

"In the Beginning..."

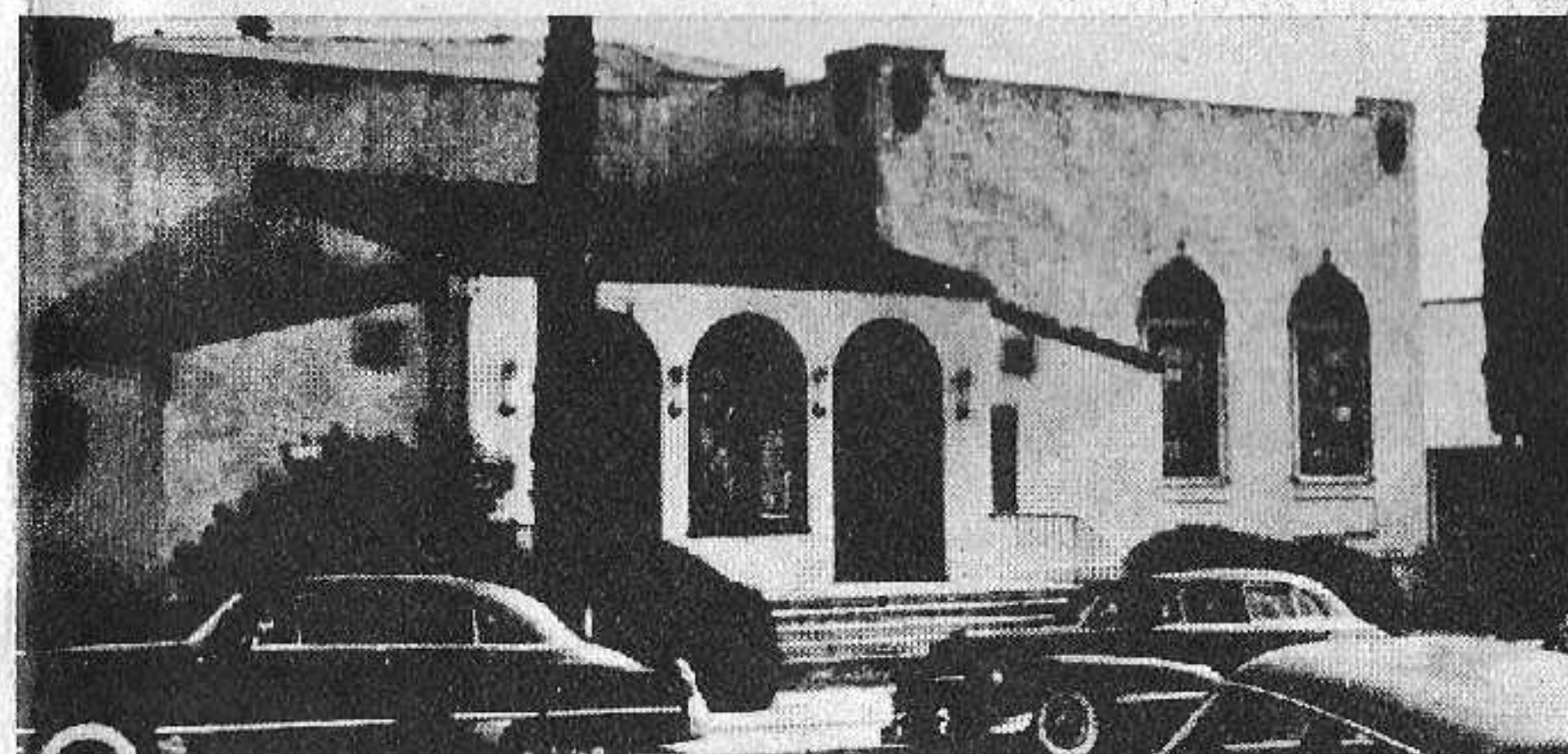
by GEORGE BILSON

ONE DECADE, one score and one year ago, sixteen farsighted men met at the home of Ed Weiss to form a conservative congregation. This was the beginning of Hollywood's first synagogue which, for the next thirty years was to serve as a House of Worship, House of Study and House of Assembly for the rapidly-growing Jewish community of the Western Avenue-Sunset Boulevard district.

