphanage, the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home.

It is sincerely hoped that the overall impression given herein is not slanted in any way, and that the abbreviated written stories are as informative and enjoyable as were the live interviews. But should there be a question or a doubt as to the accuracy and objectivity of the overall impression or to the ethics of rearranging tape-recorded conversations into written vignettes, here is an explanation.

What is meant by "overall impression" is that this book is designed to capture the flavor of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home by sampling the memories of a few persons who lived there as children. The flavor should be sensed from the book as a whole and not from a single chapter, a single story, or, certainly, not from the opinions of a single alumnus.

Others who lent their expertise and documents toward the completion of this booklet were Bertha Aleck, former librarian of the Kagan Memorial Library in the Home; Dr. Helen Beiser, psychiatric consultant for the Jewish Children's Bureau; Mitchell Horwich, author of a sociological history of the agency's early years, Conflict and Child Care Policy; Frances Lazar of the North Shore Auxiliary of the Jewish Children's Bureau; Rose Leimberg, alumna of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home; Kay Rasmussen, transcriber and typist for the Marks Nathan Oral History Project; Karen Lueken, typist, and Marilyn Silin, social worker for the Jewish Children's Bureau, daughter of a Marks Nathan volunteer.

Most important, those who made this booklet possible are those whose words comprise this booklet. The sample of interviewees included: Favil David Berns, Elsie Niebow Brooks, Edward Doctor, Gilbert Drucker, Maxine Spiegel Fineberg, Arthur Friedman, Elmer Gertz, Dr. Bernard Gordon, Margaret Cohen Green*, Miriam Markowitz Grossman*, Ceil Helford, Leonard Niebow, Mickey Pallas, Hannah Rosenthal Posner, Bernard Rattner, David Rubin*, Sally Drew Ryce, Esther Leimberg Versten, and Mildred Schooler Winograd.

*Pseudonyms have been assigned.

To all who have shown interest, thanks is due for your concern, and encouragement.

Aaron Gruenberg
Project Coordinator

CHAPTER I

MARKS NATHAN AND ITS ORIGIN

As the nineteenth century ended and the twentieth began, Chicago was a booming metropolis, home to a vast array of people newly arrived from almost every corner of the earth. Among them were Jews: Liberal or Reform Jews usually from Germany and other Western European countries and Orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe. The nation was losing its frontier flavor. People still passed through Chicago on their way west, but the city was bursting at the seams with industry, culture and opportunity; many were inclined to settle in one of the neighborhoods spreading out at the southern shore of Lake Michigan.

In the years since the great fire of 1871, Chicago had grown faster than any other city on earth. With the Columbian Exposition of 1893, it achieved world-wide recognition as a center of industry and culture. Most important of the forces shaping the city and the people within it were the people themselves. They came from a depressed East Coast and a Europe that, at best, lacked opportunity and, at worst, forced people to suffer privation and oppression. In the rush toward a better life, frequently conditions caused many of these hopefuls to fall by the wayside. Often it was the children of this migration who suffered most because of circumstances beyond their control.

The Jewish community in the years after the Chicago fire was made up of two distinct groups: middle class Jews from Germany and other Western European countries who followed liberal and reform religious practices, and newly arrived Jews from Russia and other Eastern European countries who were Orthodox in their religious practices. The liberal or reform Jews had come to Chicago in the 1850's and were established in businesses and professions by the time the larger group of Jews arrived from Eastern Europe.

Along with others of the city's most recent immigrant groups, Eastern European Jews lived in over-crowded, unsanitary conditions on the edge of poverty in the most ramshackle area of Chicago. It was not all that different from the low standard of living they had been accustomed to in Europe. As a "later" immigrant group--arriving in Chicago in the 1890's and 1900's--the Orthodox Jews were subject to the same vicissitudes--cholera, epidemics, poverty, family abandonment--that caused non-Jewish groups to have orphaned or homeless children. Yet they arrived to find others caring for children in need: non-Jewish and liberal Jews who saw the need for Jewish charitable institutions. The Orthodox Jews felt their obligations toward their dependent children, but they had few resources to bring to bear for them. They rejected what they saw as "coldness" in the German Jews' business-like approach to running their charitable institutions. They felt that, as in their shetetl communities in Eastern Europe, charity should be given to those in need, whenever they were in need, and with face to face interaction. Furthermore they believed that Jewish charities--especially those helping children--should follow Jewish law and observe the Sabbath as a holy day and operate a kosher kitchen.

The first Jewish orphans in Chicago--and early histories show that there were some in the 1850's--either were sent to the Jewish Orphan Asylum of Cleveland, which was operated by B'nai B'rith, or were cared for by the Chicago Catholic or Protestant institutions. Some Jewish children spent their days and nights in the streets. As early as 1883, a group of concerned Reform Jews began to plan for an orphanage and to place a few needy children with families. After the establishment of the Jewish Home Finding Societies in 1907, the idea of foster family care began to gain supporters, but it was not the preferred method of care. Even then it was only a supplementary way of handling the excess children. Both the Reform and Orthodox Jewish communities preferred institutional care. The Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans had been

opened by a Reform Jewish group in 1894. The Orthodox Jewish community continued to deplore the lack of proper kosher facilities. They were especially critical of foster care, or "farming", because to them it often implied taking advantage of children's labor and inferior treatment.

Advocates of the orphanage did not expect that lack of experience in family living could be a handicap in children's later lives. While the accounts of the Home Kids interviewed for this publication show that most boys and girls reared at Marks Nathan have been able to live out their lives as happy, useful citizens, there is no question that in many institutions the protective environment led to difficulty in later functioning in the rough and tumble outside world. It was only in recent years that child care specialists came to the full realization that children reared in institutions often had difficulty as adults when they tried to live independently and establish families of their own.

The demise of orphanages in general and of Marks Nathan in particular was caused by many factors. In the 1930's and 1940's, with advances in medical science and with the financial resources that came through enactment of the Social Security Act, true orphans and half-orphans virtually disappeared from the American scene. Infectious diseases no longer claimed the lives of parents in young adulthood. Various forms of public assistance allowed families to stay together, even if there was only one parent. Social work was becoming a profession and methods of caring for children were becoming more sophisticated. Children who could not live with their natural parents or relatives for one reason or another often needed more individualized, therapeutic care than the orphanage model encompassed. And, as a setting for intensive therapeutic residential care, the orphanage was too big, too unwieldly, and too expensive. The concept of foster home care became the preferred setting for the rearing of children who could not live at home, yet were able to live a normal life.

Marks Nathan, as known by the Home Kids in this account, was the second facility. The building still stands at 1550 South Albany Avenue, facing Douglas Park. It was a large, impressive institution built on eleven lots in the center of the neighborhood often referred to by former Jewish residents as "the great West Side". Here was the center of the city's largest Eastern European Jewish community until the 1950's when the racial make-up of the area changed from white to black.

The structure was begun in 1911. But after construction was underway with the walls up and the roof not yet on, the whole effort was in danger of not being finished due to insufficient funds. A timely gift of twenty-five thousand dollars from philanthropist Julius Rosenwald allowed the completion of the building.

A whole week in November, 1912 was set aside for dedication ceremonies. Dr. Ludwig Bernstein, then superintendent of the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society of Pleasantville, New York, remembers the last Sunday of Dedication Week:

> "A procession of automobiles, in each of which sat two directors together with as many children as could be comfortably accommodated, moved slowly and was cheered as it passed the crowds along the way. Each carrying an American flag and a Jewish flag, 184 children led by Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Levy marched to the platform of the Synagogue where they occupied the seats arranged for them. Music was furnished by the Home band consisting of 36 boys who had been carefully trained by Mr. B. P. Pollock; and all of the Orthodox Jewish leaders of Chicago graced the occasion with their presence. The Synagogue was crowded and thousands were unable to find even standing room inside."

Soon after the dedication of the handsome new Home, friction arose between several members of the old Marks Nathan Home and the new Committee

on Admissions and Discharges. The original superintendent, Saul Drucker, was the first to resign in the summer of 1913. That cleared the way for Elias Trotzkey, a social worker trained in England who had been working at the Home for two months. Mr. Trotzkey was a devoted and sensitive professional. He left an indelible imprint on the Home and the lives of the Home Kids during his twenty-eight-year tenure as superintendent.

Following the death of Mr. Trotzkey in 1941, the Marks Nathan institution experienced a series of dramatic changes, yet the children interviewed in this study who lived there at the time were not especially aware of them. Perhaps it was because most children were in the Home for only a short duration, or perhaps it was because they experienced no significant hardships as a result of the changes, but alumni rarely associate events in the Home during the 1940's with the administrative transformation. Understandably, the constant presence of Samuel Feinstein, who had worked under Mr. Trotzkey and was promoted to succeed him as executive director, helped create the impression that Marks Nathan would remain the same and would never close.

Yet, even before the administration of Mr. Feinstein, changes occurred. In 1932, the Home held 242 children, but that figure declined rapidly to 165 in 1935. One would expect the number of children admitted to the Home to have risen during the Depression years, yet numbers declined. The reasons for the decline were that new government payments for dependent children allowed more families to stay together, the increasing popularity of foster care, and the establishment of a city-wide social work agency for the Jewish community. The Jewish Children's Welfare Society coordinated placements with Marks Nathan, the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans (soon to be called Woodlawn Hall) and the Jewish Home Finding Society. The Marks Nathan board of directors resisted a full merger with the other agencies, wishing to protect its independent standards of child care. A merger had occurred between the Jewish Home Finding Society and the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans in 1937 resulting

in a new agency, the Jewish Children's Bureau. In 1938, the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home changed its name to Marks Nathan Hall to update its image as a modern child-care institution with services not necessarily limited to orphans. It also began to work with the Jewish Children's Bureau on a placement committee. A full merger between Marks Nathan Hall and the Jewish Children's Bureau was finally reached after Mr. Trotzkey died in 1941.

At the time of the merger with the Jewish Children's Bureau, the Marks Nathan physical plant was badly in need of repair. Some renovations were made, but plans were soon underway for a new type of care in a new building. The new structure on North California Avenue in West Rogers Park was called the Eisenberg Unit of Marks Nathan Hall. It was designed to accommodate thirty children who had emotional problems and to provide for their individual therapeutic needs in a setting more similar to a family. The old home was gradually phased out under the guidance of its last director, Joseph Selver, who replaced Mr. Feinstein in 1947. The remainder of the children who did not need the therapeutic services of the new smaller institution were placed in carefully selected foster families. Those who were old enough to be graduated moved out on their own. In some cases the children were able to return to their natural families.

CHAPTER II

HOW DID YOU COME TO LIVE AT MARKS NATHAN?

Because this book of memories has been organized thematically and excerpts of interviews appear out of their original order, this chapter provides an opportunity for the participants to introduce themselves to the reader. In these introductions, it will be apparent that there is more than one way of perceiving the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home. Home Kids were bound by shared experience, yet their lives varied according to their personalities and circumstances. Marks Nathan was above all a home to a group of individuals, and when members of the group left the Home, they left with both similar and dissimilar sets of experiences as well as differing perceptions of them. Today, the memories of the Home Kids are far from uniform.

If children of the Marks Nathan family were bound by shared experience, then why were they not more alike? In answering this question, it must be remembered that children entered the Home only after the age of five, and often not until the age of ten or more. During those years before coming to the Home, children had lived uncommonly varied and often turbulent lives. Some were subjected to tremendous suffering, while others were displaced by recent events from comfortable homes in the neighborhood. It is not surprising, then, that some alumni remain bitter or cynical from their misfortune of their early lives. Nonetheless, the remarks of those in this project suggest that the majority of Home Kids have grown up to achieve a high level of personal, and often public, success and are justifiably proud of their lives.

In this chapter, participants are introduced in alphabetical order so that the reader will be able to get to know them and review their introductions in relation to memories noted in later chapters.

Favil Berns lived in the Home from 1935 to 1944. He was born in 1926 on the West Side in the same school district as Marks Nathan. Before entering the Jewish home, he spent several unhappy months in a Masonic orphan home. Recently, Mr. Berns described his admission to Marks Nathan as "...one of the most fortunate circumstances of my life."

Today Mr. Berns holds degrees in mechanical engineering and law. He is a practicing attorney, a past president of the Decalogue Society of Lawyers and general counsel and guiding light for the Marks Nathan Alumni Foundation.

Favil Berns: My father died in 1935. He was a Mason, and they operated a Masonic orphanage in LaGrange, Illinois, and my mother placed me in that particular facility shortly after my father's death in 1935. That home was my first experience with anti-Semitism. My name was then Favil Bernstein, and when word got around that they had a Jewish kid on the premises I got the treatment, which usually was some type of hazing, and in due course my arms became black and blue. I knew that my mother was having a hard time adjusting during that Depression era, and I didn't want to say anything to her, but once I was wearing a short-sleeved shirt and she saw the bruises on my arm, and that's when she inquired of me what was going on, and she made up her mind that that was not a place for me to be. I wasn't happy there anyway. She inquired where she could place me, because during those days she had to go out and get a job. Prior to my father's death we had operated a small rooming house on the West Side of Chicago and that went into foreclosure, so she got a job cashiering at Goldblatt's Brothers in Chicago at that time to

maintain herself. She couldn't take care of herself and me (also). There was a politician on the West Side of Chicago that I recall her precinct captain had suggested she consult. His name was Sonnenschein, and through his efforts, the next thing I knew, I was led by the hand to Marks Nathan, and to me it was not a new experience because where I had been living on the West Side of Chicago I knew so many of the other kids from Marks Nathan when we went to Pope Grammar School. So it was not a traumatic experience at that time and I blended in very well because I had friends immediately, and that's when my happy days at Marks Nathan began.

Elsie Niebow Brooks was born on July 4, 1910. She lived in the Home from 1921 to 1928 and is a graduate of Carter Harrison High School. Elsie's husband was the proprietor of four fruit stands and a junk shop. He died while their three sons were still young and Mrs. Brooks supported herself and her children by operating a fruit stand at Lawrence and Cicero Avenues. Later she was an office worker, first for the Great Northern Chair Company and later for Do-Ray Lamp Company. Mrs. Brooks is now retired and lives alone.

Elsie Niebow Brooks: There were three of us kids: my brother, and sister and I. My mother died at the age of thirty-six. My father was not a rich man, he was a coal and ice man, and he couldn't afford to pay what the Home wanted, so he happened to talk to a man who was on the Board of Directors of Marks Nathan and he said, "Mr. Dirchlach,* I can't afford to pay what the Home wants." See, my father was aggravated because I lived with a sister, and my sister was married to a Gentile. Her husband

*A search of the available records did not confirm the spelling of this director's name.

was Irish and my father was a very religious man. It was killing him; he couldn't wait to get us out, so he talked to this Mr. Dirchlach, and Mr. Dirchlach said, "Don't worry, I'll take care of it. When I go to the Board of Directors meeting I'll talk to them and see what they say." So then he said, "Okay, Mr. Niebow, it's all set." So I don't know what my father paid but I don't think it was too much, and that's when we went in the Home.

