

70th Anniversary
Dinner Script
1969

WHAT IT WAS WAS LOVE

OPENING

SONG: It's a Lovely Day Today

Francine: Good afternoon, we would like to help celebrate the 70th birthday of the Sisterhood of the Tree of Life Congregation. From beginning to present, Sisterhood has provided a service of assistance to the congregation. We can find the reason for this service in every phase of Sisterhood's history: What it was was love. And we want to review with you some of the joys and sadness that have drawn the sisterhood together and present some songs that seem most appropriate to the spirit of Sisterhood. Seven decades of history have passed as quickly as seven years or seven days.

SONG: Try to Remember

SCENE ONE

FRANCINE: Let's look in on a coffee klutch that occurred shortly after the birth of Sisterhood in 1899.

RABBI FRIED: Well, Mrs. Jackson, these refreshments are delicious, but I can see that you and Grandma have a secret. Tell me what it is before you burst.

MRS. JACKSON: Oh, alright. We thought that since the idea to found the Sisterhood came up here in Grandma Goldstein's kitchen, this would be the most appropriate spot to present you with the results of our most recent fund raising enterprise. Here is the check for \$1,000 that we netted from last week's Benefit Bazaar at the Dusquesne Garden.

RABBI: My goodness. The Congregation isn't exactly accustomed to gifts of this size. I'm not certain whether "congratulations" or "thank you" should come first. So let me say them both in the same breath.

GRANDMA: (laughs) Rabbi Fried, you know that Sisterhood could never have raised all that silver if we hadn't brewed up enthusiasm for the Bazaar in the midst of our coffee and sewing circles.

RABBI: Grandma, I've often wondered just how much sewing really gets done in the midst of one of Sisterhood's meetings.

SONG: Pick a Little

SCENE TWO

FRANCINE: In the second decade of our life, we were pleased and flattered by the visit of President Roosevelt shortly before we celebrated the Golden Anniversary of the Congregation.

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT: I am indebted to Rabbi Coffey for enabling me to make your acquaintance. Pittsburgh shall always be far more than a stop-over on my journeys to the West. Your kindness as individuals and your devotion as a Sisterhood serves as inspiration to my own faith.

SCENE THREE

BARBARA: In the 1920's, Sisterhood acquired a new spiritual advisor and the Congregation a youthful guiding hand - Rabbi Herman Hallperin, who came to Tree of Life while yet a senior seminary student. Sisterhood welcomed him with open arms.

SONG: "Consider Yourself"

BARBARA: Never was the joy of prosperity and peace after war more epitomized than by the \$3,000 presented to the Congregation after Sisterhood's Purim Show of 1927, which featured children of the congregation.

SONG: Purim Day

SCENE FOUR

SONG: Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?

FRANCINE: Sadness followed our joys during Sisterhood's fourth decade when America was locked fast in the Great Depression. With so many out of work and out of cash, we struggled to help the congregation survive. Fuel bills and salaries were often unpaid. Money for membership dues simply was not available. As if economic disaster was not sufficient plight, the Sisterhood Dance of 1936 was cancelled because of the Flood that ravaged the Pittsburgh area.

MAYOR: Madame President and Madame Secretary, as Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh I'm honored to have you call today. I had been looking forward to attending this year's Sisterhood Dance, and I am disappointed that you had to cancel it because of the flood.

MADAME-PRESIDENT: Mr. Mayor, we have come today to tell you about a change in Sisterhood's plans.

MAYOR (brightening): Well, I shall assume by your very presence here that the changes are encouraging.

MADAME SECRETARY: We think they are. I want to read a portion of our minutes for you. (Reading from journal of minutes)
"Be it resolved (1) that the Sisterhood Dance shall be re-scheduled four weeks from today, and in as much as this dance has always been one of Sisterhood's most successful financial investments as well as a delightful social event be it

(SCENE FOUR - CONTINUED)

further resolved that (2) all proceeds from this dance be turned over to the City of Pittsburgh Flood Relief Committee.

MAYOR: Ladies, I thank you for the generosity of the Sisterhood. And I realize that this kindness happens at a time when your own treasury is none too full. Let me assure you that I will be among the first to arrive.

LADIES (laugh)

SONG: Mr. Mayor, "Won't you dance with me."

DANCE

(Lights out)

NARRATOR: Fortunately the anguish of the Depression was ending during the latter years of the 30's, and Sisterhood continued to assist the Congregation rather than struggle to keep it from sinking.

NARRATOR TWO (BARB): So many of the families of the Congregation moved from Oakland to Squirrel Hill, that it became a necessity to move our Hebrew School to Squirrel Hill. We found suitable quarters on Forbes Avenue near Shady.

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NARRATOR THREE (BOB): This was the first progressive Hebrew school in Pittsburgh because classes were held three days a week. The Congregation also planned to build a new Synagogue on land at the corner of Wilkens and Shady.

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NARRATOR TWO (BARB): How would the Sisterhood be able to raise funds for this dream of a new synagogue?

NARRATOR (FRAN): We started with the Thanksgiving Eve dances at the Schenley Hotel. And we established the Gift luncheons, which later became the Donor luncheons. We raised large amounts of money from these events for the Building Fund, wondering if this would only be a dream.

