

Jewish Home Family Shares Story of Man Who Lived in Original Hebrew Orphans Home

By JLNJ Staff

In 1925 four brothers lost their mother to typhoid fever—two-year-old twins Herb and Joel Rubel and their two older brothers, David and Meyer (Max). Their father didn't think he could take care of the four children and hold a job so he placed the twins in a foster home, and the two older brothers were placed in the Hebrew Orphans Home of Hudson County in Jersey City (in those days, the home did not take infants). By the 1930s the Home became the Hebrew Home for Orphans and Aged because there were many elderly people who were unable to care for themselves. In the 1970s, the Jewish Home & Rehabilitation Center was established, followed by the Jewish Home at Rockleigh in 2001 and the Jewish Home Assisted Living in 2007.

When the twins turned six they joined their two older brothers at the Hebrew Orphans Home and stayed there for six years. Joel Rubel recalls, "Approximately 50 boys and 60 girls lived there at the time. Kids were raised in the Orthodox tradition. Everyone at the home was assigned a task. Herb and I were responsible for taking care of a half-acre of lawn and shrubbery bordering the home. The grounds were very spacious, with a bandstand and a baseball field. There was a large auditorium and everyone in the home had to learn to play a musical instrument. Herb and I learned to play the flute while our older brothers played the cymbal and trumpet."

"We all went to P.S. 34, a block away," said Joel. "When Passover came, the school shut down because of the preponderance of Jewish students who didn't attend on these holidays. The home was run by an Orthodox rabbi and everyone went to Hebrew School every afternoon after regular school." Rewards were handed out if the kids behaved, said Joel. "Saturday movies with passes and sometimes trips to NYC to see a ball game," were given to those who



Joel Rubel

behaved well. "Cod liver oil was required before breakfast. That must be why we were so healthy," he added.

Some 10 years after their mother's death, Joel's father remarried and most of the family was reunited. "My oldest brother Dave, 18, left to go on the road. Max, Herb, and I moved to Bayonne, NJ to start a new chapter in our lives." Eventually Joel joined the Marine Corps, arriving in Anacostia Naval Air Station, outside of Washington, DC in December 1941, shortly before the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was then assigned to the presidential retreat at Camp Shangri La—later known as Camp David. "It was a Civilian Conservation Corp construction project. All the buildings were log cabins. I bunked with the company gunnery sergeant." In 1944 he was transferred overseas



to the Pacific, landing in Okinawa, where he was injured, but fortunately recovered. After he was released from the service, he then headed to college in Austin, Texas. He met Sylvia Goidl on a blind date and they eventually married. They were together for 52 years before Sylvia passed away. Joel had a successful career, after receiving a Master of Science in Industrial Engineering in 1954.

The Jewish Home Family is celebrating its Centennial with a series of events and lectures. Rubel was excited to tell his story as the Jewish Home looks back to its roots and forward to the next 100 years.

For further information, please call 201-518-1176.