

Telephone interview of Lilyan Golden Milner, Kilgore, Texas -March 22, 2018

By Marlene Trestman - Transcribed by NoNotes.com

Lilyan: Hello, Marlene.

Marlene: Hi, Lilyan. And how are you doing?

Lilyan: Well, this morning, as my grandmother said, this morning I woke up a dead one but I'm better. I have a really bad asthma.

Marlene: Oh, my goodness –

Lilyan: And the sun is shining and all the flowers are blooming, and I woke up with a real – I had breathing problem but I'm a lot better now. I'm okay –

Marlene: Do you want to do this another time?

Lilyan: No, no, no. Let's do it.

Marlene: Well, thank you so much for talking with me. I did a little digging and I have found some wonderful goodies about you in your Newman senior yearbook including your smiling picture and your quote from Cervantes.

Lilyan: Yeah. I was very active in the musical department. Mr. Cooksey was the head of the music department, and we did a Gilbert & Sullivan opera for three years when I was in the high school. And in the last one, one of them, I had to leave, I can't remember which one. But I can sing the whole damn Mikado to you. Mr. Cooksey was the head of the music department and he was a great help to me.

Marlene: Let's start at the beginning. What caused you to go into the Home?

Lilyan: Well, we went to the Home in 1935. I was ten years old and Hannah was seven. Some lady in Tyler, Texas named Mrs. Lipstadt (?) was on the federation board. This was during the Depression. I had an aunt in Tyler who told my family in Tulsa about the Home. And I'm sure that she got us in there because nobody in Tulsa knew anything about the Jewish Children's Home. And because it was such a bad time, my father lost his business, my grandfather lost – he had a custom upholstery business, my grandmother lost her farm. It was very bad time. And then my mother died in 1931, I think. And so, we were lost in the world, we lived with aunts and with my grandmother for a while. Anyway, my aunt in Tyler knew about the Home and somehow got us in there. We never expected such a great thing happened. I thought it was – now, as I looked back, it's the best thing that ever happened to me.

Marlene: Were you still in Tulsa when you learned you were going into the Home?

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Lilyan: Yes. We were in Tulsa. Well, you have to understand it was such hard times, my grandfather – my grandmother lost her farm. We were living with aunts, and my father would get a job once in a while. He was a very good upholsterer and they had a custom upholstery business but there wasn't any market for that. It was – the Depression. So, we were really down and out, I mean, poor.

Marlene: Were you the only two children in your family?

Lilyan: Yes, it was just me and my sister.

Marlene: When you first heard about the Home, what was your reaction, were you scared?

Lilyan: My father did not tell us where we were going. We did not know anything about the Home. My sister says that she made daddy promise not to put us in a home. But I don't remember that, but she says that on the way there, I know we went through Arkansas, got a flat tire. And she was craving it in, "You're not going to take us to the Home." We knew about some kids that went to a Catholic home. And it was so terrible. That was our idea of the home.

Marlene: Your father was driving you in his car?

Lilyan: Yes. An old beat up car, and we had a flat tire. And the roads in Arkansas were terrible. And somehow, he went from Tulsa through Arkansas, through Louisiana.

Marlene: How long did that take?

Lilyan: Probably two days.

Marlene: Wow. When you had the flat tire, did your father change it himself?

Lilyan: Well, he was pretty good at everything, so he fixed the tire. But my sister grabbed the steering wheel and said, "You're not sending us to any home, we're not going." I don't know how she got that in her head, but she talks about it now.

Marlene: And when you say your father didn't tell you where you were going, you mean, when you were in the car you didn't know where you were going?

Lilyan: No, we didn't know.

Marlene: Where did you think you were going?

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Lilyan: I had no idea. I will tell you this that we went to the Home with a cardboard box of clothes. We had very few things, and the kids at the Home laughed at us because Hannah just got two dresses and two pairs of shoes, and we didn't have any decent shoes and our clothes were pitiful. Of course, we looked better than some of the kids who came with no clothes at all.

Marlene: When you first saw the Home on St. Charles Avenue, what was that like?