Gilbert Drucker was born in Mt. Sinai Hospital in 1929 and lived on the West Side before entering Marks Nathan. He is a graduate of Farragut High School, and has had a distinguished career as an attorney for Allstate Insurance Company; as Assistant United States Attorney, Department of Justice; as attorney, United States Department of Labor - Office of the Solicitor; and now as Administrative Law Judge - Office of Hearings and Appeals, United States Department of Health and Human Services. Mr. Drucker has published numerous articles and has won the Ollie A. Randall Award: National Council on the Aging, 1973, and the United States Department of Labor Award for distinguished career service, 1978.

Gil Drucker: I was admitted into the Home in I think June or July of 1938, and I resided in the Home continuously up until the latter part of 1944 or early 1945. My mother, who was divorced and who was living with my grandfather and grandmother, told me that for one reason or another they couldn't take care of me and they placed me in the Home through the Jewish Children's Bureau. It was a very traumatic experience. I was then about seven or eight years old.

Edward Doctor lived on the Northwest Side before coming to the Home in 1924 at the age of ten, following the death of his mother. Since

leaving the Home in 1930, Mr. Doctor married Ethel Vasselman. They have a son and daughter. Mr. Doctor worked as a foreman in his uncle's factory, part of the Doctor Dress Company. He is now retired.

Eddie Doctor: I remember I came in on St. Patrick's Day. My father had to work and he didn't like the idea of me free all day and on my own, and in the meantime my sister was in the Wicker Park Day and Night Nursery, so he thought it best to get us under one roof, so that we would know one another, and so he got us into the Home and of course in those days if you could contribute a little, you did; if you couldn't they took you anyway.

Well, my father came home from work one day and he couldn't find me, and he kept looking and looking and looking for hours. Finally the police joined him in the search, and they kept walking, canvassing the neighborhood till almost eleven o'clock at night. Now, finnaly a woman opened the window and put her head out and asked the police whom they were looking for. So they said, "a little boy," and they gave a description of me and she said, "Yes, the wagon from the communicable disease hospital out on the South Side picked up a little boy." A woman had told the guys on the wagon that her son had diphtheria and that he might have gotten it from a little boy whose mother had died and who was, you know, walking around loose.

So the police got out to the South Side and sure enough, they established that it was me, see. And there was quite a ruckus, because they felt that they had no business to pick me up without leaving a note, or without saying where they were taking me, or without waiting for information, but that's neither here nor there. In the meantime, I was in the hospital and I'd already had innoculations

and I didn't know my dad was there. I was there four or five days before they let me out, and that's when I first saw my father. I was in a little glass cubicle and I thought, "Well, this is where you go when you die," see? I knew my mother had gone. So, after that, he said, "No more," and that's when he made contact with the Marks Nathan and got me in there, see, so that I would be accounted for twenty-four hours a day, which was good for the children. I'm sure there were others like me.

Maxine Spiegel Fineberg has lived in Chicago since her birth in 1928. She lived in the Home from 1937 until 1946 and served a term there as "mayor." She graduated from Farragut High School and is now herself a teacher at the Orville T. Bright Elementary School in the Chicago public school system.

Maxine Spiegel Fineberg: My father had been ill, and he died in May of thirty-seven. He had been out of work for a couple of years. That was during the Depression and my aunts had some friends who were associated with Marks Nathan who spoke to my family about it and they felt at the time that it would be in our best interests to live in the Home. Although my mother was living, she was emotionally distraught. She was really overcome by my father's death and times were very, very bad. There was very little money and, I guess on the advice of her family, she considered putting us in a home where we would be well taken care of and I think it was brought about through the efforts of Netty Wolf, who was the social worker.

I do remember going to visit one day. My mother had given up what was our home, which was my father's business, and temporarily we were living with a distant relative, sharing my mother's room in their home, and she took us to the Home one day to meet Mrs. Wolf and Mrs. Wolf said something like, "Well, as long as you're here,

why don't you let the children stay?" And my mother said, "Well, I sort of didn't expect to, but maybe I will." I was kind of excited about the idea. I don't know how my little brother felt. It was sort of an adventure and my mother had promised me that we would have breaded veal cutlets for dinner and I don't know whether she was going to take us out or make them or what, but they had them that night at the Home and this is one thing that I remember. So we stayed for dinner, and we stayed.

Arthur Friedman came to the Home in the summer of 1937 at the age of ten and left in 1945. He is a graduate of Farragut High School and has had an successful career in business. He is currently Industrial Sales Manager for Fel-Pro, Inc., a division of Felt Products Manufacturing Co. of Skokie, Illinois.

Art Friedman: Well, first of all my life was in a turmoil, because my mother was sick for a long time. She had cancer, and she passed away when I was between nine and ten. My father was a tailor. He came from Europe and when my mother passed away, he just couldn't be alone with the three children. And I had two older sisters: One was seventeen; one was eighteen. There was only about a year and a half between the two, and they were going to graduate high school soon, so obviously, after school they were going to get jobs and be able to take care of themselves. They didn't have any money to set up a home for me, and who was going to take care of me while they were at work? You know, when you're seventeen or eighteen and you're a girl you can handle yourself, but when you're ten years old and a little boy, what are you going to do? You have got to go to school. Who's going to wash you behind

the ears? And so she wasn't really around to take care of me; I was on my own. Then I went to my aunt's house after my mother died, and she was working and she was a widow, and then my grandmother took care of me, but she was up there in years so that I was going from one transition to another transition.

So eventually, unbeknownst to me, the decision was made that I was to be put in the Home. The only thing that I remember is that I was going to Hebrew School and it was a warm summer day and Mrs. Netty Wolf pulled up in a car with my two sisters and I was just coming out of school. It was in the morning, and they called me over to the car and they said, "Get in the car," and I was ten years old, and my sisters were there, so I got in the car, and they took me to the Home, and I don't remember who said what, but they said this is where I'm going to be living, and that was my first introduction to the Marks Nathan Home. When you think about it, going back, our home broke up, and my family really had no choice, other than to put me in the Home.

Elmer Gertz was born in 1906 and lived in several Chicago neighborhoods until the death of his mother. One of six children, he came to Marks Nathan in 1920 after a three-and-a-half-year stay at the Jewish Orphan Asylum of Cleveland, later the Jewish Orphan Home, now Bellefaire. Mr. Gertz is a graduate of Crane Technical High School. Besides being the author of numerous books, articles, and plays, Mr. Gertz has earned a national reputation as a lawyer and defender of civil liberties. Among his achievements were the release from prison of Nathan Leopold, the overturned death sentence of Jack Ruby, and the defense of Henry Miller in the Tropic of Cancer obscenity case. Today Mr. Gertz continues to be active in his profession.

Elmer Gertz: See, originally, my brother Bob and I had been sent to the Cleveland orphanage because it then had the reputation of being perhaps the outstanding Jewish orphanage in the country. It had been started by B'nai B'rith right after the Civil War for the orphans of Jewish soldiers, and B'nai B'rith still supported it. My aunt, my mother's younger sister, dominated family affairs. She decided, and apparently it was easy to persuade my father, that my brother and I ought to go to the Cleveland orphanage, and my father would periodically take off time from work and get a job in Cleveland to visit us. My aunt and uncle, who had been responsible for our going to the Cleveland orphanage, would visit, but the rest of the family couldn't, except my oldest brother went there with his bride as part of his honeymoon in 1919, and when my next oldest brother came out of the army, after the First World War, he got a job in Akron, Ohio, working in the tire factory and also doing professional prize fighting. So he saw a bit of us but otherwise, the only contacts with the family were through correspondence, and so after a while they all began to feel it would be much better if we came home, particularly at that time when my mother's mother was in failing health, and as a matter of fact, within days of our return to Chicago my mother's mother died.

Dr. Bernard Gordon was born in 1930 in East Liverpool, Ohio, but lived most of his childhood in Chicago. He entered the Home with his brother and left after five years to resume living with his mother. Dr. Gordon is a graduate of Marshall High School and is now an anesthesiologist for Northwest Surgicare, Inc., an outpatient surgical facility in Arlington Heights, Illinois.

Bernie Gordon: I was eight years old when I came to the Home April 5th of 1938; I left some time in October of 1943. I remember vividly the day I came to the Home. To give you a little background, my mother and father were divorced. My mother and my brother lived here in Chicago, where my mother had her home before she was married, and when we were separated from my father, we came back to Chicago to live with my grandmother, and then my uncle helped my mother to get started in a small crockery business. The Depression was drawing to a close, and it was just the right time to open a store. My mother was a good business woman and built this little crockery business into a rather active store, and it was almost impossible for her to give us the care that she wanted for us. She was in the store all day, she could barely break away to come to the back and give us our food when we came home from school for lunch, so I think that this was the motivation for her to seek help with us. And so she arranged for the Home to take us in. She visited us very frequently; she was no more than eight blocks away.

On April the fifth, I remember coming to the Home with my brother and wandering around this huge institution. Other children were very interested in us. We were soon split off into our own peer groups and we were very actively being escorted around and enthusiastically shown the various rooms, the various dormitories, and various components of the Home. The kids welcomed us. I remember very distinctly Barney Willis, a boy who I would guess is if anything no more than a year older than I am, very enthusiastically bringing me around the house, showing me the dormitories and telling me about who lived in various dormitories, how the divisions were broken up, what age group slept here, and giving us various bits of advice about how to get along with the seniors and so on.

Miriam Markowitz Grossman* lived in Chicago before coming to Marks Nathan in 1924 at the age of six. Since leaving the Home in 1936, she worked as a secretary, married and raised a family of two children. She is now semi-retired.

Miriam Markowitz Grossman: I had a father, but he had these three children that he did not know what to do with. I was the youngest. I entered the Home when I was six years old but that was after several years spent in two different nurseries and one of the nurseries was a very bad experience. My older brother at that time must have been thirteen. I have total recall of sitting on his knee. He was wiping my tongue where somebody had put soap on it for saying some kind of curse word; maybe I said damn or hell or something, and I was sitting on his lap crying because my tongue burned, and he was wiping it with his hanky. This was in the nursery, not in Marks Nathan. It was my first introduction to a world filled with people who were in charge of little ones who did not know what they were doing. They made life miserable for little people.

Cele Helford is a past president of the Star Auxiliary of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home, and has been a loyal member for more than sixty years. The Star Auxiliary, which was founded by concerned West Side women in 1905, is one of four auxiliaries of the Marks Nathan still associated with the Jewish Children's Bureau. The others are the Esther Clamage Auxiliary, the International Auxiliary, and the North Shore Auxiliary.

Cele Helford: I lived at 300 South Hamlin, which was a short way from the Home, and at that time I had a car that belonged to my husband and myself and I used to take it and drive over to the

*Mrs. Miriam Markowitz Grossman has requested anonymity; a pseudonym has been assigned.

Home at lunch hour to see what type of food they were getting. So I noticed that they didn't get any butter, but they got apple butter and they smeared that on their bread and ate it, and they got milk with their meals. So I said to Mr. Trotzkey, "Don't you have any other kind of jelly to give to these children?" and he said, "Mrs. Helford, we can't afford it." I said, "Would you mind if I went ahead and raised the funds in my organization to buy them preserves?" He said, "No, I'd be glad if you would."

Mickey Pallas was born on March 21, 1916. He attended Farragut High School, but left before graduating to go to work. He held a job as a musician in the 1933-1934 Chicago World's Fair and has since become a distinguished free-lance photographer, having had numerous assignments for Time-Life, American Broadcasting Company, and Standard Oil of Indiana. Today he is a consultant for Pallas Photo Labs of Chicago, Denver, and Milwaukee.

Mickey Pallas: My parents were divorced when I was a year old. I was born in Belvidere, Illinois, and so I was kind of knocked around. I lived with my mother for a very short time on Roosevelt Road in Chicago. When I was four or five years old she was institutionalized. She had a breakdown and at that time a breakdown meant, "Hey, you're crazy, man," and that's it, you see? Okay. So she wasn't able to take care of the children. There were just three of us: there was my brother, who was raised mostly by my grandmother; my sister, who lived with an aunt, more or less; and I. Prior to this we'd been living with different people all over with the Jewish Home Finding Society.

But anyway I was also living with my father. He had legal problems but when he got married again he got everything straightened

out. So what happened was that he was working--and when I was just a kid eight years old, sir, I used to go to work with him--he was a peddler, you know, and he became pretty good. He was really a very knowledgeable guy, and was a very bright guy without any education. He couldn't read or write, and that's what got him in trouble. He signed a check and he had to go to jail, you know. We're talking about when he bought watermelons and stuff like that, he made a check and he had to go to jail, because he couldn't write a check. Somebody else had to write the check and he had to help sign it but that's what happened.

I lived in Flint, Michigan, at the time with my father, because he went there in order to get away from being in jail. But anyway, they picked him up there and they took him in the middle of the night back to Chicago, and how I got back to Chicago I don't really remember now, because it was so long ago.

I came back to Chicago and I was going to school there, okay? I was living with him. So he lived on Kedzie Avenue. He was renting a room. You know, years ago you could rent a room with a family, which helped with the rent. So I was with him and with this family, and there was another man who rented a room too. He had a son who was in the Marks Nathan Home.

The regular school that I went to was the Pope School. All the kids from the Home went to that school. So I was getting into all kinds of problems, you know, talking back to the teachers, and my father had to come to school one time. I was friends with two of the boys from the Marks Nathan. A particular one was Lou Lubliner, and there was another one by the name of Miller. So we kind of hung around and we were good buddies, and it seemed to me that one winter, it was around Christmas time, and my aunts gave me a pair of rubbers,

and the shoes I had been wearing had holes in them and I used to put paper in them, you know. It helped at that time to get into the Home because the kids that I worked with had shoes, you know, and they had short pants--not knickers but pants. And I said I wanted them too.

The first thing that really got me, when I met kids from the Home, is that they had clean clothes and shoes. The first thing I got was a pair of shoes, you know, and they had their own shoes, they had a shoemaker, you know, and they had their own shoes, they there was someone; I forget her name, but she used to take care of you. If you had a rip she'd sew it. And another thing, every morning, you had to make sure your nails were clean, that you're washed, you know, the way you should be, and you fought against these things.

Hanna Rosenthal Posner was born in 1915 and entered the Home at the age of five, the minimum age allowed for placement. As a young woman she had sincere interest in musical and theatrical performance. She plans to retire this summer from the Department of Chemistry at the University of Chicago, where she has worked as executive secretary.

Hanna Rosenthal Posner: My mother died eleven days after I was born. My sister was twelve years old, my brother was six. And then there was my sister Tillie, who was two years and nine months old. So my mother had an aunt and this aunt didn't have any children, probably couldn't have any, so she asked my father if she could adopt my sister Tillie, and so there were adoption papers, and we were never to be told that we were sisters. So when it came time for them to put me out to the Jewish Home Finding Society-there must have been families that wanted to adopt me-and why I mentioned this prior

business was because this aunt was the matriarch in the family and so she wouldn't let me become adopted, because she said there was enough of the family broken up. So since she was my aunt, my sister was my cousin. For all the time I grew up she lived with my aunt, and my brother and I were in the Home. My sister was twelve so she went to work. See in those days, even at twelve years old, everybody went to work. There was no money.

