



**HISTORY OF TEMPLE BETH SHALOM  
AND JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER  
OF THE NORTHWEST VALLEY  
SUN CITY, ARIZONA  
1969 – 1999**

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Special thanks to  
Irving Pallin M.D.  
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## CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	3
Introduction	5
Chapter 1     The First Jews of Sun City (by Leah S. Glaser)	7
Chapter 2     The Origins of Temple Beth Shalom, 1969	12
Chapter 3     Formative Years, 1970 - 72	19
Chapter 4     Towards a Building, 1973 - 77	25
Chapter 5     Building Dedication and Bar Mitzvah, 1978 - 82	37
Chapter 6     Transition and Growth, 1983 - 89	47
Chapter 7     The Temple in "Mature" Sun City, 1990 - Present	53
Conclusion	63
Appendix A    Board Presidents of Temple Beth Shalom	67
Appendix B    Sisterhood Presidents	68
Appendix C    Brotherhood Presidents	69



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the fall of 1997, Alfred Neumann first approached me about the idea of writing a history of Temple Beth Shalom. We spoke in between classes sponsored at the Temple by the Bureau of Jewish Education. While sipping a cup of coffee, he detailed for me what this project warranted. Since the break was short, we could not go into specifics. He said the Board had received a donor commitment to underwrite the project.

The matter rested there until April 1998, when I joined Fred, Irv Pallin, Beth Shalom President Sandy Sunkin, and Archivist Earl Schatz at a meeting to discuss the project in greater detail. At this time, some anecdotes were shared about the synagogue's past. Some of these were very good and I wished we had a tape recorder to preserve them. Eventually, we did get these nuggets and other gems on cassette for future use.

Irv had generously made a donation to the board for the research to begin. He had been involved with the Temple for almost its entire existence. Irv served as president (1976-78) when the sanctuary was constructed. After his terms, he served on innumerable committees and later was the second president of the Brotherhood (1981-82). He had written his own history of the congregation in 1978. Others had left their written accounts of the Temple as well. All of these documents were consulted for this study. As the Temple's 30th anniversary approached, many felt it was a propitious time to bring the Beth Shalom story to date.

Earl said there was an entire file cabinet full of papers dating back to 1969. This sounded like a good start to me. For a number of years, the Temple's indefatigable archivists had made copies of documents on acid-free paper and stored them in a metal cabinet in back of the auditorium. A complete set of these papers was also sent off regularly to the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio. I was astonished to find how well many of the early years had been preserved. To this day, one wonders how they kept all of these documents intact before storage was possible in the synagogue. Earl had perused some of these papers and was skeptical about their value in doing a comprehensive history. These papers, painstakingly collected for nearly 30 years, were extremely important in the creation of the present study. In the absence of old-fashioned newspaper "morgues" for articles, the files were a major source for references. Hundreds of musty old clippings from 1969 onward had stood the test of time, movement, and the elements. I am grateful to the Temple's archivists who contributed to this collection.

The Board and Annual Meeting minutes were also meticulously kept and conveyed a sense of the times. I commend all of those faithful Board recording secretaries who took the notes, typed them up, and maintained the minutes over three decades; Their labors were invaluable, and I applaud them all. With these items and a sequential plan, we commenced the research in May 1998.

At the start, I suggested we examine the roots of the Jewish community in Sun City. Several of Irv Pallin's anecdotes underscored the need for the full story to be told. With this in mind, I wanted to identify a graduate student who could concentrate on this topic. I spoke with Beth Luey, public history lecturer in the Department of History at Arizona State University. She recommended Leah Glaser, a history doctoral candidate, who had written her masters thesis on the ethnic communities of Guadalupe, Arizona. Leah understood the possibilities involved in this study and quickly agreed to explore the foundation of the Jewish community in Sun City. Aside from Beth Shalom sources, Leah interviewed persons and examined documents from both Congregation Beth Emeth and the Sun Cities Area Historical Society. She did a fine job, and Leah's findings are reported herein as a separate chapter. My salute to Sandy Sunkin who quickly secured the requisite Board support for Leah's participation in the project .

From the onset, it was agreed I would have access to whatever documents and related materials could be found. Earl Schatz kindly contacted the American Jewish Archives (AJA) to see if they had any items. Sandy put an announcement in *The Shofar* and asked members to bring forward any items

or memorabilia for copying. A number of members agreed to share their scrapbooks and other memorabilia noted in this project.

I want to extend my appreciation to those who graciously consented to personal interviews: Beatrice Bernstein, Sidney Breslow, Gladys Burstiner, Bunnie Englander, Daniel Englander, Rabbi Frederick Greenspahn, Anna Gallia, Joseph Harris, Max Kelter, the late Rabbi Bernard Kligfeld, the late Julia Kligfeld, Irene Kubisa, Abraham Meth, Irving Pallin, Irving Raihill, Muriel Rose, Sanford Sunkin, and Saul Wexler. Special mention also must go to Albert Plotkin, Rabbi Emeritus at Temple Beth Israel in Phoenix. He shared many recollections of Beth Shalom at a memorable lunch with Leah and myself. As questions arose and/or events needed to be corroborated, many other individuals were consulted: Rabbi Arthur Abrams, Claire Abrams, Gladys Gordon, Dr. Lillian Greenstein, Henrietta Fine, Gary Himler, and Florence Sunkin. Another thank you goes to Phyllis Street, president of the Sun Cities Area Historical Association. She made available to Leah many important documents/materials related to the creation of Sun City and the early Jewish community. Also helpful was Melanie Sturgeon, deputy state archivist, who wrote the pioneering work on Sun City's history and provided guidance on sources available in the State Capital History and Archives Division. Her colleague, librarian Donald Langlois cheerfully obtained for me rolls of microfilm and bound volumes of area newspapers.

As research drew to a close, discovery was made of many documents filed with the Pacific Southwest Council office of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC). Rabbi Alice Dubinsky kindly consented to examination of these papers and permitted their duplication. My thanks to Danna Joselowitz for her assistance in this process during an afternoon visit in Los Angeles. Just prior to my contact with UAHC, the regional office had sent their files from Beth Shalom's early years to the AJA. Dorothy Smith at the Archives in Cincinnati was a genuine champ. She went beyond the call of duty in going through these many unprocessed, large boxes and identified the Beth Shalom file. She quickly made copies of these papers and dispatched them to me. These collections included personal correspondence from Rabbi Albert Michels and other significant insights into the congregation's past.

At Arizona State University, Dr. Joel Gereboff, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, offered encouragement to me on this project from its inception. He made helpful suggestions on various issues raised during the course of the research. I also want to thank Patricia Friedman, the department's administrative assistant for her care and guidance with computer software issues. Jeremy Bergin of the ASU Computing Commons staff merits high praise as well. He was undaunted by the software conversion process and got the job done for me.

At the Temple, Irene Kubisa always gave her full cooperation when I asked for information requests, and they were many. She patiently put up with my copying needs and frequent phone calls.

Sandy Sunkin merits my gratitude for the friendship and assistance he provided at every step. He guided this entire project along during the time he was President and afterward. I also wish to thank President Dusty Rhodes for his continued support with the Board. Lastly, these members offered beneficial comments on the present draft: Rabbi Arthur Abrams, Sidney Breslow, Camille Forrest, Gladys Gordon, Babette Himler, Gary Himler, Herman Mandell, Alfred Neumann, Estelle Mailman, Morris Mailman, Irving Pallin, Muriel Rose, and Sandy Sunkin

Lastly, I want to thank one other senior citizen who went through this project with me: Elayne Rubinoff. Along with my late father, Martin Rubinoff, they were the co-producers at every step.

M.W.R.  
Phoenix, Arizona  
April 2000



## INTRODUCTION

When I first entered the Temple (Beth Shalom) I said to my wife, 'look at all those old people.' Those so called old people who are from 50 to perhaps 85 years old (average of 62) are the most doers and shakers that I'm [sic] ever come across.

Robert Hart<sup>1</sup>

Created in 1960, the retirement community of Sun City, Arizona consisted of 4,000 people in 1963. This fact alone was a source of amazement for observers. Sun City had been created only 36 months earlier--in the arid desert, 20 miles from downtown Phoenix. A product of post-World War II affluence and confidence, the community was advertised as a kingdom of green golf courses, immaculate streets, and lush lawns. The look was definitely western, but the mile-wide street grids and new tract homes had the unmistakable and familiar look of Levittown, Shaker Heights, Niles, and many other modest, middle American suburbs from the 1950s.

Sun City's environs had been carefully prepared and promoted. The community turned into a magnet for many transplanted East Coast and Middle Western retirees who sought to enjoy the manicured desert oasis fashioned by developer and New York Yankees owner Del E. Webb. Among those who established residences here were Jews.

Some of Sun City's early Jews simply moved from Phoenix proper into the new community. William and Mary Bloyed were one such couple. Joining the post-war influx to Phoenix in 1950, they had been members of Temple Beth Israel. When they decided to retire to Sun City in 1965, they remained as members of the Phoenix congregation. However, an equal motivation directed the Bloyeds in Sun City. Mary said, "...if we live here [sic] we should help support and associate with our own people."<sup>2</sup>

Many more Jews were like Aaron Papermaster. The son of a rabbi in North Dakota, he was a dentist. Papermaster and his wife drove up and down the coast of California in search of a place to retire in 1963. Papermaster recounted his story 19 years later:

Our arrival in Sun City was by accident on our way home. We had never heard of Sun City. We were looking for a motel and someone suggested the King's Inn. Seeing this beautiful little city and having lived in a small community all our lives, we decided to investigate. We stopped to admire three homes and each time someone came out and invited us in for coffee. I said, "This is [sic] my kind of people."

The comfortably built ranch homes, carefully trimmed with winter lawns, and hospitality won the day. The Papermasters put down a contract for a home.<sup>3</sup>

The Bloyeds and Papermasters were typical as Sun City grew in the 1960s. They were Jews seeking a new home. As time passed, they were also people anxious to create a brand-new Jewish community--"a sunbelt diaspora."<sup>4</sup> Unknowingly, they and their fellow Jews in Sun City were about to embark upon a new phenomenon: establishment of the first modern association exclusively for Jewish seniors and retirees. Equally significant, they helped to create an "extended family" for themselves. This would be a unique support system to help one another: culturally, socially and spiritually. This study shall examine the history of Temple Beth Shalom and the Jewish Community Center in Sun City. The emphasis will be placed on how this community has met the specific needs of its members and friends.

An evaluation will be made on how the Temple has resolved many issues for retirees and seniors. Its many programs have run the gamut: religious services, holiday celebrations, social events, service organizations, education, and community action.

Attention will focus on the dynamics of mature people who are active in their middle and senior years. The success of the Temple speaks to new Jewish social development patterns in the latter part of the twentieth century. These achievements point to a significant community accomplishment. More importantly, they also point out viable alternatives for Jews, regardless of their age, at the dawn of a new millennium.

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NOTE: Items referenced as (TBS) refers to the Temple Beth Shalom Archives and (BSF/AJA) refers to Beth Shalom Files/American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

<sup>1</sup> Draft for UAHC Regional Seminar, Jan. 19, 1985, Your Retired Congregations Meeting, Their Needs and Utilizing Their Talents (BSF/UAHC Pacific Southwest Council, Los Angeles, Calif.).

<sup>2</sup> Mary Bloyed to Beth Shalom Congregation and Jewish Community Center, Dr. Pallin and Board Members, March 27, 1978.

<sup>3</sup> *News-Sun* (Sun City, Ariz.), Nov. 11, 1982.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Hirschl to Vicki Maher, May 11, 1988.

## CHAPTER 1 - THE FIRST JEWS OF SUN CITY

By Leah S. Glaser

In September 1964, twelve people gathered at the home of Sam and Stella Levy for High Holiday services. Two of Sun City's earliest residents, the Levys arrived in Sun City three years prior from New York City.<sup>1</sup> Six months later, nine people, named as officers and a Board of Directors, incorporated as the Jewish Congregation of Sun City on April 12, 1965. They identified their mission as providing "religious, educational, cultural and social activities, in accordance with General Principles within the Conservative movement of the Jewish religion, that will perpetuate the teachings and preserve Traditional Judaism."<sup>2</sup> By then, the group boasted 45 members and one Torah.<sup>3</sup>

The incorporators included Dr. Henry Fay, a Czech-born active podiatrist from Illinois as president and Sam Bassman, a former tailor from Des Moines, Iowa, as vice president. Joseph Eicove, a former barber from Denver, Colorado, served as treasurer with Frances Van Houten, a widow from the Bronx, New York, as Secretary. Jack Nouget, a tire dealer from Staten Island, New York, Thomas Sampson, a retired electrical engineer from Brooklyn, Esther Abramson from Cleveland, Ohio, Albert Harris, a retired auditor also from Cleveland, and Mark Linkner from Detroit, Michigan, served on the first Board of Directors. Van Houten, the Sampsons, the Abramsons, the Bassmans, the Eicoves, and the Levys had all been in Sun City since 1962, but one can surmise the recent arrival of the Fays and the others over the next two years served as a primary instigator to organizing a group for services. Fay continued to serve as the congregation's spiritual leader at weekly services where he would read Torah translations and provide sermons. Other members would participate in the service's activities as well. Like Sun City's other Jewish residents, the congregation served as one of many activities for its members. Fay also became Governor of the Kiwanis Southwest Region and Vice President of the Sun City Community Fund.<sup>4</sup>

### Sun City and "Active Retirement"

The Fays and Sun City's other early Jewish residents arrived as participants of a brand new twentieth century phenomenon called "active retirement." They also belonged to a trend of mass migration of Jews out of the northeast and midwest and "to the Golden Cities" such as Los Angeles, California, and Miami, Florida. Sun City served as one of the first age segregated retirement planned communities in the United States.

In her masters thesis, "It's a Paradise Town," Melanie Sturgeon documents how the Del Webb Development Company (DEVCO) adapted contemporary sociological theory about the importance of elderly involvement in meaningful activity during retirement into the marketing and development of Sun City. Retirement became more popular after the prosperous 1920s, when it could serve as a convenient antidote to unemployment in depressed times. The passage of the Social Security Act, one of the key pieces of legislation in Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, marked retirement at age 65 and furthered the trend, providing an alternative income and individual support for older people. In addition, companies increased their contributions to pension plans.<sup>5</sup> As more senior citizens of all social, economic, and religious backgrounds made the transition from work to retirement, marketers and entrepreneurs looked to capitalize on this new group of people with both time and money as early as the 1920s.

Beginning in the 1940s and 50s, sociologists began to study the aging process in response to both longer life expectancies and the retirement phenomenon. By the 1960s, retirement was a hot commodity. The Del Webb Company hired prominent scholars, like sociologist Robert Havighurst who believed activity considerably eased the aging and retirement process. Theorists also surmised how migration served as a method of adjustment.<sup>6</sup> DEVCO marketed this idea in full page advertisements throughout national publications like the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, *Look*, *Readers*

*Digest*, and *Ladies Home Journal*. One of the most effective promotions emerged on the radio in the form of this memorable and catchy jingle:

Wake up and live in Sun City  
For an active new way of life  
Wake up and live in Sun City  
Mr. Senior Citizen and wife  
Don't let retirement get you down  
Be happy in Sun City  
It's a paradise town  
Wake up and live in Sun City  
Mr. Senior Citizen  
The best of your life Mr. Senior Citizen and Wife.<sup>7</sup>

### Jewish Retirees Arrive

DEVCO advertising suggested a plethora of facilities and commercial enterprises which might allow many senior citizens to exercise independence more so than in other living environments. In addition to the warm weather of Arizona's Salt River Valley, historian Deborah Dash Moore, in her book, To the Golden Cities, provides clues as to why Sun City may have attracted retiring Jewish people. At the same time retirement communities began to develop, American Jews, young and old, had begun a significant migration out of the northeast and upper midwest areas to places like Los Angeles, California, and Miami, Florida. Interestingly, Moore observes Jewish tradition does not require the young to care for the old.<sup>8</sup> However, both literature and practice run counter to Moore's assertion.

Furthermore, after World War II, northern communities began to change physically and demographically. American Jews grew restless after the war disrupted ties to their past world. Many felt pressure to carry on the security and survival of Judaism. Some simply sought a new start. The newer and cleaner cities of the south and the west appealed to many who wanted to start again. In addition, some had also become frustrated with the cold weather and followed family or friends to places like Miami, Los Angeles, and Phoenix. Frequently, whole neighborhoods resettled together. Miami's elderly Jewish population solidified between 1950 and 1965. In 1960, Miami's elderly population made up 28%, and only five years later their numbers increased to 38%. Miami Beach boasted several retirement residences.<sup>9</sup>

Proximity to the fast growing Phoenix metropolitan area, prior familiarity with central Arizona by those who had been stationed in the area during the war, as well as the lure of friends and family, provided additional reasons for choosing Sun City as a place to retire. Early Beth Shalom members Daniel and Bunnie Englander had enjoyed the Phoenix area when Lt. Colonel Englander had been stationed at Luke Air Force Base in the war years. Max and Irving Kelter, recently retired businessmen from Hastings-on-the-Hudson, New York, heard of Sun City while visiting a friend in Scottsdale. They brought their wives, Sarah and Dolly, out a year later after concluding they would rather tolerate Phoenix summers over New York winters. Sociologists cite the desire to live among a community of peers, a distance from children, support in times of illness, loneliness, and crisis, and promise of a free and easy lifestyle as motivations to move to retirement communities. Social Security amendments passed in 1968 and 1974, may also have encouraged people to retire independent of their families. DEVCO's best advertisers were its own residents who continually drew additional friends and family into the community. The company encouraged the activity and even provided free holiday and postcards to be mailed. Several members of Sun City's Jewish community learned of the retirement community this way.<sup>10</sup>

DEVCO launched Sun City's opening day on January 1, 1960. Sun City consisted of five model homes, a golf course, Olympic size pool, community center, shuffle Board, croquet, archery, creative

activity center, cooperative apartments, and commercial shopping area.<sup>11</sup> In 1960, Sun City had only 50 residents, but grew rapidly. Though the developers planned for 1600 residents, 7500 moved to the community by 1964, and 42,000 by 1977. About 54% of the first arrivals came from the West, 36% from North Central States, 6% from Northeast, and 3% from the South. Specifically, about 20% hailed from California, 17% from Arizona, and 10% from Illinois. About 85% of them were married, and claimed professional backgrounds as engineers, state and government employees, small business owners, publishers, and skilled personal service providers such as dentists, barbers and pharmacists. Sun City's first Jews reflected this profile.

By 1969, more people began coming to Sun City from the upper midwest. In 1970, 26% of the people were from the West, 15% from the Northeast, 10% from the South, and nearly half from the upper midwestern states. The population grew more affluent, and Sun City emerged less as a place for economical retirement and more closely resembled a resort town. Eventually residents gained more influence over the direction of their community beyond a company town vision. At the same time, they refused to incorporate as a municipality, feeling confident Del Webb provided most of the essential services without the hassle of local government.<sup>12</sup>

The retirees of Sun City expressed the feeling they had earned the right to a life of leisure and felt no obligation to become involved in activities outside of a social or recreational nature. Sturgeon notes how, before the rise of entrepreneurial communities like Sun City, "religious, fraternal, and union groups often sustained early retirement communities." However, Sun City residents hardly relied on the corporation to fulfill all their needs. Encouraged by DEVCO, they participated enthusiastically and intensely in these activities and group organizations. Many Sun City residents expressed their social concerns by participating in church initiated activities.<sup>13</sup>

#### Del Webb Company and the Jews

In its initial planning, the Del Webb Company anticipated the desire for religious worship and an obvious reluctance among older residents to travel to Phoenix each week. The company set aside lots for sale to religious groups to erect buildings.<sup>14</sup> Emil Fischer dedicated his 1987 publication, "Churches of the Sun Cities," to "the people, who after retirement, dared to leave old ties, establish new homes, make new friends, and build new churches, thereby demonstrating a deep seated faith that goodness will ultimately prevail."<sup>15</sup> However, congregations had to purchase their own lots and build their own structures.

Religious congregations in Sun City faced different concerns than more traditional communities in designing their respective structures. Membership rolls had to accommodate seasonal residents. In addition, space requirements for various activities had to relate to congregations' specific uses. For example, large meeting halls, discussion rooms, and libraries replaced Sunday schools for children.<sup>16</sup>

The Phoenix area boasted several options for Jewish worship including Temple Beth Israel, Beth El Congregation, and programs at the Jewish Community Center. However, the twelve-mile drive from the Del Webb Company's new planned retirement community proved inconvenient. Besides, most retirees sought a local congregation similar to the one they had left. Sun City had appealed to many residents because they did not have to rely on the noise and confusion of a city. The planned retirement community provided essential needs in a neat and organized atmosphere of relaxation and contentment.<sup>17</sup>

After incorporation as one of Sun City's first religious congregations, the Del Webb offices would direct new Jewish residents to congregation members. Later on, congregants Max Kelter and Harry Zimmerman even visited homes of people with Jewish last names to introduce possible members to the Sun City Jewish community.<sup>18</sup> People also found each other through word of mouth, through friends, and even, in at least one case, in front of the lox and bagels section of the supermarket.<sup>19</sup>

The Sun City Jewish Congregation held all meetings and services at the Recreation Center at 10725 Oakmont Drive and later at the Town Hall. In October 1965, the Jewish Community of Sun City

established a building fund, but the process of erecting a permanent structure for Jewish worship would take years of hard work and fund-raising. They opened their services to all, but asked for voluntary donations in lieu of charging fees to non-members. The donations often yielded great success, most offering over \$50. At first, for the high holidays and Passover, the congregation traveled to Circle City in Wickenburg, a "Workmen's Circle" founded community.<sup>20</sup> Under the direction of President Max Kelter, the congregation held its first seder in Sun City at the Melody Lane restaurant about 1966 with 89 attendees. Kelter arranged cooking instructions for the kitchen workers, recruited Jewish residents through the phone book for dinner, and solicited Haggadahs from a local supermarket chain. Since then, the Sun City Jewish community held all holiday services in Sun City and Sun City West.

Meanwhile, Sun City's new arrivals from the midwest and after 1965 included people from different socio-economic and varying religious backgrounds. Many of the newer Jewish arrivals had backgrounds in Reform Judaism. By 1969, Sun City's Jewish population had grown too large and diverse for one congregation to accommodate all of those conflicting views. The Jewish Congregation of Sun City split in two: the more traditional Congregation Beth Emeth continued under the guidance of Henry Fay and the Reform Temple Beth Shalom with direction from Aaron Papermaster. Both would compete for the membership of new arrivals over the next several years, but the congregations kept close ties to one another through personal connections and as part of the greater Jewish community.

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<sup>1</sup> Sun City Homeowners Association Directory, 1961, Sun City Area Historical Society

<sup>2</sup> Certificate of Incorporation, Articles of Incorporation, "Jewish Congregation of Sun City," Arizona Corporation Commission, Phoenix, Ariz.

<sup>3</sup> Burstiner, Gladys, "History of the Jewish Community of the Sun Cities."

<sup>4</sup> Sun City Homeowners Association Directory, 1961, Sun City Area Historical Society, *Youngtown Record-Sun City Sun Citizen*, 1968-69

<sup>5</sup> Sturgeon, Melanie I., "It's a Paradise Town: The Marketing and Development of Sun City, Arizona." M.A. thesis, Arizona State University 1992, pgs 2,8.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pg 28.

<sup>7</sup> Freeman, Jane and Sanberg, Glenn, Jubilee: The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Sun City, Arizona (Phoenix: COL Press, 1984), pg. 243.

<sup>8</sup> Moore, Deborah Dash, To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Dream in Miami and L.A. (New York: Free Press, 1994), pg.39

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pg. 41.