Lilyan: Well, it was overwhelming, and I remember standing at those big windows at the top of the second floor. They put us in isolation for two weeks. When you were new, in order that you weren't contaminating anybody, we were in isolation in the infirmary for about two weeks. And I remember standing there watching my father leave. And really bitter tears.

Marlene: You and your sister?

Lilyan: And Hannah was seven.

Marlene: So at least the two of you had each other.

Lilyan: She hated me though.

Marlene: Why?

Lilyan: Well, because I had to take [responsibility] over her and she's kept telling me you're not my mother and you can't tell me what to do, and all of that. In the Home, they put us on separate floors. I was upstairs and she was downstairs.

Marlene: Did that help your relationship?

Lilyan: Yes. It did. Well, she laughs about it now –

Marlene: What did your father say to you when you got to the Home?

Lilyan: I don't remember that he said a word. I think he was so upset at dumping us off. He felt like he was just getting rid of us. Maybe he needed to know because he was having trouble find – he was a kind of man that could do anything, he couldn't find a job. And so, we lost our house, we lost the farm, we lost everything. Oklahoma was a bad place. And I remember the clan in Tulsa, marching on the street. Anyway, when we got to the home, we really didn't know what we were doing. We just found out after we were there that it was a place for girls and boys, and we were on one side, the boys were on the other. And I think we just accepted it as a matter of – I think we've been so many places. We stay with my grandmother and then we'd stay with my aunt, and then we'd

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stay with somebody else. And then we lost our house. I think we've been kicked around so many places that we just accepted whatever happened and that it was nice that we had a nice clean place. I think we were glad to be there.

Marlene: Was it nice compared to where you'd been living or was the Home actually nice?

Lilyan: Well, you have to understand that for three or four years we were living in a house with one relative or another relative. I think in one year, we went to six different schools in Tulsa. So, I guess in retrospect, we were probably happy.

Marlene: So, who do you remember meeting when you got to the Home?

Lilyan: The kids, the girls. Yes, I was in the upper dorm and Hannah was in the bottom. The younger kids went downstairs and we called them the thundering herd. The older girls were upstairs, and I was thrown in with those big sisters and they were bullies. They tell you, "You better wait on me when I tell you what to do." To tell you the truth, we did what they told us to do because the big sisters were in charge. But Irma was the supervisor. Irma Simon.

Marlene: When you say big sisters, do you mean the counselors that were hired to watch over the kids?

Lilyan: No, no. I'm talking about the older girls that were older than me and they were really bossy. And if you were 10 years old and they were, like, 13 or 14 or 15. They gave orders and you just did what they said or you're going to be in trouble.

Marlene: Who did you become friends with?

Lilyan: Well, most girls of my own age.

Marlene: Do you remember any names?

Lilyan: I remember Millie Berman. Have you talked to Helen Garb?

Marlene: I haven't heard about Helen before. Is she still around?

Lilyan: I don't know. She and I were friends, and we went to Washington together during the war. And she went back to Dallas. And for some reason, I tried to call her and she never talks to me again. I guess she got mad at me over something, I don't know what. But anyway, I don't know if she's still alive. She had a brother named Morris (Maurice). He played football or something.

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Marlene: Is he the young man who had only one arm?

Lilyan: Yes.

Marlene: I have heard he was an amazing football player in spite of it. Tell me a bit more about when you got to the Home.

Lilyan: I was overwhelmed with how good it was. Because we had separate beds and we had a huge shower. It must have been four, five, six showerheads. It was a big shower. And we had hot water. We had one room that was a recreational room, and the rest of it, if you were old enough you got a room of your own. I wasn't old enough. You had to be, like, in high school. I was ten years old.

Marlene: The Newman yearbook for your senior year says you entered Newman in the sixth grade.

Lilyan: I was a good student, and the teachers were so special at Newman. I loved the school, and I really loved studying. I love education. I remember I was the president of my senior class. But Miss Christian in the Newman office used to say, "Home kids lunches are in the office." We knew it would be there if it rained. She hated home kids and she hated me because I spelled my name with a Y. But I think she really just hated home kids.

Marlene: Besides Miss Christian, what was the general reaction of faculty and other Newman students to home kids?