The first Friday evening services were held in a bungalow on Wilton Place just south of Sunset Boulevard. An improvised Ark, two Torah scrolls and some folding chairs transformed the living room into a House of Worship. The congregation elected Ed Weiss president; Samuel Tuch, vice-president; E. J. Peiser, recording secretary; Louis Kirstein, financial secretary; Joseph Miller, treasurer. A charter was granted by the State of California and the Congregation was incorporated January 26, 1922. A few months later a lot was purchased for \$8,500 at 1508 North Wilton Place and plans for the erection of a temple were under way. The fund-raising slogan adopted in 1922 also served as a time schedule, "For All To See In '23." In September of that year, services for the High Holy Days were held in their new building. The interior was unfinished. The "Bima" consisted of a raised wooden platform with velvet draperies covering the raw lumber. But there was fervent religious spirit within its walls. The Congregation gave their temple a truly divine name, Beth El—House Of God.

Mr. and Mrs. Morris Wulinger were true pioneers in the building of the Temple. Among their many donations were memorial lights for the pulpit. Mr. and Mrs. Morris Rosen were among the first and most generous of the members. Their daughter (now Mrs. Seymour Brown) taught Sunday School, and their sons Jack, Allan, and Joseph learned their "alef, baiz" from old Rabbi Wellington in the Beth Hamidrash. Mitchell Moidel, well-known attorney, served for many years as principal of the Sunday School, and performed outstanding service. The first Torah was donated by Mrs. Sarah Esther Levine, whose daughter Saraphine Davidoff is still an active worshipper. The Sam Yellen family were among the early leaders. Sam enjoyed congregational work and took pride in honoring others with Torah readings. And who shall ever forget the years of loyal service by Mark Rappaport, our recording secretary. Through the efforts of Mrs. Ed Weiss a Sisterhood was started, with Mrs. Lena Schwartz, Mrs. Julia Mintz and Mrs. Esther Greenwald, her able assistants.

Rabbi Alstead was the first to occupy the pulpit and the little, 600-seat Temple began to attract men and women in all walks of life, many from the motion picture colony: Michael Curtiz, Vera Gordon, Carmel Myers, Mervyn



Since 1923 Temple Beth El on Wilton Place has served the Jewish people of Hollywood. The new Freeway removed many of the homes of the Temple members and worshippers. Changing conditions and declining population of the area compelled the closing of the old Temple's doors.

LeRoy, Jack Pearl, Mme. Reinhardt, Edward G. Robinson, Sam Bischoff, George Sidney, Hal Wallis, Benjamin Warner, Louis Halper, Mike Gore, Ike Briskin, William Koenig, Carl Laemmle, Joe Nadel, Abe Cohen, Lew Seiler, Harry Maizlish, Arnold Pressberger and many others.

There was the Pivar family, Maury, Ben and Edward who occupied an entire pew in the Beth Hamidrash where their father, the beloved Adolph Pivar sang the Kol Nidre with tenderness and heartfelt emotion. There was the Goldstone family, Phil and his mother, Mrs. Rae Goldstone, and his sister, Mrs. Dora Levine, and her husband, Abe. The Temple, Chapel and schoolrooms are studded with plaques and mementos, reminders of the contributions made by Phil Goldstone, one of the great Jewish philanthropists of Los Angeles. There were other staunch supporters such as the families of Abe Herman, Jacob Herman, Sr., George Heltzer, Mrs. Rose Simon, Dave Marantz, E. J. Margolin, Dave Matuso, A. A. Schnierow, Henry Davis, Herman Deutsch and his sons, Lester and Alex; Sam Engleman and his son, Alex, Sam "Pop" Feldman, Ben Feldman, the Moidel family, Jacob Borstein, Morris Landau, Max Fersko, Maurice Katleman, Joseph Koch, Henry Davis, George Bilson, Abraham Dratwa, Sol Behr, Joe Chlavin, Al Galvin, Abe Rosenfeld, Max Buky, Milt Nebron, H. Schoenwald, Joe Schwartzman, Sol Silpa, Stanley Stone, Morris Weiner, the Mintz family, and their sister, Mrs. Schwartz; the Isadore Sharpe family, Mr. and Mrs. Leon Solomon, Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Sackin, the Lipnick family, the Glesby family, and many, many others. To list the names of all who helped build Temple Beth El, and all who helped keep open its doors, would require more space than is possible in this limited brochure. Mark well their names for without their contributions and hard work, the Temple's history might have ended long before this.