<sup>10</sup> Op. Cit., Sturgeon, pg. 16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>12</sup> When Del Webb pulled out of Sun City in 1978, Maricopa County took over Sun City Services. Ibid., pgs. 1, 89; Findley, Jon M., Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940 (Berkeley: University of California Press), pgs. 160-213.

<sup>13</sup> Op. Cit., Sturgeon, pgs. 54, 128.

<sup>14</sup> Fischer, Emil C., "Churches for the Sun Cities" (Sun City, Ariz.: Sun City Historical Society, 1987), pg. 5; Op.Cit., Freeman.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pg. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pg. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Op. Cit., pgs. 193-204.

<sup>18</sup> Max Kelter interview, April 15, 1999 (Sun City, Ariz).

<sup>19</sup> Gladys Burstiner interview, October 23, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz).

<sup>20</sup> The Western Circle (*Der Arbeiter Ring*) was created in 1892 by Jewish immigrant workers with socialistic ideological beliefs. By 1900, the national body served as a secular fraternal and service organization that continued to cultivate Yiddish culture and intellectualism. Irving Howe characterized

the Workmen's Circle as reflective of the Jewish immigrants gradual assimilation and success in American society, while clinging to their sentiment of political and cultural traditions. Irving Howe with Kenneth Libo, World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976, pgs. 357-359.

## CHAPTER 2 - THE ORIGINS OF TEMPLE BETH SHALOM, 1969

Nine years after its creation, founding member Mary Bloyed wrote about the impetus to create a new congregation for Jews in Sun City.

Dr. [Henry] Fay asked us to come to a handful of jews [sic] that met in a dark dreary room at the Fairway Center. He always said he was not a Rabbi [sic] but just a spiritual leader trying to keep the few jews [sic] that were here at that time together. After services, which were in the orthodox manner and were sad and hard to understand, he asked how we liked the get-together. They had no name, the room was given to them free of charge. I said to him we jews-[sic] are deserving of a house of our own, we will work for it by spreading the word around. The answer was what to do [sic] we need it for when we die we will be sent back to where we came from.<sup>1</sup>

On April 24, 1969, approximately 30 persons gathered at the home of Aaron Papermaster, 10309 Cumberland Drive in Sun City. According to one newspaper account, the purpose of the meeting was to create a Reform congregation for Sun City.

### A Fast Start

Archival evidence suggests Papermaster and his fellow congregation founders had devised a well-developed plan. Within two weeks time, various committees had been appointed, by-laws were drawn up, membership guidelines were established, and the name, "Beth Shalom," was proposed for consideration.<sup>2</sup> Other essential details were discussed during a meeting of twelve people at the Papermaster home. These included a report on congregation use of the Town Hall Center in Peoria, a modest 1969 budget of \$5000, and a request for a slate of officers to be nominated at a May 16 Annual Meeting--only three days off.<sup>3</sup>

### Congregation Beth Shalom Begins

On May 16, and with little surprise, Papermaster, who had been serving as temporary chair, was elected president. The election also confirmed the following in office: first vice president, Max Schaffer; second vice president, Dr. Harry Shapiro; secretary, Harry Zimmerman; treasurer, William Bloyed; and directors, Esther Bassman, Maxwell Black, David Fine, Benjamin Gould, Max Kelter, and Nathan Kremen.<sup>4</sup>

### Board Member Elected in Long Island

Beth Shalom would achieve many "firsts" in 1969. One which stands out was the election of Benjamin Gould to the Board. He and his wife were in the process of moving from Great Neck, N.Y., to Sun City in a matter of weeks. He wrote Papermaster on May 6 "about the possibilities of organizing a reform [sic] group." Gould was delighted about the efforts of the new congregation. He asked Papermaster, "Count us in as members." This was all Papermaster and the others needed. Gould was elected Board member in absentia and arrived in Arizona at the end of June. He was told annual membership dues would be \$50.<sup>5</sup>



### The First Board Acts

The newly elected Board met for the first time on the morning of June 1 at the Zimmerman home. A motion was made by Zimmerman to hold a congregational dinner at Sir George's restaurant on June 20 (\$2.25 per person). Kremen moved to have a cabinet built to house the anticipated Torahs.<sup>6</sup>

Of interest, Max Kelter moved to have the congregation observe two days for Rosh Hashanah. Though it was unusual for a Reform Temple to adopt a practice more common to a Conservative congregation, this motion carried but with some apparent reservations.<sup>7</sup>

At the Board meeting on June 20, Kelter amended his original motion to observe Rosh Hashanah for only one day, but with a caveat, "if the members wish to be together for a second day that they may do so." This two-day New Years observance would distinguish Beth Shalom from its sister Reform Temples, and this tradition has been maintained for 30 years.

At this second meeting, the Board also resolved to pay all bills incurred to date. Stationery and receipt books were also ordered. A significant presentation was made by Jerome Froimson, past president of Temple Solel in Scottsdale. He reviewed Beth Shalom's Articles of Incorporation. Though this produced a "lively discussion," the Board members agreed to sign the articles.<sup>8</sup>

### Rabbinical Services

From its outset, Beth Shalom wanted a rabbi. On May 13, the working group made the goal of having a rabbi at least, "every other Friday." There was no mention as to what the Temple would do on the alternate weeks. The amount of \$3,500 was discussed as the funds necessary to achieve such rabbinical services. At the June 20 meeting, David L. Caplan, Director of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) spoke to the Board about what services and advice his organization could furnish. He discussed the merits of student rabbis vis-a-vis an ordained rabbi. The Board asked Caplan if UAHC could identify a rabbi looking for retirement or semi-retirement, who could at once serve the needs of the congregation. Discussion focused on the need to obtain a Torah, and Caplan explained how to get one.<sup>9</sup>

### Incorporation

Beth Shalom was formally initiated into the Reform movement on June 20. At a dinner at Sir George's, Caplan was feted on the happy occasion. The group then went to the Town Hall Center for regular Friday services.<sup>10</sup> The Arizona Corporation Commission issued its certificate to Beth Shalom on June 25.<sup>11</sup> The paperwork was complete and the Board was in place. It was summertime in Arizona. A few months would pass before other new actions.

### High Holidays Preparation

By the time the Board reconvened on Sept. 28, a number of items had been addressed by Papermaster. A Torah had been obtained for the High Holidays, and a student rabbi had been hired to conduct the services. He also said music books had been ordered. Another agenda topic was the construction of a building, news of which had been made public as early as June.<sup>12</sup>

In advance of the holidays, donations had been made by a number of persons to cover essential items: books, flowers for each holiday, candle stick table, candle sticks, pulpit cover, wine cup, Israeli flag, American flag, Star of David for the Israeli flag, and an eagle for the American flag.<sup>13</sup>

### High Holidays

The first Reform High Holiday service was held at the Town Hall Center on Sept. 12. Fred Greenspahn, a student rabbi at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Los Angeles arrived to do the services.<sup>14</sup>

Then age 23, Greenspahn had been "assigned" to Sun City. He was "one of the top" students in his class.<sup>15</sup> Greenspahn at this young age had previously conducted services for junior congregation and youth groups in Southern California.

Though he was heavily preoccupied with his rabbinical studies, new wife, and future graduate education, Greenspahn did recall a particular image of Sun City. It would not have struck me as the kind of place where I would have liked to have lived. It was not a place where I expected to see Jews (older people on bikes and in golf carts)...I remember the green-painted pebbles on their lawns. Greenspahn had grown up in a heavily-populated Jewish neighborhood in Los Angeles. Most of the people he had known were from comfortable, if not upscale neighborhoods. There was a class gap of sorts in Sun City with the "kinds of Jews" he had known.<sup>16</sup>

My recollection is being introduced to their people, the ones identified [to me] did not come from those places (Beverly Hills, Skokie, Scarsdale). Papermaster came from Fargo, North Dakota. The only other one I remember was (Harry) Zimmerman, a pharmacist, who must have been about 50 or so. I did not see a lot of people there from New York or Chicago.<sup>17</sup>

For a 1960s student accustomed to the glitz enshrined in movies like *The Graduate*, the early Beth Shalom left an impression:

My suspicion is they were trying to get away from a bad climate...They were not the stereotypical doctors, lawyers,...they probably were not your wealthy businessmen. Not poor, but also not the elite. I wouldn't have used the word at the time, but Sun City was "goyish."<sup>18</sup>

Papermaster gave Greenspahn a whirlwind tour of Phoenix. He vaguely remembered how Camelback Mountain was pointed out as a landmark. He was housed in a Sun City motel, and his meals were provided in members' homes.

The services were held at the Town Hall Center. Blanche Schaffer blessed the Sabbath candles and Sam Bassman blessed the wine. The honor of blowing the Shofar was reserved for President Papermaster.<sup>19</sup> Greenspahn's Rosh Hashanah Eve sermon was entitled, "Atoning With, Not For." He recalled, "It was an attempt to articulate what a congregation like that [of retirees and seniors] should be. I tried to talk about coming together without the [usual] congregational need for a religious school." He was impressed with the embryonic congregation of about 100-150 persons who crowded the room. Greenspahn added congregations usually come into existence to provide a religious school. This aside, "They still wanted a congregation. I said it was a wonderful thing they were doing."<sup>20</sup>

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#### ANECDOTAL INSERT

Prior to the services, Greenspahn met the group who were to hold the Torahs. He said, "One of them had a pacemaker. I remember the others saying, 'We're not going to make it through this thing.'<sup>21</sup>

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On Saturday, Greenspahn spoke on, "The Silence of Isaac." A staple of rabbinical sermonology, Greenspahn discussed this because, "it was the Torah portion for the day." However, in the Vietnam War era, the Rabbi-to-be put his own spin on it. He recalled:

I talked about how Abraham was pleased to kill his son for God...A direct illusion to Vietnam: Parents are always sacrificing their ideals for their own ideals. This was an opportunity for me too, as a member of the younger generation, to explain to the older generation what they were doing wrong.<sup>22</sup>

But, Greenspahn had slightly misjudged the Beth Shalom congregants:

I was arrogant. I expected all hell to break loose. Then, I'm getting all of these adoring looks. I wanted to get them all riled up. But they were not looking at me as parents, but as grandparents telling them how badly their children (my parents' generation) were raising their children.

The sermon and subsequent reaction was a "generation thing." Greenspahn concluded: "I hit the nail on the head for them. Grandparents and grandchildren have something in common. The middle generation can't get it right."<sup>23</sup>

For Yom Kippur, Greenspahn brought his wife along for the services. His *Kol Nidrei* sermon was appropriately entitled, "We Have Sinned." The next morning, he spoke on "Therefore Choose Life."<sup>24</sup>

Papermaster's strong control over affairs left an indelible impression:

He [Papermaster] was trying to run it. He was reliving his experiences from Fargo...People deferred to his energy...He told me to sing *Kol Nidrei* three times--It was not a part of my background. The reason I remember this is because it was hot.<sup>25</sup>

As reported in the press, Max Kelter chanted the *Kol Nidrei*.<sup>26</sup>

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#### ANECDOTAL INSERT

Greenspahn remembered Papermaster thought he read the *Kaddish* too fast. "It came to a head on Yom Kippur-- during the day. He sat behind me and while I'm reading away he recited the exact same words except more loudly and more slowly. It was going to be his way and I slowed down."<sup>27</sup>

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The early Beth Shalom gave a perspective to Greenspahn: "They were sweet people." However, he recalled, "They were not cosmopolitan people." They showered him with agreeable looks and after services with words of praise. He was a young, committed Jew in troubling times. In short, Greenspahn saw people between 60 and 80. He was a kid of 23: "It was *naches* for them."<sup>28</sup>

#### The First Torah

Somewhere between the June 20 initiation meeting and Rosh Hashanah, the Temple secured a Torah of its own. There was a story behind it:

When Libby Zimmerman's grandmother, Ethel Sudarksy, was to marry Rabbi Benjamin Papermaster, it was presented to her by her family. The Torah was brought to Grand Forks, North Dakota, in 1889, where Rabbi Papermaster had accepted a pulpit. It was used by the Congregation [sic] in Grand Forks for sixty years or more, and also was significantly used at the Bar Mitzvahs of David and Benjamin Papermaster, grandsons of Rabbi Papermaster and sons of Dr. and Mrs. Aaron A. Papermaster. In 1968 [sic] Dr. Papermaster brought it to Sun City, and when Beth Shalom was formed, it was the only Torah used in our services.<sup>29</sup>

Writing in 1987, Harry Zimmerman added more on the Papermaster Torah. He explained how his wife, Libby, was the granddaughter of Rabbi Papermaster. He added: "Dr. Papermaster went to Grand Fork [sic] and brought this Torah to Sun City and loaned it to Beth Shalom. Art [Aaron] Papermaster reclaimed the Torah because he wanted his son to have it."<sup>30</sup>

#### Lay Service Tradition

Beth Shalom established a schedule of regular Friday night services soon after the congregation was formed. In the first months, Papermaster conducted the services. He would later alternate as lay leader with Harry Zimmerman.<sup>31</sup>

The lay service tradition set a pattern which the Temple would follow for three decades, even after it hired an ordained rabbi for the fall and spring season. The members conducted a service throughout the summer for year-round Sun City worshippers.

In the fall, an array of special programs highlighted many of the Friday night services. The congregation publicized its weekly services in the *News-Sun* and *Sun Citizen*. Conspicuously present in these services were the founders and Board members. Women in particular were active participants in group readings, the choral group, and social activities.<sup>32</sup> One pulpit guest was Rabbi Phillip Jaffa, the octogenarian Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Beth Israel.<sup>33</sup>

#### Sisterhood

From among the founding members emerged the initial leadership for the Temple's Sisterhood. After the High Holidays, interested women met for an organizational luncheon at Howard Johnson's Restaurant. The first slate of officers elected were: Henrietta Fine, president; Rosila Quinlan, vice president; Dorothy Kelter, recording secretary; Libby Zimmerman, corresponding secretary; and Danne Ettinger, treasurer. During this meeting, Rosalie Thorner was appointed to study and present a set of by-laws for the Sisterhood's next meeting on Nov. 4.<sup>34</sup>

#### Year-End Ecumenicalism

Beth Shalom announced the first Friday night service in 1970 would feature the Rev. Howard Blackburn, Rector of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church. The seven-month-old congregation viewed Rev. Blackburn's sermon as a "rare honor." It represented a community acceptance by one of Sun City's leading religious figures.<sup>35</sup> This would bode well for the Temple's future.

<sup>1</sup> Mary Bloyed to Beth Shalom Congregation and Jewish Community Center, Dr. Pallin and Board Members, March 27, 1978, pg. 1 (TBS); Pallin, Irving, History of Congregation Beth Shalom/Report of Actions of the Board of Directors, 1978 (TBS), pg. 7. Dr. Fay was an active member of Congregation Beth Emeth and later served as a president of this synagogue. He later invited Beth Shalom to work with Beth Emeth in consecration of a section at Sunland Cemetery. This offer was turned down.

The services conducted by Fay were very basic. Irving Pallin recalled his visit to Fay's congregation at the end of 1968. The service was held on Coggins Drive. Present were about 20-25 persons, mostly women and elderly. "He [Fay] had a large crate which held a siddur and another crate for a record player. He used the record as needed. Someone else served as the chazzan." Irving Pallin interview, Oct. 29, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>2</sup> The original 29 were honored during the congregation's 13th anniversary celebration: Bas-Bar Mitzvah Celebration, Temple Beth Shalom and Jewish Community Center, Nov. 19, 1982 (TBS). Those named were: Sam and Esther Bassman, Maxwell and Sally Black, William and Mary Bloyed, Norman and Helen Coplon, David and Henrietta Fine, Benjamin and Dorothy Gould, Max and Sarah Kelter, Nathan and Alice Kremen, Aaron and Celia Papermaster, Max and Blanche Schaffer, Henry and Beatrice Shapiro, Betty Solomon, Mary Solomon, Jerome and Rosalie Thorner, Frances Van Houten, Harry and Libby Zimmerman.

Zimmerman, Harry, Original Membership, March 4, 1987 (TBS). He listed: Maxwell Black, Art [Aaron] and Celia Papermaster, Max and Sarah Kelter, Harry and Libby Zimmerman, William and Mary Bloyed, Nathan Kremen, Irving La Bear, Samuel and Estelle Gardner, and Danne Ettinger; *Ibid.*, Bloyed. The author added David and Henrietta Fine to the roster compiled by Zimmerman. Mary Bloyed to Beth Shalom Congregation and Jewish Community Center, Dr. Pallin and Board Members (TBS), March 27, 1978. *Ibid.*, Zimmerman, Harry, Original Membership. He listed: Maxwell Black, Arthur and Celia Papermaster, Mr. and Mrs. Max Kelter, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Zimmerman, William and Mary Bloyed, Nathan Kremen, Irving La Bear, Samuel and Estelle Gardner, Danne Ettinger; *Ibid.*, Bloyed. The author added Mrs. and Mrs. David Fine to the roster compiled by Zimmerman. *News-Sun*, April 30, 1969. Another date for the first meeting may have been April 23, 1969, according to Irving Pallin. *Op. Cit.*, Pallin, History, pgs. 1, 8 (TBS). In years to come, the congregation would celebrate April 14 as "Founders Day." Another source which cannot be corroborated by any other document lists the congregation's founding in late 1968, Wilson, Mary, Milestones of the Congregation Beth Shalom, 1977 (TBS).

<sup>3</sup> Minutes, Meeting of Various Committees, May 13, 1969.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes, Acting Board of Directors, May 16, 1969.

<sup>5</sup> Gould to Papermaster, May 6, 1969; June 17, 1969.

<sup>6</sup> Board Minutes, June 1, 1969.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Board Minutes, June 20, 1969.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *News-Sun*, n.d., June 1969.

<sup>11</sup> State of Arizona Corporation Commission, June 25, 1969.

<sup>12</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Board Minutes, Sept. 28, 1969.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Rabbi Frederick Greenspahn interview (Littleton, Colo.), August 12, 1998.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *News-Sun*, Sept. 3, 1969; Sept. 10, 1969; Sept. 19, 1969.

<sup>20</sup> Op. Cit., Greenspahn interview.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Op. Cit., *News-Sun*, Sept. 17, 1969.

<sup>25</sup> Op. Cit., Greenspahn interview.

<sup>26</sup> Op. Cit., *News-Sun*. Sept. 17, 1969.

<sup>27</sup> Op. Cit., Greenspahn interview.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., Greenspahn interview. Rabbi Greenspahn presently is a professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Denver.

<sup>29</sup> The Little Torah, December 1974 (TBS).

<sup>30</sup> Op. Cit., Zimmerman, Harry, Original Membership.

<sup>31</sup> Zimmerman, Harry, History, March 4, 1987 (TBS).

<sup>32</sup> Detailed notices from the *News-Sun* and *Sun Citizen* for Nov.-Dec. 1969 list: Sally Black, Danne Ettinger, Estelle Gardner, Dorothy Gould, Sarah Kelter, Mary Singer, Bernice Schaffer, Eva Salomon, and Libby Zimmerman. All of the aforementioned participated in services or special programs. In addition, many other women were hosts for the post-service Oneg Shabbat.

<sup>33</sup> *News-Sun*, Dec. 3, 1969; *Sun Citizen*, Dec. 3, 1969.

<sup>34</sup> *Sun Citizen*, Oct. 15, 1969; *News-Sun*, Oct. 15, 1969.

<sup>35</sup> *Sun Citizen*, Dec. 31, 1969.

### CHAPTER 3 - FORMATIVE YEARS, 1970-72

One year after the initial steering committee of 29 met and established the congregation, the Temple had a membership of 55. Its growth would be rapid for the next several years.

1969 - 30  
1970 - 55  
1971 - 104  
1972 - 150<sup>1</sup>

During this time, Beth Shalom would strengthen its financial position and would identify its needs for a permanent spiritual leader.

#### Lay Services Start 1970

The Temple continued Friday night lay services as 1970 began. In an ecumenical vein, the Rev. Howard Blackburn, Rector of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church was the guest speaker in early January.<sup>2</sup>

In the absence of a permanent rabbi, lay services continued and their conductors were well publicized in local papers. The congregants met at 8:15 p.m. in different rooms at the Town Hall Center. These services featured the participation of the members in blessing the candles, chanting Hebrew, responsive readings in English and preparation of the Oneg Shabbat.

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#### ANECDOTAL INSERT

We knew services were over when we could smell the coffee for the Oneg Shabbat. My husband (Bernie) used to fill the coffee maker in the ladies room. Ludwig Kramer would stay outside as a guard (He had been a soldier in the German army in World War I.). This was Judaism to the znth degree.

Muriel Rose<sup>3</sup>

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In its early publicity, the Temple was anxious to explain the justification for its existence. The congregation's membership in the Reform movement was oftentimes listed at the end of newspaper articles. Perhaps in answer to the question of why a second synagogue was needed for the relatively small number of Jews in Sun City, this response was offered: "Recognizing valid differences in orthodoxy, conservatism and reform, Beth Shalom welcomes all who wish to worship in harmony."<sup>4</sup>

A variety of topics marked services in these first months. Lay presentations were made on the Scriptures, Jewish communities in Germany, the Netherlands, and the U.S., and celebration of the seasonal secular and religious holidays.

#### Milestones and Holidays

A milestone was the dedication on Feb. 20 of the American and Israeli flags presented to Beth Shalom by the joint efforts of the Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A. and Valley of the Sun Post 94. The presentation was made by Post Commander Ted Rosenman and Women' Auxiliary President Rita Rosen.<sup>5</sup>

In the late winter, the Temple held a Saturday morning Purim service.<sup>6</sup> Later the same day, eighty-five participants celebrated the holiday with a "Dessert Party" of Hamantaschen and other treats.<sup>7</sup>

The Sisterhood's early fundraising efforts consisted of a bake sale at the Plaza del Sol shopping center on April 2.<sup>8</sup> The following month, a community-wide Passover Seder was held at the Town Hall Center.<sup>9</sup>

### Building Fund and By-Laws

The Temple convened its 2nd Annual Meeting at the Town Hall Center on April 10. One year earlier, intentions to build a separate Temple edifice had been announced in the *News-Sun*. Now the Board moved forward to this goal by establishment of a building fund. Later, at a special congregational meeting in November, the membership approved a governing constitution and by-laws for the Temple.<sup>10</sup>

### London Torah Presented

Later in April, the Temple was presented with a second Torah. The full-sized scroll was obtained on a permanent loan from the famous Westminster Synagogue in London, England. In 1964, the British synagogue received 1,564 scrolls from collections gathered by the Nazis in Prague. For the past 35 years, Westminster's Memorial Scrolls Committee had repaired some of these scrolls and supplied them to needy congregations around the world.<sup>11</sup> Newspaper sources reported the Torah might have been used in Czechoslovakia before World War II and was hidden by Christians from the Nazis during the war.<sup>12</sup>

The Torah itself was donated by the children and grandchildren of Mary Solomon and presented to the congregation. Rabbi Erwin L. Herman, director of the Pacific Southwest Council, UAHC, officiated at the consecration. These cheerful tidings aside, evidently, there were some misgivings about the quality of the Torah. Seven years after the consecration, Papermaster wrote Herman and expressed his "disappointment" with the scroll. He felt a better Torah could have been obtained on New York's Lower East Side at a lower cost. Additionally, he complained the words were difficult to read, the parchment was in poor condition, and the scroll had been unusable for two years. Herman's office expressed "surprise" about such discontent after so long a time. But the rabbi was "happy" to meet with Papermaster and others who were concerned about repairing the Torah. As it transpired, the two never met but Herman offered to "purchase it from you at the same price you paid for it." The rabbi suggested it might be more cost-effective to have the scroll repaired. In the end, Beth Shalom kept the Torah.<sup>13</sup>

### Land for a Building

On May 10, the Temple received encouraging information from DEVCO, about a 2.87 acre plot of land for possible construction use. The property was on 103rd Ave. near Cumberland. This was almost adjacent to the Papermaster residence. DEVCO initially wanted \$23,911, but finally reduced the price to \$15,000. A follow-up letter detailed the offer requirements: a 20% (\$3,000) of purchase price by May 24, escrow closure in 30 days, and a letter from a bank (a mortgage company of UAHC), which would demonstrate monies for completion of the building would be available within two years. While the offer would have allowed the congregation to act quickly on building construction, it was turned down.<sup>14</sup> Evidence for this rejection appears to be due to the Temple's modest financial resources for such a large endeavor and DEVCO's narrow window for action.