Lilyan: Oh, I think they looked down their nose. It took me years to realize what a great opportunity that was. Because at that time, you have to understand that the Jewish kids didn't like us because we were home kids. And we had crappy clothes and we couldn't keep up with anybody. And we were insulated, we were protected. We couldn't go anywhere unless we had permission from Irma. And you could be grounded for the slightest infraction. I was grounded a lot.

Marlene: For what?

Lilyan: Well, at one time I remember I was playing in the backstairs and Lottie who was our cook would always tell people that were coming around that we're having this gorgeous dinner with fried chicken and blah, blah, blah. And I said, yes, it turned into red beans and rice. Well, I got grounded for a year for that.

Marlene: So – let me understand. The cook would boast that it was a delicious dinner but it would end up being red beans and rice?

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Lilyan: Yes. She did that to impress the people who were coming around looking at the home. But the food was excellent. We had really good food. And Miss Joe was the dietitian. She was a big woman and she was a tyrant. If you drop a fork or didn't set the table just right, you are in big trouble. So, we all watch our step around her. But she taught us how to set a table and how to do everything right. I mean, we had good – we had good leaders, good people. And of course, we had no corporal punishment, none. So, we all had a big mouth.

Marlene: So, you got grounded.

Lilyan: I got in trouble for popping off. One thing is I got in trouble for staying up late studying because the lights were out at 10 o'clock and I'd turn out my light and study and Uncle Harry [Ginsburg] would catch me, and I'd be grounded for that.

Marlene: Uncle Harry came to the girl's dorm at night?

Lilyan: Yes. And check on you. And if I was up studying he would catch me and then I've had to go to bed and get in trouble for that. But I was just doing my homework. I wanted to – I always wanted to make it all As.

Marlene: So, tell me this, who did you go to when you needed a sympathetic ear in the Home?

Lilyan: Let's say, Millie Berman was a friend of mine.

Marlene: Any staff or older girl counselors?

Lilyan: No, no, no. Well, we had counselors who were going to Tulane and Newcomb. And they were supervisors, and they got room and board for being counselors. But we really didn't like them, and they didn't particularly like us.

Marlene: It's funny because there's a gentleman I interviewed who was a Tulane medical student and a boy's counselor. He talked about how he loved the Home children and how they loved him, and how he took everything he learned and used it when he was a doctor and could relate to children.

Lilyan: Well, we didn't feel that way about them at all. Now, that may have happened with the boys but I sincerely doubt it.

Marlene: Okay. So, what did you do when you were in the Home and you weren't doing chores or eating, what was fun to do around the Home?

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Lilyan: Oh, we had a lot of fun. We had roller skates, skating around the courtyard, we had a big courtyard. You didn't see the home before they tore it down, did you?

Marlene: I did actually. I used to go to JCC Day Camp there in the early '60s before they tore it down. So, I know the courtyard and the balconies. Besides roller skating?

Lilyan: Oh, mostly we didn't have time for much fooling around. We had jobs to do. We were either doing our homework or we went to temple Friday night and Saturday morning. And I went to Touro and Rabbi Leipziger hated me and I hated him.

Marlene: Why did he hate you?

Lilyan: Well, he hated home kids. And we used to have to walk to the temple. And we were always late, and he always singled me out, "Why are you late?" I told him that we were waiting for street cars. He knew damn well we walked from the Home –

Marlene: Oh, that's a good walk.

Lilyan: Yes. And I wanted to take piano lessons and nobody gave me – Well, there was one girl who was a great ballet dancer and she married one of the advisers, one of the men.

Marlene: Who's that?

Lilyan: Her name was Schwartz.

Marlene: You think her name was Betty Schwartz and she was proficient at ballet?

Lilyan: Yes. She was very good, and she married one of the men who was a counselor and he was in medical school. And of course, Irma was scared to death. Some girl gets pregnant and the Home would never let it down. But I don't think that ever happened to tell you the truth.

Marlene: Did she go to Newman?

Lilyan: No. You didn't get to [stay at] Newman unless your grades were – if your grades were not really high, you didn't get to go to Newman. They had trade schools for boys and the girls went to (Beauty) school.

Marlene: The kids from the home went to Newman in the lower school, you're talking about whether they would continue on after sixth or seventh grade?