Following the term of Edward Weiss, the Congregation elected Abraham Cohen to the presidency. With great fervor he carried on the policy and tradition of his predecessor. There was no money in the treasury and debts were

piling up, but Abe Cohen saw to it that nothing was lacking to fulfill the Temple's threefold purpose, worship, study and assembly.

Stanley Miller followed Abe Cohen into office. Mr. Miller and his charming wife performed invaluable services and much was accomplished during his term of office. The fourth president was Harry K. Cohen, well-known local attorney. He served during the days of national economic depression. At times it was necessary to collect a few dollars at board meetings to pay for gas, electricity, and other utilities. Yet the doors were always open and the Jews of Hollywood knew they could depend upon Temple Beth El for a "minyone" three times daily.

One of the early presidents was Benjamin Warner, father of the Warner Brothers of motion picture fame. He was a man of integrity and good repute and a student of the Torah. His term was a progressive one and the Temple gained much by his sound judgment and hard work. He realized that only through a larger and active membership could the Temple overcome its difficulties and he campaigned relentlessly for new members.

Harold E. Sackin was next elected to the presidency. Mr. Sackin, a prominent lawyer, was the author of the Temple's by-laws and constitution. He contributed his time to take care of all the Temple's legal matters. For many years he taught Sunday school. He brought wisdom and distinction to the office of president. Ill-health forced him to decline renomination, but he continued to work for the Temple to the full extent of his physical capacity. Much of the information in this story was prepared by Mr. Sackin with the assistance of E. J. Peiser. Harold continues to be a source of inspiration to the entire congregation.

Samuel Tuch had held many offices prior to the presidency and had proved himself to be a brilliant economist, a dynamic leader and a devoted Jew. No task was ever too large or too small for him. He gave his time, his money and his energy to the Temple and was a motivating force in its progress. He presided over the Temple's affairs with a firm hand. He presided over his family with tenderness and fatherly devotion. It was a delight to see him enter the Temple with his dear wife and children, Harry, Alfred, Freida (now Mrs. Isadore Levine), Irving and Ben, (now Dr. Benjamin Tuch, eminent physician and surgeon). Temple Beth El is part of Samuel Tuch, and Samuel Tuch will always be part of Beth El. Little wonder that in subsequent years he was given the Temple's highest award, the title of Honorary Life President.

The children of Mr. and Mrs. Barney Katz, Sarah (Mrs. Dave Leviloff), Reuben, Dora, Alfred and Robert, were youngsters when Barney first joined the Congregation. It was inevitable that his generosity, wisdom and knowledge of the Torah should carry him to the presidency. All the Katz family are active in the Temple's affairs (except Dr. Robert Katz who is now a nationally famous research biochemist living in New Orleans). Barney Katz's son-in-law, Dave Leviloff and his devoted wife, Sarah, played important roles in the Temple's history and have been a tremendous influence in its progress. Dave has a heart as big as himself. He exemplifies the joy of giving. Always the first to stand up and be counted, he contributes generously to all appeals. Few men have given more of themselves to Temple Beth El than Dave Leviloff. Although he never aspired to office higher than vice-president, he has been a bulwark in all administrations. He helped Barney Katz carry some of the burdens of his term as president during some of its darkest days.

Next to occupy the president's chair was Maurice Katleman. Maurice, his wife, and his son, Beldon, had been members since the late 20's, holding many important chairmanships. Maury was not the fiery, aggressive type of leader. He

was a leader by example, and his deeds inspired others. He set a pattern of life that exemplified true religion; a deep-rooted faith in the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. Everyone was Maury's friend. Maury was everyone's brother.