So they put me in the Home. My brother took me there because they figured if my uncle took us they wouldn't accept us because he was somebody that could have taken care of us. My grandmother had been taking care of us, but she was tired, so she decided to go back to Europe, and there was no way that they could have made her take us, and so when we got to the Home, my brother was put on the boys' side and I was put on the girls' side.

Bernard Rattner came to Marks Nathan in 1924 at the age of ten after growing up in Chicago with his parents. Though Mr. Rattner's mother was hospitalized when he entered the Home, she was released soon after he left in 1930. Mr. Rattner was married to another Home Kid, Ethel Brown, who recently passed away. Together they had three children. Mr. Rattner is a past president of the Marks Nathan Alumni Foundation and has worked as a business consultant for the George S. May Company. He is now retired.

Bernie Rattner: My mother was in a state mental hospital. It was very difficult for my dad to work without worrying about what was happening to his kids. So he heard about the Home and made arrangements for them to take me in, which they did. We arrived at the Home in the summer of 1919. My dad thought it would be a pretty good idea if we started out early and be able to meet everybody and make some friends, and out came all the kids with their packs on their backs; they were going to camp.

David Rubin* was born in 1905, and left the Home in 1922 after his high school graduation. He later married a Marks Nathan alumna. He has had a dedicated career as a salesman, while Mrs. Rubin has been a devoted school teacher. Together they have reared two children and are now retired.

David Rubin: I came into the Home from Gary, Indiana. My father died in Europe. I was a war orphan in 1916 when the war broke out, so my grandfather was in Gary. He had a dry-goods store. We came from there to here, that's all. My mother was alive at the time. The first thing I knew, I was marched right into the Home. I was too young to realize what was happening at the time; I was only ten years old, and I think the family knew about the Marks Nathan Home and they applied, that's all. I wouldn't know just how or why or when or anything. They made me change clothes, that's all I remember. I was wearing short pants, but the first impression I got was my laundry cubicle and my assignment to a number. It was number 100, believe it or not. I was given a boy's locker. I was a bit bewildered. We went all the way around Russia and embarked at Archangel for the port because we were living in Asia at the time in Samarkand, Turkistan. My father was superintendent of a railroad there. He died in 1915. A year later we landed here. I was like any other boy, happy-go-lucky, that's it.

Sally Drew Ryce was born in 1931 in Trenton, New Jersey, to a mother who suffered a stroke and died before Sally's fifth birthday and to a father who soon became confined to a Chicago Veterans Administration hospital with multiple sclerosis. Before coming to Marks Nathan at the age of eight, Sally lived in the Hebrew Infants' and Children's Home in Far Rockaway, New York, and a series of foster homes in New Jersey and Chicago. Sally has worked as Business Manager of the Department of Medicine of the University of Illinois Medical Center, and is presently Assistant Director

*Mr. David Rubin has requested anonymity; a pseudonym

for Administrative and Financial Services of the Northwestern University Medical School. She and her husband Roy have one son.

Sally Drew Ryce: Netty Wolf, the social worker, told me before I came to the Home, they would let me read all I wanted to read. I was a reader, and people were always telling me prior to Marks Nathan, "You have to stop reading; you can read a half an hour, and you have to go out and play and get roses in your cheeks." I'll never forget the roses in the cheeks thing. And when I was talking to Mrs. Wolf at the Children's Bureau, she was telling me about this great place where there were lots of children, where I was going to go to live, and they were going to let me read all I want to read and that was the real thing for me, that I could come in this place and read without people interrupting me.

At one foster home, I remember, I couldn't always get milk, and I was told at Marks Nathan I could have all the milk I wanted. I felt Marks Nathan was going to be a place where there were other kids just like me, I wasn't going to be different. I was pleased going in, and I always did feel kind of special in the Home, because I was taken care of.

Esther Leimberg Versten was born Christmas Eve, 1905, on the West Side. She has had a long and happy marriage to Mr. David Leonard Versten, has been a homemaker, and after the death of her husband, she held a part-time office job for Atlas Industries from which she is now retired.

Esther Leimberg Versten: Yes, we lost our mother January 15, 1915. My mother was all of thirty-seven years old. And, well, there was a family of six small children and I guess my dad tried keeping us at home but it probably was difficult for him to work and try to keep his family together. So, he hired a woman that came with her

own two children to watch over us until my dad would come home from work. Well, my dad found that she wasn't doing the job. She was taking care of her own two children, but forgot that she was supposed to be taking care of Mr. Leimberg's six children. So my dad decided this was not for him. Knowing my dad, he probably tried to fight against bringing us into a home. I say this because I know my dad very well. But I guess the Jewish Home Finding Society decided that whether Mr. Leimberg liked it or not, these children had to be taken care of. We were all at a tender age.

Anyway, Judge Fisher was terrific. He decided he wanted to see my dad and the children in his chamber. I remember he was a very kindly gentleman, and I think I was the one that gave him more trouble than any of the other kids. My sisters decided, "Well, what are we going to do, we have to go," but I just didn't want to go. I didn't want to leave my papa. Anyway, he talked to us and he asked everybody to leave the room, except my father and myself. Judge Fisher said, "Remember, honey, your father can't work and stay home at the same time. He has to make a livelihood to support his children," and I couldn't see it. I was a very difficult child because I didn't want to go. I was the apple of my dad's eye. We had no say about it. We were taken to the orphan home, and I will never forget that as long as I live. It must have been terrible for my father because he was a thirty-seven-year-old man with all these kids. What in the world was he going to do?

Mildred Schooler Winograd generously committed one day each week of her time from 1920 to 1923 as a volunteer music teacher in the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home. In her charitable career Mrs. Winograd has also served on the Board of Directors of the Orthodox Jewish Home for the Aged (B.M.Z.) and has been a long-standing member of the Women's Board of the Michael

Reese Hospital. Though she is now retired, she continues to play the piano, leaving the family tradition of social service in the hands of her daughter, Marilyn Silin, who is a social worker for the Jewish Children's Bureau.

Mrs. Winograd: I taught piano with a group of boys and girls ages six through ten. It was through the Juvenile Welfare Association that I started there. That was a voluntary organization that's no longer in existence. The method of teaching today, you know, is different. The girls and boys are taught to play at the first lesson, whereas I taught E, G, B, D, F (Every good boy does fine), the lines and the spaces. That was one way of giving them an appreciation of music, fundamentally.

Not everybody was interested. You can be sure it tried one's patience, because here were these little kids that didn't want it, but they learned to like it. That was the purpose; it was to give them something other than just being in a home. We taught not only music but dramatic art. I didn't teach that portion. Miss Lyons did. Bertha Lyons was president of the Juvenile Welfare Association. You know, teaching a group is more difficult than giving an individual lesson. We were trying to keep them still, helping them to concentrate. After all, some of them learned to play and some of them didn't. Just the same, it took them away from the everyday routine, which was very important.

It was interesting for me. I was awfully happy there. It helped me to see how others lived. I was part of a growing, progressive institution and I have always liked that.

CHAPTER III

WHAT WAS IT LIKE GROWING UP IN MARKS NATHAN?

As the alumni told their stories of life at Marks Nathan few reviewed the normal tedium of the daily routine. It is not surprising that the recollections foremost in the minds of most alumni were about those activities which broke from the routine. Like every child who is guided by parental mandate into a sensible lifestyle of "early to bed, early to rise and off to school," Home Kids yearned for the special times: outings and activities of the weekends, Jewish holidays and vacations.

As children today are heard to complain about Hebrew school, so too the Home Kids complained about their weekday and Sunday sessions of Hebrew school at the Home. They did not regard Friday night and Saturday synagogue services the same way. The Sabbath rituals and singing were, for many, a highlight of the weekly regimen. Home Kids also recall their Saturday afternoon excursions to the local theaters often more vividly than they recall their Sunday outings with members of their families.

During the week, children were kept busy with educational and recreational activities, as well as with tasks of various kinds, including the responsibility of the older children to help care for the younger children. The Home ran smoothly because children were well supervised, happily occupied and never without the company of peers. Most can recall at least one time when they were unfairly treated or for other reasons were unhappy. No child can be expected to grow up with only joyous experiences. By the same token, few alumni have forgotten the benefits of life in Marks Nathan. Alumni often recall that they were the envy of the rest of the kids in the neighborhood, especially when the working and middle class Douglas Park area was suffering from the Depression.

By 1948, at the end of the Marks Nathan era, the Chicago Jewish community had found new ways to meet the needs of children. During the Marks Nathan era life was not easy. There were child labor abuses, world-wide economic slumps

and wars. Home Kids feel it is important to remember that while many in the Jewish community suffered, those in Marks Nathan were provided with material goods, opportunities, and educational guidance. With these points in mind, Mr. Niebow poses his rhetorical questions, and Mr. Berns adds his description of the daily routine.

Len Niebow, 1936-1942: Can you imagine not having to worry about making friends? There were so many kids and so much to do all around you. Can you imagine?

Favil Berns, 1935-1944: You could engage in so many activities that you didn't have to worry. You could read if you were attuned to that. We had a library. They had a lot of subscriptions to a lot of magazines. If you wanted to engage in music, they had their Marks Nathan band; I remember being a participant there. They had basketball and softball games going on outside. There were handball courts. There were enough activities going on that you could occupy your time with, that you didn't have time to think about anything else.

I recall that six o'clock is when the supervisors woke us up. And when you got up you had to wash up and brush your teeth. Then you had to make up your bed and fold it in a certain manner, making sure everything was neat.

By 6:30 we all had individual work assignments. Whether it was mopping the floor, or any other type of cleaning assignment, you had to do your particular tour of work. The supervisor usually would come by from dorm to dorm to see if everything was being efficiently run But that usually didn't last long. It had to be completed by 6:55 A.M.

If you were Bar Mitzvahed, you had to go down to the study room and lay your teffilin and daven*, and while you were davening in that group, the supervisors were lining up the juniors, intermediates and senior girls to walk into the dining room for breakfast. Davening only took five or six minutes, and when you were finished, you took your

*lay teffilin and daven - the ritual wearing of phylacteries and praying.

place at your assigned seat in the dining room, let's say at 7:05 a.m.

Boys had to have yarmulkes in their pockets at all times. You put on your yarmulke and said grace before breakfast. And then you were told when to start talking or when not to start talking, depending on how Mr. Feinstein felt as he walked up and down the rows of tables. Certain seniors would be assigned as waiters and waitresses to help out from the kitchen and we used to serve family style. There would be a senior boy at one end of the table and a senior girl at the other, and in between there were six other people in mixed age groups, so that each table represented a family unit, and you just passed the food around in a circle. And Mr. Feinstein would make any announcements of the day that he thought were necessary, and then you would have to say grace after the meal. Then you lined up. For those who required lunches, lunches had already been assembled and prepared. As you walked out of the dining room, you picked up your brown bag. Those who received car fare would be handed a nickel. This is how you began your school day.

Of course, when you got home from school, generally it was a requirement that you had to change clothes, from your school clothes to your play clothes. Each of us had an individual locker in the locker room. You changed clothes at about 3:00 p.m. Then if you wanted, you could have milk and cookies. However, you were required to go to the library and do your homework. If that was completed, you could go out and play or do any other activity you wanted before dinner time. Then, again, you would get washed up, and line up to go back in the dining room. You would say your prayers before the meal and start the whole routine all over again.

Then after dinner the Student Council operated a canteen. You could buy candy or ice cream or something like that. That was open from 6:30 to 8:00 o'clock. Then, you could go anywhere you wanted in the neighborhood. If you wanted to leave the grounds, you could leave the grounds and go play or study or play ball or engage in arts and crafts or some other activity. Well, then, obviously at 8:30 p.m. the juniors had to go to their respective dormitories. Then, the intermediates had to get ready. After they got out of the way, then the seniors had to be in their dorms at approximately 9:30 p.m., and cleaned up. And there were certain nights designated as shower nights when certain dorms took group showers. And lights out was about 10:00 o'clock.

Friday you had to get dressed up because right after dinner you had to go to shul*. Saturday after breakfast, you got ready and cleaned your clothes or did whatever small things you could for yourself; then we had to get ready for services. After services you had lunch; then after lunch the local movie theaters would let us in for free. If you were young, you only walked a couple of blocks to the White Palace Theater. If you were older, you walked a little more distance down to the Marshall Square Theater. Saturday evening after dinner you could do whatever you wanted. Seniors would generally get invited to go out somewhere. Once in a while, play tickets would be donated to the Home and then certain groups would go out. Sunday there were various types of classes. You still had to go to cheder*, but after the noon meal you were free: you didn't have to report back until 8:00 p.m. That was a free afternoon to go out and leave the Home. A lot of people would have relatives come pick them up, or they could take a streetcar and go to their relatives' home for the day on Sunday.

*shul- synagogue
*cheder - Hebrew School

Mr. Berns's mother came to see him often. Mrs. Posner was another of the many children that had relatives who lived near enough that they could come and take their children out on Sundays. It was particularly fortunate for her because she was placed in the Home at an uncommonly young age. Home Kids were expected to be old enough to care for themselves with a minimum of supervision. Mrs. Posner recalls her early indoctrination to the days' activities.

Hanna Rosenthal Posner, 1920-1932: I'm going to tell you what I can remember. Everybody had a job to do. We had to be up at six o'clock in the morning, and I swore when I left the Home I'd never get up at six o'clock again, but I didn't follow. Anyway, I was tiny, I was five, so my job was to dust under the bed, and of course everybody made their own bed. It's just like they teach you in the army. Our beds had to be tight and cornered. I still do it to this day; it's the training.

At breakfast we would come in and have our cereal in a bowl. You know, after all, they were feeding 300 children. And the lumps in the oatmeal would make you sick to your stomach; you couldn't eat it. Well, what happened was when they cooked a big, tremendous pot of cereal, they didn't always mix it. They were not standing over it fixing it, so we'd get these lumps. This is what we used to do: We used to have to stack our dishes, so we used to put the cereal in the bottom bowl and the top bowls were empty. So it came to the point where you had to hold your cereal bowl in front of you so they could see that you ate yours. We used to have big flannel bloomers, so we used to put the cereal in our flannel bloomers and we'd walk out of the dining room, because it was pretty hard to eat.

When we went to high school, we used to wear lisle stockings. At that time silk stockings were in fashion. I didn't have money to buy them, but the girls that had silk stockings used to stop in the hallways of buildings on the way to school and take their lisle stockings off and put on their silk stockings; then before they got home they would change. We went to Marshall High School, and we didn't want people to know that we were from the orphan home. That was a stigma. You know, we wanted to be like everybody else. So Mr. Feinstein came to school one day, and he went into each classroom to make the girls stop wearing silk stockings.