Lilyan: Unless you made really good grades you couldn't go to Newman and high school.

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Marlene: So how did they decide in sixth grade that you should go to Newman?

Lilyan: I don't know. Because I never went to any other school. I went to Newman – from the day I went to the Home, evidently, they test the IQs or something. I don't know what they did.

Marlene: Yes. In your class at Newman, do you know approximately how many other kids were from the Home? In your grade –

Lilyan: (Ben Shanker) was in my class. And I have never talked to him in all these years. And he had an uncle in Castro that was a very rich old man. And when those kids got out of the Home, he gave them big jobs. I don't know how he let them go to the Home in the first place. But he was very orthodox. And I think that maybe their mother wasn't Jewish or something. I don't know, that's just a guess.

Marlene: So you didn't really need any of the counselors to help you with homework or anything if that's what they were there for, is that right?

Lilyan: I didn't need any help. I don't think they really fraternized with us very much. I don't remember liking any of them particularly or disliking them. I think the boys had better luck than we did.

Marlene: Did you have a Big Sister in New Orleans, meaning, a woman from the community who you visited or looked after you?

Lilyan: Oh, yes, I had a big sister. Her name was Mrs. Isaacson, and by the way, the Isaacson who wrote the biography of Einstein, his aunt was my big sister. Mrs. Julius Isaacson. Julius Isaacson was a doctor. And Mrs. Isaacson was our big sister, and we had lunch with her on Sunday over many years. She was very nice and she used to send a car to pick us up. She had a Chauffeur, a black Chauffeur. And he picks us up on Sunday and had we lunch at her house. And really, we didn't know her very well. It was like we thought she was doing her duty to the Jewish community or something.

Marlene: Were there any other activities she did with you?

Lilyan: No. But I remember when I came back to Tyler that Mrs. (Lipstadt? From the local federation) introduced me as a product of the Jewish Children's Home and I hated her guts for that. And it was really very rude. We didn't want anybody to know that we were orphans or that we were – I don't know. It was like, it took me many years to realize how lucky I was to go to the Home. Now I have to tell you that story. I had a scholarship to LSU, and the federation gave me \$50 and that's it. And I could not get a job at LSU because they didn't let the woman work in the kitchen. And my father had remarried

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and really didn't have any money and wouldn't help me. So, I went to the dean of women and try to get a job and I got just pushed around so much, I finally just quit.

Marlene: How long were you there?

Lilyan: I finally got my degree when I was 70 something from UT in 1992.

Marlene: What was the degree in?

Lilyan: I just got it in Spanish and history because I was too old to finish accounting. I had three years of accounting of college accounting. But I was too old to care about it.

Marlene: How long were you at LSU in Baton Rouge?

Lilyan: Only about six months. Well, this is during the war and there wasn't any money, the Home closed up.

Marlene: The Home didn't close until 1946. You left the Home in 1940, is that right?

Lilyan: Yes. But there was no money for education, for college education for me.

Marlene: What did you want to study at LSU?

Lilyan: Well, I really wanted to get a degree in language as I was really good in Latin and Spanish. But my father by this time had remarried and was still a truck driver in an oil field, so we didn't have any money. And he thought girls didn't need an education anyway. So, he paid for me to go to business school and learn how to keep books. And then I took a couple of college education, accounting at night. I had three years of college accounting when I finally got a job as an accountant. But it really was tough. During the war, I got a job, working for the navy department. Now, this is a good story. There was an ad in the paper that said if you want – go to Washington, the government will pay your train fare to Washington if you agree to work with the government for a year. And that's why I asked about Helen Garb because she and I went together.

Marlene: You had already gone to business school?

Lilyan: Yes. I went to Tyler Commercial College and got a bookkeeping, whatever shorthand. And I got promoted at the Bureau of Yards and Docks because I could take shorthand, and a lot of the girls couldn't. I wanted to join the navy but my father wouldn't sign for me, and I'm glad he didn't. But I was there when Roosevelt died and I am a Roosevelt Democrat. And I got to go to his funeral.

Marlene: So, you were supporting yourself in Washington, DC with this Navy job?

