

A Place for Kids

Orphanages provided shelter, life lessons and some memorable fun.

Short-Term Haven

IN 1927, Dad was working the night shift on a railroad in Chicago when Mom was suddenly hospitalized with a serious illness that baffled doctors.

The church advised Dad to find an orphanage for my 7-year-old brother, John, and me. My 3-year-old sister, Eleanor, had been hospitalized since she was a baby because of polio.

John and I were easily persuaded, thinking the orphanage would be fun because there was a playground with swings and teeter-totters.

We could bring a toy, and I took my new baby doll, Dimples, which I had been taking to bed every night. When our toys were immediately put in a community toy box, I was devastated!

Mealtime was my favorite, because I could be with John. I also loved Friday nights, when we put on skits.

Dad called the home regularly and one day asked to speak to John. When asked about me, John said I was sick almost every morning, as I couldn't finish my bowl of cooked raisins. After that, Dad did all he could to get us to his mother's in southern Illinois.

The best part of leaving was that my dolly had been kept for me and was mine to take home. Mother survived her illness, which was later termed black diphtheria. Our grandmother had taken her from her hospital ward and had nursed her back to health.

—Margaret Ellingham
Lake Havasu City, Arizona

HAPPY ENDING. Margaret Ellingham and her brother, John, here in 1925 photo, spent time in a Chicago orphanage.



BUILDING SKILLS. Robert Schaeffer (right) and brother Edwin work on a model airplane in 1938 at Uhlich Orphan Home (memory below).

Confidence Construction

MY BROTHER, Edwin, and I were residents of the Uhlich Orphan Home in Chicago from August 1932 until November 1940.

We spent much of our time building model airplanes, footlockers and other wood projects and constructing kayaks to use at summer camp. Among other things, we learned carpentry and how to repair our own shoes during summers at Three Oaks Camp on Koontz Lake near Walkerton, Indiana.

What I learned at Uhlich served me well throughout my life and gave me the confidence to build my own home during the 1950s.

Uhlich Evangelical Lutheran Orphan Asylum was started in the 1860s to care for Civil War orphans. It eventually became the UCAN (Uhlich Children's Advantage Network), which now serves more than 10,000 children, youth and families every year in six Illinois counties.

—Robert Schaeffer
Walkerton, Indiana

Enjoyment "Down Da Shore"

IT NEVER occurred to us until we left the Presbyterian Orphanage in Philadelphia just how good our experience had been.

In summertime, we'd go "down da shore," as the natives put it, to Cape May Point. This was the southernmost tip of New Jersey, where the Delaware Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean. The girls were there for one month, and the boys for the next, with the order changed each year.

Our destination was a large Victorian house that was once the summer home of Philadelphia merchant John Wanamaker. It was a large,



A THOUGHT TO REMEMBER: One of the great arts of living is the art of forgiving.