If you went to Harrison High School you got a nickel, but if you went to Marshall High School you got nineteen cents: It was fourteen cents for car fare and five cents to buy something, so we used to walk to Marshall and then we'd use the money to buy potato French fries. We could get a big bunch of them for a nickel. I went to John Marshall so I got nineteen cents.

When my brother, Norbert, was in the Home, and I was eleven years old--so that made him seventeen--he used to get a nickel and he used to come and give me a penny every morning. There was a fellow by the name of Ike Rosenthal and another fellow by the name of Phil Katz. Well, these two fellows were friends of my brother's, so when Norbert went to Hebrew Union College, he told me to go to Phil Katz and get a penny, so if Phil Katz missed a morning I used to go looking for him and say, "You owe me a penny," see? When Phil left the Home, he told Ike Rosenthal to give me a penny. I was always scrounging pennies from somebody.

I'll tell you, we were like brothers and sisters. It was a nice group. The sports were out of this world. We used to play basketball out in the field. Even my husband used to come over there; I didn't know him then, but all the neighborhood kids used to come in and play baseball or play any of the sports that we had there. We used to play basketball in the boys' gym. We would challenge the boys to basketball but they had to wear our bloomers because they had to have a handicap. We were used to wearing our bloomers all the time, but when they had to wear our bloomers, it was a handicap, you know. For us it was nothing. And as we got older, we used to have dances on Saturday nights. Those were nice because they were for boys and girls.

Children were sent to overnight camp for two weeks each summer. Boys went to Camp Henry Horner and girls went to Camp Chi. I loved Camp Chi. It was a vacation. Of course we didn't have to make any friends, because the Home Kids used to go together. But it was wonderful. We did whatever everybody else did: there was swimming, we did hiking, we got lifesaving buttons and put on shows, we were picking up snakes. We did things that I wouldn't even think of doing now. The only thing that we did that was better than anybody else was make our beds. Our beds were always beautiful.

When Yom Kippur came we used to have to fast, and then if we fasted, at the end of the day when we came to dinner, they would give us each a half a dollar. I remember we used to have a nice dinner. On Rosh Hashanah the whole Board of Directors used to come.

And on Hannuka when we would walk out of the dining room, we were each given a bag and in it was Hannuka gelt* and candy and little things. That I've never forgotten.

Many of the holiday treats were provided by the ladies of the Marks Nathan auxiliaries. Other donations were often received for holidays and special occasions, such as theater tickets and even chickens and meats for main courses. The synagogue was well-used on holidays and Sabbaths by the Home and by the neighborhood. In most respects, it was a traditional Orthodox synagogue. It was a separate building with a connecting link to the main structure, and it had an adjoining yard which could be used for the harvest-season holiday, Succoth. There was a second-floor balcony intended for females, but curiously the congregation faced Jerusalem to the west, rather than the more direct eastern view. The Marks Nathan synagogue also broke with the Orthodox tradition by allowing females to sit on the same floor as males, but it has been pointed out that the neighborhood normally held separate services prior to the Home, and during these earlier adult services, women always sat upstairs. Mrs. Posner continues:

I hated Hebrew School. I only liked Mr. Silverman. Oh, he was such a gentleman. He was a real gentle man. He was a Hebrew teacher, but he had a heart as big as his body. He was real sweet. But every day after school, we went to Hebrew School, and we had services Friday night after supper and Saturday morning services from nine o'clock to twelve o'clock. And I sang in the choir. Oh, yes, we had a delightful choir. Mr. Resnick was absolutely wonderful, and we used to harmonize in the morning at services; it was absolutely beautiful. I loved it. But I said when I left the Home I'd never go to temple again. It was just

*Hannuka gelt - money

too much. I was sitting in the back; we also sat downstairs. I didn't understand any Yiddish at all, but these old men used to come into the synagogue and they spoke Yiddish. The synagogue was not just for us; a lot of people used to come in there from the neighborhood and use it for their services, and this man was saying something in Yiddish to somebody else. He was very angry, and I said to the girl next to me, "What's he saying?" and she said he was very upset that we were sitting on the same floor because we were unclean; we should be upstairs. "What does he mean by 'unclean'?" So she says, "Because we have periods and we're not supposed to be on the same floor with the men." Well, when I heard that, I said to her, "When I leave the Home, you're not going to find me going into any synagogue that segregates the women from the men. They're no cleaner and they're no dirtier than I am," you know. I was young. I was upset.

Mrs. Brooks lived in the Home with Mrs. Posner during the twenties; both women have vivid memories of the badly-prepared oatmeal. However, no alumni, in the course of this project, complained about not having enough to eat as a child in Marks Nathan.

Elsie Niebow Brooks, 1921-1928: We had nice meals. They had boys and girls together. We all went into the dining room together, boys on one side, girls on the other. We never sat together but we all went in the same dining room. They had a real big dining room and we all ate in the same dining room at a certain time. I think we had supper at five o'clock and our lunch at twelve; and at breakfast, we always had oatmeal; that's why for a while I hated oatmeal because this woman, Mrs. Bischler, she always burnt the oatmeal. So we used to take the oatmeal and wrap it in a napkin

cents, and they would go to the theater with supervisors; you know, we'd pick one theater to go to. But the seniors would get seventy-five cents, and they were allowed to go out, after dinner when we broke fast, and they had to be in at 11:30 or midnight. But I remember the year I was not quite thirteen--oh, I don't know how many boys asked me out for that night. Now, "asking out" consisted of going in a group. I mean, the boys would get permission to go where the girls went, and we would all go to the movies; then the girls would sit with the boys and then they'd take us out for an ice cream later and then we would all go home together as a group. And I remember I fasted and I was punished. I couldn't go out that night, because you weren't supposed to fast before thirteen. That was just a rule that they had in the Home and if you didn't follow the rule, you were punished. Several of us boasted that we fasted, so this one guy that I had a date with went out and brought back some candy and we sat in the lounge for a little while, and then I had to go to bed and he went to his bed. He didn't go with the other kids. He stayed home with me.

When I was in high school, we had certain rules and regulations, but I felt that we had a tremendous amount of independence, because nobody was watching our every move. We had to be home from school at a certain time, we had to be there for roll call, and we had to be there for dinner.

During the War, after I was sixteen, Storkline Furniture Company called the Home and they wanted to know if they had any responsible young people that could do part-time office work. Their vice president was on our Board of Directors or had something to do with the Home.

And I was one of the kids that was lucky enough to go, so I made thirty-five cents an hour, which was a lot of money then. Of course, I only worked two hours after school every day, but that meant I didn't have to be home exactly from school. I'd go straight from school to work. I do remember Mr. Feinstein calling me in, and there was another young man who worked with me, and he said, "Why aren't you saving more money?" and impressing upon us that it was our responsibility to put some of that money away. Now, the Home had a banking system for some of the kids who would get an allowance, and I think the Home gave it to them or the Jewish Children's Bureau. The little ones would get a quarter and when you got to be a little bit older, you would get fifty cents a week, but I made more than that when I was working. But part of that we were supposed to put away.

Like Mrs. Fineberg, Mr. Friedman was also a leader among the children, and his success in the Home has carried over into his career, but like so many of his generation Mr. Friedman, as an adolescent, was faced with the reality that he might be shipped off to Europe as a soldier.

Arthur Friedman, 1937-1945: I remember D-Day. We were eating breakfast and the word had gotten out that the invasion had taken place. I guess some of the supervisors or kids may have been listening to the radio, but at that breakfast Mr. Feinstein made a speech concerning the importance of what it meant to everyone and we all had a silent prayer for at least a minute. It was an emotional feeling at that time because, you know, since I was seventeen years old, I knew what it meant, having to look forward to going into the armed forces, and eventually maybe this would mean the beginning of the end of the War, so it is a deeply moving memory to me.

See, you have to remember when I was seventeen and eighteen, it was 1943-44 and in the height of the War, and I remember, when I first got there, on Friday evenings all the alumni would come over to play ball. There was a lot of activity and companionship between the alumni and the boys in the Home. But as I look at it now, when all the fellows went from the Home into the service, the number of times we were able to get enough alumni to come back on a Friday evening to play baseball were fewer. Sometimes, I even remember, we didn't have enough people to play, so we'd just take enough of those in the Home and make up the difference on the alumni's team because sometimes there just weren't enough.

I remember one game when I was eigteen and they put me out in left field because I really wasn't good enough to be the captain, see. I played one of those positions where you can't hurt the team, but this time I played left field, and I ran and I caught a ball, which I never thought I would do, and they cheered me. I still remember that and it's one of the nice things you remember, when you're not a very good athlete.

We had to go to Hebrew School until we left the Home, and if I remember right, it was three nights a week plus Sunday morning. I think it was a two-hour session, and when you got to be seventeen or eighteen, and you talked with your cousins and other kids who you went to high school with, and you find out that after they were thirteen, they didn't go to Hebrew School anymore, you sort of begrudge them, but there was one time I do remember. Maybe I was trying to be a smart ass, but I raised a question in front of Mr. Silverman, who was the head Hebrew teacher, and I asked him, "How do

we know that Moses spoke to God and he actually parted the Red Sea and he brought down the Ten Commandments?" And he said, "Art Friedman: out of the class." He kicked me out because I dared raise a question that differed from what the Bible said. I remember walking down the hall, and Mr. Feinstein saw me. He said, "What are you doing out of class?" and I said, "Mr. Silverman dismissed me for doing something that he didn't think was proper," and Mr. Feinstein never said a word about it, never punished me, he just passed it by, and I still remember that.

Because boys were compelled to attend Hebrew School before and after they were bar mitzvahed, it seems unlikely that they would have found enough time to become proficient in sports. But the Home had its own basketball and handball courts, as well as its own baseball diamond, and there was always a crop of fine young athletes. The other kids in the neighborhood knew that Marks Nathan was the place to go for fun and top competition. Home Kids managed to find the time, but as Mickey Pallas explains, they also had to confront anti-Semitism in athletics.

Mickey Pallas, 1929-1933: There were not too many Jews at Farragut High, but there were some and we had a rough time there because we were Jewish. The non-Jewish used to beat the tar out of us, and not only kids from the Home but other Jewish kids. And we had to meet in order to go to school without getting beat up. There were not that many of us, you know, but when they found out that we were not afraid of anybody, they let us be, and I want to tell you something; we had some bad, bad battles.

One day Joe Wolf came with a gun he took from his father, and when we were attacked, there were about eight or nine of us, and about

twenty-five of them were coming at us. So he took the gun and shot it in the air, and everyone took off, and the police took it away from him. You know, after that, they let us be, but we were discriminated against. There was no question about that. As an example, I played baseball while I was in the Home. I was a good athlete. I played good basketball too. We used to play softball, but fast-pitch. Okay, I was the catcher on the school team. Catching was important, but they wouldn't put me on first, so they had to have somebody who was non-Jewish on first. And a lot of our guys who were really good couldn't make it because of the fact that they were Jewish. See, at Harrison they didn't have the big problem that I can remember at Farragut because there were more than just Bohemians there. There were Polish, Bohemian, and I guess some other group, but there was not a large Jewish population, because most of the Jews went to Marshall. All the girls from the Home went to Marhsall; some of the boys went there too, but in Harrison there weren't so many problems because it was already diversified.

Discrimination against Home Kids because they were Jewish was apparently not uncommon. Discrimination against Home Kids because they lived in an orphanage was less of a problem. Children did not wear uniforms, although as Mrs. Posner pointed out, some girls wanted to wear more fashionable clothing that would not reveal that they were from the Home. Boys also wore tell-tale black socks, but there were no incidents mentioned of Home Kids being beaten up or harrassed simply because of where they lived. One alumna reported that a teacher accused all the Marks Nathan children in her class of being troublemakers, but letters from schools to the Home suggest that other teachers respected Home Kids for their high academic standards and hard work. Mr. Elmer Gertz remembers that the Home was not an issue for him at school.

Elmer Gertz, 1920-1924: So far as I recall, Allan Mack and I were the only two kids from Marks Nathan who went to Crane Technical High School, which was then a very great high school. Both Allan and I were leaders of Crane Tech student papers and clubs and other activities. We were almost oblivious that we were different. The students were almost oblivious that we were kids from an orphanage..

Even if Home Kids received equal treatment in high school, they still had to contend with gangs of opponents while they walked to and from school. This was no less true at Harrison High School, in spite of Mickey Pallas's comment that "there weren't so many problems because it was already diversified." Esther Versten explains:

Esther Liemberg Versten, 1915-1921: Sure, in the summertime we went to the park every day to play, but you knew that you were not supposed to leave the grounds. No kid left the grounds, because we knew when it was time to come for lunch, when we'd hear the bell. You weren't supposed to go traveling all over; you knew where you could go. We weren't prisoners, but they had to keep track; there were 350 kids, and they had to have a schedule. So in the summertime we were in the park but only right across from the Home. The Home was on one side of the street and Douglas Park was on the other side. And when we went to Harrison High, we were told, "Do not go to school through the park." Because we used to go through the park. You know, kids don't think of anything. Harrison High was predominantly Gentile. There were Bohemian and Polish kids and there were plenty of Jewish and Polish fights and gang wars during those years, because of the fact that they hated the Jews. So we used to have to go all the way around the park to 22nd Street because Harrison High was in the heart of the Polish and Bohemian area.

Mrs. Versten remembers some of the goings on that the supervisors may not have been aware of. She continuously speaks of the Home with nostalgic fondness. It provided a refuge for her within the Jewish community. Her spunk and her charm are undiminished through the years. Here she discloses the symbolicly significant lesson of bed-making. This theme was also touched on in interviews with several other alumni. Mrs. Versten continues:

> They expected you to learn how to make your bed, and you had to make that bed good because they inspected your room. Well, you stripped the bed, number one. You just didn't tuck anything under, you stripped it completely right to the matress and then you put the first sheet on and you smoothed it all out. Boy, I wish you could have seen my beds! Nobody could make a bed like I could! And they taught you how to make corners, like in the hospital the same thing. I know because the first time I was in the hospital and I saw the girl making the bed, I said, "You know, you made a mistake." She said, "What are you talking about?" I was always proud of the fact that I was in the Marks Nathan Orphan Home, so I said, "I was in the Marks Nathan Orphan Home, and they taught me how to make a bed. You didn't do it right." She said, "Don't tell anybody but I was in a hurry." That's how observing I became because if you didn't do it right, you had a demerit. Now in those days they didn't have the tuck-in sheets like we have today.
>
> Well, then after you put the first sheet on, you also had to put a second sheet on; put the corners in place and tuck them under. Then after that you had a blanket to put on, but you had to have the top of that blanket away from the second sheet so that you could turn the second sheet over to make it look more attractive. And then you had

to fluff up your pillow real good. If you walked into my bedroom, you'd see how nicely my pillow is fluffed up.

All right, this was the basic way for them to teach you that there are things that you will have to do through life. We didn't have to wash dishes; they had help doing that. They had 350 kids, so what else could they teach 350 kids to do? So they taught you that you do have to make your bed and if you're making your bed, you better make it well. And let me tell you, when I grew older and I became a monitor, those kids made their beds good. They knew they had to. "Oh, we love Esther Leimberg but, boy, we better make our beds good because she's going to give us a demerit if we don't," and that was the reputation I had. But they loved me and I loved them. Why? Every night I would tell them a story.