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Lilyan: Yes. And that's where I met my husband. Well, Helen and I had an apartment, there was so much discrimination against Jews that the landlady wouldn't give us our mail even. I don't know how she found out we were Jewish. But there wasn't any such thing as civil rights or any of that stuff. And there was a lot of anti-Semitism. And –

Marlene: Where were you living?

Lilyan: I don't know. We lived in an apartment here and there, it's hard to find a place to live. And finally I left and went to New York. I met my husband, he was in the navy.

Marlene: You met him in Washington or in New York?

Lilyan: In New York.

Marlene: What were you doing in New York?

Lilyan: I just – I don't know, I was going to go to New York before I went back to Texas. Because I wanted to see New York. Well, Helen went back to Dallas. And she married somebody there, and for some reason, she got mad at me, I don't know why but she would never answer my calls. I don't know why she wouldn't. But anyway, it doesn't matter. I met my husband there –

Marlene: How did you meet your husband?

Lilyan: Well, I think I was introduced to him. But I got hired in his office in New York, they thought I wasn't Jewish. And it turned out everybody in the office was Jewish. And the office manager hired me because she thought I wasn't Jewish. And our boss hated Jews.

Marlene: What kind of office?

Lilyan: Oh, he had a contract with the government. I don't know what the hell we did.

Marlene: Accounting?

Lilyan: We just typed a lot of pay– oh, well, his name was James Allen Tucker. I'll never forget it. And every day he comes in and says, "I hate the Jews, I hate the Jews." Well, Helen who hired me had three brothers in the navy. And one day all of us were Jewish, we all quit one day. We were not allowed to quit. Because during the war we were supposed to work. You weren't allowed to change – well, you could change jobs but you couldn't quit a job without a penalty. So, we all walked out one day. And from there on it was just one job after another. And finally, I met Mike through another girl, and he was one of the nicest people I ever met. He introduced me to his family and all that stuff.

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And he spent four years in the Pacific on a mine sweep, playing cha-cha with the Japanese. And the kamikaze. So, he was an interesting man. And he just died a few years ago.

Marlene: I'm so sorry.

Lilyan: And I have two children.

Marlene: And was his last name Milner?

Lilyan: Yes, he was born in Ireland, and his father put him on a boat when he was 12 years old and sent him to the United States to his sister who was already here.

Marlene: So how did you get back to Texas?

Lilyan: Well, my father by that time was on his feet, was doing pretty well. And we came back here because we had a hard time living in New York, it was so expensive and we can't – we couldn't find an apartment. There was no place to live. And so, we came back to Texas and we got as far – well, we really were going to go to Seattle. But we ran out of money, so my sister was living in Corpus so we went there. And we stayed there for a while and then we came to east Texas, And, we've been there ever since.

Marlene: Before you wen to the Home, when you were living with your father in Tulsa originally or with your grandparents, did you observe Judaism to any extent?

Lilyan: My grandfather was a Yeshiva Bucher. He was very religious. My grandmother was a gypsy. She was religious but in her way. She came from Romania. They were all Jewish.

Marlene: And this is your father's family or your mother's family?

Lilyan: This my father's family. I never knew my mother's family. She was an only child and she married my father and converted to Judaism. And as far as I know, we were always Jewish, I don't remember being anything else.

Marlene: When you got to the Home, how did it compare to the way you observed Judaism before you were in the Home?

Lilyan: Not the same way. The Home was not really – well, we observed all the holidays and we had to go Sunday school and we had to go to our services. And sang in the Touro choir because the other kids didn't want to.

Marlene: Was there Kosher food in the Home?

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Lilyan: No.

Marlene: Did you actually eat milk and meat together or just was –

Lilyan: No, it was really reformed.

Marlene: Were you confirmed?

Lilyan: Yes.

Marlene: And did you learn Hebrew?

Lilyan: No, we didn't learn any Hebrew.

Marlene: When you left the Home, did you practice Judaism, do you practice today?

Lilyan: We used to have a temple near here but it broke up when some wanted to go to Longview and I went to Tyler. And I belong to that congregation of Tyler. And my daughter was confirmed there. And my son was in nothing. He's a baseball player.

Marlene: Oh, professional?

Lilyan: Almost made it. He went to college on a baseball scholarship. My daughter is a nurse.

