

Sisterhood's "75" Anniversary

1974 Annual

Tree of Life Sect'd

Mrs. Gene Hotel

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY

SONG: "A Bicycle Built For Two" (Gay 90's Medley)

M: The time is 1899, and it's a man's world.

The entire country is arranged by men for their satisfaction. Men are, in fact--

F: --well, in theory at least--

M: --masters of their households and the nation. Women are banned from voting booths, nightclubs, restaurants, saloons, and arrested for smoking cigarettes on public streets.

F: George Bernard Shaw's opinion of American women was this:

M: "Every American woman says she is an absolute exception...But they're all exactly the same..."

However they are very well-dressed and extraordinarily good-looking."

F: But their subordination in society didn't stop women from playing active and beneficial roles. A part of this activity was the founding of the Sisterhood of the Tree of Life Congregation, whose purpose was to aid and strengthen the congregation, although it was then known as--

M: --the Ladies Auxiliary Society, the first Sisterhood in Pittsburgh. This new women's organization runs bazaars, and sponsors dances --proving to be the social highlights of the Jewish community.

F: But whether a bicycle or a social issue, women always took the back seat. And that was how

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American men wanted their women:

M: Beautiful!

F: --but not so bright and sassy that they wandered from their place in the home.

M: The revolution of women--

F: The emancipation of women--

M: from male guardianship--

F: from male domination--

M: as well as from their ^{elegant gowns} beautiful clothing--

F: needing ^{metal} steel-reinforced corsets--

M: --was just beginning.

M & F: Never before had the theatre aroused such interest. First Nights were important social occasions.

M: It was in these times that the synagogue had been moved to a new building on Craft Avenue.

F: What a coincidence it is that this building was later to become:

M & F: --the Pittsburgh Playhouse!

SONG: "Merry Widow Waltz"

F: A humorist from those times wrote--

M: "They haven't the right to vote, but they control the men who do. They haven't the right to make laws, but they have the privilege of breakin' em, which is better. They haven't the right of a fair trial by a jury of peers, but they have the privilege of an unfair trial by a jury of admiring inferiors."

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M: Though most women were content to play the traditional role of keeper of the home--

F: --a growing band of determined females managed to maintain their homes and venture into the exciting "man's world."

M: They became a force to be reckoned with in industry, public affairs--

F: --and at home! At first blush the men thought:

M: This is an invasion of male precincts!

F: But they were glad the Sisterhood and the women of the nation were at hand as our country was called to war.

M & F: The Great World War.

M: Little did we know it would only be the first.

SONG: "Over There"

M: The battle of the sexes took an unsettling turn during the second decade of this century, brought about by the emergence of a new kind of female; one who drove automobiles, smoked cigarettes, bobbed her hair, and generally kicked up her heels shocking her conservative elders.

M & F: And in roared the Twenties!

F: Declaring independence and equality with men, this emancipated lady discarded the corsets and cumbersome petticoats of her older sister.

M: Make-up came into general acceptance, skirts were shortened, dresses made simple, and sometimes they revealed--the back of the torso!

M & F: Dance halls sprang up like mushrooms!

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F: --to satisfy the growing urge for women to stretch their limbs, dance up a storm,--

M & F: --and be happy!

SONG: "I Want To Be Happy". (piano & dancing only)

M: It was in 1922 that Rabbi Herman Hailperin became the new rabbi of the congregation, fresh from the Seminary. His immediate interest in the Sisterhood led to his developing cultural programs and classes, and to his becoming the catalyst of many successful Sisterhood ventures for 47 years. 47 years of service until he became rabbi emeritus in 1968. To the Sisterhood and the Congregation, Rabbi Herman Hailperin will always be an inspiration.

F: Returning to the 20's (1927), the Sisterhood was busy with its Purim Show, realizing a great profit, but more importantly--involving children who would later grow up to be presidents of the Sisterhood and the Congregation!

M: Adult education classes became very popular in the Sisterhood--long before they were in vogue--~~and were well-attended in that age of feminine stepping out.~~ Meetings, competitions, and even dance-lessons flourished.

M & F: The 20' were happy, prosperous times.

F: 1931.

M: The Great Depression.

F: What was so great about it?

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M: The economy ^{was} ↓ at a stand-still. Nickels
for corner-sold apples were scarce.

F: In the congregation--staff salaries weren't
always payable.

M: Money for membership dues was scarce.

F: No one could anticipate or avoid--

M & F: the Depression.

SONG: "I've Got Plenty of Nothin'!"

M: The years moved on.

F: 1936.

M: The Sisterhood in hopes to brighten spirits
(and raise funds for the congregation) announced:

F: --a dance!!