You won't believe this: The kids decided that we were going to make peanut brittle. So I said, "How do you make peanut brittle?" and the said, "Just get the stuff and we'll show you how we're gonna make peanut brittle." You know, my dad lived right next door to the Home, so I had a key to my dad's apartment--forgive me, Mr. Trotzkey; never knew the things we did because we weren't supposed to leave the grounds-but what I did, right from school is this. I got to my dad's place and filled up a bag with sugar and I got a pie tin and a spoon. No wonder my dad used to wonder where all the sugar and everything used to disappear to. He didn't know that it was me that was taking it.

Somebody bought the peanuts and shelled them, and I got the sugar, and we got together. There was six of us. I was always called "Peewee" because I was a little one, and they said, "Okay, Peewee, you're gonna stand on top of the sink, and we're gonna hand you the stuff." We

filled the pie tin up with the sugar, and they still had the gas jets. They had electric lighting, but they didn't do away with the gas jets. They said, "We'll light the gas jet. You stand up on the sink. Don't worry, you won't fall." One kid hung on to each of my legs. They said, "Keep stirring it over the flame; it'll melt. And then when it melts, you let us know and bring the pan down and we'll put the peanuts in, then put it back up there." And that's how we used to make peanut brittle.

Well, all I can say is that we had a lot of fun in Hebrew School. Should I tell you some of the things that the kids did? Because you won't believe it, you just won't believe it. My dad used to be in stitches when I would tell him some of these things. Anyway, I can remember this one class. The teacher, Mr. Prochovnik, was really cute. He was a little guy. He used to have a hand organ, so he brought his organ in on Sunday morning, and he would play the organ and we would sing, you know, the Jewish songs, and he too was very humane just like Mr. Silverman, and he probably used to say to himself, "Oh, these poor kids without parents," and no matter what we did, unless it was very drastic, he'd overlook it. He closed his eyes too a lot, and sometimes the boys would get rough, you know, when they were singing, and he would stop the organ and he'd say in Hebrew, "Well, if you're so smart maybe you can come up and do better."

One time the boys came in before we did and hid all the Hebrew books, and here Mr. Prochovnik was looking all over. He wanted to pass the books out because it was a class and he couldn't find the books. He knew he put them in the bookcase. So he'd say, "Where are the books?"

And I'd say, "Mr. Prochovnik, why don't you look here? Why don't you look there?" and so we'd tease him, you know, and every time he would look someplace, we'd all start laughing until he caught on, see. Then he'd say, "Well, all of you stand up and you're going to Mr. Trotzkey," but we didn't all go to Mr. Trotzeky because Mr. Trotzkey would have thrown us all out of his office. It was the whole class. Anyway, he never found the books. Do you know where they put the books? Way, way on top of the bookcases, you know up there. Well, he was a little guy, so how could he even think of it? The next day one of the kids must have put the books back in the bookcase. Well, that was another stunt.

Oh, the one with the pickles. You won't believe it. When you were a child, did you ever eat a dill pickle with a peppermint stick? Well, we kids did. Anyway, before we went to class, one of the kids would get the pickles. We always picked on a kid that nobody came to visit that didn't have any money, because we paid her to do this for us. So we'd each give her a nickel and we wanted her to buy so-many dill pickles with peppermint sticks, so she would get them and put the peppermint sticks in with the pickles. Mind you, we were kids; her hands could have been filthy, but we didn't care, we ate them anyway.

She would put the bag of pickles into the dressing room, you know, where you put your coats and everything. We knew by looking at the clock that she'd be there at a certain time. You won't believe this. And then we'd each all of a sudden decide we had to go throw something in the wastebasket and we'd take the pickle and the peppermint stick out of the bag that she had brought.

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She would put the bag of pickles into the dressing room, you know, where you put your coats and everything. We knew by looking at the clock that she'd be there at a certain time. You won't believe this. And then we'd each all of a sudden decide we had to go throw something in the wastebasket and we'd take the pickle and the peppermint stick out of the bag that she had brought.

Anyway, Mr. Prochovnik started smelling garlic. He said, "What smells here? What's going on here?" And we would all start laughing. What else could we do? Well, he couldn't help himself; he had to burst out laughing. Of course, he wouldn't say anything, but he must have thought to himself, "What are they going to do next?"

We were terrible. It wasn't that we were mean, but we just played pranks, that's all, just clean fun, let's put it that way, but it was a heck of a thing to do when I think of it now.

Apparently Mr. Rubin also had some fun in Hebrew School, although he said repeatedly that he hated it. He lived in the Home during the same years as Mrs. Versten and it appears from his remarks below that they were in the same Hebrew class.

David Rubin, 1916-1922: I can't remember much about Hebrew School except that I hated it. Actually most of the boys, and perhaps some of the girls, placed no value on Hebrew School at all because of the fact that it was something that we had to do, and when you're that young, nothing you have to do is important. It's only what you want to do that's important. We would rather have gone out to play, because all the other kids around Albany Avenue were outside playing while we were studying Hebrew. So it really meant nothing to us. Some of the boys took after it, I mean some of the linguists let's say, who were interested, but by and large most of the boys weren't very interested.

As a matter of fact in one of the classes one time, there was a Hebrew teacher by the name of Geffin. All of us were sitting in a class, and suddenly the alarm rings, so he calls class dismissal Somebody had brought an alarm clock into the class, and we passed it around. When Mr. Geffin went to one desk, it was at another desk. We kept it up for about ten minutes straight. I mean, that's exactly the

kind of pranks we played. One time he brought a concertina in class, you know, and he was playing some Jewish songs, and so we actually stuffed some paper in it. It was mischievous, you know.

Another obligation was that children had to perform certain work assignments in the Home. Alumni recall these chores less frequently than they recall Hebrew School. It seems the jobs were performed more willingly and were not thought to be detracting from play time. Nevertheless, Mr. Rubin's comments regarding the shoemaker indicate that children were involved in many aspects of the Home's operation.

This was the situation with the shoemaker in the Home. The Home hired a full-time shoemaker. He left the shoes piled up on the floor, you know, like every shoemaker does. He would not give you a full leather sole. He would put patches over the tears, and of course it really crippled the girls' feet. He crippled everybody's feet. On top of that, he had a brother who was a shoemaker over on Kedzie Avenue, and at night he would steal the leather from the Home and bring it over to his brother, until he was caught.

I know about that, because I was in charge of the shoe room. It was one of my many chores. You know, I kept records of all the shoes, the sizes, and handed them out on Pesach.* Brand new shoes were given once a year on Passover, but kids being what they are, they used to tear their shoes all the time and the shoemaker would continuously patch them with a little round patch just over the hole. The shoes were all numbered on the inside so the kids would get their own shoes back. But it was a very poor job of shoemaking, I would say, and they got rid of him and then, of course, the shoes were sent out. They couldn't get a shoemaker to stay in that one place because it was a poor-paying job

*Pesach - Passøver,

to begin with.

When they got rid of him, the Home got a shoemaker over somewhere on Austin Avenue, and he would take the shoes from the Home. We bundled them up and took the streetcar over to his place and left them there. You see, that was one of my jobs, and he put full soles and heels on the shoes. That was about 1919 or 1920.

CHAPTER IV

WHO TOOK CARE OF YOU?

The simplest answer to the question, "Who took care of you?" might have been, "Mr. Trotzkey, of course." Elias L. Trotzkey was the father and superintendent of the Home. Though he had not always been there, when he became ill and died in 1941, it must have seemed as if the Home had never before been without him. The Home's first superintendent, Saul Drucker, resigned soon after the Home moved from North Wood Street to South Albany Avenue. Mr. Trotzkey took over at that time and was there for most of its history.

Mr. Trotzkey was preparing to be a rabbi when he left the Government Teachers Institute in Russia to earn his degree at the Jews' College for Preachers and Teachers in London. While still in England, he gained professional experience and came to Marks Nathan, not as a rabbi, but as a social worker. Together with his family, he occupied the superintendent's apartment in the Home for twenty-eight years. He is remembered as an imposing figure, who sometimes wore a thick mustache. He was well-dressed, well-respected, and well-liked. On the occasion of his return from a journey abroad, Mr. Trotzkey wrote to the September, 1922, issue of The Echo, a literary monthly published "by the boys and girls of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home."

> Dear Children:
>
> ...The hearty welcome that you were kind enough to give us on our return was just as soul-stirring and as thought-compelling as the farewell, if not more so. This, too, wrung the heart, stirred all the emotions and brought a tear to the eye, but it was a tear of joy and happiness. The sounds of the band seemed so sweet and melodious, as never before. The welcome signs all over the building were perhaps overdone from the aesthetic point of view, but what counted with us most was the welcome we could read in the bright eyes and smiling faces, and above all in the warm hearts. And here again the box of naturals* suspended from the office door by the boys, came in handy. "Natural" is the main motto in our work. We want to be natural to each other, without any strained relations, or too much red tape. We want to lead a natural life, as natural as it is possible under the conditions of a

*box of naturals - a gift of treats, possibly fruit or candy.

congregate plan.

> I am delighted to see you all again, well and happy. I knew that with the staff we have in our home and under the wise guidance of Mr. Herron, you would be well taken care of. Now, I am back, "on the job." Before long you will most probably hear from me of "my experiences abroad." In the meantime I wish to take this opportunity of thanking you all for all your kindness and courtesies, and to greet you all with a hearty,
>
> Hello, bunch, hello!
> Yours forever as ever,
> E. Trotzkey, Superintendent

But the memory of the benevolent Mr. Trotzkey has not lingered. To the children, his position as superintendent was somewhat removed from their experiences of daily living. Alumni have many more vivid memories about the adults with whom they had daily contact. Most of the adults in the Home were there to provide needed services for the children. Alumni often are able to recall the cooks, the laundry room workers, the nurses, physicians, dentists, and barbers. They sometimes recall members of the ladies' auxiliaries who provided treats and entertainment, and checked to make sure that the food and services were healthy and in order. Alumni occasionally remember volunteers, like Mrs. Winograd, who is introduced in the second chapter. Another adult who was devoted to the children was Mrs. Bertha Aleck. She was the librarian in the Kagan Memorial Library, which was built in the Home in 1944.

The loyal workers and volunteers who knew the children well are too numerous to list fully here, but adults who are most clearly remembered are those who were responsible for discipline. Alumni talk about the supervisors more than any other adults, even more than Mr. Trotzkey. They have especially vivid memories about Samuel Feinstein, who came to the Home in 1923 as a boys' supervisor, and soon became head supervisor, or assistant to Mr. Trotzkey. He later succeeded Mr. Trotzkey to the re-titled position of Executive Director. This chapter is filled with stories about Mr. Feinstein, because it was Mr. Feinstein who was most directly responsible for maintaining order. He is remembered as head disciplinarian. Before he took on this role, there were apparently many other

supervisors who had full authority to discipline as they saw fit.

Setting limits for two to three hundred young children and adolescents was an awesome task. Sometimes there were as few as four or five supervisors on duty. The potential for chaos was ever present. An emergency without the staff in control could have resulted in a tragedy. Home Kids were kept in line by physical punishment and by the constant anticipation of it. Discipline left an indelible, bitter mark on some. Those who had already suffered in their young lives before coming to Marks Nathan were particularly vulnerable. By today's standards the extent of physical punishment described in this chapter may seem extreme, but the discipline was usually consistent with the accepted standards of the day, both in institutions and in families.

Mr. Doctor would like to remind us that the Home belongs to a bygone time. The norms for children's discipline, both in families and in group settings, have changed over the years. Mr. Doctor was interviewed with Mr. Rattner, whose comments he did not deny, but neither man would like the issue of discipline to discredit the loyalty which they share with other alumni.

> Eddie Doctor, 1929-1934: It was a different era and a different type of discipline. They didn't think twice about slapping a kid or banging him one. But later as people's minds changed about children's discipline, they got a newer type of supervisor like Lulu Mark.

> Bernie Rattner, 1919-1929: If the supervisor was lenient and tried to understand the children, he was usually fired; but if he had everybody scared to hell, if he was tough and slammed heads around a little bit, he was considered a good supervisor by the powers that be. They didn't even consider it bad if somebody held the kids while they were hitting them. That doesn't necessarily mean that the Board of Directors knew about it. Those that had an

inkling that this was going on raised hell.

Occasionally, supervisors themselves had grown up in the Home. In these cases their own childhoods gave them their only previous training. Other supervisors may have lived or worked in different orphan homes. Some had no prior experience at all. It is not known which type of training created the most severe disciplinary habits among supervisors, but Mr. Rubin explains that there was a limit beyond which a supervisor could not be tolerated.

David Rubin, 1916-1922: The Home hired a supervisor by the name of Bedford. He came in there during the War, 1917 or something like that. He came from an orphanage in New York and he was really a mean, sadistic type of person. He would actually line up all of us, and whole dormitory or the whole class of 150 kids, and we would face the wall standing up for an hour or so, because somebody misbehaved. I think he did it just for the satisfaction of his own sadistic nature.

I was too young to do anything about it. But if you take fourteen and fifteen year old boys and stand them up against the wall like that, they're gonna rebel. They did. I don't know exactly what happened, but there was something about beating him up, and he toned down a little bit after that. The big boys would take care of him. I mean, they didn't actually take care of him, but they threatened to. When you have ten or fifteen boys around that age trying to gang up on somebody, you know darn well somebody's going to get hurt.

So after that, he only lasted about seven or eight months, but he was well-remembered, I can tell you that much. Bedford was the guy's name. He was very tough. I think some of the parents must have complained. He actually hit some girls in the Home.

Girls were supervised mostly by women, but they did have occasional contact with the boys' supervisors. Though Mrs. Posner was probably too young to remember Mr. Bedford, she does remember being hit. Girls were hit by supervisors and so were boys. Mrs. Posner also reminds us that there were other forms of punishment used before supervisors resorted to hitting.

Hanna Rosenthal Posner, 1920-1932: As I said, I had a lot of good things happen and a lot of bad things too. I was always being punished. If you were considered bad, if you did something that they didn't like, then you would be failed. That's what they used to call it. Saturday we used to go to the movies. We used to go to the Marshall Square or the White Palace theaters, which were around the corner, and if you were naughty you couldn't go, and then on Saturday you would have to fold napkins in the big girls' room. If you were twice as bad, Sunday you couldn't go out with your family if they were coming over to take you out.

I remember this particular Sunday an aunt of mine, the one that adopted my sister, came to the Home to see me, and I was being punished, so I couldn't go out, and they insisted that I admit to whatever it was that I was being punished for. I said I didn't do it and I wouldn't admit to it, and they kept hitting me, and I still wouldn't admit. You would never admit that you did something bad. I mean you just would stand up to them. They could hit you for as long as they wanted and you wouldn't give in.