Marlene: Is that Reenie?

Lilyan: Yes. She had a very good job and has just retired.

Marlene: Did you ever attend reunions of Home kids?

Lilyan: No, I – Carol [Hart] called me all the time and we were going to attend the last reunion, and then Katrina hit New Orleans. And frankly, I never had the money or the time to go to the reunions. Carol just called me all the time.

Marlene: Carol Hart?

Lilyan: Carol Hart, yes. He was my buddy. And we had decided, Hannah and I decided that we were going to go to the reunion, the last one. And then Katrina ruined that so we never went. I guess Carol started calling me – he died.

Marlene: I know. I'm good friends with his children. His kids went to Newman with me.

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Lilyan: Yes. He's a really nice man. Carol had a big family that supported him when he got out of the home. I didn't have anybody to help me go to college and that was what really determined my – I always wanted that degree and I was going to get it and put it on my tombstone.

Marlene: Well, you did. I thought you got the LSU scholarship from LSU?

Lilyan: But see, I had no money to stay there and the federation gave me \$50 and at that time the home would just throw you out and then you had to fend for yourself and...It was terrible. You got no idea how bad that was because we were so protected in the Home and then to just be thrown out in the world, you know? We didn't know where to turn. To tell you the truth, I was lost for a couple of years before I went to a business school. I really wanted to finish college.

Marlene: Did you see your sister after you left the home?

Lilyan: Well, my sister married a man in Corpus Christi.

Marlene: No, I mean while she was still in the home. When you left the home and she was still there, did you...

Lilyan: No, I never saw her anymore [in the Home]. I went over to where my father was and he was working in a pipe yard in the oilfield. I had an uncle who had a pipe yard and I worked there for about a year and then he told me I had to get a job, that he didn't want all his relatives working there, so that's when I went to Washington and got on that train. When I think about it, I must've been crazy.

Marlene: It seems to have turned out to be a good move.

Lilyan: Yes, well...I had to grow up some way.

Marlene: You said before that it took you a while to appreciate what the Home gave you. What caused you to change your feelings?

Lilyan: Well, the one thing I never expected the home to do anything for me. I really didn't blame the home for anything. I really was mad at my father because he married this mean woman and over the years though, he helped me, I have a lot of real estates now and it's all on account of him for helping me. But at the time, he didn't – I guess I

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didn't appreciate the Home because people looked down on Home kids, it was a different time.

Marlene: Yes.

Lilyan: You didn't live at that time and you don't understand it but it was a long time before I realized how lucky I was to have gone to such a wonderful school.

Marlene: Are there particular lessons you learned from your experiences in the Home?

Lilyan: Well, I think that it took me many years to realize how well I was to have been in the Jewish Children's Home. I think the older I got, the more I appreciated them – for the time, the Jewish Children's Home was absolutely superior to any kind of orphanage or whatever you want to call it, home for children. I mean, we had so many advantages that poor kids now don't have. We were very lucky. Because if we had stayed in Tulsa, as poor as we were with the rattletraps and my grandmother lost her farm, I mean it was really bad times. And if we'd stayed there, we probably would've ended up dead or something, I don't know what would've happened to us because everybody was so poor that nobody was willing to take us in and so I should mock Mrs. (Lipstadt?) for saying that I was a product of the Jewish Children's Home. At the time, I thought it was pretty chicken.

Marlene: Are there particular things that bring back memories from the Home - either happy or sad memories?

Lilyan: Okay, there are several things. One is we were exposed to wonderful art and music. We had tickets to all the concerts in New Orleans and all the symphonies and of course, I'm a music lover, so I really loved that. And of course, I can sing the three Gilbert and Sullivan operas if you wanted to listen to it but you don't. But I had that at Newman. I would've never had that at any school anywhere I don't think. Mr. Cooksey, he was the music teacher at Newman.

Marlene: Did he look down on Home kids?

Lilyan: He wasn't down on us. The teachers weren't down. It was the kids who looked down on us, like "Poor little orphans smell", that crap. As an old lady, I think it's stupid, almost ridiculous now but when you're 14, 15, 16 years old, we didn't have the ordinary life that teenagers had. We didn't go to dancing or stuff.