SONG: The Quest (Bob)

SCENE FIVE

NARRATOR: Our dream was interrupted by the horror of the Second World War. Sisterhood concentrated her efforts on war relief. Women of the neighborhood joined with Sisterhood in sewing and rolling bandages for the Red Cross, armed forces and children overseas. We sold stamps and war bonds (15,000 dollars' worth at one Bond Brunch for which we received a citation from the Treasury Department) and bought bonds with the receipts of the 1944 Honor Luncheon. With so many of our loved ones serving in the military, we contributed both woman-power and money to the USO canteens and Serva-Camp project. Our fondest hopes were expressed in the following song: God Bless America (in three part)

NARRATOR: After the war ended, we returned to our Synagogue responsibilities for in 1947 the decision was made to begin construction of the new Synagogue. Sisterhood proudly assumed a pledge of \$35,000.

NARRATOR (BOB): In 1948, our love and hopes focused upon the new State of Israel.

SONG: Hero, Israel

SCENE SIX

SONG: I Remember It Well

NARRATOR: You know, I have been trying to decide on the most memorable events of Sisterhood's history in the 50's and I think I'll leave the choice up to these two ladies.

BARB: My fondest memory is of Sisterhood's Golden Anniversary celebration in 1949 when we observed the first Sisterhood Sabbath ever held in Pittsburgh.

SONG: Sabbath Prayer

FRAN: I liked the Sisterhood Dances in the 50's because with 600 guests I never had to worry about running out of partners. Ha!

BARB: Maybe my proudest moment was realizing in 1952 that Sisterhood had paid off all of her first pledge to the Building Fund.

FRAN: Well, I think I was even prouder when we made our second pledge for an additional \$50,000. I began to think the entire Sisterhood was Mashuga! Ha! Ha!

BARB: Listen, the mashuginah time was after the Playhaus bought the Craft Avenue synagogue and we had to traipse among three neighboring synagogues to hold our own services. Talk about musical chairs!

FRAN: Ha ha, Ma ha - My favorite memories are of the Hakel performances. That was such a good name for the drama group

(SCENE SIX - CONTINUED)

which was organized by Sally Naft, since "Hakol" means "voice" in Hebrew. And those shows never failed to entertain as well as inspire Sisterhood toward service in the spirit of Judaism. The early productions were rather light-hearted. Remember this?

SONG: Sisterhood Gal

NARRATOR: Oh, I have to interrupt to ask you to play that portion of "Tales of Sisterhood" from 1952.

SKIT: Hakol Rehearses (Barb - Director, Fran - Rebecah; Bob - Narrator)

BARB: All right, all right, cut out the schmoos. We're ready for rehearsal. And remember if your jokes can't be used in the script, save them for later.

FRAN: I am Rebecah. I am Rebecah. I am Rebecah. I am Rebecah???

BARB: If only Rowan and Martin belonged to the Free of Life.

BOB: Very interesting.

FRAN: But my favorite memory of the 50's comes from a later Hakol production. Do you remember "Eve of Eden"?

BARB: Oh, yes, I know what you're thinking of. It's my favorite too.

NARRATOR: And mine as well. You've decided for me. Sing it again for us now.

SONG: Summertime theme from "Eve of Eden"

SCENE SEVEN

SONG (Starts in black out. Lights come up well before song ends.) "Aquarius

FRAN: The pace of Sisterhood's activity has quickened in the 60's as has the pace of our world generally.

BARB: In 1961, the Sisterhood Room of the Synagogue received a face lifting.

BOB: The new Sanctuary was dedicated in 1963, and just last year the interior of the Ark was newly decorated.

FRAN: In 1964, we assisted in the Congregation's centennial celebration.

BOB: In 1967 - Sisterhood assumed a third pledge for the Building Fund, which will bring her total contribution to more than 135 thousand dollars.

BARB: After 47 years as our spiritual leader, Rabbi Halperin became Rabbi Emeritus in 1968, we joined in honoring him at his testimonial dinner on January 19th of this year.

FRAN: Rabbi Solomon M. Kaplan came to the Tree of Life Congregation in August of 1968, as our new spiritual leader, where he was officially installed on April 25th of this year.

SONG: Getting to Know You

(SCENE SEVEN - CONTINUED)

BARB: Today, we are gathered together to commemorate our 70th birthday - rich in the wisdom of seven decades of experience and young with the energies of loving friends. We have more willing hands than ever to offer in our service of love.

SONG: One Hand, One Heart (duet)

FINALE

FRAN: We take our leave of you knowing that from Sisterhood's earliest days until the present her reason for being has never changed and it is more important than ever today - Wat it was - and is - is love! And we propose this toast to you all----

SONG: To Life and Shalom Medley

To life, to life L'Chaim

If you've been lucky then ~~Sunday~~^{Monday} was
no worse than ~~the~~^{Sunday} was
drink L'Chaim

~~To us~~ ~~Send~~ ~~to~~ our good fortune
be happy be healthy long life

and if our good fortune never
comes here's to whatever comes
drim

