

People & Issues: Sophie—up from Roberts Street!

# The Councilman is a Lady!

By ALBERT W. BLOOM, Executive Editor of The Chronicle

**T**he Councilman is a lady! Sophie Masloff, first Jewish woman Councilman in Pittsburgh history, looked out of the window of a comfortable city club, toyed with her fish, and said wistfully:

"It's a long way from Roberts Street for me."

Actually, the site of old Roberts Street was just a few blocks away uptown, but to Sophie the distance was measured in more than feet or miles.

"It's a long way..."

Sophie smiled, a far-away smile:

"I've been in Pittsburgh more than 50 years. For 40 of those years I've been in politics."

"I went out of Fifth Avenue High School in the Depression to work in politics."

"It was the time of the Depression and the WPA and our family was in dire straits, as so many other families were in the Hill District of Pittsburgh and throughout America."

Sophie Masloff is the only woman member of City Council. "I wish there were another one, at least, I wouldn't feel so lonesome," she smiled. "I'll be glad to get out and work for another woman on City Council."

That's just like Sophie. Always ready to do something for somebody else first. Even before herself. Even though Sophie has her own election to be busy about. She was elected to Council in a special election May 27, 1976 to fill out the term of another doughty woman politician, Amy Ballinger.

Now, Sophie is after her own full term on City Council which will make her the only Jewish woman ever to sit on City Council for consecutive terms. She faces the May election with equanimity, but with plenty of vigor. That's Sophie. Don't leave any political stone unturned.

Her husband, Jack, who just retired as a security officer at Equitable Life Assurance Association, is fully in accord with Sophie's new career in politics. "He goes right along with it; he knows how interested I am in doing things in politics."

The Masloff's have a married daughter,



SOPHIE MASLOFF

*Yesterday's bread—nourished success:*

Mrs. Linda Busa of Indianapolis, Ind. Also, there's a new baby girl granddaughter, Jennifer, Jennie for short, and "Shaindel" when she was named in the synagogue.

Sophie, who lives at 3566 Beechwood Boulevard, was born and raised on Roberts Street on the Hill, near the old Passavant Hospital, the daughter of immigrant parents from Rumania, Jennie and Louis Freedman.

At age 5, Sophie lost her father. His death put heavy burdens on her Mother, Jennie, who now had to raise a family of four all by herself.

Sophie was the youngest and her memory of those tough times are still with her today. That's why she's always reaching out to help someone, even on the little things.

No one who has a small problem need be afraid to call Councilwoman Masloff. You can find her in her office on the phone almost any time checking out big and little items. She's never too proud to check on

the lack of garbage pickups at someone's backyard.

Her times were tough but her memories are somehow sweet, nevertheless.

"When we brought a chicken to Rabbi Kochin and he said it was 'trafe', not ritually fit to eat, we threw it out. We never mentioned that we could not buy another one that week. We ate yesterday's old bread. In fact, we were hardly ever able to buy fresh bread for a long time." Sophie still keeps a kosher home.

Her mother raised the children and eked out a living by working in a Pittsburgh "tobie factory". Who these days remembers Pittsburgh "stogies" and "tobies"? Sophie does.

"My mother didn't like to ask for help from anyone." Maybe that's why the Council-lady goes about ready to help anyone in need.

Sophie climbed her way up to improve the quality of Pittsburgh life. One way is through more jobs, diversified industry and cable television! She's chairman of Council's Cable-TV committee. "Remember, we'll have eight public service channels!"

Cable television is a special baby. "The reception here in Pittsburgh is so poor. Besides, cable television will open up new avenues of education and entertainment in this area," she believes.

Her own education was interrupted, but after Fifth Avenue High, she took courses at both Duquesne and the University of Pittsburgh.

Sophie is interested in Jewish education and her daughter attended Hillel Academy and a plaque attests to Sophie's own interest.

She's busy at the B'nai Emunoh Congregation in Squirrel Hill and finds time for interfaith work between her work in Council and being "a fulltime housewife." Sophie never felt that she was anything else but a "liberated woman."

Eager to keep Pittsburgh "someplace special" in community relationships, Sophie surprisingly enough has been president of the Catholic Youth Association of Pittsburgh; treasurer of the

1975 City-Team Candidates; chairman of the 1973 Woman's Day for the State Federation of Democratic Women.

She is a member of the Pennsylvania Affirmative Action Committee, American Business and Professional Women's Association, and active in March of Dimes, Heart Fund, Children's Hospital, Disabled American Veterans, and Hadassah.

In 1973, Sophie was "Woman of the Year" in Allegheny County. Later, she received the John F. Kennedy Award here for "Political Activity, Above and Beyond."

Branching out from the local area, "Councilman Masloff", was Secretary of the Electoral College for Carter.

This year, she was named by Governor Milton Shapp to be a member of the Allegheny Regional Planning Council and the Governor's Justice Commission.

One of Sophie's goals is to see that every Pittsburgh street is safe to walk out on, to and from home, at any time of day or night. "Everyone likes to meet the cop on the neighborhood beat. It makes all of us feel good."

Pittsburgh's only City Council-lady began her career as an assistant to the late County Commissioner John J. Kane, one of the keenest political leaders in this area. Later she was appointed to the Court of Common Pleas and served there as Minute Clerk until she was elected to Council.

Nobody cleared a path for Sophie in politics; she worked her way up painstakingly from the lower to upper rungs. She believes in ethnic representation in city government, especially in such a city-of-ethnicity as Pittsburgh.

People and groups don't get forgotten that way by the political leaders, Sophie says forthrightly and philosophically.

"I've lived and worked with all kinds of the diverse people of Pittsburgh," opines Sophie, "and I've had to fight my way along the way for 40 years; but I've loved it, and it made me a better and more appreciative person of the things we now all have in this town."

Pittsburgh's Roberts Street is not ever really very far away from Sophie Masloff. First Lady, of Council, that is.