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By Marlene Trestman - Transcribed by NoNotes.com

Marlene: Did any of the girls in the home go to dances and parties outside the home?

Lilyan: Yes, but you had to have an FBI investigation to get to go. You couldn't go unless it was – I don't know, it was so strict and if you were 10 minutes late, you were grounded forever. Most of the time, you didn't even ask to go because it would have to be somebody that was beyond reproach and most of the Jewish kids in New Orleans were not interested in dating Home kids.

Marlene: The club that you were in when you were at Newman according to the yearbook was called Tri G. What was that?

Lilyan: Yes, I was the – I was the president of – that's my senior year.

Marlene: What did the club do?

Lilyan: Nothing, really. We had the advantage to have a special room that you could go on breaks and stuff and a lot of the girls who smoked would go to that room and because I was the president, I told them they couldn't smoke and that even ...I was a mean kid.

Marlene: What does Tri G stand for?

Lilyan: I have no idea.

Marlene: The only description that I can find about it is in the commencement program that year that lists the different prizes and honors, it just says the Tri G club prize for excellence in girls' government went to a young woman by the name of Alice Bachelor Patton your senior year but I'm still trying to figure out what the club was based on or what the three Gs' stand for. Maybe it's something about girls' government?

Lilyan: I don't know. I really don't know.

Marlene: The description of your activities from your Pioneer senior yearbook page includes varsity baseball.

Lilyan: Yes. I was pretty good in baseball but I – I'll tell you, I hit somebody with a ball and it upset me, so I think I quit.

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By Marlene Trestman - Transcribed by NoNotes.com

Marlene: Did you ever talk to your kids much about your time in the home?

Lilyan: Oh, yes. I talk about it all the time with my kids. If I think of something that happened, I would tell them about it and they've heard so much about it that it's just a matter of fact to them.

And Hannah talks about it a lot– maybe you'll get a different feeling from her when you talk to her.

Marlene: Yes, right. Well, people have different impressions depending on how they were doing. Tell me your impressions of Superintendent Harry Ginsburg, Uncle Harry.

Lilyan: Oh, he was a tyrant.

Marlene: Give me an example.

Lilyan: Well, like you could get in trouble with him for the minor infraction and he never forgot it. I don't know, he – I had a big mouth and I got in trouble with him a lot. I got in trouble with the rabbi and the rabbi would say "Come home and report yourself to Uncle Harry." So, I'd go home again and they made me say "Okay, you reported me. I know you're always going to do something bad." And then Hannah got it after I left. She got my reputation. They said she was just as bad, only worse.

Marlene: How did Uncle Harry interact with the kids? How involved was he?

Lilyan: He was around, he would invite you to his apartment if you were good and so well I don't know, I think Hannah got to go. Hannah was really a pet because she was the youngest child and Irma just loved her. So, I think Uncle Harry was probably nicer to her than he was to me.

Marlene: What happened on your birthday in the home? Anything special?

Lilyan: No, nothing.

Marlene: How did you get your clothes?

Lilyan: Irma had dresses and shoes in the sewing room and each season you'd get two dresses and a pair of shoes new. And there were lots of hand me downs from rich people but you should ask Hannah about her green coat.

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Marlene: I will. In terms of your clothing, were they nice, did you feel like you looked appropriate?

Lilyan: Well, I wouldn't say it was the latest of the latest, they were just ordinary JCPenney types but considering how many people were starving to death and how many people didn't have any clothes when they came to the Home, we were well off.

Marlene: Did you ever have friends from Newman come visit in the home?

Lilyan: No, never. Never.

Marlene: Did you ever have friends from Touro Synagogue who weren't Newman and weren't from the Home?

Lilyan: No, no, no. We had this big hang-up about being Home kids and it took me years to overcome that.

Marlene: When did you first realize you overcame it?

Lilyan: I think when I finally got a decent job and got on my feet a little bit financially, then I began to – and of course when my kids went to school here, how bad the schools are, they're awful, and my kids didn't get any kind of education compared to mine. I mean, Newman of course is – you know what the reputation of Newman School is.

Marlene: I know you were busy raising a family and working but just curious whether you got involved in community affairs or synagogue activities...