Louis A. Rose was president when World War II broke out. Many of our sons left to fight for Freedom's cause. Some never returned. Boys who but a few years previous had recited their bar mitzvah speeches from our pulpit became names on the memorial tablet in the Temple's foyer — Jacob J. Moidel, Budd Peiser, Stanley Sidell, Theodore J. Steiner, Herman Addleson, Jerome Foreman, Derrick R. Landau, Maurice W. Imberman, Bernard H. Glogas, Leon A. Rutberg, Mieren B. Oswell, David E. Sandler, and Sheldon Finn. May their souls rest in peace.

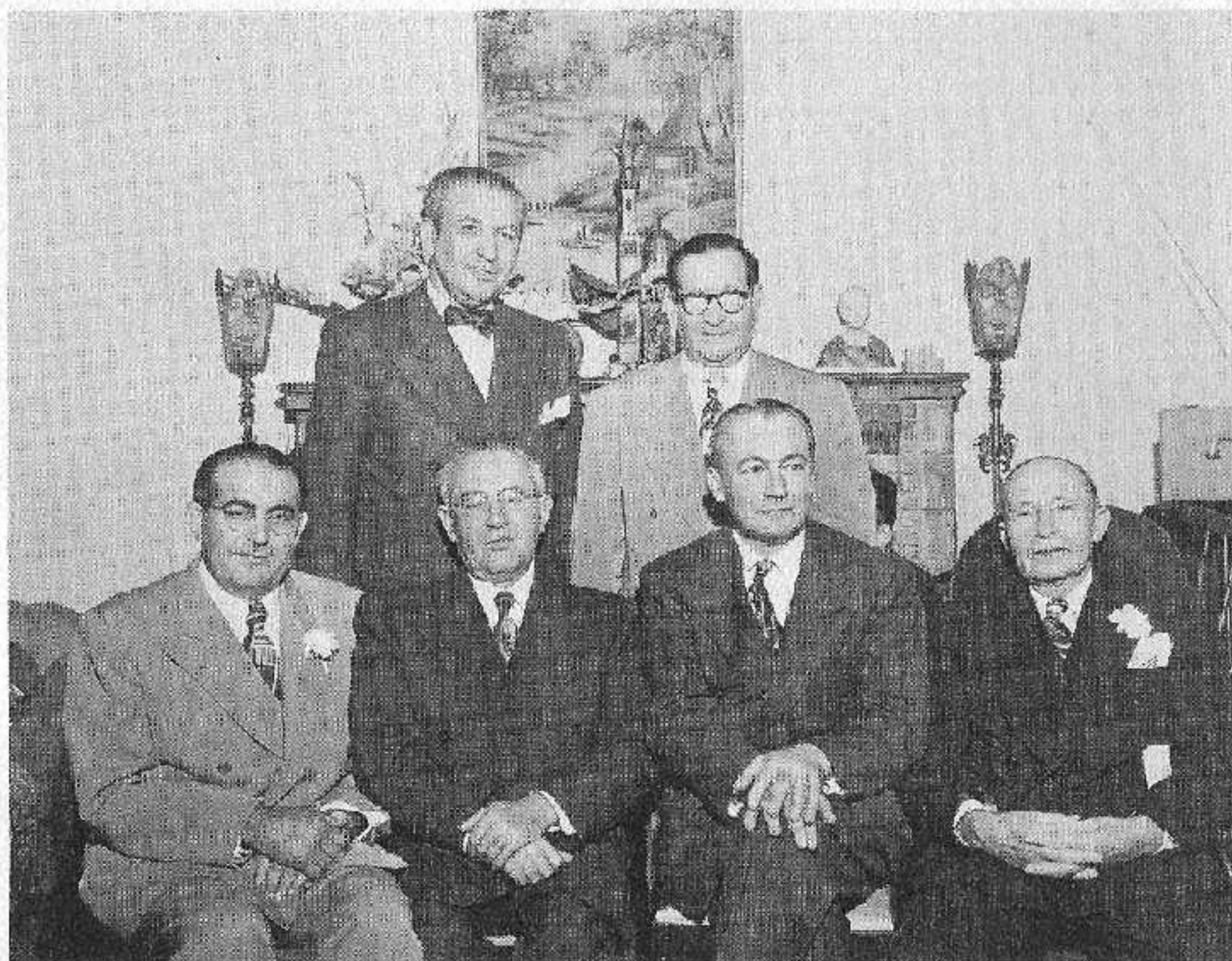
In Europe, Hitler introduced a new phenomenon, genocide. His campaign to exterminate our race brought thousands of Jews to America. One of them, Edmond Schloss, became our sexton. He and his dear wife have endeared themselves to our hearts.