When I came into the Home, my brother was all I had and I loved him dearly, and when the supervisors would want me to do

something, they would call him. I would put a dress on that buttoned all the way up the back, but I would just button the top button and they would call my brother and say, "Tell her to button her dress," or I used to wash my face so it would have a ring of dirt around it, and they would call him and say, "Tell her to wash her face," because when they would tell me, I would have to do it but not willingly, but when they would call him, then I would cry because I would think to myself, "Why would he do that to me?" you know, "Why would he side with them?" But he had no choice.

So I remember Mr. Feinstein constantly saying in the dining room, "You kids have it made. There's a Depression going on and you never have to worry about food; the food's always there; you always have something to eat and you'll go out of the Home and think the world owes you a living, but they don't owe you a damn thing, just because you were in the orphan home." This always stayed with me.

There were a lot of times when we couldn't talk at the meals. If you did, you got hit. Mr. Feinstein would say, "No talking," and I was always a clown and so I would mouth to the girl across the table and make faces and Mr. Feinstein was watching one day and he gave me a slap across the face. Well, we never hit back, but somehow or other I must have reflexed, and I ended up in the hospital* with a little gash on my chin. He used to say after that, "Anybody that wants to get what Hannah Rosenthal got, you just talk when I say don't talk.

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*the hospital - Within the Home there was an infirmary with a full-time nurse and visiting physicians.

Mr. Trotzkey, you see, had very little to do with the kids. If the kids were very, very bad, then they were sent up to Mr. Trotzkey, and he was very tolerant. I really think he understood the children; he had a couple of children of his own. I think it made a big difference. Some of the girls were friends with his daughters, but I never was. But I only remember him as a very kind man. There were no supervisors that I could say the same thing about except, just shortly before I left, there was a supervisor by the name of Flossie who played the piano and sang. I've seen her at some of the reunions and most of the girls that knew her well, liked her. There was also one other very good supervisor. Her name was Miss Brumbert, Alta Brumbert. She never married. She was the kindest and the nicest person. You see, as we got older, she would have a few of us come into her room and play bridge after the younger kids were asleep.

Oh, Miss Mabel Morris, she was a mean one. There were twenty beds in the dormitory; between each bed was a chair, and she used to punish us where we would have to stand in front of the chair and she used to keep walking around to see that nobody would sit, you know, there were times when we'd have to stand like this for the whole afternoon. She was a meany.

We had a girl in the Home by the name of Lillian who had a problem. She was an older girl, and she used to wet her bed. We had a dormitory "O", which we used to call the "Pishers' Dormitory," and this was the dormitory where all the little kids used to be. You see, as you got older if you were being punished for something, you had to go sleep in that room, which meant that you had to go to bed at six o'clock when they went to bed. Well, Lillian had a problem and I'm sure it must have been a kidney problem but in those days they didn't have social workers working at the Home. There were just the supervisors and I don't know how they hired these people. So, when the supervisor would find that her sheet was wet, Lillian would have to go wait till everyone was seated in the dining room, and then she would have the sheet over her head so she could walk through the dining room so everybody could know that Lillian wet her bed. The Home was no bed of roses, I must say.

There were always a few Home Kids who took an extra long time to grow out of the habit of wetting their beds, so we are told by several alumni. Though bedwetting is a common enough problem among children, even those with complete natural families, its apparent frequency at Marks Nathan deserves an explanation.

Children often came to Marks Nathan after turbulent or troubled periods in their young lives. Once there, they had to conform to an unfamiliar set of rules and adjust to a new group of children and adults. We are told that most new Home Kids made the adjustment easily, but in this chapter we are reminded that when children misbehaved or did not adhere to the regimen, they were punished. It must have been very difficult for children to overcome the unfortunate experience that brought them to the Home and then to adopt the new lifestyle in which they had few adults to turn to for support. Bedwetting may be interpreted as a sign that for some children this was a burden too heavy to bear all day, and then all night.

Mrs. Posner has not forgotten that supervisors misunderstood bedwetters. Punishing these children surely compounded their problem. In later years we will see that the Home ceased to punish them, but even when the supervisors were compassionate, it was not easy to prevent the other children from teasing and ridiculing. Mrs. Versten was also sympathetic.

> Esther Leimberg Versten, 1915-1921: A lot of children have that problem of wetting beds. I wasn't one of them, but it so happens that I know two kids that were in that category, and the older one even used to stutter because she was so nervous. Even as a child, I thought that was so cruel for them to do what they did. The children that wet their beds had to put the sheets up to dry over the tops of their beds so that everybody knew that those kids had wet their beds. The other kids would make fun of them. They called them "wetter-beds." That was no way to treat them.
>
> Whoever the monitor of the dormitory was, she wanted hers to be excellent. Well, everyone wanted their dormitory to A-1. Just like with soldiers, when you walked in, right away you looked down the aisle to make sure that everything was perfect. When I became a monitor I felt that a child that wet her bed couldn't help

herself. Maybe there was something wrong; so she had an accident, so what? But to display it to everybody--oh, it's horrible when I think of it.

You see in those days, I guess they didn't have the psychology, or whatever, to handle these things. It wasn't that Mr. Trotzkey knew that they were doing this to the kids, but there are a lot of people that just have a mean streak in them. To me this was a mean streak. To the monitor, these children were her charge, and this was her way of saying, "Don't do it."

Older children, who were relied on to take care of the younger ones, were an integral part of Home operations. The girls may have shouldered even more responsibility than the boys. They were particularly encouraged to take on domestic roles as a way of training for their future "women's work." At least in the early years, girls performed the awesome task of darning socks for the boys. But all children assisted the supervisors in caring for the little boys and girls as dorm heads, dorm leaders or monitors. There were simply too few supervisors to do the job without them. Mr. Drucker recalls how well this system worked.

Gilbert Drucker, 1938-1944: You know the boys and girls were separated. Then, each sex was divided into age groups. There were juniors, intermediates and seniors. When you got through the junior group you became a bigger wheel, so to speak. When you were a senior you were really a big shot. The kids who were sixteen to eighteen were seniors. Many of them were there for many years, and they told us about how things were when they were juniors and intermediates. Inside of the Home we had our own little caste system by age, but outside of the Home we were all part of one family. The seniors always took care of the intermediates and the intermediates took care of the juniors.

We were under the control in many ways of the kids who were older than us. The boys and girls mingled at the meals, but we were assigned to tables and there was a boy in charge of the boys and a girl in charge of the girls, and they maintained order, you know. There was a leader of each dormitory and they would control us to a great extent in what we did when we got up in the morning and how we'd go to sleep. They would be delegated authority to discipline us. Sometimes they went beyond their authority.

Benny Stoller I remember very well. He was a very short, muscular blond guy who was about five or six years older than me. He was the head of my dorm when I was eleven or twelve, just before I became an intermediate. When lights were out and he said, "No more talking," and some kids talked, and they refused to identify themselves, he would line up the whole dorm. He would call us in front of our beds. We would stick our arms out in front, and he would put pillows on our hands and we would have to stand up with pillows on our hands for two or three hours, and that was pretty rough. He would slap our rear ends pretty good or slap our faces. He could be pretty rough.

Some of the leaders could get carried away and I don't think some of the supervisors knew about a lot of these things. I think Feinstein would object to some things, but maybe Benny was the exception rather than the rules. He sticks out in my mind, because you remember when somebody says, "Hold you hands out," and they put two pillows on it, and you stand in front of your bed for two hours between ten and twelve at night. That you don't forget when you're nine or ten years old. But other than that he was a nice guy and he just wanted to maintain discipline and didn't want a lot of kids screaming and yelling and this was his way of doing it.

I don't know, I don't think it hurt me at all. I look back at it with a lot of fond memories. It was my childhood. The Home was something like a Jewish Boys' Town. It was a very interesting and a very rewarding experience.

When I was admitted to the Home, Mrs. Glick was my very first counselor. She made the transition from being taken care of by my mother to living in the Home, in a sense, almost bearable because she was very warm. She was like a Jewish mother. She was a small, kind, very human, Jewish woman, who I would not call the disciplinary type. I was eight or nine then. We were the junior group there. She would come in to wake us up at about six or six-thirty in the morning and she would say, "Alle menshen shtayt oyf," remember that? It means, "Everybody get up," and she'd hug us and kiss us. She was very kind, a very, very warm, wonderful woman. She was the one that was immediately in charge of us during the day. She mainly supervised the little children.

In addition to Mrs. Glick I remember a Mr. Kramer. Well, Mr. Kramer was a refugee from the Holocaust. He had a German accent and he was a funny man. We used to laugh at him. One of his famous expressions was, "Stand up before I knock you down," and we all used to laugh at that, and he really didn't mean it, you know. He would very rarely strike anybody. Violence was not the key to maintaining discipline. The key was that everybody got treated the same way.

I would describe Sam Feinstein as a very, very strict disciplinarian, but very even-handed in what he did. If he had one pronounced trait it was that he treated everybody the same. If you were bad you got punished the same way no matter who you were. What he accomplished, as far as I'm

concerned, is that he treated us as individuals, yet he never let us forget we were a group. To illustrate, when we would have breakfast or dinner, if somebody talked when they weren't supposed to, then he would say, "Who talked?" and if the person who talked raised their hand he would call them out in front of all the other kids, all three or four hundred other kids*, and he would slap their face but good, and if nobody would reveal who had talked he would call the whole table out and slap every one of their faces. That's what I mean by being even-handed.

I think Feinstein had a great system, you know, because with that many kids, being exuberant and with the variety of ages of the kids, it was a very difficult situation. Feinstein was the central authority. What he said was almost the word of God. The supervisors didn't have quite near the authority that Feinstein had, because they didn't have his overwhelming personality. He was only a little guy. He must have been about five-foot one, but you respected him. I mean when he walked down the hall you'd quake, and he was a little aloof. You couldn't really talk to him. He was not warm and outgoing because if he had been, he would have lost some of the presence that he had. It was probably necessary because if he got too personal I think it could have affected his control over the other kids. Yet, he could be very warm and very kind.

He would on occasion invite some of the kids to his quarters in the Home. His own kid, Ronny Feinstein, while he was Mr. Feinstein's son, was still a part of the life of the Home and we were friends with him, at least I thought I was friends with him. So there was this disciplinarian approach, but yet he was very, very human and very, very fair and very, very Jewish because that was a great part of the Home.

*three or four hundred other kids - Mr. Drucker has exaggerated the Homes population by 50 to 100.

Well, I wouldn't say that he personally was Orthodox, but we said prayers at every meal. He reminded us of our Jewish obligations and that we were Jewish kids. We not only had a sense of identity with the Home as such, but we also had a sense that it was a Jewish group, and when we went out into the world, he kept telling us about what the world was like and that we were Jews and we always had to maintain that identity. That's what I meant.

If we compare the above description of Sam Feinstein by Mr. Drucker with Mrs. Posner's comments on page fifty-one, and we compare these comments with those that are found in the remainder of this chapter, it will be clear that Mr. Feinstein was a cherished friend and role model to some children, and a feared source of punishment and injustice to others. What is important is that this single personality captivated the attention of Home Kids so effectively that no alumni who lived in the Home during Mr. Feinstein's tenure have been able to forget their childhood perceptions of him. Arthur Friedman remembers Mr. Feinstein as he served as leader of the Home.

Arthur Friedman, 1937-1945: Well, I thought Mr. Feinstein was very fair in what he was doing; perhaps at that particular moment in time I didn't because I sort of felt a little bitter about being in the Home. But looking back on it, the way he treated everyone was fair. In a sense he was strict, but really he cared for the kids and he was always looking out for our welfare.

The one thing I learned from him was a sense of discipline. When you have 100 boys and 100 girls, you have to have certain rules and regulations. You can bend them a little, but basically you have got to have some means of keeping order. For example, we couldn't have people going in to eat dinner at all hours of the night. People had to get up at certain times in the morning so the dorms could be

cleaned out, you know, so kids could get ready for school. The kids had to be in bed at a certain time because otherwise we would never have been able to know what was going on. When you've got a small home, like in my case, a wife and three kids, you can be a lot more flexible. You don't have to have rules saying things like, "Okay, everyone has to be in bed at eight o'clock."

In my last year, when I was seventeen, it was very difficult to get men supervisors, because of the War obviously. I was looked upon more and more to help make things run smoothly, and I remember one time Mr. Feinstein invited me to his apartment in the Home for dinner. Another time he took me and his son to the Cubs double-header at Wrigley Field. It was on Labor Day, and we were sitting three rows in back of the front row, and I was impressed by that. Later he said that if he would have known, he could have gotten first row seats and that would have been really a big thrill for me, sitting right next to the dugout. We did have a close relationship because of the War, and he relied on me more and more, and I took the responsibility as best as I could, but there was a close friendship between the two of us.

Maxine Fineberg, 1937-1946: I remember an incident with Mr. Feinstein. My aunt had asked permission to take me out for the day. This was during the Christmas vacation. She was going to take me downtown shopping, just as a treat, and I was all excited about that.

At the last moment I was told I couldn't go because they were doing some kind of testing on the kids. So I said okay, and I just let it go at that. I took the test. The next day Mr. Feinstein told me that I had been such a good sport that I could have anything I wanted. It really kind of surprised me because I was allowed to go with my aunt another day, but the thing I wanted was a Star of David, and he bought it

for me, which I thought was kind of nice.

I really think there was a certain kindness in the Home. You can see why I have fond memories.

I was disciplined when I was wrong. I remember having a temper tantrum one afternoon. We were supposed to rest and we had monitors, and I was just being obnoxious. You know, I had to get the last word in. I was smart alecking and showing off. It was a hot summer afternoon, and they wanted us to rest for about an hour in our dormitories. So this monitor was being very high-handed, since she was one of the kids too. But I called her a fat slob, and she heard me so she locked me up in the bathroom. Well, I broke the toothbrushes, so I was called into Mr. Feinstein's office, and he said I just had to pay for them. I think those toothbrushes cost seven cents a piece, and I broke ten of them so it took me a couple of weeks and I paid for them.

I was a bedwetter, and I was terribly, terribly upset about that. I mean, I was ashamed of the fact that I was nine and a half years old and I wet my bed. They changed the sheets. I was ashamed in front of the other children, and there were a few of us that were bedwetters. But I remember they'd wake me up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night, and there was a period of a couple of weeks or so that I hadn't wet my bed and Miss Levine gave me a pen and pencil set as a reward, and I don't think I ever wet my bed after that. She hadn't said she was going to do it, but she just did. So when I think about it, you know, it was a pretty nice thing to do.

Bernard Gordon, 1938-1943: I never wet my bed and I was never a victim of the discipline. The discipline usually fell to the untrained hands

of the "dorm head." Some of those guys were vicious. They didn't have the knowledge, nor the understanding, nor the restraint that trained supervisors would have acquired, and they allowed themselves to get out of hand on occasion. Well, they would force a kid who had wet his bed to put his face down in the urine in the moist matress and keep it there. I don't recall for how long, but the kid had his face pushed in it, literally.

But I don't remember too much physical violence. Surprisingly enough, very few fights, if any, actually come to mind. Nobody could come along and imitate Feinstein by smacking you or slapping you around. I think the other supervisors would have been notified almost immediately if this was the case, and Sam would not have stood for that.