M: --that they would sponsor. But what the
Depression didn't stop--

M & F: --a record flood did.

M: The Sisterhood looked beyond its own needs and
recognized the greater plight of the community.

The Dance was re-scheduled, but the proceeds this
time were to go to the relief of the flood victims
of Pittsburgh.

F: In '37, as the conditions of the Depression
became less severe, the Sisterhood held its first
donor luncheon, the first Sisterhood donor luncheon
held in Pittsburgh.

M: In those years neighborhoods shifted, as they
always do. More and more Tree of Life families
moved from Oakland to Squirrel Hill. Thus the next

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big challenge was to build a new synagogue on a large lot at Wilkins and Shady. And it seemed that a new chapter in the congregation's life was about to begin. There was a calm, and a hope.

SONG: "Oh, What A Beautiful Morning"

F: This hope was to be short-lived, since the calm comes before a storm--in this case the storm was World War II raising its ugly head in the future.

M: The new building plans were interrupted, and the Sisterhood concentrated on war relief. Women of the neighborhood joined the Sisterhood in rolling bandages for the Red Cross, knitting and sewing for the armed services and children overseas.

F: They sold stamps and war bonds, earning a Treasury Department citation. Money and woman-power were also contributed to U.S.O. canteens.

M: Once again the Sisterhood met the challenge.

SONG: "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree"

F: After the war, the synagogue was once more an important focus, and in '47 the Sisterhood assumed a pledge toward the new building.

M & F: 1948!

M: An event of historic prominence and heartfelt importance. A long-awaited dream became a reality with the creation of the Jewish state of Israel. The love and hopes of the Tree of Life members turned to this new sun rising in the East.

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SONG: Theme from "Exodus" (piano solo)

F & M: 1949. ^{M.} The First Sisterhood Sabbath was held--
a major innovation not only in the congregation,
but in the city of Pittsburgh.

SONG: "Blessing of the Candles"

F: The 50's came and brought back interest in
women's fashions which had ended with the war.
The "New Look" came in, women in pants were common-
place, dark red lipstick, ponytails, and most
notable of all--the bobbi-soxer --were the style.

SONG: "There Ain't Nothin' Like a Dame"

M: The Playhouse bought the Craft Avenue building
in '51, and the congregation wandered to various
places until one year later the building at Wilkins
and Shady was completed.

Sisterhood activities broadened, and dances
peaked in popularity. The pledge to the new building
was proudly paid, and another pledge taken (as has a
third since then--now totalling \$150,000.)

M & F: The 50's out. The 60's in.

F: The tempo of life picked up with the speed of
the cars, the rhythm of rock, and the vanishing
hemline.

In '64 the Sisterhood took a great part in the
congregation's centennial celebration, saluting
Congregation's illustrious past.

M: But once again the joy of peace was disrupted.

In '67 came--

M & F: The Six Day War.

F: A challenge to Israel's very survival. Women in Israel didn't only work in the background supporting their troops, they also were part of the troops, carrying rifles, driving trucks, and actually fighting on the front line. This war and these women raised the image of the Jewish woman in the eyes of the world.

M: And through it all the world stood in awe that Israel was led by a woman: Golda Meier. She is a woman of dedication, determination, and dignity --commanding the respect of the leaders of the world. Truly, she is a woman of valor.

SONG: "Jerusalem of Gold"

F: In '68 the duties of the Spiritual Leader of the Tree of Life were newly assumed by Rabbi Solomon M. Kaplan. He's a young man with not only a very fine analytical mind, but also a warm outgoing personality. He excels both as a scholar and as an excellent teacher. The young people respond to him with enthusiasm. He has the respect of all the congregation. He has been a great inspiration to the Sisterhood, and the Sisterhood looks to him for guidance.

SONG: "We Believe In You"

M: After the Six Day War there were skirmishes on Israel's borders but everyone assumed that progress was being made toward peace. But then on the holiest of days, Yom Kippur, Israel was attacked.

SONG: "O Seh Shalom"

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M: In their defense of Israel in the Yom Kippur War, Israeli women have given stature and confidence to all women, and a pride in what it is to be a woman. In the past 75 years, women have progressed in all phases of society. Women have branched out into important social roles in the government, and the professions.

F: --and attained equality at home.

SONG: "I Am Woman"

F: We've come a long way. Sisterhood members are now members of the governing body of the congregation. They are given the honor of an Aliya. They are now counted among the members of the Minyan.

M: The future of the Sisterhood depends upon the same selflessness and perseverance that has been her life blood in the past.

F: So, let's remember the past fondly--

M: --and look to the future with hope and determination,

M & F: --and raise our glasses in one toast:
to us, to ours, to life.

SONG: "To Life"