During the War years the Temple Sisterhood worked countless hours sewing garments for the Red Cross. There were Mrs. Rose Simon, Mrs. Lena Dratwa, Mrs. Weiss, Mrs. Marantz. The product of their fingers kept many a soldier warm in foxholes on the battlefronts of Europe and Asia. So faithfully did they perform their duties that the American Red Cross honored them with certificates citing their extraordinary service. At War's end, they continued to sew for the people of Israel. To their undying glory was the "adoption" of six European orphans through the Youth Aliyah. The Sisterhood worked night and day to keep abreast of the changing times. Under the presidency of the beloved Mrs. Rose Simon, they brought their membership together at luncheons, raised money at parties, put on Purim programs at which their own members entertained with singing and dancing. Mrs. Lena Dratwa was always ready with a song, a kind word and wise guidance. For years she was chairlady of the Oneg Shabat following the Friday night services. To mention just a few of the others, there were Mrs. Sarah Weiss, Mrs. Clara Elstein, Mrs. Minnie Mayer. They followed in the spirit of all the great women who served the Sisterhood as presidents: Mrs. Louis Kirstein, Mrs. Bessie Peiser, Mrs. Hilda Goldman, Mrs. Dora Levine, Mrs. Rose Moore, Mrs. Rose Sigelman, Mrs. Eva Marantz, Mrs. Lena Schwartz, Mrs. Sarah Clesby, Mrs. Jenny Rothman, Mrs. Muriel Wollman, Mrs. Rose Simon, who was recently elected Honorary Life President, Mrs. Jean Rubenstein and Mrs. Betty Baltimore. The Temple has been enriched with the gifts of their hearts and the spirit of their devotion.

Tragedy struck when Louis A. Rose passed away during his term as president. For years he had served the Temple well, for he was a learned Talmudic scholar as well as a fine leader and a devoted husband and father. His dear wife helped fill the void left by his passing, and his daughter, Mrs. Betty Baltimore, is doing an outstanding job as president of the Sisterhood.

It was not easy to find a man to replace Louis Rose who had served faithfully from 1938 to 1944. Sam Tuch was pressed into service again and carried on for three years with the help of Dave Leviloff, Barney Katz, Maurice Katleman and Hyman Levine, who was conscripted for the presidency in 1946.

From the moment Mr. and Mrs. Hyman Levine joined the Congregation it was evident that they were heart-and-soul Jews who believed in religion as a way of life. Hyman Levine was a man with vision, courage and faith. He recognized the fact that the new Hollywood Freeway, pushing its way relentlessly



Seated (Left to Right) DAVID LEVILOFF, HYMAN LEVINE, LEON HELMAN, BARNEY KATZ.
Standing: MAURICE KATLEMAN and SAM TUCH.

These far-sighted men made our New Hollywood Temple Beth El possible. Their dream came into reality in 1952 aided and assisted by many others of our Temple family. While all of the men pictured above have since departed their dominant spirit continues to inspire us.