Trotzkey was still there but I believe he was ill, and to all intents and purposes Feinstein was the superintendent. It's surprising, none of the supervisors had any mean streaks in them, none of them. Mrs. Wolf was a rather hawkish-faced and black-haired woman. She was very nice. Miss Fox was a heavy-set woman, very heavy-set, and she was one of the sweetest of the supervisors.

You know, Feinstein used to knock the kids around, he used to discipline us and stand us up against the wall in the dining room and really slap us, but it was a very tempered slap. He never hauled off and knocked us down, although I guess he could have. It was a restrained slap. In spite of the fact that the expectation of it was more terrible than the actual slap, I don't think anybody ever held it against him. It's surprising nobody ever said, "Boy, that Feinstein is a real s.o.b." I mean in their heart of hearts I don't think they ever felt he was malignant. He was just a staunch disciplinarian and he was very set in his way. Perhaps he was inflexible about giving

people a choice, but on the other hand he was not a dictator in the malignant sense. Certainly he was a dictator, but I think it was because Trotzkey got ill and Sam inherited the mantle of the Home rather unexpectedly.

He was trained as a lawyer and I think he even hoped to be a lawyer. I do remember his getting his law degree. I think simultaneously with that he went out and bought himself about four or five suits, and I remember he was walking around a lot, and we would watch him change those suits. He would come down at different times from his apartment and he was always impeccably dressed. Once he got those suits he really never allowed himself to be seen as a less than very properly attired superintendent. He did laugh. He did smile; not readily, but the kids could get him to smile. But I think he just felt that any laxity of a personal nature would be mistaken for weakness and taken advantage of by the kids. And he may very well have been right; they might very well have done so.

Mickey Arkin, Margaret Green, and Sally Ryce are still friends, thirty-five years after they left Marks Nathan during its last full year at 1550 South Albany. They nostaligically recall how they and their girlfriends would tease Mr. Feinstein and try to take advantage of him. They also recall how mischiefmaking Sally Ryce was won over by the Home's last superintendent, Dr. Henry Selver.

Mickey Arkin, 1941-1947: The girls used to like to get into trouble. We used to have a lot of fun. We were all waitresses in the dining room and sometimes we used to purposely get into trouble so we'd all be called into Mr. Feinstein's office, and then we'd all start giggling.

Margaret Cohen Green, 1940-1947: Feinstein was more old-fashioned. He would use a strong hand and hit somebody across the face but he had a soft spot. Every Saturday he'd say that we couldn't go to the show and then about twelve o'clock he'd forgive us and we'd all be allowed to go to the show.

Sally Drew Ryce, 1939-1947: Feinstein put too much power in the hands of the older girls who were dorm leaders. We had one who used to make us wash out her underwear at night, or if you weren't good you'd have to walk on the fire escape with bare feet and she would make you do duck squats. Well, the supervisors didn't do that to you; those were your own kids who would do that to you. They weren't judicious, they didn't know what they were doing really. I think you can't put thirteen and fourteen-year-olds in charge of eight and nine-year-olds--you can't give them that authority and responsibility.

I remember being terribly afraid of Mr. Feinstein because I thought he smacked indiscriminately. The first time I remember him smacking me, where I really got scared, was in the dining room. He would suddenly call for a silent meal and you'd have to be quiet. Now I was a good little girl. I was really a very shy, quiet thing initially. When he said, "Hands off the table," a lot of kids would sneak a piece of bread or sneak some food or something, but I took my hands off the table. He'd walk around to see who was talking or who had been talking and you'd hear someone you knew get smacked, and somebody right behind me had gotten smacked. I turned around to see who it was, and my elbow knocked the spoon off the table onto the tile floor and it clattered. He didn't ask me what happened. He snapped, "I said 'hands off the table,'" and whack, he smacked me.

Now I still remember the injustice I felt with that. Then my sister, who is five years older than I, and was sitting at my table, told me afterward, "I'm going to take you up to his office, and I'm going to tell him he's not to hit you anymore." This was really quite a brave thing to do, and we went up and he was sitting there at the desk, and he let us stand there. He kept looking down and finally he looked up, and he said, "Well,?" and she said, "I just want to tell you not to hit my sister anymore." He said, "Get out of here," and she turned around and left me and I stood there and he said, "You, too," and then I ran. But she tried, which was very brave.

Mr. Feinstein was bad; but he also was nice. I remember Merle Oberg and I always spent our allowance the first day we got it, and it was Sunday afternoon and we didn't have visitors and we went to him to ask if we could borrow money on our next week's allowance so we could go to the movie, and he gave us money. I don't remember if I ever paid him back. Maybe he just wanted to get rid of us but, whatever it was, he gave us the money.

When Mr. Feinstein left the Home we had this whole summer with very lax discipline because the supervisors knew there was somebody new coming in. Some of the supervisors were planning to go or were thinking they were going to have to go and they were much looser about things, and they said things like, "Boy, you kids think it was hard with Feinstein, wait till you see who's coming in."

When Dr. Selver came in I, with a group of girls, decided we were going to show him right from the beginning that we were not going to have this kind of discipline anymore. He had called for a big meeting

in the playroom and I think it was only for the girls. It was an evening meeting and we decided to boycott it by walking in a group and then we would scatter so they couldn't come after all of us. Some would go out in the play yard and some would go somewhere else. We were just going to run. While we were standing there plotting this thing, I think he saw us. He walked right up to me and put his arm around my shoulder and said, "Hi, I'm Dr. Selver and I'm new here. What's your name?" I told him, "Sally Drew." He said, "I wonder if you would come with me because I don't know a lot of people. You can help me by telling me their names." He swept me into this room and those other girls followed. He was a very wise man, because at the time I just thought it was dumb luck, and I was annoyed that my friends didn't go ahead and carry out the plan even though I wasn't with them.

He announced that night he was taking away the numbers; we weren't going to have numbers anymore. He said our clothing would have name tapes rather than numbers, and that caused me to create a petition because they were our numbers and he had no right to take them away. I mean, I was a troublemaker.

Well, when I presented this petition to him, instead of just throwing it out and ignoring me, he sat me down and he said, "Before you came in the Home, who was Number 48?" and I said, "I don't know." He said, "And after you leave the Home somebody else is going to be Number 48, right?" and I said, "yes," and he said, "But nobody else will ever be Sally Drew but you." And I liked that idea and I said, "Oh," and he said, "So the number is artificial; the name is what's really important. That's you. The number's only something that you're using for the time being," and I was perfectly satisfied that he talked to me about my petition. That was almost as impressive as his discussion

of my number. I think that was all I really needed. I grew up very angry at the injustice of this whole system, and if Selver hadn't come in, I don't know how I would have turned out.

He also announced that night that he was going to set up dorm representatives. There were going to be two representatives from each dorm, and they were going to meet with him every Saturday morning and discuss things that they would like to see changed, and I thought those kids would be the goody-goodies, but when my name was posted as a dorm-rep, I went armed with all sorts of demands and he listened. He sat, he talked and he listened to everybody. He devoted the time to sit there and listen to us, and, as I say, I think he turned me around.

Then he asked me if I would help him. Visitors would come up to his office and the secretary was off, and he asked me it I would sit out at the front desk and tell people to sit down and wait until he was through, and while I was there I complained that the newspapers should hear about the terrible things that went on in the Home. He said, "Why don't you write them down for the newspapers?" I said, "I'm not going to get in to them." He said, "I'll take you to the newspapers." So I used to sit there and write these reams of paper that I was going to send off to the newspapers. I'm sure he read them, because he gave me a place to keep them. He was a remarkable person, coming in to take over the Home. I had the sense that I was the only one to him, and everyone seems to have had the sense that he was special to them, and I'm sure he was. But my sense was that he was special to me and I think he just did a marvelous thing there.

Dr. Henry I. Selver came to the Home in 1946 after serving as Assistant Director of the Pleasantville Cottage School of the Jewish Child Care Association of New York. He was clearly not what the kids were used to,

and this was intentional. The Home, by that time known as Marks Nathan Hall, was overseen by the Institution Committee of the Jewish Children's Bureau, led by Mr. Charles Herron. Mr. Herron had served on the Board of Directors of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home since 1908. The Institution Committee decided in 1946 that Mr. Feinstein was no longer the kind of superintendent the Home needed. Only one hundred children were served by Marks Nathan. The building had fallen into disrepair, and the work force had dwindled. In part it was due to lack of funds and the labor shortage caused by World War II. Samuel Feinstein left with a record of twenty-three years of honestly devoted service. Sadly for him, his principles of child rearing had become old-fashioned during his own time. Dr. Selver was hired to replace Mr. Feinstein and bring about a transformation of Marks Nathan Hall from an orphanage to a new system of small-group living units. Several new facilities were planned to provide more individual attention and treatment to children who could not be appropriately placed with families.

CHAPTER V

WHAT DID THE HOME DO FOR YOU?

Home Kids usually moved out upon their graduation from high school. During their years with Marks Nathan, small amounts of money were put away for each resident until a modest sum was available for each of them to use as a way of getting started in their new lives. Recent alumni frequently went to work in business upon high school graduation. Their first jobs were often the starts of successful careers. It was also common for high school graduates to go directly on to college. While many of the women included in our sample have had successful careers, it seems likely that most Marks Nathan girls, like others of their generations, devoted their lives primarily to their families and to their homes.

As time went by, some alumni moved away from Chicago to pursue jobs, to accompany their spouses, and as they became older, to retire. Yet even today, the largest concentration of alumni is in the Chicago metropolitan area. Not all alumni have maintained contact with their friends from the Home, but in recent years many have gathered for Passover Seders, just as they gathered for alumni-day reunions in the years before the Home closed on South Albany Avenue.

Alumni frequently have attributed their successes in life to what they learned while living in Marks Nathan. When they were asked about their regrets they often hesitated, and then almost invariably responded that they regretted not having a complete natural family. Still, alumni are convinced that the Home was such a fine place to grow up in, that no surrogate or foster family could have been better. They feel that only a real mother and father can be Mom and Dad. They are suspicious of the motives of foster parents. Even though they regret not having their own parents, alumni often feel that, given the predicament of children without united families, it is

less risky when they are safe in quality institutions like Marks Nathan than when they are placed with families to which they were not born. Later in this chapter, Mr. Rubin will outline his views on the inadequacy of foster care.

One of the things that Marks Nathan did for Home Kids is that it allowed them to complete school without having to drop out and help support their families. But not all Home Kids were so fortunate, and not all families appreciated the emphasis which Marks Nathan placed on education. In his syncopated manner of speech, Mickey Pallas made this quite clear.

Mickey Pallas, 1929-1933: On Passover you would go home if you had a family or something. So I went there. So I stayed. They had a restaurant that they lived in, you know, upstairs. That's old-fashioned, and these were old-country ways, that the kids had to work there. See, I had no discipline in school. I didn't finish high school, so I had to work in the restaurant. Don't misunderstand me, I mean most of the children of American-born parents were different from us. They were educated. Well, my father had no education whatsoever. Like I said, he got in trouble because he couldn't read and write. When he finally learned how to sign his name, he signed the wrong things. His way of thinking was not the same. I think a lot of the parents who were born in Europe were uneducated, and so if they were able to live without education, why did they need it for their kids? I mean, "What was good for my father is good for my son." Of course, in the Home we learned different.

If there's one thing the Marks Nathan did for me, it made a man of me. There was discipline. That's the one thing I learned, to be a disciplinarian for myself. I tried to do that with my children It didn't work as well, but it worked a certain amount. If there's

one thing that I missed it was that I missed my parents. I guess I didn't realize that until I got older, because I was busy with sports and I had enough food. I had a lot of things to do.

Hannah Rosenthal Posner, 1920-1932: Someone once said to me, "The kids in this home have a chip on their shoulders." I never did. I don't think I felt ungrateful. I felt if I had lived at home with my father, who had nothing, then I would never have had the opportunities I had. What I'm saying is I wouldn't have had all the dancing and singing instruction. My sister who lived with my aunt didn't have those things. You know, when I look back I find that we had a lot more than a lot of other people did. The only thing that I really feel that I missed, since having my own children was affection. Because, after I left the Home I looked for it from any boy that I went out with. You know, if he would put his arm around me and show me any affection, I would feel like I owed him something. But that was the only really bad feature about an orphan home. They couldn't love you. How could they love 150 girls?

Esther Leimberg Versten, 1915-1921: I'll tell you what Marks Nathan did for me, it made a person out of me. It made me understand, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto yourself," and how to be kind and thoughtful, and how to be just a nice person. I think the bringing up I had was beautiful. That's why I'm proud. My only regret is that I had lost my mother and I came into an orphan home instead of being brought up by a family. It's true, Marks Nathan was a family in a way, but it wasn't in a way also. I never did have the family bringing up that I longed for; that I never had because it was a big

group. There were 350 kids.

There is something about a mother that she always finds room for her children. As wonderful as my father was, he was my father. See, I never had a mother, but I imagine there's a certain closeness with a mother that is hard to have with a papa. Like when a girl is growing up, when she gets into her teens, there's a lot of things that happen to her body. Well, who does she go to, to ask questions?

I'll tell you a very personal thing that happened to me. You see, I was a slow developer as a child. I don't mean mentally, I mean physically. Well, there's a reason why I'm bringing this up. I don't feel uncomfortable because if I wrote a book I'd put this in the book. I think it's important. This is what I missed about growing up as a child. When I first started having my menstrual period, when do you think I had it? On the day of graduation. I was so sick. I was doubled up with cramps. I didn't know what it was all about. I was just an innocent kid, that's all, where if I had a mother, she would have taught me that this is what a girl goes through. This is what I actually missed in my life, the fact that I didn't have a mother when I really and truly needed her.

As a teenager when a girl's body starts changing, she hesitates to talk about it to her father. You know, after all, I tried to be close to my father, but I couldn't be as close as if I had had a mother. The woman supervisors never told us anything. Sex was hush, hush. The older girls would never, never talk that way to us, because they probably had the same experience we did. We were not taught any of those things. They never even entered my mind. See, to me this was wrong. We were such a bunch of innocent yokels. But I'll never forget that day. I was so sick. If only I could have not gone to my own graduation! I wished they had left me alone and just let me go to bed and die.

David Rubin, 1916-1922: The one thing I would like to say is this: I favor the Home as opposed to farming out kids because the foster home idea is actually inadequate for more than one reason. First of all, foster parents are using the kids for money; they're getting an income, number one. Number two, in many cases, they're not treating the kids the same as they would their own, and you know about that; I'm pretty sure you do. A kid can be farmed out to one place and six months later, if he doesn't get along there, they can farm him out to somewhere else. Regimentation in an orphan home, like in the army, is not the worst thing when the child is young, because you do have military academies. All of those places have regimentation. Do the kids come out any worse?

In the Home we were given many, many things that kids outside the Home did not have and could not have; for example, theater parties, baseball games. How many kids at ten years of age would be able to see an opera like we did? I mean, there was added culture there that the average parents could not give themselves let alone their families. So by and large I favor the orphanage over farming out.