### Search for a Permanent Rabbi

When Beth Shalom convened for the High Holidays in 1970, student Rabbi Bernard Beliak served as spiritual leader. Salaried at \$3000 a year, he continued to serve the congregation through May 1971. He conducted Friday services on an alternate week basis. Rabbi Beliak left Sun City because of his impending marriage and plans for an extended stay in Israel.<sup>15</sup>

Following Friday services at the Town Center on April 16, 1971, the membership was convened for the Temple's Annual Meeting. Prior to the gathering, Papermaster resigned as president. Max Schaffer assumed this position and presided over an assembly where the major discussion focused on "to either engage or not engage the services of a Rabbi." Schaffer opened the topic and said the Board favored engaging a rabbi. Three types of rabbis were put forward to the members: (1) a student rabbi on a bi-



weekly basis, (2) an ordained rabbi on a monthly basis, and (3) a Reform, retired rabbi on a weekly basis, who would reside in Sun City.<sup>16</sup>

Evidently, the Temple's officers and Board were already pre-disposed towards the third option. Benjamin Gould, chair of the Budget and Finance Committee, disclosed how an ad had already been placed in the [New York] *Jewish Post and Opinion* "for the services of a Retired, Reformed [sic] Rabbi." This ad attracted approximately fifteen applicants.<sup>17</sup> Gould offered a motion: "That the Board of Trustees be empowered to engage a rabbi and to use its discretion as to the type of rabbi to engage." Max Kelter with Jack Nouget moved and seconded an amendment for this issue to be a secret ballot. The membership defeated the amendment and agreed to the original motion by a voice vote.<sup>18</sup> During the meeting, George Wirpel presented the idea for publication of a Temple bulletin. A motion by Sam Gardner authorized publication of such a newsletter on a monthly basis. Lastly, Nathan Kremen moved the congregation issue an honorarium to Rabbi Beliak in view of both his wedding and in appreciation for his past services.<sup>19</sup>

### Rabbi Michels Selected

Over the summer, the Board received applications from rabbis. Papermaster "was acquainted" with one applicant, Rabbi Albert A. Michels. According to a subsequent report to the Board, Papermaster said Michels was between 68 and 70 years old. Rabbi Albert Plotkin from Temple Beth Israel in Phoenix had given the Board "high praise" on Michels. John Goodman moved the Board offer the position to Michels and empowered Papermaster to handle the negotiations with the prospective rabbi.<sup>20</sup>

The Board made public its choice at a General Assembly Meeting in November. The search committee announced acceptance of an offer by Rabbi Albert Michels of Hot Springs, Arkansas. The rabbi, age 62, studied under the famed Rabbi Stephen S. Wise and was ordained at the Hebrew Union College in 1933. He held a bachelors degree from the University of Michigan and Ph.D. from Burton Seminary. Michels had previously served congregations in Natchez, Mississippi; Corsicana, Texas; and St. Petersburg, Florida. In addition, he had been an army chaplain in World War II. Released from the service in 1945, he went on to a position as a college Hillel director.<sup>21</sup>

The specifics of Michels' contract were outlined. He would conduct services for the congregation from September through June. Additionally, the rabbi would "conduct an educational or discussion class once a week at a convenient time." He would receive \$500 expense for moving to Sun City, \$200 for monthly housing allowance, and \$1,680 in non-taxable earnings until he reached the age of 65. The rabbi informed the Board he had rented a home on Camelot Circle and expected to be in the Beth Shalom pulpit for the service on Dec. 10, 1971.<sup>22</sup> The rabbi's wife, Helen, conducted the choir and played the organ during services. She also was an excellent pianist who performed classical music in many Beth Shalom and general Sun City programs for many years to come.<sup>23</sup>

### Winter Resident Membership Created

Metropolitan Phoenix's moderate climate had long made the area a haven for winter visitors. The Board created a new "Associate Member" category for such residents. They would be assessed dues of \$50 annually and accorded all privileges except the right to vote at membership meetings.<sup>24</sup>

### Michels Installed as Rabbi

The Temple celebrated the formal installation of Rabbi Michels with a special service on May 10. It was held at the Town Center on a Wednesday night. The program included participation by Phoenix-area rabbis and Sun City clergy: Rabbi Frederick Grosse, Temple Solel; Rabbi B. Charles Herring, Temple Beth Israel; Rabbi Benjamin Field, Phoenix Hebrew Academy and Lubovitch Seminary; Rabbi

Albert Plotkin, Temple Beth Israel and Rabbi Moshe Tutnauer, Beth El Congregation. The Sun City Ministerial Association was represented by Dr. G. Christie Swan, United Presbyterian Church. He was joined by the Rev. Howard Blackburn, St. Christopher's Episcopal Church. Other remarks were made by newly elected President Daniel Englander; Sisterhood President Helen Bogot; and Samuel Levy, representing Congregation Beth Emeth.<sup>25</sup>

#### Rabbi Chides the Del Webb Corp.

Before the end of 1972, Rabbi Michels expressed displeasure over Beth Shalom's lack of a permanent facility. He told the *Sun-Citizen*, "The Del Webb Corp. has not offered enough help in creative planning for congregations without buildings." He emphasized this was not a complaint about financial help--it was a question of where to find property zoned for religious organizations. He added how the Temple's meetings at the Fairway Center were inadequate. There was no office provided for the rabbi, and he had to meet with members in their homes.<sup>26</sup>

In a related vein, the Recreation Centers in Sun City announced a new policy on use of their buildings by religious organizations. Groups could only use such buildings as long as they "purchased land for the erection of a sanctuary." This new policy implied a direct threat to the congregation's existence if it did not act to please DEVCO. At the Annual Meeting, Gould presented a lengthy report which reflected his frustration in efforts to obtain a building site.<sup>27</sup>

In essence, Beth Shalom was on the horns of a dilemma. The small but steadily growing Temple faced the need to construct its own building. DEVCO was applying pressure for the congregation to erect a structure, but had not made any suitable land available for such construction to take place.

#### End of Second Year

The building issues aside, the congregation was off to an enthusiastic start as 1973 approached. The need to build a sanctuary was acute. The challenge for everyone involved would be how to meet it.

<sup>1</sup> Pallin, Irving, *A History of Congregation Beth Shalom, 1978* (TBS), pg. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *News-Sun* (Sun City, Ariz.), Dec. 31, 1969; *Sun-Citizen* (Sun City, Ariz.), Dec. 31, 1969; *News-Sun*, Jan. 14, 1970. The Rev. Blackburn made his church's parish hall available to Beth Shalom for High Holiday services in 1971.

<sup>3</sup> Muriel Rose interview, October 6, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>4</sup> *Sun Citizen*, Jan. 28, 1970; *News-Sun*, Feb. 4, 1970; *Sun Citizen*, Feb. 18, 1970; Op. Cit., Pallin, p. 7. The Temple donated \$100 a month for use of the recreation center. *Sun Citizen*, Jan. 21, 1970.

<sup>5</sup> *News-Sun*, Feb. 19, 1970; *Sun Citizen*, Feb. 19, 1970. Members who contributed to the flags were: Irving and Dorothy Kelter, Max and Sarah Kelter, William and Mary Bloyed and Frances Van Houten.

<sup>6</sup> *News-Sun*, March 16, 1970; *Sun Citizen*, March 18, 1970.

<sup>7</sup> *News-Sun*, March 25, 1970.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> *News-Sun*, April 15, 1970; *Sun Citizen*, April 15, 1970. Bloyed wrote the Seder was held at the Sun City Country Club. She and her husband donated 55 Haggadahs for use in the Seder.

<sup>10</sup> *News-Sun*, (n.d., June 1969); Op. Cit., Pallin, pg. 1. Later, George Wirpel sent out a special five-page flyer to members who protested 1972 by-laws changes. He consistently refers to by-laws which had been adopted in 1969. According to one source, Papermaster was re-elected president for a second term. However, poor health curtailed his involvement. Subsequently, Max Schaffer, Benjamin Gould and Harry Shapiro each served in this office for two month periods. Silver Anniversary Celebration of Temple Beth Shalom & Jewish Community Center, 1969-1994, Dec. 11, 1994 (TBS).

<sup>11</sup> Frank, Ben G., *A Travel Guide to Jewish Europe*, 2nd ed. (Gretna, La.: Pelican Books, 1996), pg. 137; Israelowitz, Oscar, *Guide to Jewish Europe*, 9th ed. (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Oscar Israelowitz, 1995), pg. 53.

<sup>12</sup> *News-Sun*, April 1, 1970; April 22, 1970; *Sun Citizen*, April 22, 1970; *Phoenix (Ariz.) Jewish News*, April 24, 1970.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*; Consecration of the Westminster Torah Scroll, April 24, 1970 (TBS). The donors also wanted to honor the memory of the late Isadore Solomon. These included: Aaron and Celia Papermaster, Betty Solomon of Sun City; Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Solomon of Minneapolis; Mr. and Mrs. Harry Henry of Chicago; and Patricia Henry of San Francisco. Papermaster to Herman, June 9, 1977; Mrs. Lester Steuart, Secretary/UABC to Papermaster, June 14, 1977; Herman to Papermaster, Aug. 8, 1977. (BSF/AJA).

<sup>14</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Pallin, pg. 7; Report of the Building Committee, May 19, 1970 (TBS). The committee was chaired by Benjamin Gould. His members included William Bloyed, Irving La Baer and David Fine. The committee "guessed" the cost for the structure would be \$66,000. This included: \$15,000 for land, \$41,000 for a 4,000 sq. ft. building and \$10,000 in furnishings. At the time, Beth Shalom's budget was under \$10,000 per year. The projected building would increase the budget to \$75,000. Four other church groups were interested in the location. Time was short and a mortgage was necessary. At the special Board meeting on May 20, Fine moved the action be "tabled for sometime in the future." This was adopted unanimously.

<sup>15</sup> Wilson, Mary, *History of Congregation Beth Shalom, 1968-1977*, pg. 1 (TBS); *Op. Cit.*, Pallin, pg. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of the 3rd Annual Meeting of Congregation Beth Shalom, April 16, 1971 (TBS), pg. 1. The verbal resignations of President Max Schaeffer, First Vice President Joseph Corwin and Trustee Samuel Gardner led to an emergency congregation meeting at the home of Daniel and Bunnie Englander on July 14, 1971. There were approximately 35 members present. Englander was subsequently elected president. Emergency Meeting Minutes, July 14, 1971.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pgs. 1-2. Mention was made about a resume from Rabbi Samuel Teitelbaum of Phoenix. This candidate had 43 years of experience and was also associate professor of sociology at an undisclosed institution.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 2

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, *Op. Cit.*, Wilson, pg. 1. Wirpel edited the newsletter from May 1971 through January 1973.

<sup>20</sup> Minutes, Board Meeting, Sept. 5, 1971; Minutes, Special Board Meeting, Sept. 26, 1971 (TBS).

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of General Assembly Meeting, Nov. 26, 1971; pg. 2. Program, Bar-Bas Mitzvah Celebration Temple Beth Shalom and Jewish Community Center, Nov. 19, 1982 (TBS).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 2; *News-Sun*, Jan. 7, 1978.

<sup>23</sup> Concert to Benefit the Center, Jan. 1978 (TBS). Mrs. Michels began her piano study at the age of four with a teacher from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. As a teenager, she became the first organist and choir director at Temple Beth Israel in Phoenix. She also appeared as a pianist with symphony orchestras in Arizona, Arkansas, and Colorado. Additionally, Mrs. Michels played the cello with the Sun City Orchestra.

<sup>24</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Pallin, pg. 9.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 9. The Michels were quickly appreciated by the Beth Shalom membership and officers. A year later, the Board raised the rabbi's salary by \$420, Mrs. Michels was compensated for her choir services, and the Board agreed to pay the couple's health insurance. *Sun Citizen*, May 3, 1972; *News-Sun*, May 5, 1972; Service of Installation for Albert A. Michels, M.H.L. [sic] Ph.D. as Rabbi of Congregation Beth Shalom, May 10, 1972 (TBS).

<sup>26</sup> *Sun Citizen*, Nov. 1, 1972.

<sup>27</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Pallin, pg. 2.

## CHAPTER 4 - TOWARDS A BUILDING, 1973-77

Beth Shalom continued to increase its membership, to expand programs, and to move towards building site acquisition at the start of 1973. The congregation was fortunate to attract good leaders who provided the drive and expertise to move forward on a wide agenda. Beth Shalom was served in these years by presidents Irving Raihill (1974-75) and Irving Pallin (1975-78). The building project was the dominant issue, but the congregation maintained the vigor which characterized its first years. The increased membership boded well for this critical period of time.

1973 - 172  
1974 - 193  
1975 - 207  
1976 - 363  
1977 - 432<sup>1</sup>

### At Last: Land for a Building

The need for a permanent home was the major concern of Lt. Col. Daniel Englander, USAF, who became president in July 1971. The Philadelphia native first visited Arizona in the 1940s and remembered the modest store-front synagogue services in Phoenix. At his request, the service transferred him from Colorado Springs to Luke Air Force Base in Feb. 1970. Both he and his wife, Bunnie, were under the minimum Sun City retirement age of 55. But they liked being close to the base and Sun City. Englander recalled his first encounter with Beth Shalom came by way of a sign posted at the Fairway Center which gave notice of a Jewish congregation meeting.<sup>2</sup>

Elected second vice president in May 1971, Englander became president upon Max Schaffer's resignation the following month. Joseph Corwin as first vice president was in line to succeed Schaffer, but declined the presidency.<sup>3</sup> Englander's resignation from the air force was effective in July: Thus he was free to accept the position.

The building fund was initially established in 1969, but it had collected very little in four years. DEVCO's intent to limit use of the recreation centers concerned all religious congregations in 1973. There was no malicious intent by DEVCO. They wanted the centers to be used for social and cultural activities.

The centers issue led to creation of a land purchase fund at the Annual Meeting in Nov. 1972. A resolution was unanimously adopted to purchase land for a site. At this time, the Beth Shalom treasury was reported at \$8,897.53. Board member Ben Gould was appointed to negotiate with DEVCO for a parcel of land. He reported upon his deep frustration with the company about a possible location. Sporadic communications dragged on for months. There was a delay during 1973 because areas were still being platted. One effort to purchase land from the Fountain of Life Lutheran Church was turned down.<sup>4</sup> The corporation had marked zoned areas with crosses for churches.<sup>5</sup> There had been no plans for synagogues. According to Englander: "Del Webb was not supportive." He believed, "They (DEVCO) were permissive and generally steered area Jews to the synagogues." All parties understood the urgency. "We were supposed to build within a year of getting a lot," said Englander. He added, "We just never knew what year."<sup>6</sup>

The impasse was eventually broken by Irving Pallin and Cy Rogers. In Nov. 1970, the Brooklyn-based Pallin had been recruited by Del Webb to head up the anesthesiology department at Boswell Hospital. He had access to the corporation's highest leadership. Now as first vice president (1973-75), he aggressively took up Beth Shalom's cause. Pallin remembered:

I went to Del Webb personally. We were very much annoyed. We could not purchase land where there were

crosses. He sent me to Fred Meeker. Ben Gould applied for two acres of land, instead of a six acre parcel. Gould's letter was returned (acceptable).

Meeker was uninterested in low profit, piece meal land sales. The corporation had six acres available at 101st at Alabama Avenues priced for \$47,000.<sup>7</sup> Meeker was disinclined to divide the parcel. But Pallin and Rogers pressed him.

Our people raised a fuss and we (eventually) took the smaller piece. I said to Meeker, 'We must have a piece of land. It was originally zoned for a hotel'. So he changed it to where we are now.

There was also the need for the congregation to raise money for the land. Pallin continued:

I told Meeker we could not raise so much money so quickly. He said, 'We do not change prices, but I'll do this for you. You can have a \$1.00 option for one year'.<sup>8</sup>

In Sept. 1974, Pallin reported to the Board on the negotiations and the need for a \$3,000 deposit to hold the land. Several weeks later, Meeker specified other terms. The purchase of 3.9 acres would cost \$23,747 plus \$2500 for landscaping. An additional \$12,000 was necessary if more landscaping was required. The congregation had one year to exercise this option at \$1.00. Several months passed, and then Board President Irving Raihill gave notice to the members about a special meeting to consider the option offer on March 23, 1975.<sup>9</sup> Oddly enough, the congregation would decide to buy adjacent land later.

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#### ANECDOTAL INSERT

The Meeker proposal ignited a lively debate at the special meeting. The members gather on a Sunday afternoon in the Lakeview Center to discuss the \$1.00 option. The meeting droned on for hours. As it was running late, Stephen Lewis pulled a dollar out of his wallet and waived it around for all to see. He said, 'Here's your dollar. Now, let's all go home.' Thus the Meeker offer was finally accepted.

Irving Pallin<sup>10</sup>

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The matter was far from over. The corporation had zoned the area across the street for a grocery market. Pallin said, "I raised the devil. So he (Meeker) changed it for residences."<sup>11</sup> In short, Beth Shalom's building site was created by Meeker's fiat with the stroke of his pen.

On April 26, 1975, the Board approved the contract with Meeker for \$1.00. They also agreed to erect a sign on the property which would identify it as the future sanctuary and home of Congregation Beth Shalom and the Jewish Community Center of Sun City. As if to underscore the need to act, Raihill said on May 18, the congregation would be denied use of the Sundial for High Holiday services in the fall. True to their agreement on construction, the Recreation Centers approved use of the Sundial for Friday services.<sup>12</sup> Another special congregation meeting on May 23 adopted a resolution to hire an architect at a cost of \$2,500.

### Building Fund Controversy and a Shakeup

Once the option and architectural design contracts were signed, the congregation had to establish a fundraising structure. A format for pledges and donations was approved by the Board on Aug. 31. At a special meeting on Sept. 26, Hyman Sapakie, chairman of fundraising and Norman Wigutoff, chairman of building construction, made a joint report. They proposed limitations on the building to be erected, "that can be financed, built, and equipped and furnished by the ensuing drive." This helped trigger a "rather turbulent" meeting which resulted in the resignations of both Sapakie and Wigutoff. Construction of a building was a major endeavor. It reminded many members of the seemingly endless drives they had financed in their former hometown synagogues. Some wanted a clearer picture of the costs. Others asked for the congregation to consider purchase of an existing facility in the area. Still, there were individuals who could not grasp how inactivity might jeopardize the congregation's future. Sapakie and Wigutoff formalized their resignations on Oct. 8, along with David Pinkas, chairman of special gifts.<sup>13</sup>

### Building Funds and Plans Begin Anew

The resignations of Sapakie, Wigutoff, and Pinkas created a short-term vacuum. After Friday services on Dec. 5, the Annual Meeting resulted in the election of Pallin as president. He quickly appointed Abraham Tamis as chairman of fundraising and Joseph Harris as chairman of the building construction.<sup>14</sup>

Tamis, a retired gynecologist from New York, originally accepted the fundraising chair on an "acting" basis. This was due to his belief that the job required a year-round effort, and he was at this time a six-months resident. Whatever his reservations, Tamis admirably filled the void and proved to be a phenomenally successful fundraiser.<sup>15</sup>

The new leadership team quickly swung into action during the Annual Meeting. A motion was passed to assess each member \$500 for the building fund. In addition, the congregation authorized up to \$100,000 for a mortgage loan, which was never exercised.<sup>16</sup> Upon Tamis' acceptance of the fundraising chair, Gertrude Pallin spoke up and said: "What are we waiting for? Let's start the contributions." This helped set the tone, and 68 members on the spot made combined pledges of \$32,727. This was a solid start towards the \$50,000 needed for the land purchase. The meeting was so long, a majority agreed to finish the agenda with a continuation on Jan. 28, 1976. Tamis wrote to each contributor and asked them to complete payment by March 1, 1976 or earlier. The congregation had to make the purchase before the April option deadline expired.<sup>17</sup>

### Early Fundraising: "No Longer Shrouded in Darkness"

Expectations were high as 1976 began. But inevitably, there were problems for Tamis and his committee. Harris was an electrical engineer from Akron, Ohio. An American citizen for decades, his voice always retained the lilted accent of his native Scotland. He recalled those heady days:

People were happy to construct the building. But the money did not come in as good [sic] as they expected. They originally plans drawn way beyond their means. They originally sought had \$500,000 and they only had near \$200,000. The lowest (construction) price came in at around \$300,000. It was still too much.<sup>18</sup>

On Feb. 18, 1976, Pallin wrote to members about a special meeting on March 5. The purpose for gathering was to purchase the land and hear more details about the construction.<sup>19</sup> A figure of \$250,000 was released for membership consideration.

Tamis revealed in April 1976 how the project would be accomplished. The 1975 Annual Meeting was Phase One to purchase the land for \$50,000. Those who contributed would be designated as "Pioneers of the Building Program." The planning for the facility and creation of a building oversight committee was Phase Two. Lastly, actual construction would be Phase 3. The total \$50,000 was collected by the end of February. Tamis acknowledged financial assistance from non-members as well. He wrote, the committee "envisions the road ahead as no longer shrouded in darkness." The land was officially purchased on March 21 and a sign was quickly erected. Construction bids were soon requested, and the congregation officially marked the occasion with a special Friday night service on April 2. Commemorative certificates were distributed to the "Pioneers" who made the land purchase possible. Members were urged to watch a large fundraising thermometer posted at Friday services each week.<sup>20</sup>

One obvious concern was the cost for the enterprise. The first figure was \$250,000 for the building. The first round of fundraising was targeted at \$150,000 to begin construction. This sum was available by the end of June. Several large donations and a \$50,000 loan put Beth Shalom over the mark. Tamis termed this "electrifying news" and called for members to contribute \$160,000 more to finish the building. At this point, the project was already \$10,000 over the original figure.<sup>21</sup>

#### Fundraising *Naches* and *Rachmones*

Fundraising continued nonstop over the summer. Many members continued vital activities to keep the congregation moving on all fronts: Everyday tasks were handled with aplomb. Saul Wexler developed the Memorial Booklet. Treasurer Herman Shirwo was responsible for bookkeeping. Joseph Harris commuted almost daily to Phoenix for consultations with the architect. The building enterprise was among the most meaningful public efforts in the lives of those who diligently plodded on with the effort.

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ANECDOTAL INSERT

A couple once came up to me and said they had a "granddaughter" problem and could not pay their Building Fund requirement in full (\$500). So we agreed they could pay \$50 a year for ten years. They only paid for one year. Later, they threw a 50th wedding anniversary for \$2,000-2,500.