"In the Beginning . . ."

from the East, was compelling many worshippers, whose homes were in its path, to move from the district. He recognized, too, that the modern generation needed a more modern building. This thought had been in the minds of most officers and board members for many years, but it was under Mr. Levine's presidency that the plan was activated. That the idea succeeded so well is due in a great part to his brilliant leadership, his personal contributions, and to the encouragement of his dear wife. Hyman Levine served as president from 1946 to 1949 and was subsequently made Honorary Life President, an honor he shares with Sam Tuch. To add to the driving force behind the new project came their three sons, Isadore, Sid and Dr. Ben. Standing shoulder to shoulder with the sons and daughters of other older leaders, they represented the youth and strength that would bring the ideas to full fruition. In April 1948 a large lot was purchased on Crescent Heights Boulevard and the new Hollywood Temple Beth El was soon in the blueprint stage.

In 1949, a new voice was heard; not new in terms of membership, but new as a prospective leader. For years Harry Sherman had spoken from the sidelines. Now he would speak from the president's chair. Once in office, Harry Sherman put on a gala fund-raising show at the Biltmore Bowl, spearheaded by Dave Leviloff, Maurice Katleman, Hyman Levine and other Board members. Over \$40,000 was raised at the Biltmore Bowl affair at which Eddie Cantor was master of ceremonies. This was the "shot in the arm" that revitalized the entire organization. A new slogan echoed across the Hollywood Hills, *"God Willed It, Let's Build It!"*

Leon Helman was made chairman of the building committee and he worked night and day to organize the million-and-one details of the building program. The zealotness with which he worked, through long days and nights, was motivated by his desire to get the structure finished in the quickest possible time, for he knew his days on this earth were limited. He passed away without seeing the new Temple completed. But he left a great legacy in the love of his wife Claire and his brother, Israel "Babe" Helman, who are carrying on his work as he would have wanted them to. The new building committee chairmen, Jacob Herman, Sr. and Joseph Koch, are fitting successors to Leon Helman, devoting their entire time to the supervision of construction. Theirs is a labor of love born of years of service to the Temple.

Joe Pasternak, one of Hollywood's top film producers, assumed the office of Chairman of the Board. Dave Leviloff got out of his sick bed to put on a fund-raising campaign with the help of Reuben Katz. Sigmund Altman, active and vigorous at 86, chaired the Board of Education. A Brotherhood of the Temple was formed through the efforts of Isadore Levine, with Arnold Clejan as president. The foundation of the new building was laid. Steel-work was completed. The Temple started to take form.

To the older members, watching the steel arms rising toward the heavens, and recalling the early days on Wilton Place, it must seem like history is repeating itself. To their sons and daughters, many of whom first heard of Temple Beth El from the laps of their parents, it is a new, living and soul-satisfying experience. For how many times in a lifetime does one have the blessed privilege of helping build a religious edifice? One dominant thought motivates the efforts of both young and old. They know they are building for their children, and their children after them, so that future generations of Jews may walk in the path of righteousness toward a full and fruitful life in Temple Beth El, House of God.



ABE COHEN
Past President



SAMUEL TUCH
*Past President
Honorary Life President*



HYMAN LEVINE
*Past President
Honorary Life President*



MAURICE KATLEMAN
*Past President
2nd Vice President*



BARNEY KATZ
*Past President
Treasurer*



HAROLD E. SACKIN
*Past President
Chairman Legal Committee*



HARRY SHERMAN
President



JOE PASTERNAK
Chairman of Board



DAVE LEVILOFF
First Vice-President



HARRY TUCH
Third Vice-President



ISADORE LEVINE
Chairman Ways & Means Comm.



GEORGE BILSON
*Chairman Publicity Committee
Vice-President Men's Club*



JACOB HERMAN, SR.
Chairman Building Committee



JOSEPH KOCH
Co-Chairman Building Committee



REUBEN R. KATZ
*Co-Chairman Ways & Means
Committee*



ARNOLD GLEJAN
Pres. Men's Club



MRS. LOUIS BALTIMORE
Pres. Temple Sisterhood



I. B. HELMAN
Co-Chairman Publicity Committee



MRS. ROSE SIMON
*Honorary Life President
Temple Sisterhood*



SIGMUND ALTMAN
Chairman Educational Committee



TILLIE LEVER
Recording Secretary



E. J. PEISER
Financial Secretary



JULIAN M. WHITE
Rabbi



NATHAN KATZMAN
Cantor