

Excerpts from memoir of Clarise Auerbach

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EARLY JEWISH RESIDENTS OF
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

By

CLARICE ELIAS AUERBACH

I DEDICATE THESE MEMORIES TO MY ILLUSTRIOUS
ANTECEDENTS, TO MY FAMILY WHOM I LOVE DEVOTEDLY,
TO MY LOYAL FRIENDS OF EVERY RACE AND CREED, AND
TO ALL WHOSE PATHS MAY HAVE CROSSED MINE. I AM
GRATEFUL FOR THE INSPIRATION, THE COURAGE, AND
THE HAPPINESS THEY HAVE GIVEN ME.

TO PREVENT THESE RECOLLECTIONS
FROM BEING JUST DRY STATISTICS, I HAVE INTRODUCED
A BIT OF LEVITY WITH THE HOPE THAT NO ONE
WILL TAKE OFFENSE.

... Although, compulsory education had not become a part of American life at that time, Michael and Regina Grausman believed in education for all of their help as well as for their family. One of their servants named Margaret was married in their home, and a house was built on the premises for her and her family, consisting of her husband and two daughters. It was she who was nurse to the Grausman children. Her children, being of comparable age to the younger Grausman children, were required to maintain the same pattern of life and to attend prayers and school. Michael Grausman tutored all the young people in his household and prepared Margaret's two daughters, Annie and Belle, for further education at St. Agnes College, in Raleigh. There they graduated as trained nurses and, if I am not mistaken, became the first two colored trained nurses in the State of North Carolina. Later my mother obtained a position for Annie as Head Nurse at Shaw University, and the second daughter, Belle, as visiting nurse for the colored people of Raleigh.

With the Hebrew Benevolent Association as a starter, my mother, Helen Elias, next formed the "Sisterhood" and was its President for twenty-five years. Many of the Jewish women at that time worked in the stores with their husbands and could attend meetings only in the evenings, having their husbands call for them afterwards. At first these Sisterhood meetings were held in my mother's home. Because of her ability to lead and organize all types of people, she became a charter-member of The Women's Club of Raleigh; organized the first Parent-Teachers Association in Raleigh, the first Visiting Nurse Service, on for the white population and for the colored, and assisted Mr. William Andrews with the Associated Charities of Wake County. She also assisted Dr. Delia Dixon Carrol in forming the first Red Cross Chapter in Raleigh; and she and her daughter, Clarice, were pupils of the first Red Cross class. She was chairman of the Social Service Department of the Women's Club. I can remember going with my mother to the City Jail, taking peanuts and cookies to the prisoners.

At that time the Influenza epidemic was worldwide. My mother, realizing the catastrophe, spoke to our dear friend and physician, Dr. Hubert Hayward II, and to volunteer as the first Red Cross nurse in Raleigh. In order to accommodate the many sick soldiers, the swimming pool at the A. & E. College was drained and cots were placed on the cement surrounding it. There my mother nursed the first eighteen men, assisted only by the young recruits at the college when they were available. Not having the modern medicines and medical techniques, she had to make the mustard plasters, milk-shakes and nourishments for her patients. I was told by Dr. Riddick, the then President of the A. & E. College, that mother was supposed to come to his home in the evenings to sleep, but that her rest periods at his home were never longer than five hours. Finally, my mother contracted the influenza herself and was brought home by Dr. Hayward in his buggy. He and I carried her to an upstairs bedroom because of her weekend

condition. Dr. Hayward always called Mother "Fair Helen of Troy." When leaving our house the Doctor handed written instructions to me and said: "Follow these. Take good care of Fair Helen of Troy. I don't know when I'll get back."

Unfortunately I too contracted the malady while nursing mother. With the help of our kind neighbors and the care of the colored visiting nurse (whose position as such my mother had arranged) we survive. Before my mother was strong enough to walk again, she had an upstairs telephone installed, for the purpose of pleading for volunteer nurses from all over the city and county. Many answered the appeal and, I regret to say, succumbed to this plague. Still in a weakened condition, through the newspapers and urged all the farmers and hucksters to bring their surplus foods to the public market. And before she had gained back her normal strength, she secured the services of one of our former cooks and together they took a small stove to the market and there were able to save the surplus food by canning it. At this time she also pleaded through the papers and the clubs for assistance in this project. She trained these helpers and, with their aid, produced enough canned vegetables, fruits, etc. to keep the poor people alive for two years, because, after the food was canned, the volunteers distributed it where it most needed. There was never a surplus to be stored. After the war when the severe need was over, the University of North Carolina asked her to head the Extension Course in the canning of food, having highly praised her work during the war and in originating this project. This offer she declined because of her health, but she suggested a Mrs. James McKimmon, whom she trained, who accepted this position.

Following this war effort on the part of my mother, the towns-volunteers, but mother would not permit her name to be included with those of the brave women who had lost their lives in this valiant work. Mother suggested that if some recognition were to be made, she would prefer that an addition be built at the hospital or, failing that, that a waiting trough for horses be placed in front of the Court House.