Sidney Breslow<sup>22</sup>

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After the High Holidays, more plans and commitments were made. On Nov. 23, Tamis convened his committee at the Rostholder's home. The chair announced selection of Barker construction of Phoenix to build at \$249,000. The committee needed to raise an additional \$100,000 for furnishings and equipment.<sup>23</sup>

The actual groundbreaking date was delegated to Jack Roth. At this time, \$122,006 had been collected with pledges of \$46,285. To keep members focused on the immediate fundraising needs, the committee decided to delay the sales of dedications and memorializations.<sup>24</sup> Beth Shalom's leadership continuously made progress reports to the members. Approximately \$14,000 in pledges needed to be collected in early 1977. The fundraising committee established a working definition: a family unit was a single or couple. The congregation had some 171 such units and 20% or 35 units were determined unable to contribute the full \$500. This left the construction at approximately \$2,250 per unit. Only 31 units had contributed \$2,000. The committee concluded, "That leaves much for improvement."<sup>25</sup>

In a letter to members, Pallin expressed his disappointment, "that 31% of our membership have made no pledge at all and have contributed nothing to the proposed edifice."<sup>26</sup>

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ANECDOTAL INSERT

We acknowledge with appreciation, the generous gift of Bertha DeBois, who passed away on May 24, 1976. Bertha left the contents, and half of the sales price of her apartment to the Building Fund. The sale of the contents, beside kitchen equipment, amounted to \$886.67, all of which was turned over to the Building Fund. All the kitchen equipment which can be put to use in our Temple kitchen has been stored for such purpose. Other miscellaneous items will be sold at a special Building Fund table, at our Sisterhood meetings, all proceeds are for the Building Fund

Sept. 1976<sup>27</sup>

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As the year ended, the congregation received updates on the building at the Annual Meeting. A number of by-laws amendments were submitted for approval. These reflected normal housekeeping measures (notice of nominations, office succession, etc.) and the congregation's growth (expenditure limits). The incumbent officer slate was re-elected. The Sisterhood pledged \$10,000 to the Building Fund. Most importantly, Jack Roth, chairman of the public activities committee announced the formal groundbreaking would take place on Sunday, Jan. 9, 1977.<sup>28</sup>

Finally: Ground is Broken

So it was, almost nine years of dreams and many months of hard work culminated in a community-wide gathering at the building site on Jan. 9 at 2:00 p.m. It was a "cold, wintry day." Contemporary photos of the ceremony confirm participants wore heavy coats. Many men had on fedoras. This was quite unusual for Phoenix. But the weather could not detract from the purely joyous occasion. Members were advised to bring their own chairs since seats would only be available for guests.<sup>29</sup>



The program featured members and many dignitaries. After the salute to the flag, the tallis-adorned Rabbi Michels could barely contain his emotions. A makeshift platform was placed at the site and the contractor's trailer provided the backdrop. He proclaimed, "At last, we have a home. We no longer have to wander in the desert." His oratorical style was reminiscent of his mentor, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. With a deep baritone flourish and arms flung wide to accommodate his flock, Michels said, "We are now in our own home. The precincts of our own sanctuary."<sup>30</sup> It would take more than a year to build the actual structure, but this was a moment to treasure for those in attendance. The choir sang several psalms. Greetings were extended by Fred Meeker, president of DEVCO; Rev. Karl Tubesing, president of the Sun City Ministerial Alliance; Aubrey Grouskay, Executive Committee of the Phoenix Jewish Federation, and Rabbi Albert Plotkin of Temple Beth Israel. The featured speaker was Arizona Supreme Court Justice William Holohan.<sup>31</sup>

The actual groundbreaking was made in three designated groups. The designees wore gloves as they put their shovels into action. Enthusiastically, the ground was sufficiently broken. The choir chanted *Ein Kelohenu* and Rabbi Michel's benediction closed the program.<sup>32</sup>

### Cornerstone Laying

At the onset of the fundraising, hopes were high for the building completion by the 1977 High Holidays. Throughout 1977, the Board had to approve various projects: installation of the stained glass windows (\$3,000), construction of an Ark (\$5,900), and purchase of 400 chairs (\$1,200).<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, the cornerstone laying ceremonies provided the next hallmark in construction of the building. It was scheduled for Sunday, April 24. Selection of the date was no accident. It marked the 9th anniversary since the first group met at the Papermaster home to create Beth Shalom. Again, Rabbi Michels presided over the activities, the highlight of which was the presentation of materials to be placed in the cornerstone's repository. Twenty-two items detailing the history of Beth Shalom and Jewish organizations in Sun City were carefully placed in the cornerstone. The keynote address was made by David Bush, past president of the Phoenix Jewish Federation. The setting was somewhat makeshift: The electricity to operate the microphone was provided by Morris and Estelle Mailman's motorhome.<sup>34</sup>

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#### ANECDOTAL INSERT

During the remodeling in 1982, I saw men working. They had moved a safe from the cornerstone--the time capsule with documents. We discovered [sic] the drilling had destroyed all of the papers.

Sidney Breslow<sup>35</sup>

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### A Full Platter

Notwithstanding the building enterprise, the congregation continued many of the programs initiated in early years and established many more throughout the 1970s. These covered a gamut of activities: community service, cultural, educational, religious, and social. During the Yom Kippur War in Oct. 1973, a special Sun City-wide committee was established to collect funds for the United Jewish Appeal. The committee consisted of Aaron Papermaster, Harry Shapiro, Irving Raihill, Ben Gould, and Irving Alperson.<sup>36</sup> Through the 1970s, Beth Shalom members worked with Congregation Beth Emeth members on mutual endeavors. One of the unquestionable highlights was "The Yiddish Theater Review" directed by Edith Oxman, a Temple member. The script for the production was brought to the congregation by Irving and Lee Kimerling. Held at the Faith United Presbyterian Church, approximately two dozen members from both congregations performed an array of solos, duets, and ensembles numbers.<sup>37</sup>

The Sisterhood undertook a variety of projects. In Jan. 1973, the organization donated \$500 for construction of an ark.<sup>38</sup> An annual Sisterhood Sabbath was begun in May 1973. This program featured

a pre-service supper prepared by the members. The actual service was conducted by Sisterhood members. The only men who participated were Rabbi Michels and Board President Daniel Englander.<sup>39</sup> The organization consistently hosted dinner dances, guest speakers, fashion shows, bake/white elephant sales, and holiday parties.<sup>40</sup> One of the Sisterhood's long-lasting efforts was the donation of a new organ. Fundraising for the organ was the main goal of Sisterhood President Bunnie Englander. She recalled: "We used a second-hand organ. The old one squeaked. I was in the choir and got tired of it."<sup>41</sup>

During Beth Shalom's early years, members welcomed newcomers. There were informal occasions, which helped people acclimate to Sun City. Anne Raihill liked to host "Meet the Rabbi" and "Get Acquainted" gatherings. She would call upon Beth Shalom couples to join in a welcome to new residents. More than one member credits her leadership in maintaining a personal dimension to the Beth Shalom community. Lee Kimerling coordinated pre-Shabbat dinners. Members would bring items in pyrex dishes. Afterwards, Muriel Rose would sometimes play the piano and they would sing.<sup>42</sup> Then it was onto the service. Anne Raihill was dedicated to educational endeavors and worked to develop adult instruction classes for the congregation.

#### Another Torah Presented

Erich and Anna Gallia presented a Torah to the congregation on March 28, 1975. It had a unique history. After the turn of the century, the Gallia family commissioned a pair of Torahs to commemorate the births of their two sons. The scrolls were used at the family's synagogue in Vienna, Austria. Prior to *Kristallnacht*, the Torahs were spirited out of the Shul and kept at home. The family lost virtually all of their possessions when they emigrated from Nazi-occupied Austria. One scroll was packed in a hand-carried suitcase and taken to England. The family kept it from harm during the blitz. The scroll eventually came to the U.S. with Erich Gallia. The family had the Torah "rekoshered" and it eventually was brought to Arizona.<sup>43</sup>

#### Farewell to the Sundial

Building Chairman Joseph Harris provided oversight to the construction effort on a daily basis. If something appeared wrong, "I made them tear stuff out and make it right."

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#### ANECDOTAL INSERT

At the Bimah there was supposed to be steel [reinforcements] on each side. I saw the metal on the contractor's truck. They had to tear the wall down and insert the steel. The beams were then placed. It was an oversight not checked against the plans. It took 2-3 hours to do.

Joseph Harris<sup>44</sup>

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Without question, the move into the building was the major event of the late summer. In August, Harris said the new facility was "close to 80 percent complete." He expected the congregation to occupy the building by Sept. 1. The Sundial was used for final Friday night services in late August and early September. The still to be finished Sanctuary was ready for use at Rosh Hashanah on Sept. 12.

#### Gifts Acknowledged at Contested Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting on Dec. 5 revealed a fuller extent of gifts made to the new facility. One anonymous donor extended a \$36,000 interest-free loan to the congregation. Other gifts are detailed below:

Julius Cohen for the wood panel;

Anna Gallia for the Torah cover and candelabra;  
Samuel Oxman for the pulpit table construction;  
Ana Leonard for the portrait of Golda Meir;  
Joseph Goldstein for another Torah;  
Boris Smilove for the candle table and Torah cover holder; and  
William and Mary Bloyed for the "Tree of Life."

The Sisterhood's pledge of \$10,000 was made along with an additional \$10,000 for kitchen equipment.<sup>46</sup>

The Annual Meeting also had a controversial election. Irving Pallin broke tradition and ran for a third consecutive term. His nomination along with the remainder of the slate came from the Nomination Committee, chaired by Joseph Harris. Pallin's preceding two years had been arguably successful. But his style was not universally appreciated. Nathaniel Jampel nominated Daniel Englander from the floor. The former president accepted the nomination. Louis Ziemand, Abraham Tamis, and Mildred Sarafan spoke on behalf of Pallin. Jampel and Muriel Rose made the case for Englander. As it turned out, the members present in the room were about evenly divided between the two candidates. The use of proxies was hotly contested. Membership Chair Saul Wexler had voting authority to cast 65 votes. Some members contested the form which was used. Others were concerned about the integrity of the ballot counting process itself. In the end, Pallin defeated Englander by a margin of 220-145.<sup>47</sup>

Later in December, the Board met to consider Irving Raihill's motion to change the name from Congregation Beth Shalom to Congregation Beth Shalom and Jewish Community Center. The Board agreed to send the issue to the Constitution Committee for study.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pallin, Irving, A History of Congregation Beth Shalom, 1978 (TBS), pgs. 11, 12, 19, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Englander interview, Oct. 9, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Englander. In these first years, Beth Shalom permitted members to cast multiple proxies at the Annual Meeting. Schaffer's opposition to this practice was reportedly one reason for his early resignation. Saul Wexler interview, Oct. 9, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.). Corwin frequently served as the congregation's chazzan in these early years. Bea Pinkas to Annual Meeting, Dec. 9, 1981 (TBS).

<sup>4</sup> Op. Cit., Pallin, History, pgs. 11-12.

<sup>5</sup> Irving Pallin interview, Oct. 29, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>6</sup> Op. Cit., Englander interview.

<sup>7</sup> At one point, the Board considered a joint purchase of the land with the Masons. Nothing came from these discussions. Op. Cit., Pallin, History, pg. 2. Alternately, Beth Shalom was offered a more expensive plat near Union Hills. This was declined in part because development would take about four years. Op. Cit., Pallin interview. Aside from a building, there was talk about a merger of Beth Shalom with Congregation Beth Emeth. The conservative synagogue had no rabbi and like Beth Shalom, was in need of a building. Michels said the shul was "no different in any way other than their present loyalty to a leadership which understandably is not interested in relinquishing its power." Irving Raihill broached this idea with Michels. The rabbi thought it might be possible to accommodate both groups in the same edifice. He appreciated the prayer book differences and the prospect of two services going at one time. Mindful of the schisms from the late 1960s and his own preferences, Michels said, "I am not eager to try to fit into their image of what a kosher more orthodox than conservative style rabbi would be." The UAHC was amiable to the notion and suggested the merged entity to retain membership in the UAHC, United Synagogue of America or both. They advised Beth Shalom to give Beth Emeth a couple of officers. These discussions met with no success and both synagogues chose

to remain as separate entities. The causes for their split probably were as great in 1974-75 as they had been a decade earlier. Michels to Herman, May 24, 1974; Michels to Herman, April 16, 1975; Herman to Michels, April 29, 1975 (BSF/AJA); Op Cit., Pallin interview.

<sup>9</sup> Op. Cit., Pallin, History, pg. 13. A 2/3 vote of the members in person or by proxy was necessary under the by-laws for purchase of real estate. Raihill to Dear Member, March 5, 1975 (TBS).

The UAHC in Los Angeles expressed concern about the land location and size. The regional office dispatched National Board Member Don Millstone of Tucson to a meeting with Beth Shalom leaders. He expressed disappointment with a "less than choice" location. Ben Gould said, "people could not wait for other areas to be made available in a couple of years; because of their age, they wanted a building now." At this time, there was no agreement on whether or not to construct a separate sanctuary or a room to accommodate services. The UAHC concluded, "The members see this project more as a center with service usage,...more dance classes, card playing and arts and crafts, than worship." ELH (Erwin L. Herman) to Sun City File, March 10, 1975; Herman to Raihill, March 5, 1975; Herman to Myron Schoen, March 5, 1975 (BSF/AJA).

Papermaster cogently expressed a salient fact: "A majority of our congregation are over 65 years of age and are not inclined at this stage in their lives to donate large amounts of money for a building that they do not expect to occupy for many years. In other words [sic] it is going to be a job to get them to let loose of cash, especially with costs mounting daily." Papermaster to Schoen, Jan. 2, 1976 (BSF/AJA).

During this time, one unidentified congregant asked Michels to put forth what was labeled a "fascinating inquiry." This was a fundraising scheme to finance the new structure in one shot: To wit, the UAHC could ask each of its 1000 or so member congregations to loan \$100.00 to Beth Shalom over a period of time. In essence, this would be a "pass the plate" from coast to coast. This idea was quickly discouraged by Rabbi Herman in Los Angeles. He said such a fundraising device would "lead to chaos" among sister congregations eager to take advantage of other Temples. Moreover, he concluded, "...Beth Shalom is not a poverty group." Michels to Herman, March 29, 1975; Herman to Michels, April 9, 1975 (BSF/AJA). The UAHC did make a \$20,000 building loan available to Beth Shalom. Herman to Raihill, July 1, 1975 (BSF/AJA).

Actually, Michels was fairly pessimistic about what his congregation would do. He wrote privately, "I doubt if anything like the erection of the synagogue-center is going to start soon."

Op. Cit., Michels to Herman, April 16, 1975.

<sup>10</sup> Op. Cit., Pallin interview. Lewis was a former advertising account executive from New York. *Sun Citizen*, March 7, 1973.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pg. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Op. Cit., Pallin, History, pg. 2. Stanley M. Stein was selected as the architect. His early rendering of the proposed building was quickly used on informal congregation letterhead.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pgs. 2, 16; Pallin interview.

<sup>14</sup> Tamis to Morris and Estelle Mailman, Dec. 22, 1975. The revamped fundraising committee included: Morris Mailman, Celia Papermaster, Irving Raihill, Arthur Reich, Saul Rich, Joseph Rostholder, Jack Roth, Mildred Roth, Rose Shalet, Herman Shirwo, Shirley Solomon, Saul Wexler, and Harry Zimmerman.

<sup>15</sup> Florence Sunkin (Tamis' daughter) to author, June 23, 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Op. Cit., Pallin, History, pg. 3. The obligatory \$500 remained an issue until it was no longer a membership requirement (as of Jan. 1, 1996). However, the congregation "staunchly agreed no one should be denied admission to our religious services because of hardship." Pallin appointed a special committee to deal with such cases on a confidential basis. Irving Pallin to Fellow Congregants, n.d. (TBS). Beth Shalom never carried a bank mortgage. The fundraising committee kept the loan option open. Appeals for Temple members to complete the construction "in the black" were successful. "We

are prepared to borrow whatever funds are needed to have a building functional for the High Holy Days, but we hope the response to this appeal will mitigate or eliminate such action." Abraham Tamis and Joseph Rostholder, *An Appeal to the General Membership of Congregation Beth Shalom By the Building Fund Committee*, n.d. (TBS).

<sup>17</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Tamis to Morris; Pallin, *History*, pg 3; William and Mary Bloyed made a substantially large pledge at this time. "It was hard to get started [sic], thought we would get people more interested if we made a \$10,000 donation (which we cut corners on other causes that we might have donated to),... We donate towards a get-together for [sic] going out for celebrations...I suggested to donate money toward the building fund and have a game room,..." Mary Bloyed to Pallin, March 17, 1978 (TBS).

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Harris interview, Oct. 9, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.)

<sup>19</sup> Pallin to members, Feb. 18, 1976 (TBS).

<sup>20</sup> 1976 Business File (TBS); Pallin, *History*, pg. 3; Irving Pallin to Members and Friends, March 18, 1976. According to Tamis, there were 25 "beautiful churches" in Sun City at this time. He estimated the Jewish population to be under 1,000. Tamis to the Jewish Residents of Sun City, March 29, 1976; *Newsletter*, April 1976 (TBS).

<sup>21</sup> Building Fund Committee report, Abraham Tamis, Chairman, June 1976. The loan was offered by William and Mary Bloyed. It was made available to Beth Shalom, but was not acted upon. Tamis later wrote the loan was a generous offer which allowed Beth Shalom to move forward with the contractor. Tamis to Mary and Bill Bloyed, Oct. 14, 1977. Fundraising activities of all kinds were developed by the congregation. Beth Shalom began selling ads in the December 1975 newsletter. The editors were Abraham and Etta Weiss. Profits were donated to the Building Fund. Abe Weiss to President and Board of Directors, May 14, 1976 (TBS).

<sup>22</sup> Sidney Breslow interview, Oct. 8, 1978 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Building Fund, Nov. 24, 1976 (TBS).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* A delayed flyer to members revealed the short-term needs and projected costs. These included the ark (\$25,000), Ner Tamid (\$5,000), pulpit (\$2,000), baby grand piano (\$10,000), stained glass (12 need at \$1,500 each), library furnishings (\$4,000), office furnishings (\$7,500), etc.

<sup>25</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Tamis and Rostholder, *Appeal*.

<sup>26</sup> A Message from the President, n.d. (TBS). The fundraising issue played heavily upon Pallin. It was not easy to directly reveal the congregation's money problems to the outside--even Rabbi Herman at the UAHC in Los Angeles. During a dinner with several persons including Herman, Pallin wanted to talk about "several problems which were disturbing us here." Pallin said the reason for the rabbi's visit was to discuss dues. This seemed almost irrelevant to the Beth Shalom president. He observed with no religious school or typical life cycle events, "There hardly seems to be any great need for our membership in the U.A.H.C. [sic]." Instead, Pallin wanted to discuss a different agenda: "We need financial assistance and we need it urgently. We shall need other assistance later on." Evidently, Herman also took a different view of the dinner. He diplomatically wrote to Pallin how something "you might have alluded that eluded us." [sic] Pallin to Herman, Aug. 15, 1977; Herman to Pallin, Aug. 29, 1977.

As he expressed misgivings to Herman, Pallin also tried to justify the merits of continued UAHC membership to his fellow members. This was not always successful. Board Member Rae Gross fired off a pointed letter to the UAHC office in New York. Gross (speaking for the entire congregation) said no one had any "real knowledge of the purposes and the service the Union should and can be to the Congregation." She complained about a lack of materials for Beth Shalom's use. Gross cited her previous service on the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS). Upset about the "burden" of UAHC affiliation, she wrote, "...at this time, our people are more interested in receiving than giving." Gross to Dear Sir (UAHC), Oct. 12, 1978 (BSF/AJA).

Similarly in this year, the Sisterhood had its dues battles with the NFTS. The Temple's chapter was placing heavy demands on both materials and human resources. The New York office was concerned about the national effort being spent in Sun City and if it was worth "an investment in expanding our membership." The NTFSS recognized, "...many members of this group have served NFTS in leadership positions in earlier periods of their life in other Sisterhoods." They expressed "concerns for the problems of aging one [sic] is our responsibility." The NFTS understood "the financial realities of those persons living on fixed incomes." But they believed retirees concurrent, dues-paying membership in other Jewish organizations necessitated the organization to take an appropriate position on financial obligations. Eleanor Schwartz(?) to Esther Saritzky, Dec. 1, 1976 (BSF/AJA).

<sup>27</sup> Sept. 1976 (TBS).

<sup>28</sup> Pallin to My Fellow Congregants, Nov. 24, 1976 (TBS); Op. Cit., Pallin, History, pg. 19. Roth's committee included: Deborah Lewis, Jesse Lansner, Erich Gallia, Ed Gerber, Larry Shalet, Joseph Rostholder, Lillian Tamis, Joseph Harris, Mary Wilson, Clare Wexler, William Makler, Rose Mann, and Morris Mailman. Groundbreaking (TBS). Once again, the Annual Meeting could not finish the requisite by-laws issues in one night. It was subsequently continued on Jan. 28, 1977. Irving Pallin to Friends, Jan. 24, 1977 (TBS).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Rabbi Albert Plotkin interview, Oct. 23, 1998 (Phoenix, Ariz.); Groundbreaking, Larry Shalet, Jan. 1977.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Plotkin interview.

<sup>31</sup> *News-Sun*, Jan. 4, 1977.

<sup>32</sup> Groundbreaking Ceremony Program (TBS); assorted newspaper photographs (TBS). Group 1 consisted of Beth Shalom's leaders and the invited dignitaries. Group 2 consisted of the four past presidents (Aaron Papermaster, Max Schaffer, Daniel Englander, and Irving Raihill). Group 3 consisted of William and Mary Bloyed, Joseph Harris, Joseph Rostholder, and Abraham Tamis.

<sup>33</sup> Op. Cit., Pallin, History, pg. 20.

<sup>34</sup> Cornerstone Ceremonies, April 24, 1977 (TBS); Morris and Estelle Mailman to author, March 2000.

<sup>35</sup> Op. Cit., Breslow interview.

<sup>36</sup> *News-Sun*, Oct. 19, 1973; Oct. 30, 1973.

<sup>37</sup> *Sun Citizen* (Sun City, Ariz.), Jan. 17, 1973; Op. Cit., Feb. 25, 1977. Congregation Beth Shalom Presents The Yiddish Theater In review, Feb. 28, 1977 (TBS). Listed performers included: Morris Hackel, Miriam Cohen, Anna Gallia, Ana Leonard, Paul Leonard, Jack Levy, Augusta Resnick, William Garr, Freda Levy, Harry Zimmerman, Milton Plattner, Bunnie Englander, Mary Solomon, Libby Zimmerman, Estelle Gardner. The finale was a hora choreographed by Deborah Lewis. The dancers were Estelle Mailman, Blanche Schaffer, Rita Weiss, Etta Weiss, Bernice Sanders, and Deborah Lewis. The music was provided by Harvey Burk at the piano with Sidney Klauss on the violin.

<sup>38</sup> *Sun Citizen*, Jan. 17, 1973.

<sup>39</sup> *Sun Citizen*, May 1, 1973; Program, Sisterhood Sabbath Services, May 4, 1973 (TBS).

<sup>40</sup> Various newspaper articles (TBS).

<sup>41</sup> Bunnie Englander interview, Oct. 22, 1998.

<sup>42</sup> Muriel Rose interview, Oct. 6, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.); Gerber, Ed, ed., History of Congregation Beth Shalom, Program, Dedication of Congregation Beth Shalom, Sun City, Ariz., March 17, 1978; *News-Sun*, Oct. 23, 1973.

<sup>43</sup> *News-Sun*, March 25, 1975; Anna Gallia interview, Dec. 1, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.). After 23 years, the Gallias elected to keep the legacy of their Torah in the family. They reclaimed the Torah for use to their daughter's synagogue in suburban Philadelphia.

