

Michel Salmon, On The Occasion of The 30th Anniversary of The Nathalie Salmon House

Soon to be 93, I am not able to attend the 30th anniversary of the Nathalie Salmon House, but my heart and spirit are with you for this celebration.

After the death of our only child Nathalie in a traffic accident on June 9, 1986, Lilo and I were crushed. Our friends, staff and Board members of H.O.M.E were also devastated, but extremely kind and supportive of us. After a while, the Board of Directors suggested that the next expansion of the organization should be another intergenerational home for low-income elderly, named after Nathalie. At that time, H.O.M.E. operated the Pat Crowley House, a 6-flat building, and the Oak Park House, a former convent we rented in Oak Park. The Board of Director's idea was another 6-flat or another convent. Lilo was adamant that a house named after our daughter should be special and new, but her vision would cost a few million dollars to be realized. By principle, we would not charge more than 30% of income for rent to low-income elderly, and the maintenance of the house would have to be subsidized by the organization. Lilo and I did not want to compromise the future of H.O.M.E. with very large mortgage payments for years to come, we wanted to have no debt and find enough cash (some Board members called us 'the Bohemians' for not believing in debts.) I told Lilo our only chance would be to find one or two very generous "mécènes" – that is, benefactors.

Our very good friends Ed and Susan Panian introduced us to Bill and Mickey Murray, Mickey is Susan's sister. Lilo and I went to New York to meet Bill and Mickey for the first time. They invited us to a local restaurant, and we talked. At the end of the evening, Bill handed me a check for \$50,000 to pay for a feasibility study of our project, asking us to let them know of our progress.

We hired a consultant couple, went to an architect with our project, and started a special fundraising campaign. I will always remember the 'power breakfast' Lilo and I had with Bill after he stayed in our house while passing through Chicago. We told him about our concern raising enough money for the construction, and he told us, "Don't worry, we will build that house." We believed him and shook hands. He also told us he would not be a 'maintenance man', which was fair. We asked him to be on our Board of Directors for a couple of years and he accepted. Bill funded and starred in a promotional short film about H.O.M.E. and the future Nathalie Salmon House, directed by Loretta Smith.

We won a \$500,000 grant award for an innovative concept of housing development toward low-income elderly in an Intergenerational setting, from the State of Illinois. We received a substantial no-interest, forgivable loan from the City of Chicago. Many donors sent us small and large donations for this project. We had a fundraising event for the premiere viewing of a film featuring Bill Murray with Bill's presence and presentation. Bill and Mickey ended up being extremely generous toward the building's construction.

The Nathalie Salmon House was inaugurated 30 years ago in presence of Mayor Richard Dailey, Alderman Joe Moore, Bill and Mickey Murray, the H.O.M.E. Board members, and many of our friends and donors. Jerry Duffy who was the Treasurer of the organization at the time, mentioned to me that the NHS has been built thanks to 3 Irishmen: Bill Murray, Mayor Richard Dailey, and Gene Callahan who was the President of the Board of Directors and worked tirelessly toward the completion of the house.

I believe that Lilo and Nathalie are somehow with us for this celebration. I am quite confident that the Nathalie Salmon House will continue to be a beacon of friendship, peace, and community living for years to come, under the competent guidance of Gail Schechter and the Board of Directors of H.O.M.E.