Lilyan: Well, I taught at Sunday school and I worked for the rabbi. We had a rabbi here for a while and I worked for him. Mostly I didn't have time to do much else. I did belong to the PTA and then my father told me "You better stay out of the PTA. You're going to get in trouble." And so, I stayed out of it...

Marlene: He was around in your life for quite a while then.

Lilyan: Yes. After – he finally helped my husband get a job here, Mike got a job working for Halliburton and when they found out I was Jewish, they fired him.

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Marlene: Oh, my goodness.

Lilyan: Now, they don't hire Jews in Halliburton. And so, we came back here and my father got him a job working for a local supply house and he worked there for many years. So, we got involved in the Jewish community, that there is of it. Touro was the center of the Jewish community because people came from all around here and I guess the reason for it was that the Jewish community in this area was supported by the oilfield. That was the days of the oil boom and there were a lot of Jewish men here in the supply business, pipe yards and drilling and stuff. There are a lot of rich Jews in the oil business in East Texas.

Marlene: Do you recall Mrs. Lashman at the Home?

Lilyan: Yes, Edith Lashman. I don't know why we didn't like her but we didn't like her. She was, oh, some supervisor or something, I don't know.

Marlene: She was a development director. She raised money for the Home.

Lilyan: Oh. Well, that's a good thing but we didn't like her. She had a son that didn't fit into us, he was too good for us. They lived in the Home.

Marlene: The other thing I want to read to you, it says in your commencement program that you performed a duet called – do you know the name of it?

Lilyan: No. What's the name of it?

Marlene: "I Feel thy Angel's Spirit."

Lilyan: Oh, my God.

Marlene: You sang it with Warren Leon Garfunkel.

Lilyan: My God. I didn't know I did that. I know that I had the lead in the Fireworks [inaudible 1:37:57] I can't remember which one but I can tell you that I can sing those operas pretty much from the beginning to the end. I have that kind of memory that it's just ridiculous. But anyway, I'm glad I got to know Gilbert and Sullivan.

Marlene: Yes, that's wonderful.

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Lilyan: And that was because Mr. Cooksey loved Gilbert and Sullivan and so I was exposed to a lot of culture through him. Anyway, you are a doll. Thank you for doing this, I don't think most people ever knew about the Jewish Children's Home and I know that in time or where there's a rabbi there that is a really good friend of mine, Rabbi Katz, and I know he gives money to the Home because I've seen his name on the list and I think he's going to run for office as an independent because we've got such crappy people here. Anyway, it's been so nice to know you and I am so impressed with your life and your work and your education.

Marlene: I'm just – that's very kind of you. I'm grateful to all of the good things that happened in my life, I just feel that I need to spend a little time giving back, so I'm happy to do that. And I also just want to make sure that I have your permission to quote you on what you said in this interview that I can use in the book, would that be okay with you?

Lilyan: Yes, that'll be fine.

Marlene: That's wonderful.

Lilyan: I want you to send me a –send me a notice when you publish your book and I'll order it from Amazon.

Marlene: Okay, I certainly will. And if you're interested in seeing any of the copies of things that I've found from the Newman Pioneer, I'll be happy to stick them in the mail for you.

Lilyan: Please do.

Marlene: Okay, I'll be happy to send those to you.

Lilyan: I read religiously. I am studiously reading – but since I'm so old, I can't do much of any activity but I'm still mobile. I'm not in a wheelchair or anything like that but I'm not very active because of my breathing.

Marlene: You've been a tremendous help and a great memory and just really a pleasure to learn all this from, so I really want to thank you and if I call you back have additional questions, I hope that'll be all right.

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Lilyan: Oh, that's fine. Anyway, thank you for putting up with my bad voice...

Marlene: Oh, no, no. Thank you so much, Lilyan.

Lilyan: Thank you, Marlene. Let me hear from you again.

Marlene: Before you go, Lilyan, let me just make sure I have your mailing address.

Lilyan: Okay. It's 805 Hunter, H-U-N-T-E-R Street, Kilgore, Texas 75662.

Marlene: Thank you, Lilyan.

Lilyan: Thank you, Marlene.

Marlene: Have a great day.

Lilyan: Bye.