<sup>44</sup> Op. Cit., Harris interview.

<sup>45</sup> *News-Sun*, Aug. 30, 1977; unidentified and undated newspaper article, Aug. 1977 (TBS).

<sup>46</sup> The donor's name remains anonymous after 21 years. Contrary to popular belief, this was not Abraham Tamis. Op. Cit., Florence Sunkin; Op. Cit., Pallin, History, pg. 4. The Bloyed's Chai Tree had some controversy. According to Mary Bloyed, her brother Max Peterman donated his time to construction of the plaque. Some members criticized how it was made. The birthstone on each life denotes Life Membership from the other leaves. Bloyed to Beth Shalom and Jewish Community Center, Dr. Pallin and Board Members, March 27, 1978 (TBS).

<sup>47</sup> Op. Cit., Pallin, History, pg. 4; Beth Shalom Congregation Annual Meeting, Dec. 4, 1977.

<sup>48</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, Dec. 20, 1977. The issue took less than a year to resolve. Raihill's name change initiative was already part of the stationery by Oct. 1978. A special congregation meeting was convened on Nov. 15, 1978, for constitution changes. But now, it was to change the name to Temple Beth Shalom and Jewish Community Center of Sun City. Due to a lack of quorum, the vote was deferred to the Annual Meeting when the changes were approved.

## CHAPTER 5 - BUILDING DEDICATION AND BAR MITZVAH, 1978-82

The period between 1978 and 1982 ushered in exciting years for Beth Shalom. The Sanctuary and Community Center were formally dedicated in 1978, and the facility was expanded in 1982. This activity was marked by a celebration of the congregation's 10th anniversary and Bar Mitzvah. This was also a time of transition as Rabbi Michels retired and Rabbi Bernard Kligfeld assumed the pulpit. A second generation of presidents guided Beth Shalom: Jack Roth (1978-80), Hyman Parks (1981), and Sandra Rubin (1982-83). The membership continued to grow in the aftermath of the building's dedication.

1978 - 440

1979 - 533

1980 - 546

1981 - 579

1982 - 605 <sup>1</sup>

### Role of Sisterhood

The Sisterhood had been organized in the fall of 1969. Henrietta Fine, a founding member of Beth Shalom, was elected its first president. Over the years, its members had been instrumental with the identification of worthy projects. Aside from member financial contributions, Sisterhood held innumerable fundraisers. They included bake, rummage and handicrafts sales, raffles, tribute cards, dinner dances, talent shows and the like. These activities not only accomplished essential goals, they strengthened the congregation's base and served as a proving ground for officers and trustees.

As preparations advanced towards the building's completion, the Sisterhood dedicated its efforts towards furnishing of the kitchen. A special committee was chaired by Florence Parks. She was joined by Rose Mann, Sydelle Rostholder, Shirley Solomon, and Ada Turner. The group coordinated its efforts with Joseph Harris, Joseph Rostholder, and Norman Wigutoff. The committee visited Phoenix/Sun City area churches and synagogues to see how other congregations designed their kitchens. Sisterhood's \$10,000 kitchen donation resulted in the purchase of a convection oven, stove, refrigerator, freezer, sinks, dishwasher, and serviceware for 300. Even when the kitchen was complete, the Sisterhood raised other funds to obtain related service items.<sup>2</sup>

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### ANECDOTAL INSERT

We once held a "Chanukah in Hawaii" affair. There fire-eaters-- island dancers by the natives, etc. In one dance, a Fertility Rite, prompted one overblown prude to apologize to Rabbi Michels for the nudity, which prompted me to tell her the rabbi is old enough to watch a Fertility Dance, which in turn, prompted the rabbi to burst out laughing!

Muriel Grossman <sup>2</sup>

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### Irene Kubisa

Irene Kubisa joined the Beth Shalom family on Jan. 18, 1978. Irene was a native of Queens, New York. While in Phoenix visiting her parents in Sept. 1977, she saw a part-time secretarial ad for the congregation. The Secretarial Search Committee liked her credentials: CPA secretary, legal secretary, and secretary to the commandant of the naval base in Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>3</sup> She had returned to New York when the job was offered.



The position at Beth Shalom had its moments. The office was located next to the Sanctuary entrance (Today this is the gift shop.). It consisted of a couple of desks and a file cabinet. Irene started on Jan. 16, 1978.<sup>4</sup> She recalled: "When I arrived, Frances Van Houten was maintaining the Temple's book--one book." The kitchen had not been equipped at this time. A sink with ice cubes kept her lunch fresh.<sup>5</sup> Irene was by herself most of the time: "Some people from the Valley Lodge--seniles, used to walk in from time to time." There were other "visitors" as well. One morning she entered the office and found the file cabinet had been opened with a crowbar. About \$50 in petty cash had been stolen. In another instance, someone tried to enter through a small window. Irene said, "He had to be a skinny guy."<sup>6</sup>

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ANECDOTAL INSERT

One day after I started, a man came in and was walking around. He introduced himself as Rabbi Michels.

Irene Kubisa<sup>7</sup>

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Interior Design

It took approximately seven months for the interior to be completed. The Interior Design Committee was chaired by Morris Hackel. Other members of the committee included Harry Zimmerman, Mildred Sarafan, Lillian Tamis, Rose Mann, and Elsie Kerns. The group asked Joseph Harris and Abraham Tamis for advice. They also benefited from Rabbi Michel's input "at each step."

Mildred Sarafan told the *News Sun*, the blue and white motif was a play on the traditional Jewish colors. The deep blue ceiling was an idea from an old synagogue in Vienna. Climate, both controllable and uncontrollable, was another factor in the color choice. "It is a camouflage for all the air conditioning equipment," Sarafan said. She believed there was a need for Beth Shalom to be energy conscious in these years of gas lines: "...a cool scheme is more economical energywise." She added, "And as patriotic American Jews, it is important for us to conserve energy and hopefully use less oil." The 400 blue chairs were selected to keep this type of visual harmony.

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ANECDOTAL INSERT

The ark design came from the Reform Temple in Roslyn, Long Island. During his grand-nephew's Bar Mitzvah, Abraham Tamis was busy making a drawing of the Temple's Ark for Beth Shalom.

Florence Sunkin<sup>9</sup>

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The 12 stained glass windows were configured by Hackel. The layout was submitted to Maureen McGuire, a stained glass designer.

As noted at the Annual Meeting in Dec. 1977, individual members had virtually created many of the interior designs themselves. Samuel Oxman carved the podium table for use in Torah reading. The carved panel with a scroll was crafted by Jule Cohn. The table for the Shabbat candles and valet for the Torah cover was made by Boris Smilove.<sup>10</sup>

By far the the most extensive group design was the Chagall tapestries. The world famous artwork which depicted the 12 tribes of Israel was unveiled in Paris in 1961. One dozen members met at Teddy Kerns' home to do the needlepoint. Sylvia Richlin, owner of a needlepoint store in Youngtown obtained Israeli canvases.<sup>11</sup>

## Dedication

Beth Shalom was dedicated during Friday services on March 17. The program began with a special anthem composed by Helen Michels: "We Bring to You Our Praise." The keys and mezuzahs were presented by Joseph Rostholder, Joseph Harris, and Mildred Sarafin. Each Torah was formally presented with participation by the congregation's five past presidents. This was followed by consecration of the Ark and unveiling of the Eternal Light. Judge Charles Wax and Irving Pallin made welcoming remarks in advance of the dedication address by Rabbi Albert Plotkin. Following *Kaddish*, Rabbi Michels made the benediction which concluded a memorable evening.

The dedication was an unsurpassed moment for many. Teddy Kerns captured the spirit:

We feel like pioneers in a way. I've never felt this way  
about a Temple the way I feel about this one. I feel so  
proud of this building. I feel a part of it. <sup>12</sup>

On March 26, 3,000 guests, mostly from Sun City attended an open house at the synagogue. A special effort was made to contact each church in a genuine outreach to the community. Some members wanted the event to highlight "gastrointestinal Judaism." In the end, the members decided on more modest fare: punch and cookies. The stained glass windows made a special impression on guests, who were escorted around the Sanctuary by docents. <sup>13</sup>

## Another Acre (or almost)

The year 1978 was truly a year for the membership to savor. There was a sense of pride in what the congregation had accomplished with the Sanctuary. "We wanted to invite them (Christians) to our home," said Muriel Rose. She recalled, "We wanted them to see what we Jews had done." <sup>14</sup>

At dedication time, the Board was in negotiations with the neighboring Unity Church of Sun City about a .982 acre (117 feet) of land on 101st Ave. The church wanted \$22,500. Beth Shalom offered \$15,000 and the final settlement was a compromise of \$18,500. The Board approved this action in November, and it was adopted at the Annual Meeting in December.

## Membership Gains

The rise in membership during these years was owed to the tireless efforts of Saul Wexler. A textile buyer from Montreal, Wexler knew how to market a product (In this case, it was Beth Shalom.). He and his wife moved to Sun City from Los Angeles in 1974. Two years later, he was named membership chairman. Wexler recruited 358 members between 1976-80. He had a style all of his own: "I was a hustler and a manipulator. I worked from 8:00 in the morning until 10:00 at night. I signed them up in their homes, on tennis courts, stores, bowling alleys--anywhere I could find Jews." He recalled: "Recruitment was good at bowling alleys." Wexler's greatest enemy was time: "We had to get them before they became unaffiliated." The highlight of these years for Wexler was the new members consecration. This special Shabbat service recognized each new member. One year, 100 such members were called to the Bimah. <sup>15</sup>

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### ANECDOTAL INSERT

I sold memorials. One couple in their '90s' gave us \$1,000 in bonds.  
They could not see or drive. They never saw the building.  
We got \$1,000 a year from them as long as they lived.

Saul Wexler<sup>16</sup>

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## Traditions

Once located in their new home, Beth Shalom members continued older programs and began many new ones. These included Yom Hashoah day commemorations, Israeli Independence day celebrations, and perhaps most importantly, a Saturday morning minyan. The minyan harked back to Beth Shalom's more traditional members. It was founded by Max Pomerantz and Harry Stoll. Frank Schor continued the minyan which, in the new location, was attended by members of Congregation Beth Emeth also. Beth Shalom marked its 10th anniversary with a dinner on Dec. 15, 1979. This same year, the Sisterhood began their sponsorship of bus trips to Las Vegas. The congregation also established in 1980 a Soviet Jewry Committee, Phyllis Chanin, Chairperson, which began an intense campaign on behalf of the Yelistratov family. Two years later, the Pevner family's cause and those of other families were similarly championed. The 35 committee members met once a month in the morning. They directed these letter-writing efforts to Jews in the USSR and to Arizona's congressional delegation. In these years, senators and congressmen asked the State Department to press for visas so the "refuseniks" could leave the USSR.

The new building also provided a stimulus for Beth Shalom's men to create a Brotherhood. On April 7, 1979, a petition signed by 19 members called for creation of a "Men's Club." Forty-five men met on May 8, 1979, under the chair of Harry Zimmerman.<sup>17</sup> Walter Weiskopf was chosen as the first president. The organization adopted its by-laws in June, 1979. A major contributor to Beth Shalom's programs was Abraham Meth. Meth studied musical orchestration in his native Budapest with Bela Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly at the Hungarian National Academy of Music. Meth survived the Nazi occupation with the help of Raoul Wallenberg. After the war, he came to the U.S. and settled in Kansas City, Missouri. There he was Ba'al K'riah for 31 years. He retired to Sun City in 1978, where he was quickly recruited by Wexler and appointed to the program committee by Alfred Neumann. Meth's story was very typical: "We made friends to replace the family we left behind. I would never have moved to Sun City if there had not been a Beth Shalom."<sup>18</sup> Other members expressed similar sentiments about the Temple and Sun City.

Meth not only was a vital part of Beth Shalom's lay services, he was the congregation's "music man." He also was, and still is, a member and Torah reader of Beth El Congregation in Phoenix. Beginning with Israeli Independence Day in 1979, he frequently included Beth El youth groups in musical programs for Beth Shalom. He conducted these shows with a Beth Shalom 13-piece orchestra and choral group. In future years, Meth directed a variety of programs which focused on Yiddish and Hebrew melodies, Viennese operetta music, Broadway songs, etc. He also wrote his own opera, "Out of the House of Bondage." Completed during his time in Kansas City, it took Meth twelve years to complete the work. This was a three-act story of the Exodus. It was presented in 1985 before Hadassah at the Sundial under the sponsorship of the Sun City Ministerial Alliance. Later, the production was staged by Utah State University with a 100-voice choir and 35-piece orchestra.<sup>19</sup>

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### ANECDOTAL INSERT

There were 198 diners (\$2,970 catering bill) at Beth Shalom's Passover Seder in 1981. In his report, Hyman Parks said, "Because of so many complaints about the food, etc., recommended a questionnaire [sic] be sent to every family attending the Seder."<sup>20</sup>

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## First Building Expansion

Expansion of the Temple facility dated back to the mid-70s when various building plans were discussed. In 1981, the Board appointed a Long-Range Planning Committee to evaluate possible additions. At the semi-annual congregation meeting on April 15, 1981, Irving Pallin summarized the committee's findings and the Temple's obvious needs. There followed a lengthy discussion about

construction of a social hall, a larger business office and kitchen, along with storage space. There were concerns expressed about use of the facilities during the High Holidays. Walter Weiskopf suggested the social hall be made into a separate building. This would have made the project much costlier.<sup>21</sup>

Hyman Parks secured an architect's estimate of \$50 per square foot or 5000 square foot estimate of \$250,000. Treasurer Seymour Chanin reported the congregation had \$150,000 in cash, \$35,000 in the Building Fund, and enough pledges to reach the \$250,000. The members heard Abraham Tamis review the Temple's financial history. He said, "...we are in a position to go ahead because we don't owe a penny." No action was immediately taken on the report due to a lack of a quorum. There was no consensus. A year went by and the expansion issue came to a special congregation meeting. This gathering was a heated affair. Jack Saltzman wanted to know if the Temple was in compliance with its constitution. There was a dispute about committee review protocols. President Sandra Rubin opposed approval of a lower architectural fee as an effort to "out-manuever" the congregation. Jack Lipton predicted the architectural contract would be voted down. He was correct, as motions to approve the expenditure of \$2,500 and then \$5,000, both failed. The architectural fee, report, and costs of furnishings were passed at the Annual Spring Meeting two weeks later. The expansion could finally begin.<sup>22</sup>

### Rabbi Michels Retires

By the end of 1981, a movement among some members led to the retirement of Rabbi Michels. It had been in the making for quite some time.<sup>23</sup>

Michels had his many friends and admirers. His wife was a beloved figure within the congregation and community.<sup>24</sup>

The Board essentially gave Michels, now age 80, no alternative but to resign.<sup>25</sup> He commiserated with Rabbi Albert Plotkin. Michels said, prior to Arizona, he had always led a congregation with a building. For years, he felt like a "Gypsy" in Sun City. In Plotkin's words, the aging rabbi was "terribly hurt."

I carried the congregation on my back. And I wandered for years from house-to-house. And then when I get it done, I am like Moses; I couldn't enjoy the promised land.<sup>26</sup>

By many accounts, the resignation process was not easy, but it could have been done better. From a distance, Plotkin believed Beth Shalom had been "heavy-handed."<sup>27</sup> This matter did not bode well for Michels as a Rabbi Emeritus. It was painful for him to step down.

All of the aforementioned made it difficult for Michels' successor, Rabbi Bernard Kligfeld. Born in Brooklyn, the bearded rabbi earned bachelors and masters degrees respectively from Brooklyn College and Columbia University. His ordination was granted by the Jewish Institute of Religion. He was fluent in both Hebrew and Yiddish, respectively. Kligfeld had served as Associate Rabbi at the conservative Beth Shalom Congregation in Kansas City, Missouri for five years. From 1950-82, he was spiritual leader of Temple Emanuel in Long Beach, New York.<sup>28</sup> Contracted at Beth Shalom when he was age 65, Kligfeld, like Michels before him, was hired as a part-time rabbi.

From the onset, there was tension between Michels and Kligfeld. This was keenly felt by many members. Kligfeld said:

When [sic] the Beth Shalom position opened, I called him up. He was very upset (due to his forced retirement). I couldn't get anything out of him...He made me feel like a usurper.<sup>29</sup>

Michels clearly was uncomfortable. Kligfeld by his own admission, did not make things better. "We had never met before," Kligfeld recalled. The new rabbi had his own concerns too.

I think he (Michels) had it in for me. I got reports. I raised nousey questions about his credentials. He took my questions as digging. I wanted to know his interests-- what he wrote his thesis about. I was unaware he was acting this way.<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps Kligfeld was a bit naïve at the time on the impact of his questions. Regardless, there would be a wall of ice between the two men from this point until Michel's death at age 93, in 1995. The elder rabbi was denied a place on the pulpit during most services. If Kligfeld was absent, Michels did fill in for him. Towards the end of his years in Arizona, Kligfeld reflected: "I regret we never got close." Michels and his wife remained members of Beth Shalom but turned their attention to participation in the Sun City Orchestra and other activities.<sup>31</sup>

At the time he was contacted by Beth Shalom, Kligfeld was preparing a retirement in Florida. He had been to Phoenix several times and was willing to change his plans. Kligfeld was particularly impressed with members of the Search Committee which included David Wollach. He agreed to the position after it was offered to him by Irving Pallin in a phone call.<sup>32</sup> Beth Shalom members helped with the sale of Kligfeld's Florida residence, and he moved to Arizona in time to lead services on Sept. 3, 1982.<sup>33</sup>

#### The Temple's Bar-Bat Mitzvah

A festive three-day celebration over Nov. 19-21 marked Beth Shalom's 13th birthday. Planning for the Bar-Bat Mitzvah began in April with a 21-member committee chaired by Phyllis Chanin. A Friday night service paid tribute to the Temple's founders and past presidents. President Sandra Rubin presented certificates to each of the seventeen surviving founders. Plans for a plaque with the names of the 29 founders were also announced. The service emphasized the founders: The candles were blessed by Rosalie Thorner. Aliyahs were made by Benjamin Gould, Aaron Papermaster, and Harry Zimmerman.<sup>34</sup>

On Saturday morning, members were provided with a very touching moment: the Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah of Jack Roth and Beatrice Bernstein. Rubin expressed the excitement of the ceremony: "Beatrice and Jack are both over 65 years old. They've studied (with David Wollach) all summer for the Bar and Bat Mitzvah they never had. We are so proud that, at their age, they want to perform this mitzvah."<sup>35</sup>

Later that night, over 200 persons attended a celebration dinner dance at the Hotel Westcourt near Metrocenter. Jack Merlin's 12-piece orchestra provided the entertainment, and Sunni Scott, billed as the "Miss Sunbeam of Song," sang tunes from the 1950s. During a Sunday brunch, Sidney Breslow made a special presentation to Beth Shalom's past presidents. Songsheets were distributed for a sing-a-long of each president's favorite song. Lillian Strull expressed her joy about the congregation in a reprinted 1978 poem:

BETH SHALOM: TEMPLE IN THE DESERT  
Come now, children of Israel, a house of  
Worship is here.  
Among the beauty of its splendor, awaken all  
With the prayers of yesteryear.  
The Psalms will be heard in Song, ringing

Out in the Desert calm.  
The Torah will forever have its home, in  
Congregation Beth Shalom.  
Blessings on all our neighboring houses of  
Worship in unity.  
For God is everywhere, especially in Sun City.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Congregation Beth Shalom Proposed Budget 1978, pg. 1; Temple Beth Shalom 10th Anniversary Celebration Invitation, Dec. 15, 1979; Temple Beth Shalom and Jewish Community Center of Sun City, Tentative Proposed Budget 1981, Exhibit A; *News-Sun*, Nov. 18, 1982. Minutes, Board of Directors, 1979-82.

<sup>2</sup> *News-Sun*, March 14, 1978; Muriel Grossman to author, March 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Irene Kubisa interview, Dec. 1, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.). The search committee included Rose Lepko, Alfred Neumann, Irving Pallin, Hyman Parks, Joseph Rostholder, and Hyman Sapakie. Dr. Alfred M. Neumann Tribute to Irene Kubisa, Jan. 9, 1998 (TBS).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Irene Kubisa to author, June 28, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Kubisa fondly recalls Rabbi Michels in her early days at the Temple: "I was not Jewish. (Michels) was the one that took me by the hand and explained things to me. He was very kind. He was a good teacher. He had a good sense of humor." *News-Sun*, Oct. 26, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> *News-Sun*, March 14, 1978.

<sup>9</sup> Florence Sunkin to author, July 1, 1999. The drawing was turned over to Woods and Five Sons of New York for final design. Program, Dedication of Congregation Beth Shalom, Sun City, Ariz., March 17, 1978 (TBS).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *News-Sun*, March 3, 1978. The panels were assigned as follows: *Benjamin*-Florence Parks; *Joseph*-Beatrice Pinkas; *Naphtall*-Muriel Rose; *Asher*-Sylvia Richlin; *Gad*-Eva Green; *Dan*-Virginia Cohen; *Isaacher*-Teddy Kerns; *Zebulon*-Lucille Okney; *Judah*-Lee Kimerling; *Levi*-Betty Schwartz; *Simeon*-Jane Schweitzer; and *Rueben*-Rose Mann.

<sup>12</sup> *Phoenix (Ariz.) Jewish News*, March 10, 1978; Op. Cit., Program Dedication. The program book listed all current congregation members, major committees, officers, etc. Mention was also made to Sun City clergy who helped Beth Shalom with temporary homes, 1969-77: Rev. Howard W. Blackburn, St. Christopher's Episcopal Church; Dr. G. Christie Swain, First United Presbyterian Church; Dr. Paul B. Calhoun, First United Presbyterian Church; and Rev. Ralph Kofoed, First United Methodist Church; *News-Sun*, March 14, 1978.

<sup>13</sup> *News Sun*, March 14, 1989; Op. Cit., Pallin, History, pg. 6; Muriel Rose interview, Oct. 6, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Saul Wexler interview, Oct. 9, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> *New-Sun*, Dec. 12, 1979. The minyan was well attended by Congregation Beth Emeth members until their own building was completed. Rabbi Bernard Kligfeld interview, Oct. 20, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.); Phyllis Chanin to Historian-Temple Beth Shalom, May 1, 1982. Chanin passed away on Nov. 20, 1989. The Jewish Federation of Phoenix established the Phyllis Chanin Memorial Fund for the Resettlement of Soviet Jewry in her honor. Program, Shabbat, Nov. 24, 1989; *News-Sun*, Nov. 24, 1989; Program, Bar-Bat Mitzvah Celebration, Temple Beth Shalom and Jewish Community Center, 1982; Program, Silver Anniversary Celebration of Temple Beth Shalom & Jewish Community Center,

1969-1994, Dec. 11, 1994, pg. 19 (TBS). This latter source states 42 men attended the first Brotherhood Meeting on May 8, 1979.

<sup>18</sup> Abraham Meth interview, Oct. 27, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>19</sup> Program, Israeli Independence Day Celebration, May 6, 1980 (TBS). The orchestra consisted of Allan Ames, Sam Cohn, Shelia Lane, Leonard Partnoy, Pat Carpenter, Sandy Henriquez, Leslie Lindner, Pam Richie, Paul de Bourg, Py Landau, Carol Moore, Margerie Kaiser, and Hyman Parks. *Symphony Loses Talent Through Retirement*, n.d. 1991 (TBS). The opera was first performed in Meth's hometown of Kansas City, Missouri. It was revived with cast members from the Houston Opera Company at Beth Shalom in 1995, and again with a primarily Sun City-based ensemble in April 2000. *Phoenix Jewish News*, Feb. 24, 1995; Meth and his family survived the Nazi occupation and immigrated to the U.S. in 1948. He said: "Native-born Americans will never fully understand the blessing of being an American." *News-Sun*, May 5, 1984.

