

## ALUMNI PROJECT

(In person interview with Emanuel Gayner (born Ginsberg) on September 3, 1983)

The first thing Mr. Gayner recalled was Camp. He explained in some detail how the camp came into being, but his explanation may not be accurate, since he thought that the land belonged to the YMHA when it actually belonged to the Federation. He recalled that they spent the month of August there, returning just after Labor Day. There was an old building on the property, which he described as a hotel, where the girls lived and where all took their meals. They built ten cabins in back to house the boys. He believed that later in the twenties the camp period was extended to six weeks.

Mr. Gayner recalled attending Annual Meetings at the Athenaeum on St. Charles Avenue.

Mr. Gayner spent two weeks in the Infirmary when he was first admitted. Then he was placed in the Nursery, since children under 7 lived there. He recalled that the Nursery was on the second floor in the front of the building facing St. Charles Avenue. When he was seven, he "went downstairs", which was the Home term for moving into the regular boys' quarters. The boys lived in the wing of the building along Leontine Street, while the girls lived in the wing on Jefferson Avenue. He recalled that Leontine was not yet paved. Across the street was a Negro College, and he recalled climbing up on the wall along Leontine Street to watch various kinds of ball games being played in the college grounds.

Bill Parker was an important person to Mr. Gayner while he lived in the Home. He recalled helping him in maintenance chores, particularly unloading stores of food to put in the storeroom, which was on the ground floor on the Jefferson Street side, liking that job because it gave him a chance to "swipe" apples. He made it a point to state that this was not because he was hungry, as the food was more than adequate. He recalled with pleasure the garden which he helped Bill with in the back part of the Home grounds. He also recalled that he had many pets back there, white rats, guinea pigs, ducks. He remembered that Herman Deutsch came to visit and wrote an article about the garden and animals and commented that they had everything but goats, resulting in someone making a gift of a couple of goats which he remembered caring for. He was sometimes rebuked for getting so dirty in the garden, but this was not a problem as he recalled, and he loved the time he spent there. Mr. Gayner regretted that he did not get a chance to go to college, as he would have liked to have become a veterinarian, specializing in farm animals. However, he did enjoy his years at the Farm School in Pennsylvania, where the Home later sent him, and his love of gardening still remains. Other jobs he recalled helping Bill Parker or other maintenance staff with included cleaning out the equipment used for heating and other mechanical tasks.

Because of Mr. Gayner's cleft palate, he needed a good deal of medical attention, which he felt was excellent care. He recalled that he went to Touro Infirmary for surgery about every 15 months, and that Dr. Isidore Cohen was his surgeon. He also recalled an outbreak of scarlet fever, amounting to an epidemic in the city, when 28 people in the Home, children and staff, were ill. This, he recalled as occurring in 1928. He got ill the day after Mardi Gras, and he

remembers that the staff thought he had got it from the crowds on that day. He recalled that a little girl named Bessie Crow was the most seriously ill, but they all recovered. He also recalled a time when a number of children had whooping cough.

Mr. Gayner had no kind recollections of Mr. Vollmer. He insisted that the real reason for Mr. Vollmer's leaving, the "poor health" given as the excuse was the result of his own father's physical attack upon Mr. Vollmer. He remembered that once when his father visited, and Mr. Gayner was still quite little, his father was taking him by the hand to the dining room, and Mr. Vollmer, who came by, "tried to grab him out of his father's arms." Mr. Gayner's father became enraged and pushed Mr. Vollmer down a flight of stairs.

This recollection led to a digression as to the volatile temper of his father, who he said had once been a sparring partner of Jack Dempsey, and the other trouble his father had been in because of his too liberal use of his fists.

He recalled a counselor named Tony Lubrow, who came from Birmingham and was attending Tulane. If the boys misbehaved in the dormitory, their punishment was to stand still holding a pillow over their heads, sometimes for as long as 20 minutes. Other punishments he recalled were being forbidden to use the living room (really a recreation room), being forbidden to go to one of the Home dances, or "sitting on your locker," sometimes for as long as an hour or two. He mentioned pointedly that the lockers, where children could keep their own private possessions, were never locked, but that serious punishment would follow if anyone tampered with another's locker.

Mr. Gayner recalled that collecting and trading photographs of movie stars was a principal hobby of the girls. A special event he recalled was the wedding of a former Home girl, Helen Lubow, in the Home chapel. He remembered that there was always a special dinner on Friday night and that in later years children were permitted to invite a guest, a friend from outside of the Home, to dinner on Friday night.

Mr. Gayner recalled that Harry Ginsberg was pleasant to the children, but he described his personal life as "shady" repeating some gossip about him I had heard from other alumni.

Mr. Gayner reminisced about some of the other children who had lived in the Home when he did, particularly the girls he thought were pretty (Adele Karp), some of the boys he thought were terrible bullies and one boy who was somewhat effeminate, whose nickname was "Paperdoll." He also provided gossip about other boys and their later political affiliations.

He recalled the maintenance staff most clearly, being able to give all of their names and remembering where their quarters in the building were. He also recalled Miss Simone, who was in charge of clothing, and Mrs. Sonia Berger, Mr. Ginsberg's sister, but all he could recall of her duties was that she bought the clothing for the children.

Mr. Gayner cannot understand why his sister and his brother feel they were deprived by having had to be in the Home. He, himself, feels it was a wonderful experience and that they were well cared for. He said that his brother, who was active at Newman and was on the Pioneer (school paper) was helped by the Home to go to college. Mr. Gayner is presently still not on good terms with his sister and brother.

They had to come into the Home because their mother was killed by being run over by a truck, and his father was not able to care for them adequately. His father did keep in touch and visited regularly as long as he was living in the city. The family originally came from Texas.