Self-confidence is one of the things the Home instilled in me. It instilled in me self-esteem, team cooperation, cleanliness, and religious training. The one thing I regret is the disassociation of my original family. My brother was left out. He was too old to go into the Home. He was four years older, and since my mother lived in Gary at the time, why, I could only see her once in a blue moon, but that's about all.

Art Friedman, 1937-1945: The Home gave me two things. One, it taught me to take care of myself, because there was no one to run to. You couldn't go crying to your mother or father saying, "He hit me" or "He shoved me" or "He did this or he did that." It taught me how to get along with kids my own age or above or below. You were actually listening to those kids who were bigger than you, because if you didn't, they would put you down physically, but that also meant that one day you would be in their position and you wouldn't want to be a bully or anything. So I learned how to get along with people of all different ages.

The other thing that it taught me more than anything else is a sense of responsibility. I did have many positions in the Home, and I think the sense of responsibility has carried out. I think I've been a success in business, I think my kids have learned what the word responsibility means. I don't give them everything on a silver platter, even though perhaps financially I can. They do know that nothing comes their way without their having to put out, and so far it's proven very successful, and that's the one thing more than anything else that I did learn from the Home.

The only thing that I did regret is that from ten to eighteen I never did have the real home life that I always craved, and I always envied other kids. It really was not the fault of Marks Nathan, you know, I was put in that position because of what happened at my home, but I did sort of miss the holidays and going out with my parents and having a real home life. Maybe kids automatically assume that it is their right to have a real home life, but when you didn't have it, you really do appreciate it when you do have it.

Favil Berns, 1935-1944: Well, as I was about to leave the Home, I had answered an ad for an office boy, and I hurried to get out of high school one afternoon to be on time for the appointment to be interviewed, but when I got to the Field Building at 135 South LaSalle Street, there were about thirteen or more kids ahead of me waiting, and I said, "This is one job I'll never get; I should have skipped high school to get there earlier to be interviewed first." I wanted to work there because I didn't want to sell shoes for Goldblatt's, like most everybody else who left the Home. I tried that for a short period, and I didn't like it. It wasn't for me.

Well, finally this fellow called me in to be interviewed in the mailroom, and of course I had no references for my application, so the only thing I could put down was that I knew a Mr. Feinstein and that I lived at 1550 South Albany, and I also knew a Mr. Trotzkey. He was not living then, but I had nobody else to put down. The guy studied the application and asked me some questions, and he said, "How do you know Mr. Feinstein?" I said, "Well, I live in the building where he is, and we have a lot of other kids there," because I didn't want to say that I was living at Marks Nathan. And he didn't say anything more to me except he said, "When can you start?" I was overjoyed when he said that to me, and I said, "Well, I can start any time you want." He said, "Okay, why don't you begin after school? I'll start you off here."

That was General American Transportation Corporation and I started working there after high school. I got permission from Feinstein to do that because I wouldn't be too late getting back to the Home from downtown. And then, after I was there a short while, I thought, "There's something very strange about the way he hired me," and I saw Mr. Feinstein and I went to him and I said, "I want to tell you about something that

happened to me." The fellow was Mr. Kagen--I still remember his name. When I told Mr. Feinstein what happened with my application and how Mr. Kagen asked about it, he said, "Who, Kagen? He used to be a kid in the Home here years ago." What a strange coicidence in life! And that was the reason I got the job and the others didn't.

At the time, while we were there, we thought that life could be better elsewhere, when in truth we had a better life than the surrounding families in the neighborhood. We never had to cry for food. We had food that we gave away, when other families in the Depression era never had enough food. We had clothes, we had activities, we were exposed to more cultural events than any other children in the neighborhood. No family could afford the type of instruction and specialized tutoring that we had. If there's one thing the Home did for me, it was to widen my horizen and make me aware that in order to achieve any degree of success in life, an education was an important factor. The only thing that I regretted was that I knew I came from a large family, and I lost all contact with my father's family because most of them were in Minnesota.

Maxine Fineberg, 1937-1946: When I came to the Home, I had three rows of curls and I'm the same age as Shirley Temple, and people made a big fuss over me. I liked being with people, so I don't remember any feeling of abandonment or anything like that. My mother came to visit often, and I think the separation was harder for her, but it did motivate me. After growing up, when I was starting to plan my family, I felt that if I were put in the same predicament that my mother was in, I was going to have something to fall back on and I would not want to give up my children, because that's the way she put it. She gave up her children,

and it makes me sad to feel that way now because it was sad for her. But we had more advantages than many children that were living at home with their parents who were struggling to make ends meet. I was one of the fortunate people in that during my first two years of college, the Jewish Children's Bureau helped me with a scholarship. I felt that they were very supportive of me all through my growing up.

Bernie Gordon, 1938-1943: My mother didn't say anything and my brother and I just began to kind of raise questions about it like, "Well, you know, how about letting us move out now, Ma, and come back to live with you?" To my knowledge, it just kind of happened. "Well, yeah, I really don't have any objection to that. It would be nice for you, I don't have the store anymore, and you're grown up and you're both in high school, so I guess we could manage that." The Home didn't seem to put any pressures that I know of on my mother.

Gil Drucker, 1938-1944: In my family I always felt that I was a second-class citizen. I always felt I didn't belong. I think that kids had a hard time adjusting, you know, to life outside of the Home. I mean, you were in a totally different lifestyle, and when you left the Home, particularly if you were still a kid, it was difficult. You know, the non-discipline, the non-group atmosphere, plus the fact that I felt that I wasn't normal in the sense that I didn't grow up in the same way that other kids grew up, was difficult for me. But as the years went by I considered myself something very special.

Life is funny, but I'll say this again and again and again. Had it not been for the Home, what I accomplished, if I accomplished anything, would not have been possible, because it gave me a determination

to never give up. I don't think the ordinary lifestyle would have given me that and I'll always be thankful for it.

APPENDIX A

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The Jewish Children's Bureau of Chicago, which today incorporates the tradition and the agency that was the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home or Marks Nathan Hall, has organized this booklet to preserve the memories of a vital and relevant landmark in the history of Chicago's Jews. It is important to JCB, the Jewish community of Chicago, and the city of Chicago itself. Though the Jewish Children's Bureau continues as an important child welfare agency, Marks Nathan Hall as a large, residential, children's institution has ceased to exist. Why is Marks Nathan still vital? It is true that the imposing structure on South Albany Avenue still overlooks the green expanses of Douglas Park, but it has been thirty-four years since girls and boys have poured from its doors on their way to school. What relevance does this building have to children today?

Marks Nathan is vital to the hundreds of adults who became men and women under its guidance. It is vital to the husbands, wives, children and grandchildren of those men and women. It is vital to those proud and altruistic Chicagoans who volunteered their time in it, supported it and jealously guarded it.

Marks Nathan is relevant to all who would like to understand the history of social services, institutions and child care. The Home Kids whose comments make up this book are proud of their fraternity. They are especially proud their members who have won national or international recognition. Many Home Kids have, in fact, achieved positions of fame and influence.

Some Home Kids became sad when they discussed the changing methods of child care. They often regret that children today have missed some of the opportunities that the orphanage provided even though these sentiments are out of step with the present day image of institutional care. Home Kids

included in this book resent any inference that their lives were at all like those of "Little Orphan Annie" or "Oliver Twist". This booklet is intended to offer a true and full flavor of the Home. The reader is meant to find sadness, happiness, warmth and humor in the thoughts of the Home Kids.

Institutions for children after all have not vanished from the landscape. There are homes for children with special needs. Perhaps all institutions can benefit from a look at the past. There is another type of institution for children which is still common and acceptable today. As one Home Kid has pointed out, that type of institution is called the boarding school.

To sum up the purpose of this publication, it is to pay tribute to the residents of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home. Each has a unique past. It is clear that the institution did not have a detrimental influence on the individuality of its residents. The Jewish Children's Bureau continues to strive to improve its services and adapt its methods to an ever-changing population of children in metropolitan Chicago. The agency recognizes the need to re-examine the past periodically so as not to lose perspective on the present and the future. The general and professional public may also gain insight through this reflection of the orphanage era.

APPENDIX B

METHODS USED

In order to maintain objectivity in an oral history, it is important to take great care when selecting the sample of interviewees. The group must be evenly represented. For example, we made a concerted effort to include an equal number of males and females. As expected some of the experiences of the boys were different from those of the girls. In addition, the types of experiences male subjects chose to recall varied from those which females chose to recall.

It is also important in an oral history to include in the sample those who are known to hold viewpoints which are different from those of their peers. Those with dissenting viewpoints may recall facts and experiences that the others would not readily volunteer. For example, not everyone in our sample was willing to say that the Home was a good environment to grow up in. One has said that it was a dreadful place. To include this viewpoint it was necessary to seek it out and convince its holder that this type of comment was also wanted.

Marks Nathan Jewish Orphans' Home was in operation for approximately four decades. When this project was still in the planning stage, before any interviews had been conducted, it seemed wisest to begin the series of interviews with those Home Kids who dated back to the first years of the Home. Unfortunately, it became impossible to meet with Home Kids who remember the Home during the first decade, when the Home was still located on North Wood Street. It also became difficult to arrange interviews with those who left the Home during the second decade of its operation. Thus, the first interviews were conducted with those who left the Home sometime during the third decade from the middle 1920's to the middle 1930's. This group of interviews is followed by interviews with those who were in the Home towards the end of its existence, from the middle 1930's until the middle 1940's.

Those who were in the Home in the second decade, the World War I era, were interviewed last.

As no specific information was sought regarding the Home, it was difficult to design a specific question format. What was desired was information that would reconstruct the atmosphere of the Home. The facts, names and dates were not as critical as were the descriptions of the good times, the sad times, human relationships and the unique aspects of orphanage life. Good interview questions were those which triggered the memories of the respondents and produced highly personal, lengthy accounts of the events; bad questions resulted in short or single-word answers, or memory blockage.

All interviews were tape recorded; handwritten notes were also taken. Before the meetings, the interviewees were mailed a written explanation of the project in the form of a welcome letter from the Executive Director of the Jewish Children's Bureau accompanied by a sample list of questions. Interviewees were repeatedly encouraged to speak their minds and remain anonymous if they so wished. A list of about ten questions was prepared for each interview. Some pre-planned questions proved unnecessary, while others were asked spontaneously. Most questions were open-ended; but it was found that the quality of the answer depnded most upon the personality or mood of the interviewee. Questions were tailored to the individual, because often the prepared questions proved useless and ad libbing became the order of the day. Thus, not every subject was presented with the same list of questions. Interviews generally began with the questions: "How did you arrive at the Home?" and "What were your first memories of the Mark's Nathan Jewish Orphan Home?" These two questions usually got the interview off to a good start. Most Home Kids talked at great length of the circumstances of their placement in the Home and their separation from their parents. Fewer Home Kids were able to discuss their first memories of Marks Nathan. While some did give candid descriptions of their adjustment to orphanage life during the first

few weeks, others had very little to say about this early period. For some, the adjustment and loss of family was too traumatic to re-live in conversation; for others, especially those who maintain contact with their parents and previous friends, the adjustment to the Home was not problematic and not memorable.

After several interviews had been completed, it became clear that certain topics were prominent in the memories of Home Kids, either from specific generations or from all generations. The outline of this publication is formed, not by the topics of interest of the author, but by the topics of interest of the Home Kids themselves.

In an oral history without dissenting points of view, the whole picture may not be illuminated. Yet in order to maintain objectivity it is necessary to give proper weight to dissenting points of view. When the topic at hand is an event that took place several decades ago, it is not always easy to give proper weight to the various viewpoints. When four out of five interviewees explain an event one way, and the fifth has a different story entirely, then one cannot discard the "different" story merely because it is a minority opinion. Perhaps it would not be a minority opinion were it not for a quirk in the sample, or perhaps the holders of the majority opinion had reason to hide the true nature of the event. Only by a clever and pre-planned question format together with controls and painstaking analysis of every interview can proper weight be given to dissenting points of view.

The Marks Nathan project was not designed to draw strict conclusions. From its inception the project was intended only to reconstruct the flavor of the Home. To do this it was not necessary to interview a large number of Home Kids. Though it would have been helpful to include more participants, the scope of this project and the available resources would allow only a modest sample of twenty interviewees. To gain a more accurate picture of

the Home a more involved study would be required. Nevertheless the nineteen, who introduce themselves to the reader through their memories, do give a flavor of life at the Home. The limitation is merely that there is a lack of corroboration and connecting links between one story and another, and between one period and another. Given limitations of time and money, it was not possible to gather information from the few remaining alumni from the first building of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home who were outside the Chicago area.

We were fortunate to have the assistance of two Home Kids, Favil David Berns and Bill Weisberg of the Marks Nathan Alumni Foundation. They helped locate and contact interviewees. Home Kids living in Illinois were chosen from the roster of the Marks Nathan Alumni Foundation and were contacted by either Mr. Berns or Mr. Weisberg. No Home Kids were contacted outside the Chicago area. If after the first contact a Home Kid declined to be interviewed, he or she was not pressured to do so. Thus the sample is not even because it includes only those who were willing to participate. While not all of those who declined gave reasons for this, two said that they were too busy, one said he was not well, one said he was in the Home too short a period of time and too long ago to remember anything. Another began an interview but did not complete it because he was overtaken by emotion and shyness.

There is no reason to believe that those who declined to be interviewed would have given greatly different interpretations of the past from those that were included. However, we must bear in mind that with three exceptions only Marks Nathan Alumni Foundation members were asked to participate. Those alumni that had reason to hide themselves by not joining this organization, and those that did not care to join for other reasons may indeed have given wholly different information. To reiterate, it is hoped that the flavor of

the Home will be captured by this book but no hard sociologic facts are contained within it. That it is so does not decrease the value of the study.

Great pains were taken to retain the meaning and style of all testimony used in the study. All interviews appear below in an edited form and no interview is included in its entirety. Changes were made only to increase readability and clarify meaning. Wherever an excerpt from an interview is used to explain or underscore an aspect of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home, it must be borne in mind that the interviewee intended his or her comments to apply only to the issue at hand, and not be taken as a general description of the Home.

The set of interview tapes has become a part of the permanent records of the Jewish Children's Bureau. Transcriptions of the tapes were also saved, though they were only made for selected segments of the interviews.

Transcripts were edited as needed to present the testimony in a readable manner. Irrelevant digressions, redundancies and other superfluous remarks and words were deleted. Some idiomatic words and phrases otherwise without meaning were retained to preserve the style of speech. Where necessary, phrases, sentences and paragraphs were rearranged to clarify the original meaning and to enhance readability. Edited versions of transcripts were read to subjects over the telephone in cases where the intended meaning was in jeopardy. Those persons who received such calls unanimously agreed with the changes made in their speech. When distinct portions of an interview were joined together and the resulting train of thought was artificial or interrupted, it has been denoted by a horizontal bar, centered between the two sections.