<sup>20</sup> Sylvia Evens, *Sisterhood V.P., Ways and Means*, May 1, 1981.

<sup>21</sup> Minutes, Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting, April 15, 1981. The expansion need had been present at the building's conception. In his Annual Meeting speech in 1977, The Long Range Planning Committee consisted of Irving Pallin, Bruce Evens, Herman Feldstein, Gerald Reiter, Elliott Schneider, and Marvin Yawitz. Pallin bemoaned the inadequate size of the new facility. He did report there might be a parcel of land available from the neighboring Unity Church. The Temple did make the purchase and this helped pave the way for necessary expansion. Annual Report of the President, Dec. 4, 1977 (TBS).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*; Special Meeting, Temple Beth Shalom, March 21, 1982; Temple Beth Shalom, Semi-Annual Congregation Meeting, April 15, 1982; Sandra Rubin to Dear Member(s), April 12, 1982 (TBS); Special Congregational Meeting, Nov. 11, 1982. Bunnie Englander said "the multi-purpose room is not necessary" and favored a more modest expansion of the existing structure. A motion by Daniel Englander to "not build a multi-purpose chapel" was ruled out of order. Per the constitution, a 2/3 vote was needed to approve. Jack Roth moved to approve the expenditure of \$250,000. The vote was 140 (yes), 39 (no) and 3 abstentions.

<sup>23</sup> Michels had critics from the start. Though he could speak without notes, the rabbi tended to speak far too long. A speech impediment from an earlier stroke did not help his delivery. The Board voted on Oct. 7, 1973, to notify the rabbi about a 75 minutes limit to Friday services. A year later, the rabbi was given a vote of confidence to speak on any topic he chose. *Op. Cit.*, Pallin, *History*, pgs. 11, 14. The rabbi was obviously aware about his sermon length. He gently tried to find out about "the average length of sermons currently." He was given this quote: "If you fail to strike oil in 18 minutes, stop boring." [sic] Michels to Herman, July 6, 1976; Herman to Michels, July 15, 1976 (BSF/AJA).

Beth Shalom received excellent newspaper publicity for Michels' sermons. A review of the 1970s shows a wide range of topics on both secular and religious themes. Though some members found Michels to be distant and frequently hard to understand, his "Renaissance" wit was widely acknowledged. Rabbi Michels submitted his resignation to the Board in Jan. 1982.

<sup>24</sup> Michels took what was initially a "part-time" job and devoted himself totally to Beth Shalom. Daniel Englander remembers, "He was a parish rabbi--a working rabbi. He assisted Bunnie (Englander) in the hospital at Luke. He didn't know if it was okay to be there, but he was there--always walking the hospital floors." Daniel Englander interview, Oct. 9, 1998 (Sun, City, Ariz.).

<sup>25</sup> Rabbi Albert Plotkin interview, Oct. 23, 1998 (Phoenix, Ariz.). Michels had been a rabbinical classmate with Rabbi Abraham Krohn, Plotkin's predecessor at Temple Beth Israel. Plotkin knew a short sermon was always better than a long one. He remembered, "Albert would belabor a point until you could *plotz*. People did not understand what he was saying--He would *hock mir a chinik*. He would talk about Kant, Schopenhauer and Hegel--He wanted to show off his intellectualism. Michels felt he was 'throwing pearls to swine.' He complained about his salary."

Michels groused early on about his compensation package and the "petty indignities that go with paying my stamp bills, books, mezuzahs, etc." Michels to Erwin Herman, Feb. 16, 1975; Michels to

Herman, May 24, 1974 (BSF/AJA). In another instance, Michels bemoaned his plight: "Much of the psychology of this congregation has been that since they are all working hard as volunteers why shouldn't we (Michels and Helen), also [sic]. Michels to Herman, Nov. 19, 1975. Michels' compensation was raised to \$7,500 in Jan. 1978. Op. Cit., Pallin, History, pg. 22. Later, Michels expressed though he was "still being budgetted [sic] salary-wise as 'part-time' Helen and I do feel we have been blessed in many ways." Michels to Herman, July 7, 1978 (BSF/AJA).

The Reform movement had little to guide either Michels or a budget-minded Beth Shalom Board of Directors. The New York office advised the rabbi to have the congregation enroll him for \$2.00 a year in the American Association for Retired Persons. They also believed the congregation should pay for an insurance program and cover Medicare/Medicaid. Interestingly, they anticipated the need for the rabbi to eventually retire. Michels was encouraged to stay on until he retired or three physicians (one chosen by the Temple, one chosen by the rabbi, and one chosen by the other two physicians) determined he could not function. Malcom H. Stern to Michels, Nov. 28, 1972 (BSF/AJA).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Plotkin interview. At the time of his retirement, Michels had spent four years in the finished Beth Shalom building.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Plotkin was in agreement with the Board: Michels needed to retire. Upon news of the Board's decision, Helen Michels called Plotkin and was in tears. Rabbi Michels said he had been "railroaded."

<sup>28</sup> Op. Cit., Kligfeld interview. The rabbi said his major celebrity claim-to-fame was the bar mitzvah of comedian Billy Crystal.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Op. Cit., Plotkin interview. The questions grated on Michels. Plotkin said, "Michels complained Bernie Kligfeld questioned his doctorate. He (Kligfeld) thought it was a phony. It (the tension) continued when Helen died [May 2, 1995] and funeral arrangements were being made. Kligfeld said Michels was a total fraud. Helen Michels denied this." The author consulted the Arizona State University Office of Admissions and was unable to confirm the existence of Burton Seminary, the institution where Michels' claimed to have earned his doctoral degree.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Rabbi Kligfeld conducted the funeral service for Rabbi Michels, Oct. 27, 1996. *News-Sun*, Oct. 26, 1995. The new rabbi came to Arizona for a Dec. 23 meeting with Temple officials.

The meeting included Hyman Parks, Seymour Chanin, Joseph Lipton, Estelle Mailman, Abraham Meth, and Irving Pallin. At this time, the rabbi's duties were agreed upon including his "part-time" commitment on a nine-month contract. Discussion turned to his attitude on mixed marriages. Kligfeld said, "He used to turn them down. Now he has no objection, especially where there are no children." Meeting with Rabbi Kligfeld, Dec. 23, 1981, (TBS Minutes).

<sup>32</sup> The bitterness never left Michels. He said, "It's probably going to happen to him (Kligfeld) and I hope I'm around to see it." Op. Cit., Plotkin interview. Likewise, Mrs. Michels retired as choir director at this time and was succeeded by Arthur Clark. Op. Cit., Silver Anniversary, pg. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *News-Sun*, Sept. 3, 1982. Rabbi Kligfeld's formal installation took place one year later. Program, Sabbath-Sukkoth Services Installation of Rabbi Bernard Kligfeld, Friday, Sept. 23, 1983 (TBS). The rabbi held the Temple's pulpit until his retirement in 1997 at age 80. Rabbi Kligfeld battled cancer for several years until his death on July 9, 1999. He was buried alongside his wife Julia on July 12, 1999.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Nov. 17, 1982; Nov. 18, 1982; Program; Honoring Our Founders, Nov. 19, 1982 (TBS).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., Nov. 13, 1982. The first Bar Mitzvah at Beth Shalom was Theodore Eric Pozil, grandson of Rabbi and Mrs. Michels. The ceremony took place on April 17, 1981. "A Temple Beth Shalom 'First.'" April 1981 (TBS).

<sup>36</sup> Phyllis Chanin Report on Bar-Bat Mitzvah Celebration, n.d., 1982 (TBS). Chanin reported the weekend brought a net \$8,900 to the Temple; Op., Cit., *News-Sun*, Nov. 16, 1982; Our President's Favorite Songs, n.d. (TBS). The songs were: "If I Were a Rich Man" (Aaron Papermaster), "God Bless America" (Daniel Englander), "Sunrise, Sunset" (Irving Raihill), "Tea for Two" (Irving Pallin),



"Hungarian Czaroar" (Jack Roth), and "You'll Never Know" (Hyman Parks); Strull, Lillian, "Beth Shalom: Temple in the Desert," May 1978, n.p. (TBS).

## CHAPTER 6 - TRANSITION AND GROWTH, 1983-89

Secure financially and comfortable in a home, Beth Shalom continued to expand its scope of activities in the 1980s. After the membership soared on the eve of the building dedication in 1978, numbers crested and reached a plateau. The congregation proved to be an effective magnet for Reform and for previously unaffiliated Jews in the northwest Phoenix area.

The 1980s also marked a major transition for the Beth Shalom leadership. Some of the founding generation and early leaders passed away: Aaron Papermaster and William Bloyed (1984), Abraham Tamis and Simon Meisler (1985), Larry Shalet (1986), and Anne Raihill (1987). They and others were deeply mourned. But their mantles would be assumed by energetic and confident new leaders. The congregation presidents in these years were: Sandra Rubin (1983), Walter Weiskopf (1984), Benjamin Feldman (1985-86), Walter Weiskopf (1987), Daniel Hirschl (1988), and Leo Hill (1989).

1983 - 613  
1984 - 611  
1985 - NA  
1986 - 657  
1987 - 677  
1988 - 660  
1989 - 654 <sup>1</sup>

### Activities With No Bounds

The modest schedule of organizations, committees, holiday celebrations, etc., continued with greater participation. There were Sisterhood food fairs, interfaith Seders, Yom Hashoah Days, and Thanksgiving dinners, Israeli scout performances, art shows, guest speakers, education classes, community service outreaches, and hundreds of other events.

His congregant's vitality made a quick impression on Rabbi Kligfeld. He said, "I didn't need to start many things." The members' enormous drive and "self-leadership" astonished him. The rabbi mused: "A friend back East told me he read over our bulletin and said he got tired of reading about all of these activities." Kligfeld believed the varied schedule for the members "kept them lively." He added, "I never had a sense Sun City was a waiting room." Indeed, Kligfeld recalled his thoughts after speaking to a senior group in Phoenix: "They are old [in their thoughts and actions]. They're the same age as my people in Sun City." He succinctly put his finger on it: "There is a therapeutic side to Temple Beth Shalom."<sup>2</sup>

### Physicians Committee

There was also a medical side to the congregation. In May 1984, a Physicians Committee was established to deal with medical emergencies. Abraham Tamis recruited Michael Bograd to serve as co-chairman with him.<sup>3</sup> The main issue was equipping the Emergency Room (officially named by the committee the "First Aid Room") and establishing procedures for emergencies. The entire committee was concerned about use of the room. A unanimous agreement was reached: "...use of the room shall not be for medical or surgical therapy except for emergency situations." Some expressed concern if there was a "Good Samaritan Law" in Arizona to permit potential emergency treatment. The committee set out an extensive needs list of 29 supplies: wheel chair, oxygen tank, blood pressure testers, basic medications, etc.<sup>4</sup>

### New Organ and More Programs

The Sisterhood collected over \$5,000 for purchase of a new digital electronic organ. The instrument made its debut on March 25, 1985, with a special recital by Musical Director Arthur Clark. He was

accompanied by his wife Georgia Clark and the Temple's 15-member-choir. It was primarily a classical program with selections by Purcell, Vivaldi, Bach, Rinck, Franck, and Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.<sup>5</sup>

During the 1980s, the Sisterhood Kosher-Style Food Fairs became very popular events. The first fair was held in 1980 and by 1985 it was a major social event. The fairs received good widespread publicity, and up to 2500 attendees sampled a variety of foods such as gefilte fish, blintzes, corned beef, and hot pastrami. Many came to the Food Fairs after attending their Sunday morning church services. Homemade pastries were usually the favorites and several recipes were printed in the *News-Sun*.

#### **Esther Koppel's Rugelach**

1/2 pound of cream cheese  
1/2 pound of sweet butter or sweet margarine  
2 tsps. baking powder  
2 cups flour (presifted)  
Mix into dough and divide into 9 balls.  
Refrigerate overnight.  
Roll and cut into circle (8" paper plate).  
Cut circle in 16 sections.  
Cover with cinnamon, sugar, nuts and raisins per section.  
Roll each section.  
Roll each triangle and bake at 350 degrees until Golden [sic] brown.<sup>6</sup>

Sisterhood had help with the fairs from Retired Reserve Air Force Col. Leo Hill, Irving Berger, and many volunteers from among the Temple's members. The former had been a logistical officer in the service and knew how to feed a lot of people: "I have it all laid out." He constructed a cardboard chart with details on what 50 men and women needed to do with the serving of food.

More recipes were printed in the local press. These included:

#### **Sylvia Evens-Parks' Poppy Seed Cake**

4 eggs; 2 cups sugar; 1 1/2 cups oil;  
1 can poppyseeds; 3 cups flour  
1 tsp. baking soda; 1 tsp. salt; 1 can evaporated milk  
Beat eggs well; add sugar, oil, poppy seeds.  
Sift flour, soda, salt and alternate adding flour mixture and milk to egg mixture. Pour into greased 10 inch tube pan. Bake one hour at 350 degrees. Cool for 10 minutes and remove.

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#### **ANECDOTAL INSERT**

At a Food Fair held at the Greenway Terrace Shopping Center, the Sisterhood sold bagels from a booth. The Mailmans used their motorhome to store 75 dozen bagels and transferred them to the booth, as needed. At one point, a woman, pointing to the pumpernickel bagels, asked "Are these chocolate bagels?"

Morris and Estelle Mailman<sup>7</sup>

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Beth Shalom also provided a locale for political events. Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) addressed the congregation about the plight of Soviet Jewry.<sup>8</sup> In advance of the 1986 general election, the Temple hosted the three gubernatorial candidates, Evan Mecham (R), Bill Shulz (I), and Carolyn Warner (D). Two years later, the Sisterhood provided a community-wide general election forum to engage Democratic State Chairman Terry Goddard and Republican State Chairman Burton Kruglick. A lecture on "How to Combat Extremists in Arizona" was given by Attorney General Robert Corbin (R) before the Brotherhood.<sup>9</sup>

Beth Shalom hosted a diverse range of lecturers. These programs were sponsored by the congregation, Sisterhood, Brotherhood, and other Phoenix/Sun City organizations. These included: B'nai Brith, Bureau of Jewish Education, Hadassah, Jewish War Veterans, ORT, State of Israel Bonds, and United Jewish Appeal. Featured speakers were: former Brooklyn Dodger pitcher Joe Black, humorist Emil Cohen, Israeli diplomat Walter Eytan, Israeli Consul in Los Angeles Ilan Elgar, Israeli Ambassador to the United States Benjamin Varon, Nazi hunter Beate Klarsfeld, and the editorial staffs of the *Arizona Republic* and the *Phoenix Gazette*.<sup>10</sup>

### Mr. Publicity

The success of many events was owed to dozens of members. But critical publicity for these activities was made through the dedication of Larry Shalet. Born in Connecticut, Shalet and his wife Rose, moved to Sun City from New York in 1971. He quickly became "Mr. Publicity" for a host of area Jewish and secular organizations. Evelyn Barber of the *News-Sun* termed Shalet, "one of the most reliable of our 'unpaid reporters.'" His writing was not pretty: not precise punctuation, misspelling, and confused syntax. But Barber valued Shalet's ability to offer a news story and a good lead. Though ill at the end, he kept publicity going until three weeks before his death at age 83. Beth Shalom meant the world to Shalet as his daughter said at his funeral:

...When I'd admire the plaques on his wall, he'd beam and say, "I really did a good job for them". He was so thrilled with all the honors -"They added another zero to my salary," he'd quip and then he'd send me a packet of press clippings and delightedly tell me how he managed to get more space than he dreamed of in the newspaper for this or that organization.<sup>11</sup>

### Education Programs and Lectures

The education classes begun by Rabbi Michels expanded into a regular program in the 1980s. Beth Shalom began an annual Scholar-in-Residence program in 1985. A Tuesday morning tradition for such classes was also underway by this time. In addition to these ongoing activities, the Temple hosted classes sponsored by the Bureau of Jewish Education from 1987 onwards.<sup>12</sup>

Upon her husband's death in 1985, Rose Meisler established a fund for an annual lecture series. This fund continued until 1992 when its balance was directed towards purchase of a new "everyday use" Torah.<sup>13</sup>

### Brotherhood and the Sounds of Music

Invariably, the talents of Temple members were most creatively demonstrated in the musical arena. The Brotherhood sponsored a "Gala Night of Jewish Music." Abe Meth put together a rich evening feast of Israeli, liturgical and Yiddish theater melodies. The music was staged with an orchestra, choir and soloists. Another Brotherhood program focused specifically on "Jewish-American Contribution to Musical Comedy." Morris Solomon opened the evening with a short lecture. In a similar vein, multi-lingual Cantor Janese Erman performed an evening of folk, opera, and show tunes. Israeli-born

entertainer Moshe Berger alternated between cantor and folksinger in a unique evening of Jewish music. With a mixture of Sabra and Borscht Belt humor, Berger lamented in rhyme to his audience:

I'm getting fever and chills from all of these bills, so  
now I'm taking pills. All the unpaid bills piled up on my  
windowsills...<sup>14</sup>

### Beth Shalom and Social Action

The Temple consistently urged donations for the West Side Food Bank in the weekly Shabbat programs. A sociological phenomenon of the 1980s was the growing number of homeless people. Usually seen clustered around downtown sections of large cities, many began to appear in Phoenix. Bernard Pearson and Fannie Bograd coordinated collections on behalf of the Temple and Sisterhood at Succoth 1987.<sup>15</sup> The following year the homeless drive continued in earnest with two major efforts. Pearson was joined by Mina Weiner in a joint appeal to help 6,000 homeless persons in Maricopa County.<sup>16</sup>

Temple members also were concerned about their own people. In 1987, new life was infused into the Group Services Committee. The committee co-chaired by Etta Field and Pepi Dolberg was re-established to provide transportation for people to Temple events, assist with adjustment to bereavement, and help the shut-ins. These activities continued a policy of aiding the less fortunate members and set a precedent for other committees in the 1990s.<sup>17</sup>

Lastly, Beth Shalom solidified itself as a socialization outlet for the community. A "Singles Group" was formed in 1982 for persons who were widowed, divorced or never married. The group continued in the 1980s with continental breakfasts and pot luck dinners coordinated by Sidney Feldman, Melva Simon, Sally Miller, Sylvia Evens-Parks and Beatrice Levine.<sup>18</sup>

### Another Expansion

The Temple reached another milestone in 1989 with its third building effort. A 33-page report to the Board from the Strategic Planning Committee in Sept. 1987, offered guidance. The committee was chaired by M. L. "Bill" Bearman, and it was written with care and in great detail. At the time, the report was received with mixed feelings, but many of its recommendations were eventually accepted. The report made a number of points which played upon an overriding conclusion, "The congregation is growing out of its present facility" and "...leaves much to be desired when we focus on its religious mission."<sup>19</sup>

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#### ANECDOTAL INSERT

As more Jews move to the West Valley, Beth Shalom was not equipped to satisfy the needs of Jewish couples with families.

Bearman Report, page 5

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The committee made its "suggestions," and they read like a list of many Temple members' complaints: uncomfortable seating, sloping floor in the sanctuary, too small a Bimah, poor lighting and sound systems, inadequate library/rabbi's study/gift shop/office/entrance, and lack of classroom space. The report specified the need to correct the air conditioning and heating systems to improve comfort. The report advised creation of a five-year plan to address these problems. They said two or three architects should be contacted for bids. Towards this end, the committee said it would be necessary to budget \$15,000 for blueprints and design.<sup>20</sup>

The Board received the report and, after a year, it was taken to the membership at a special meeting on Feb. 8, 1989. Virtually all of the major concerns in the Bearman Report were on the agenda along with a repair of the roof and ceiling. President Leo Hill wrote how members wishing to speak would be limited to three minutes. The Board's plan was adopted, and on March 15, 1989, another special

meeting was convened by Hill to adopt a bid placed at \$380,000. These plans went beyond Bearman's Report and included an auditorium with stage, new meeting rooms, and a new curved driveway with sidewalk. In keeping with Beth Shalom's conservative fiscal history, \$305,000 was already on hand for the entire project. Hill could write members in capital letters: "THERE WILL BE NO ASSESSMENT OR INCREASE IN DUES BECAUSE OF THIS PROJECT." <sup>21</sup>

A fundraising goal of \$95,000 was established. Hill served as chairman of the Building Committee and personally provided oversight to the construction. His committee consisted of veterans like Stanley Fram, Morris Hackel, Joseph Harris, Herman Mandell, and Irving Pallin. Notwithstanding their experience, a couple of major issues arose: First, the poor acoustical system was due to a design flaw in the building. Secondly, the major contractor ran into personal financial difficulty and left the congregation with a cash shortfall. The latter problem would be addressed by the successor Board in 1990.<sup>22</sup>

### 20th Anniversary Jubilee

In the meantime, Beth Shalom celebrated its 20th anniversary in Dec. 1989. The overall coordination of the event fell to newcomer Sanford Sunkin. The congregation held a Founder's Day Shabbat service on Dec. 17 and a dinner dance on Dec. 19. The gala proved to be the single biggest fundraising success in the Temple's history. Walter Weiskopf chaired the souvenir book which filled 144 pages of copy and advertising. The success of ad sales was owed to Saul Wexler and Isadore Rabinovitz. A crowd of 285 gathered in the social hall and partially built auditorium. The affair brought in approximately \$16,000.<sup>23</sup> As members were soon to learn, every dollar would be needed.

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, 1983-89.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Bernard Kligfeld interview, Oct. 20, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.). The rabbi's immersion into the interfaith activities led to his election as President of the Sun Cities Ministerial Alliance in 1985. *News-Sun*, June 29, 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes, Physicians Committee, May 8, 1984. Other committee members included: Oscar Cohen, Daniel Hirschl, David Jacobs, Irving Pallin, Theodore Rubel, Meyer Rutgard, Elliot Schneider, and Henry Ricewasser.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. The committee completed many of its goals within the year. Most of the equipment goals were made and other procedures for their use and care were agreed upon. A special notice ruled out use of the room by retired physicians (without license) or use by practicing physicians for private patients. The Board named the room in honor of Irving Pallin, M.D. and the equipment in honor of Abraham Tamis, M.D. Minutes, Physicians Committee, April 10, 1985.

<sup>5</sup> *Sun Cities Independent*, March 20, 1985; *News-Sun*, March 22, 1985; Program, Organ Recital by Arthur R. Clark, March 25, 1985 (TBS). Arthur Clark served in a similar capacity with the Congregational Church of Sun City. Georgia Clark was also a soprano soloist with the Church of the Palms.

<sup>6</sup> *News-Sun*, Jan. 6, 1981; Jan. 11, 1983; Jan. 29, 1986; *Sun Cities Independent*, Jan. 30-Feb. 5, 1985; *Arizona Republic* (Northwest ed.), Jan. 27, 1986; *News-Sun*, Jan. 28, 1986; miscellaneous articles, n.d. (TBS); Morris and Estelle Mailman to author, March 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., *News-Sun*, April 17, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Oct. 6, 1986; *Sun Cities Independent*, Oct. 15-21, 1986. The feisty Mecham won the three-way election. He soon ran into major problems and was impeached/removed from office. The author recalls Mecham was approached by Aaron Papermaster to speak at Beth Shalom during his unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign in 1978. Notice, Evening Sisterhood Program, Oct. 10, 1988. Notice, The Brotherhood Presents Bob Corbin, April 24, 1989.

<sup>10</sup> *News-Sun*, Feb. 16, 1984; *Greater Phoenix (Ariz.) Jewish News*, Feb. 20, 1985; March 4, 1987;

Announcement, Walter Eytan, Nov. 23, 1987; Program, Shabbat, March 18, 1988; Notice, Beate Klarsfeld, April 10, 1988; Notice, Editors of the *Arizona Republic* and the *Phoenix Gazette*, Nov. 27, 1989. The journalists included: John Oppedahl, William Cheshire, Steve Benson, Pam Johnson, Paul Schatt, and Dave Waner. Additionally, columnist Dorothee Polson spoke to the Sisterhood on May 8, 1989. Notice, Beth Shalom Sisterhood Meeting, May 8, 1989 (TBS).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., *News Sun*, June 13, 1986; In Memorance [sic] of Lawrence A. Shalet, June 11, 1986 (TBS).

<sup>12</sup> *Sun Cities Independent*, Nov. 20, 1985 Jan. 29-Feb. 2, 1986; *News-Sun*, Nov. 21, 1985; Feb. 1, 1985 Jan. 31, 1986; Adult Education Classes announcement, n.d. 1986 (TBS); Adult Education Classes At Temple Beth Shalom, n.d., 1987 (TBS).

<sup>13</sup> Simon Meisler, a New York attorney, moved to Sun City in 1978. He had been first vice president of Beth Shalom at the time of his final illness. He had been nominated for president when he died. Sanford Sunkin to author, July 10, 1999. The first Meisler lecture was delivered by Cantor Aviva Rosenbloom of Temple Israel in Los Angeles (niece of Rabbi and Mrs. Kligfeld). *News-Sun*, Jan. 31, 1986; *Sun Cities Independent*, Jan. 29-Feb. 4, 1986; Program, Simon Meisler First Annual Memorial Presentation, Feb. 5, 1986; Program, Sefer Torah, A Gift of the Meisler Family in Memory of Simon Meisler, March 20, 1992 (TBS). The presentation was made by Rose Meisler, Richard Meisler, Etta Weiss and Arthur Meisler. A similar fund in honor of Abraham Tamis brought scholars-in-residence to the congregation for a number of years. The remainder of the fund eventually helped defray costs of the stained glass lobby windows. Sanford Sunkin to author, July 10, 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Announcement and Program, "Gala Night of Jewish Music," March 9, 1986; Announcement, "Jewish-American Contribution to Musical Comedy," April 21, 1986; Announcement, Cantor Janese Erman, Jan. 28, 1987; *News-Sun*, Nov. 10, 1987.

<sup>15</sup> Announcement, Social Action/Help the Homeless, April 22, 1987 (TBS).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Jan. 27, 1988; Nov. 16, 1988 (TBS).

<sup>17</sup> Notice, Group Services Committee, n.d., 1987 (TBS).

<sup>18</sup> Program and Planning Committee flyer, Feb. 1982; Notice, Singles Group, Jan. 24, 1989; Special Coming Event, March 11, 1989 (TBS); Morris and Estelle Mailman to author, March 2000.

<sup>19</sup> Bearman's committee members included: Beatrice Bernstein, Sidney Breslow, Shirley Lipton, Herman Mandell, Irving Pallin, Hyman Sapakie and Marvin Yawitz. Strategic Planning Committee Report to the Board of Directors of Temple Beth Shalom, Sept. 1987 (TBS).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. The Bearman Report also suggested the Board should assess the viability of a nursing care facility to serve infirm members' needs.

<sup>21</sup> Leo Hill letter, Jan. 20, 1989; Leo Hill to Congregant, Feb. 27, 1989 (TBS).

<sup>22</sup> Program, Dedication Sabbath, May 3, 1991 (TBS).

<sup>23</sup> Sanford Sunkin interview, Nov. 5, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.); Booklet, Twentieth Anniversary Celebration, Temple Beth Shalom & Jewish Community Center, December 17, 1989 (n.p., 1989). The respective chairs were as follows: Dinner-Irving Berger and Sylvia Evens-Parks; Invitations-Lorraine Weltman; Decorations-Helene Polansky; Program-Caryl Meltzer; Publicity-Robert Hart; Souvenir Journal Production-Walter Weiskopf; Advertising Sales-Saul Wexler; and Photography-Jerry Firestone.

## CHAPTER 7 - THE TEMPLE IN "MATURE" SUN CITY, 1990-PRESENT

Temple Beth Shalom evolved into a dynamic institution in the 1990s. The expansion plans developed in 1989 were quickly acted upon. Construction of the auditorium, Board room, library, and choir room were completed and put to immediate use. Earlier concerns about space limitations were eliminated by the greatly enhanced facility.

Once again, the congregation underwent a transition. Many of the second generation members were joined by a still younger group who provided leadership in Beth Shalom's third decade. This change was also reflected in the pulpit as Rabbi Kligfeld retired in 1997. He was succeeded by Rabbi Arthur J. Abrams. These years were marked by the auditorium dedication (1991), 25th anniversary (1994) and 30th anniversary (1999).

The decade of the 90s ushered in a comfortable time for Beth Shalom. The austerity of previous years was gone. The now mature Temple could delve into new areas for the membership. In this period, the presidents were: Hilma Brown (1990-91), Sanford Sunkin (1992-93), Melvin Abrahamson (1994), Jerry Black (1995-96), Sanford Sunkin (1997-98), and Sherwin "Dusty" Rhodes (1999 - 2000). The membership remained consistent over the decade.

1990 - 645  
1991 - 667  
1992 - 671  
1993 - 666  
1994 - 652  
1995 - 686  
1996 - 722  
1997 - 684  
1998 - 673  
1999 - 673 <sup>1</sup>

### Expansion Pain and Jubilation

At the start of 1990, members were anxious about financial irregularities related to the building expansion. The contractor was not bonded, and the \$40,000 advanced to him was lost. President Hilma Brown wrote the membership:

When an architect and contractor were hired, certain procedures were set up with the contractor. All subcontractors were paid directly by the Temple. But when the contractor did his particular work, which amounted to \$67,000, he was given "draws" with which to pay his suppliers. The work was completed, but in November it was discovered that the contractor had not used his \$40,000 in "draws" which amounted to pay the suppliers. He disappeared, and the Temple had to pay an additional \$40,000. At the present time, we are looking into ways of legally pursuing the matter.<sup>2</sup>

The congregation did raise the requisite funds, but delayed dedication of the auditorium and expanded facility until May 3, 1991. Along with structural changes, several outdoor additions were made as well. The original building doors were replaced with new wood, handcarved doors. A Holocaust memorial designed by Herman Mandell was set off to the right of the new covered entrance as well as an outdoor menorah. The landscaping around it was also improved under the guidance of



Mandell and Joel Forrest.<sup>3</sup>

Once again, this was an occasion for celebration and Estelle Mailman was chairman of the Dedication Committee. Rabbi Kligfeld performed the dedication reading and Hilma Brown made a presentation to Leo Hill. Earlier, the Board had adopted a resolution to name the new auditorium in honor of Hill. Rabbi Daniel B. Syme, vice president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was the featured speaker.

#### Redecoration and Near Record Donations

Numerous physical changes followed after the auditorium dedication. An intense period of improvements began in 1992 and finished in 1993. Andrew Kubisa (Irene's husband) provided his carpentry skills to the redesign and refurbishment of the lobby. Forrest arranged to have the rugs changed at no additional cost to the Temple. He and Kubisa moved the "Tree of Life" from the Sanctuary into the lobby. Simultaneously, Brotherhood President Bernard Shuer supported a "no strings" donation of \$2000 to build an art gallery in the lobby front entrance. The project was constructed and designed by Forrest, Mandell, Kubisa, and Michael Field. This sum was matched three times over by additional donations. The new structure would showcase the works of Beth Shalom members.

At this time, Leo and Ruth Kissel shipped from Milwaukee a gift of between 2,000-3,000 books to the congregation. When the building was expanded, a much larger library was built. Sisterhood President Gladys Gordon pledged a "no strings" \$2,000 donation to provide the requisite shelves and other amenities. Again, a matched sum of nearly four times this amount was secured to finish the refurbishment.

The congregation's many plaques were placed on a reconfigured "Wall of Honor," a donation from Edna Sapakie in honor of her husband. In addition, the social hall was "sold" and other funds were obtained through the sale of "commandments." The four chairs on the Bimah were gifted, and the rabbi's lectern was dedicated. Lastly, the Sisterhood funded a new Memorial Board in the Sanctuary. The fundraising for the completion of these projects exceeded \$100,000.<sup>4</sup>

#### Lobby Stained Glass Windows

The Temple's beautification was completed with dedication of the lobby stained glass windows. The gift was a redirection of Tamis family funds. Installed in late 1991, the windows were formally dedicated in Shabbat services, Jan. 17, 1992.

Artist Janet Brandt was commissioned to design the windows based upon passages from the Union Prayer Book's morning service.

The circular form is a traditional symbol of God; since it is a figure without beginning or ending, it represents a God who is both eternal and one. Enfolded within this symbol of God's never ending [sic] presence is a stylized skyline representing Israel and the Jewish people...The sun is a symbol of God's power and majesty...The green leaves in the bottom sections of this design symbolize growth and life...The letters at the bottom - read from inside the building - translate: "This is none other than the House of God."(Gen. 28:17)...The letters in the small window's design - read from outside the building ..."Beth Shalom."<sup>5</sup>

### Holocaust Commemoration

Beth Shalom members were active participants in the annual Yom Hashoah Day observances. These annual programs, spearheaded by Rabbi Kligfeld, were community-wide and joined the Temple with Congregation Beth Emeth and the Sun City Ministerial Association.

The Nazi period was ever-present in Beth Shalom's memory: its founding members were the World War II generation. As the Temple grew, it attracted members who were survivors.<sup>6</sup> The building expansion in 1989 was cause for member Herman Mandell to create the metal sculpture to remember the six million. The artist had his own recollections in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in postwar France, where he assisted the unloading of concentration camp survivors. "This is something that I don't think people should forget." His eight-foot structure set off from the building entrance depicts the flames of an oven. He embedded in the artwork the names of the major extermination camps.<sup>7</sup>

### Expansion of Sisterhood Activities

Throughout the decade, the Temple's members embarked upon new endeavors. The plight of homeless people gained national attention during the early 1980s. The problem still remained and in June 1992, the Sisterhood launched "Warm Up America." Chaired by Lorraine Weltman, members crocheted squares and knitted squares to be sewn together into afghan blankets for the Valley's needy population. The idea came to Weltman from a friend who operated a knit shop in Wausaw, Wisconsin. The knitters met at Beth Shalom for two hours at a time on Thursday and Friday afternoons. "We think some of our vacationers can work on squares while they're traveling in their cars and RVs," she said. A number of Sisterhood members who spent their summer in Logan, Utah, participated as well. The project also kept the stay-at-homes busy as over 176 blankets were completed in a year's time. In the aftermath of the Los Angeles earthquake in 1993, the need for blankets was even greater. This number grew to 324 one year later with the help of 25 Temple knitters. By 1995, the total number of blankets had risen to 439. The Sisterhood's efforts were joined with other women's auxiliaries in Globe, Kingman, and Pinetop.<sup>8</sup>

In a related vein, the Temple continued to collect food for the West Side Food Bank. Robert Hart served as a Volunteer Board Member and helped publicize the collection efforts. Between 1991 and 1994, Beth Shalom members had contributed 13,810 pounds of food to help the less fortunate. At the same time, Temple members supported an annual clothing drive initiated by Mina Weiner to assist the homeless and Jewish Family and Children's Services Agency.<sup>9</sup>

### Brotherhood Programs Grow

The Brotherhood continued to flourish as well. Kohl's Ranch in Payson and the Francisco Grande Resort in Casa Grande provided venues for three-day retreats. The monthly dinners and luncheons featured a variety of speakers such as ASU Provost Milton Glick, comic Rabbi Bob Alpert, former Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), and Arizona Diamondbacks General Manager Joe Garagiola, Jr. Most significantly, the organization provided assistance to Jewish prisoners. Bernard Pearson and Robert Siegel were the coordinators for Purim and Passover celebrations at the Arizona State Prison in Goodyear. The inmates complaint: they did not have Hamantashen to nosh in 1994.<sup>10</sup>

### Cultural Activities Abound

The new auditorium was a unique feature for Beth Shalom. Aside from Temple Beth Israel, Beth El Congregation and the Phoenix Jewish Community Center, there was no similar facility for Jews in the metropolitan area. The stage was the scene for countless programs: classic film screenings to musical ensembles. In addition, the auditorium was the home for the Anne Raihill Memorial Lectures Series. Established in memory of the late Anne Raihill, these events also received support from the Arizona Humanities Council. Throughout the decade, the lectures were coordinated by Babette Himler. These and other events were well publicized through the efforts of Robert Hart. The Chicago native worked tirelessly and won many accolades for his work. Lastly, the Temple secured the services of its cantorial soloist, Baruch Koritan in 1992. Initially hired on a part-time basis, he became a permanent

fixture on Friday nights within a few years.<sup>11</sup>

### Silver Anniversary Celebration

Beth Shalom celebrated its Silver Anniversary throughout 1994. On Jan. 14, over 400 persons attended the program, "A Musical Travelogue: From Delancey to Tel Aviv with Stops in Paris, Vienna and Budapest." Abe Meth conducted members of the Sun City Orchestra who accompanied the Temple choir and soloist, Liane Pitts. The evening included Yiddish songs, Viennese operetta fare a la Franz Lehar, Hungarian love songs, and Israeli melodies. A major highlight was when Mrs. Pitts sang the fiery "Habanera" from Bizet's *Carmen*. The month-long 25th anniversary celebration began with a recital by Dr. William Van Ornam on Nov. 12. Rabbi Kligfeld wrote about the significance of the Silver Anniversary:

The special characteristic of the community in which we live has shaped the composition of our membership. We thus faced unique problems, but we are also blessed with unique opportunities and strengths. We are grateful to all those who, in spite of years, are vigorous. We value beyond measure, everyone who can no longer give freely of time and energy.<sup>12</sup>

But perhaps, it was left to Rabbi Michels who best summarized the unique success of Beth Shalom. He said:

Perhaps, one of the most fortunate of our Beth Shalom constituency blessings is that our many most competent leaders came here after years of early experience in acquiring their proficiencies.<sup>13</sup>

Jerry Black was general chairman for the festive weekend, which began with Shabbat on Dec. 9. The service was dedicated to the congregation's founders and past presidents.<sup>14</sup> The guest speaker was Rabbi Sheldon Marder, associate dean of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles. Two days later, the membership gathered at the Wigwam in Litchfield Park for a gala dinner dance.<sup>15</sup> Rabbi Kligfeld captured the essence of the occasion in an interview: "We're looking forward to the next 25 years." In speculation about a Golden anniversary, he said, "We'll start planning for it after this one."<sup>16</sup>

### Beth Shalom Enters the Computer Age

Long-time Board Secretary Gary Himler also provided an impetus for the Temple to become computerized. To better acquaint members with the intricacies of the technology, he conducted four morning instructional sessions for members in early 1994. The Viennese-born Himler was a strong advocate for the Temple to modernize its office operations. One year later, President Jerry Black reported the congregation had purchased new computers. Simultaneously, the Sisterhood donated \$3500 for the purchase of accounting software.<sup>17</sup>

### Searching for the Unaffiliated

There had always been a large number of unaffiliated Jews in the Sun City area. Anxious to address the Jewish demographic situation in the northwest Valley, President Jerry Black appointed Sidney Meltzer to chair a survey committee. In May 1995, they attended a seminar in Los Angeles on "How to Reach Unaffiliated Jews." Black returned and appointed Alan Oppenheimer to chair a Welcome to Your Congregation Committee to acclimate new members. This group worked with the Board, each

of whom agreed to look after a new member for 30 days after receipt of their dues. Meanwhile, Meltzer's committee reported to the Board various findings. The Sisterhood took note and granted a waiver of first year dues to new women Temple members. One major issue was acted upon at the Annual Meeting: suspension of the building fund requirement as of January 1, 1996. Predictably, former and new members joined the Temple.<sup>18</sup>

### Farewell to the Michels

Both Rabbi and Helen Michels died in 1995. Mrs. Michels had been ill for a long time. She refused treatment for a brain tumor. Nonetheless, she performed a final Chopin concert for the Sisterhood on March 13. Her death On May 2, seemed to hasten the decline of the rabbi. By late summer, he was visibly dying.

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#### ANECDOTAL INSERT

Former Sisterhood President Muriel Rose was hospitalized in late September [1995] with bypass surgery. She had a visitor: "I was absolutely stunned when I saw him standing there...He wasn't that well...But despite his own problems he did come to see me. He will be greatly missed."<sup>19</sup>

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Rabbi Michels passed away at his home on October 23, 1995. He was 93 and had been with Beth Shalom since 1971. The tributes to him were warm and full.

Michels held a unique place in the memories of Beth Shalom's older members. Irene Kubisa said, "When people passed away he always made sure he'd see the spouse to talk them through their grief. We didn't have grief support groups 17 years ago and the rabbi did that." He was interred at Sunland Cemetery next to Helen on October 27, 1995.<sup>20</sup>

### Anti-Semitism and Sun City

The creation of a Jewish presence in Sun City was accomplished with relatively little anti-Semitic backlash. As noted earlier, DEVCO allowed Jews religious use of the recreation centers for many years. Jews happened to be customers and like gentiles, they needed some attention. But like Phoenix itself, Sun City had no Jewish geographic, economic, or social center in the tradition of Pitkin, Devon, or Fairfax Avenues. Still, the overwhelmingly WASP culture of Sun City could present situations for the retirees. The West had historically been open to newcomers such as Jews. But sometimes the secure enclave left behind could make one cognizant of a suddenly omnipresent gentile world. Rabbi Fred Greenspahn intimated as much in his recollection of Beth Shalom's first High Holidays in 1969. The congregation Seder in 1971 was held at the Sun City Country Club. According to Daniel Englander: "It was a goyish place where we thought they (the club members) hated Jews."<sup>21</sup> This concern had a precedent. Well into the early 1960s, Phoenix had its share of "restricted" resorts and dude ranches. For those who came to Sun City from large cities, the lack of Yiddishkeit carried some emotional trauma--hence the critical importance of Beth Shalom as a community anchor. On the other hand, the small town emigres from places like Aaron Papermaster's Fargo, were used to being in the decided minority. Fittingly, the latter group played such a profoundly large role in the creation of the synagogue.

Rabbi Kligfeld experienced two troubling situations. One year during the Interfaith Yom Hashoah service, he said: "Christianity has failed." This was a simple rhetorical sentiment not uncommon to many Jews. He meant it. Perhaps in hindsight, the phraseology could have been expressed better. Whatever, it was not intended to give offense. At this utterance, Kligfeld remembered, "a negative reaction from the ministers who were present." The rabbi's comment transcended religious disputation and spoke to the central crisis of what Catholic and Protestant churches did or did not do during the Holocaust. The recitation of *Kaddish* for the six million, notwithstanding, the clergy at the meeting

(including men of genuinely goodwill) missed this very salient point: They would forget it in another uncomfortable circumstance.<sup>22</sup>

Upon his arrival, Kligfeld quickly became active in the Sun City Ministerial Association. He served a term as president. But his fellow clergy were not immune to stereotypes. At one meeting, a Lutheran minister discussed the purchase price of some chairs for the Lakes Club. He joyously exclaimed to his colleagues: "We jewed them down." Kligfeld was shocked by the nonchalant nature of the comment. He was also alarmed by his fellow clergy's reaction to it. No one at the meeting voiced objection to the remark. Kligfeld spoke directly to the minister: "Don't you dare say that again." The rabbi was all by himself. The other clergy stoically sat there. Either the confrontation unnerved them, or they had used the infamous verb themselves in other settings. Regardless, none of them registered a protest and/or stood with Kligfeld.<sup>23</sup> Of course, this was the very kind of comment which prompted Kligfeld to say, "Christianity has failed" in another context. In this instance, it certainly did apply.

Obviously, these were fairly mild events when compared with swastika attacks and fires at synagogues elsewhere around the United States. Sun City Jews could consider themselves to be quite fortunate. Almost all of them remembered far worse episodes in their original hometowns with established Jewish communities.

If anything, gentile Sun Citians were probably amazed by the busy activity among their Jewish neighbors. There were constant articles about Jewish affairs in local newspapers from the virtual inception of Beth Shalom to the present. Generous ministers opened their hearts and doors to the fledgling Jewish community. The Temple succeeded with the efforts of clergy and churches such as Rev. Howard Blackburn of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church at 103rd Ave. and Peoria. "He adopted us," said Daniel Englander.<sup>24</sup> The reverend was instrumental in the use of his church building for the High Holidays in the early years. Perhaps more than anti-Semitism, the Sun City experience demonstrated the power of philo-Semitism. The Holocaust Remembrance Days, Interfaith Thanksgiving dinners, social action activities, and many other celebrations suggest the integration (but not assimilation) of Jews into Del Webb's retirement utopia.

### Rabbi Kligfeld's Retirement

There had never been a reconciliation between the Temple's two rabbis. Resentful about his forced retirement, Michels once predicted: "It's probably going to happen to him (Kligfeld), and I hope I'm around to see it."<sup>25</sup> Michels was incredibly prescient and almost lived long enough to see history repeat itself.

The movement to retire Kligfeld began in 1992. At this time, one of the Havurah study groups prepared to circulate a petition for the rabbi's dismissal. Kligfeld had a strong base in the congregation. But as happened with Michels, newer members were less patient with his style. Critics were unhappy with his sermons, hospital visitations, and the like. Some had a justifiable concern: Beth Shalom was a large congregation and required a vigorous spiritual leader.<sup>26</sup>

President Sanford Sunkin invited this group to his home for a meeting. There was a full airing of views: some members simply wanted a change. Sunkin suggested the group should hold off and avoid a precipitate action since Kligfeld was expected to retire in a couple of years. This effectively bought a few more years for the rabbi.<sup>27</sup>

Ultimately, age conspired against the rabbi. By 1996, he was approaching 80--this was the same age for Michels when he was retired. As members spoke to the issue behind-the-scenes, an informal group to "Dump Kligfeld" gained momentum, and they put the burden of carrying their message to Sunkin and Hilma Brown. As pressure grew, the rabbi vainly tried to resist. He was visibly frail, though the cause of this was unknown at the time. There was the question of his pension amount. As a compromise, it was agreed Julia Kligfeld would receive the pension if the rabbi died first. As events had it, she predeceased the rabbi by seven months. In sum, Sunkin tried to appease the various sides, but in the end "regretted the way the thing was done."<sup>28</sup>

Ultimately, Kligfeld acknowledged the inevitable in mid-1996 and agreed to step down as of July 31, 1997. He and his wife were feted with an appreciation dinner at the Union Hills Country Club on

May 19. Soon thereafter, the rabbi was diagnosed with cancer. For two years he declined chemotherapy and tended to his ailing wife. He kept active with adult education classes at the Temple and in Phoenix. He also conducted High Holiday services for the startup Kol Hamidbar congregation in Sierra Vista, Ariz. The rabbi and Mrs. Kligfeld had plans to relocate eventually closer to their children in Connecticut. But it was not meant to be. Julia soon declined and passed away on Oct. 24, 1998, and the rabbi followed on July 9, 1999. Memorial services were held both in Long Beach, New York and at Beth Shalom. The rabbi and Julia were interred in the Jewish section in the Sunland Cemetery.

Prior to Kligfeld's retirement, a Search Committee chaired by Gary Himler screened for a new rabbi. The committee put together a detailed questionnaire of personal attributes for the desirable candidate. Himler said: "...the overwhelming desire the congregation expressed was that they wanted a rabbi who was warm and who cared for people--aside from being a good teacher and preacher."<sup>29</sup>

There were seventeen applicants for the position. A detailed survey was mailed by the Search Committee to every Temple member. There were 241 responses and these were tallied. The data were broken down by gender and religious tradition (reform/conservative). The vast majority preferred a "comforting, caring" rabbi. This was also the view of more self-described conservative members over those who were reform. Not surprisingly, men overwhelmingly opted for a male rabbi. "The screened field consisted of six names and the selection process narrowed between Rabbis Arthur Abrams and Mark Golub. At the Dec. 1996 Annual Meeting, the members agreed to let the Board make the final selection. This was made early in 1997 and the choice of Rabbi Abrams was made public on Feb. 27."<sup>30</sup>

Kligfeld's retirement came at a difficult time. Beth Shalom had to make choices and this inevitably led to partisanship. An outside observer to the Annual Meeting in 1976 noted the "debates were angry and contentious." The issues of the rabbi's salary, UAHC dues, and membership dues seemed to split the congregation into two factions. An amendment to cut the \$14,000 UAHC dues in half was defeated. It was believed the members do not "know how to disagree politely," and there is a tendency for groups to "attack those who are not with them." The Temple was praised as a beautiful facility and Beth Shalom was "a vibrant congregation with a wide array of activities." However, it was concluded, "conflict seems to be one of the activities they enjoy the most."<sup>31</sup>

### Rabbi Arthur Abrams

The new rabbi was born in New York, but grew up in Southern California. He graduated from California State University in Los Angeles. Abrams had been ordained in 1961 from Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Previously, he held pulpits in Florida, Los Angeles, Wichita, Kansas, and Evansville, Indiana, before his arrival in Sun City. His wife, Claire, had degrees in social work and gerontology. The rabbi assumed the pulpit on the eve of Rosh Hashanah.<sup>32</sup> The couple quickly immersed themselves in the Temple's cultural and social activities. His enthusiasm and drive were quickly noticeable. In keeping with his predecessors, Abrams was interested in teaching classes at the congregation.

Significantly, Abrams enjoyed a good friendship with the ailing Rabbi Kligfeld. The two men frequently took walks together at the nearby Arrowhead Mall and shared rides as needed. The elder rabbi genuinely appreciated Abrams' outreach, warmth, and kindness in his final 18 months residency in Sun City.<sup>33</sup>

### Towards the Millennium

With a new spiritual leader at the helm, Beth Shalom could face the end of the 1990s with confidence and circumspection. The traditions such as lay services in summertime continued. Concern about the dwindling Saturday service attendance was an issue for old-time members. With the establishment of Congregation Beth Emeth's own facility in Sun City West, many predicted the eventual demise of the "minyan." But by the decade's end, it was kept precariously together by congregants who remembered such services in their younger days. The related community center activities and organizations forged onward as unaffiliated Jews made frequent appearances at the

Temple.

There were also leadership style considerations. Veteran Sanford Sunkin returned to the congregation presidency in 1997 and 1998. The son-in-law of the late fundraiser and activist Abraham Tamis, Sunkin was a link to the congregation's early years. He had a "hands on" management style which pleased some and bothered others. Like his predecessors, he took criticisms in stride. In April 1998, he reported:

...Last Friday I was accused of being a dictator by a well known and once very active member of our Congregation. A member who [sic] I respect and consider a confidant [sic]. The statement did not bother me in the least. As a matter of fact, I was pleased that someone thought I had a tight, too tight, control-particularly someone with the Temple background my friend has. Unfortunately, sometimes it does take a dictatorial tactic to get a job done.

At about the same time, another active member told Sunkin he was too much of a fence-sitter, who "can't make decisions." Probably Sunkin's fellow past presidents could commiserate with these mixed observations. Sunkin reflected:

...In my mind,...the negative criticism derives from a small group of "all-talk" no action members on the outside looking in without the slightest idea on how to juggle a 700 member congregation of retirees. I would suggest they ask me. May I point out and I agree, when you straddle a fence more than likely you're going to end up with a sore crotch.

All of this aside, the congregation presidency could also generate *naches*. Sunkin was the recipient of many community-related service and leadership awards. Critics aside, few could seriously challenge Sunkin's devotion to the synagogue. If anything, his precedent-setting four years in the 1990s (1992-93 and 1997-98), set a benchmark standard for others to build and expand upon.

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In 1988, Walter Weiskopf came to my house in Sun City. He said, "We'd like to put you up for second vice president. You're not so great, it's because you're young." [At the time Sunkin was 64.].

Sanford Sunkin<sup>34</sup>

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Joel Forrest presided over the expansion to the office in 1998. Again, more workspace was provided for new computers, a state-of-the-art copier, and the like. At the same time, the Judaica Shop was supervised for many years by Harriet Greenberg, received a new design under the leadership of Sonia "Toni" Rhodes. Furthermore, new glass windows on the Bimah were installed with the direction of Joel Forrest.

When Dusty Rhodes assumed the presidency in January 1999, the Temple was a mature institution. Beth Shalom's 30 years of roots had made it an indelible part of Sun City. Even without a religious school complex, it could boast some of the most functional and best maintained facilities to be found among Jewish congregations in the United States. With the guidance of a highly motivated group of founders and their successors, the Temple had become a unique home for Jewish retirees. In the

process, the congregation carved its own unique place in modern Jewish history.

<sup>1</sup> Minutes, Board of Directors, 1990-99.

<sup>2</sup> Hilma Brown to Our Members, Feb. 26, 1990 (TBS). The \$40,000 was never recovered. The contractor was found, but did not have any assets for attachment.

<sup>3</sup> Program Dedication Sabbath, May 3, 1991; Sanford Sunkin to author, July 18, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Sanford Sunkin to author, Oct. 7, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., *News-Sun* (Sun City, Ariz.), April 26, 1991. Shortly after his tenure as president, Hill returned to his original hometown of Lincoln, Neb. He retained his Beth Shalom membership.

<sup>6</sup> Program, Jan. 17, 1992 (TBS).

<sup>7</sup> Program, Silver Anniversary Celebration of Temple Beth Shalom & Jewish Community Center, 1969-1994, Dec. 11, 1994, pgs. 9 (TBS). Among Beth Shalom's Holocaust refugees and survivors were: Lilo Fern, Harry Fern, Anna Gallia, Erich Gallia, Gary Himler, Abraham Meth, Lillian Meth, Alfred Neumann, Johanna Neumann, and Rose Marie Phillips.

<sup>8</sup> *News-Sun*, April 16, 1993.

<sup>9</sup> *Arizona Republic*, June 12, 1992; Warm Up America, n.d., 1992; The Shofar, n.d., 1993; Sisterhood News & Views, n.d., 1994 (TBS); *Sun Cities Independent*, Feb. 1-7, 1995. After the passing of Lorraine Weltman, the project was renamed in her memory. The committee was chaired by Caryl Meltzer. The Sisterhood knitters through 1999 produced over 1,000 blankets coordinated by Camille Forrest and Sara Grossman. Gladys Gordon to author, Aug. 8, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Bill Ennis to Kligfeld, Dec. 8, 1994; miscellaneous items, n.d., 1994 (TBS).

<sup>11</sup> Program, Dr. Milton D. Glick, March 23, 1992; Brotherhood Program for the Fall Season, 1992-1993; Brotherhood President's Message, Oct. 1994, Jan. 1995, Jan. 1997; "Batter Up" Invitation, April 17, 1995. Sen. Barry Goldwater spoke at a dinner on Jan. 23, 1995; Reid DeWalt to Robert Siegel, March 4, 1994 (TBS).

<sup>12</sup> By 1997, Beth Shalom eventually boasted the only stage in the Phoenix Jewish community. Program flyers, Anne Raihill Memorial Lecture Series, 1994 (TBS); Sanford Sunkin to author, Oct. 7, 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Program, Dr. William Van Ornam, Nov. 12, 1994 (TBS). Van Ornam became musical director upon Arthur Clark's retirement in 1991. Program, Silver Anniversary Celebration of Temple Beth Shalom & Jewish Community Center, 1969-1994, Dec. 11, 1994, pg.7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Program, 25th Anniversary Service, Dec. 9, 1994 (TBS). President Melvin Abrahamson provided greetings at the service. The past presidents who participated were: Daniel Englander, Irving Raihill, Irving Pallin, Leo Hill, Walter Weiskopf, Daniel Hirschl, Hilma Brown, and Sanford Sunkin.

<sup>15</sup> *Sun City West Independent*, Nov. 30-Dec. 6, 1994; *Jewish News of Greater Phoenix*, Dec. 2, 1994.

<sup>16</sup> *News-Sun*, Dec. 2, 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Program, "Computer Literacy for Total Beginners," n.d., 1994; President's Message, March 1995; Excerpts from April Board Meeting (TBS).

<sup>18</sup> President's Message, April, May, Summer, Oct. 1995; An Important Notice-building fund suspension (TBS).

<sup>19</sup> Sisterhood News & Views, March 1995; Muriel Rose interview, Oct. 6, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>20</sup> *News-Sun*, Oct. 26, 1995.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Michels' work for the bereaved encouraged members to create a Chevra Kedisha to help families with funeral arrangements and shiva. Norman Wigutoff chaired the committee for twenty years. "He was available 24 hours a day," said Sidney Breslow. Wigutoff received assistance from Sidney Breslow, Irving Raihill, and Isadore Rabinovitz. When his health began to decline, Wigutoff gradually began to transfer the committee chair to Sanford Sunkin in 1994. Sidney Breslow and Sanford Sunkin to author, Sept. 5, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Englander interview, Oct. 22, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).



<sup>23</sup> Rabbi Bernard Kligfeld interview, Oct. 20, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Op. Cit., Englander interview.

<sup>26</sup> Rabbi Albert Plotkin interview, Oct. 23, 1998 (Phoenix, Ariz.).

<sup>27</sup> Op. Cit., Gladys Gordon.

<sup>28</sup> Sanford Sunkin interview, Nov. 5, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.); Op.Cit., Gladys Gordon. Beth Shalom learned from the Michels and Kligfeld retirement issues. At the Annual Meeting on Dec. 9, 1999, the by-laws were changed: Article IV, Section 5, "Mandatory retirement age of the Rabbi shall be 75 years of age. This may be extended, year by year, at the discretion of the Board of Directors." Tempe Beth Shalom Annual Meeting minutes, Dec. 9, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> *Jewish News of Greater Phoenix*, Aug. 22, 1997.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.; Report of the Search Committee, Gary Himler, Chair, Jan. 1997 (TBS). Gary Himler to author, Dec. 31, 1999. Kligfeld's exit was not an easy one. He wanted to retain an office in the Temple. There were space limitations and the Board was against Kligfeld's continued occupancy after July 31, 1997. The rabbi briefly occupied the old library room across from his study. Eventually, he vacated the building completely. Op. Cit., Sunkin interview.

<sup>31</sup> Rabbi Alice Dubinsky Visit to Annual Meeting, Temple Beth Shalom, Sun City, AZ, Dec. 10, 1996. The Pacific Southwest Council office had been alerted to a petition for Beth Shalom to withdraw from the UAHC, Jerry Black phone consultation with JM (Rabbi Janet Marder), Oct. 29, 1996. (Beth Shalom File/UAHC Pacific Southwest Council, Los Angeles, Calif.)

<sup>32</sup> *Jewish News of Greater Phoenix*, Aug. 22, 1997; *Sun Cities Independent*, Sept. 10, 1997; *News-Sun*, Sept. 12, 1998. As rabbi at Temple Emanuel in Beverly Hills, Calif. (1963-65), Abrams confirmed Fred Greenspahn, the rabbinical student who officiated at Beth Shalom's first High Holidays in 1969.

<sup>33</sup> Kligfeld interview, Oct. 20, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>34</sup> From the Presidential "Sweet," *The Shofar*, March 1998.; Op. Cit., Sunkin interview, Nov. 5, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

## CONCLUSION

...To form a congregation in our day and age is, it seems, something of an act of courage – if not blind faith! And yet Beth Shalom is surely different. I recall Dr. Papermaster's comment about a month ago that this is one congregation not founded in order to provide a religious school. And that is no small achievement, for such a group must be one whose chief concern is not simply guaranteeing Jewish children, but rather finding Judaism for themselves. Certainly there will be few Bar Mitzvahs at which to gather, and it is unlikely that much time should be spent discussing "alternatives to the draft," a subject which has, since 1965, slowly grown to occupy a major proportion of the efforts at many Temples. What then does a congregation such as this one do?

...This congregation is young; its traditions few. There is the opportunity to discover and decide which forms of religious expression can be the most meaningful to the conditions here. To congregate is no small accomplishment. To learn with and from others is the function of our tradition. And in the process, the act of congregation, joining together, strengthens itself: meeting others, learning about others, learning from others, learning about oneself: We become at-one with them and with ourselves.

Fred Greenspahn, Student Rabbi  
Rosh Hashanah sermon at  
Congregation Beth Shalom  
Sept. 12, 1969<sup>1</sup>

History is a lens by which the past can be explored. Like any prism, it can be focused in different ways. In the compilation of Temple Beth Shalom's history, one can see this constantly at work.

First, several congregation history accounts reflected the words of the Temple's early members. Secondly, a bevy of original documents substantiated these works and validated their accuracy. Third, a re-examination of materials and new interviews offered additional insights on these efforts. Fourth, the perspective of time allowed for new interpretations. In essence, all of these helped in the effort to explain Beth Shalom's past.

### Links from Past to Present

The Sun City experience addresses the merging of several post-World War II themes in American life: suburbanization, the growth of the sunbelt, senior living, and increased life-expectancy. Many persons who came to Sun City believed it would be their retirement abode. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, this was viewed as a final home. For some this would be true. But from the 1980s onward, many older residents and Temple members did not want or could not maintain anymore their houses with the "green pebble lawns." With children in other parts of the country, it was frequently difficult for aging parents to regularly see their family. Weather aside, Arizona was not always a convenient place to visit. As such, some Sun Citians sold their homes and moved back to their families. In the process, they reconnected with the world they had known before Del Webb's "Paradise Town."

When you walk into the Temple's lobby, you see the "Tree of Life" donated by William and Mary Bloyed. All of those little leaves are carefully engraved. As you look elsewhere, other plaques list the names of members past and present. Some were officers. Some were the "worker bees." Some were financial contributors and donors. Others, just wanted to be remembered--by somebody.

It is easy to write history as the saga of leaders. But with Temple Beth Shalom, we see much more

than this. It was a large enterprise conducted by very mature people, who otherwise could have spent their time on purely leisure activities. One reads with wonder and admiration about the early meetings in homes, members packing up the prayer books and makeshift ark in the recreation centers, coffees for new members, preparations for the food fairs, musical skits, fundraising efforts and the like.

For many members who are new to Sun City, these are just names. But the synagogue perpetuates these names for good reasons: these men and women collectively built Temple Beth Shalom.

A visit to Sunland Cemetery allows one to revisit many of names seen on the Temple's plaques. Just feet apart from one another, in neatly arranged rows and in view of desert trees, are the resting places of many who made the Temple and formed it as a distinct community. In this way, the cemetery is a vital link with the Temple: a living body.

Life cycles tell a story too. The obituaries from the 1970s and early 1980s shows many of the first generation members were born in Russia. This mirrored the mass Jewish immigration to the U.S. in the years prior to World War I. Increasingly, American-born congregants formed the base of the Temple's membership. These were the children of the East European-born Jews. By 1985, the few foreign-born obituaries showed some member's origins in Germany and the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. These were refugees and survivors from the Holocaust. Ten years hence, the majority of Temple members will be from the depression-era generation. The "baby boomers" will follow right behind them about 2010.

Rabbi Albert Plotkin witnessed the first 30 years of Temple Beth Shalom. He helped them organize in 1969 and was a frequent guest at the Temple. A number of his older Temple Beth Israel members retired to Sun City and joined Temple Beth Shalom. Over the decades, he was impressed with the friendship and warmth found in this senior community. He said: "At *Kaddish*, many people stand and recite for their friends from the past. They really love each other."<sup>2</sup>

### Beth Shalom as a Model

The essence of Beth Shalom is easy to formulate. Along with Congregation Beth Emeth, they are one of only a handful of retirement synagogues to be found in the United States.<sup>3</sup> These congregations pioneered a new lifestyle for retired Jews in the sunbelt states. It remains to be seen if this trend will spread among aging Jewish populations elsewhere in the years ahead.

Beth Shalom developed towards the end of Sun City's first decade. The split from the existing, more traditional congregation was due to personalities, class and ritual differences. This in itself, was not unusual. From its birth, the Temple's members created their own spiritual, social, and community needs. As Rabbi Plotkin succinctly put it: "There was no model for Beth Shalom. They succeeded. They defined a different kind of Reform Judaism."<sup>4</sup> From the very start with two days for Rosh Hashanah and a Saturday morning service, the Temple established its own identity within the Reform movement. As a community center, the congregation welcomed the unaffiliated Jews of Sun City. With a diverse array of programs, it replicated "family" for people, many of whom were in a self-imposed exile from their former homes. Perhaps, Beatrice Bernstein expressed this best: "My travels do include visits to my family, but my extended *mishpoche* in Sun City is my greatest source of comfort, strength and support."<sup>5</sup>

### Lessons from Sun City

The Beth Shalom story is instructive. It both answers and poses questions. The tenuous early years demonstrated how sheer determination could overcome the problems associated with small numbers, modest finances, and itinerant facilities. Beth Shalom's fundraising methods were very conservative--a modest-sized edifice was built without any mortgage. But was eschewment of a loan a good long-term strategy? The "pay-as-you-go" policy was reassuring to a senior population on fixed incomes. But would a loan have been more cost effective in the long run? At least two large loans were offered at the time of initial construction and the congregation turned them down. Under rapid growth, the Temple underwent two major, costly expansions within a ten-year period after its initial construction.

Another subject is the issue of rabbinical employment. The first two hiring actions suggest the need

for Board personnel committees to establish written criteria and performance requirements to better evaluate their applicants. The Beth Shalom leadership learned about these needs the hard way and was able to make an informed choice when a third rabbi was engaged in 1997.

Perhaps more importantly, the forced retirement of rabbis requires guidelines as well. At what point is it necessary for a congregation to discharge an appreciated, aging rabbi? When this happens, can this be gracefully accomplished? As we have seen, the congregation finally voted a by-laws change in 1999 (which mandated retirement at age 75) to better define this matter for the future. These are not new issues, but all synagogues need to address them.

Lastly, Beth Shalom reveals the potential for retired persons in a positive environment. The Temple was a needed institution. Many founders and members had been active in their former Jewish communities. However, Sun City provided others the opportunity to fill the gap for more leaders and workers. In sum, the Temple allowed some retired people to "grow" and "blossom out." At Temple Beth Shalom, these senior citizens "became somebody."<sup>6</sup> Many found "community" for the first time in their lives. Others re-established the kind of middle class Jewish society they once knew. Their retirement age notwithstanding, some members belonged to the Temple for a longer period than any other synagogue in their lives. Beth Shalom's membership was not drawn from a radical political tradition. But the election of two women as Temple presidents speaks to an entirely new concept of gender equality and acceptance. The Temple also developed an exceptionally strong lay leadership with its own self-programming mechanism. The congregation was fortunate to have dedicated members with the time and talents to accomplish these tasks: everyday operation of the synagogue, the ability to conduct religious services on their own, and creation of meaningful cultural and social activities to address a variety of interests. The end result of these endeavors was the creation of an immaculate facility used for multiple purposes on a daily basis. In between the golf courses, bridge games, and the Sundome, the members built a solid structure for senior Jewish life. In the process, they maintained good relations with their Sun City neighbors and became an integral part of the greater Phoenix Jewish community.

They came to Sun City from many places: usually from the northeast and midwest. The congregants represented every major Jewish tradition from Ultra-Orthodox to Reform. Some were photographers, fire department dispatchers, and salespersons. Others were homemakers, physicians, lawyers, social workers, educators, and accountants. Whatever their origins, the members of Temple Beth Shalom arrived in the desert and embarked upon a remarkable project.. Collectively, we can learn a great deal from such people. As young Fred Greenspahn suggested on a very warm, Rosh Hashanah eve in 1969: "To ponder the purpose of prayer or social action, consider the values which our tradition has brought to such problems, and then map out a significant form of action."<sup>7</sup> This, the members of Temple Beth Shalom did and continue to do.

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<sup>1</sup> Greenspahn, Fred, "In the Midst of a Congregation," Congregation Beth Shalom, Sun City, Ariz., Sept. 12, 1969, pgs. 2, 3, 6. The author wishes to extend his appreciation to Rabbi Greenspahn for making available his sermons delivered in September 1969.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Albert Plotkin interview, Oct. 23, 1998 (Phoenix, Ariz.). From the onset, Rabbi Plotkin was an early advisor to Aaron Papermaster. He was in attendance at many of the Temple's major celebrations and officiated at funerals for Temple members before Rabbi Michels' arrival.

<sup>3</sup> Other retirement congregations are located in Leisure World/Laguna Woods, California and San Marcos Island, Florida. Rabbi Arthur Abrams to author, Sept. 21, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Op. Cit., Rabbi Plotkin interview.

<sup>5</sup> B'nai Brith Magazine, n.p., 1991? (TBS). Born in Brooklyn, but raised in Philadelphia, Bernstein came to Sun City in 1978. She joined both Beth Shalom and Congregation Beth Emeth. Beatrice Bernstein interview, Oct. 20, 1998 (Sun City, Ariz.).

<sup>6</sup> Op. Cit., Plotkin interview.

<sup>7</sup> Op. Cit., Greenspahn, pg. 6.

APPENDIX A

BOARD PRESIDENTS OF TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

President	Year
Aaron Papermaster	1969-70
Max Schaffer	1970-71
Daniel Englander	1971-73
Irving Raihill	1974-75
Irving Pallin	1976-78
Jack Roth	1979-80
Hyman Parks	1981
Sandra Rubin	1981-83
Walter Weiskopf	1984
Benjamin Feldman	1985-86
Walter Weiskopf	1987
Daniel Hirschl	1988
Leo Hill	1989
Hilma Brown	1990-91
Sanford Sunkin	1992-93
Melvin Abrahamson	1994
Jerry Black	1995-96
Sanford Sunkin	1997-98
Sherwin "Dusty" Rhodes	1999-2000

## APPENDIX B

### SISTERHOOD PRESIDENTS

President	Year
Henrietta Fine	1969
Esther Bassman	1970
Helen Bogat	1971
Mary Wilson	1972-73
Shirley Solomon	1974
Muriel Rose	1975-76
Sidele Rostholder	1977-78
Sandra Rubin	1979-80
Melva Simon	1980-81
Minnie Dunn, Lee Kimerling	1981
Shirley Lipton	1982-83
Lilyan Weiskopf,	1983-84
Betty Bearman, Bunnie Englander,	
Lee Kimerling	1984-85
Hilma Brown	1985-87
Caryl Meltzer	1987-89
Lauli Black	1989
Lorraine Weltman	1990
Beatrice Drucker	1991
Gladys Gordon	1992-94
Eleanor Frank	1994-95
Florence Sunkin	1995-97
Charlotte Brody	1997-99
Gladys Gordon, Caryl Meltzer	1999-2000

## APPENDIX C

### BROTHERHOOD PRESIDENTS

President	Year
Walter Weiskopf	1979-80
Irving Pallin	1981-82
Jack Bromfield	1983-84
Robert Hart	1985
Abraham Meth	1986-90
Jerry Black	1991
Bernard Shuer	1992
Michael Zarin	1993-94
Irving Lipman	1995-96
Larry Mattal	1997-98
Earl Schatz	1999-2000

