

## Chapter 7 Born-Again Brotherhood

*From each of your tribes, men who are wise . . .*  
—Deuteronomy 1:13

The Brotherhood comes and goes. It thrives and declines, rises and plummets. With each rebirth, the Brotherhood springs to life, energizing the Temple in a new direction.

Henry Simon Sr. “reactivated” the Brotherhood in 1948 in conjunction with the rebuilding of the synagogue after the fire. During the 1960s, Temple President Manny Rosenthal declared the Brotherhood “awakening . . . with ‘vigah,’ ” a reference to JFK’s New Frontier. Wally Nass spearheaded a 1970s rebirth. In 1982, Jerry Zodin, the first Brotherhood president after a three-year lapse, pledged to “reorganize . . . and . . . rejuvenate” the phoenix-like group. (“It has been too long since Temple has had an active brotherhood,” Zodin wrote, motivating 83 men to pay their \$15 dues.) Little happened with that money until Jerry Weiner launched a Temple landscaping project. Highlights since then have included the second (or was it the third?) revival of the Mickey Goldman Spaghetti Supper. Brotherhood’s next ascendancy, strengthened during Rusty Feld’s five-year presidency, led to a national board meeting in Fort Worth during May 2001.

Why the erratic history?

Such ups and downs and dormant periods are typical of Brotherhood affiliates.



### DON'T MISS BROTHERHOOD'S HORSE DERBY DANCE!

Sisterhoods far exceed Brotherhoods in chapters, membership, and continuity. The National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods (NFTB) began in 1923 “with the intention of giving men a more active role in synagogue life,” writes Michael A. Meyer in *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*. “The men would simply attend services from time to time and a few of them manage the Temple’s financial affairs.” Women and rabbis dominated synagogue life. “Brotherhoods were created to change that.”<sup>32</sup>

Jewish men in Fort Worth and elsewhere already gathered communally through B’nai B’rith, the

international fraternal organization formed in 1843 and begun in Fort Worth in 1901. Popular and convivial, B’nai B’rith crossed intradenominational lines and did not channel activities toward a particular congregation.

The Temple Brotherhood movement was intended to bring the Reform men home, to redirect energy into their own congregations and to promote male bonding through service projects within each Temple. As a byproduct, Brotherhoods became a training ground for congregational leadership.

At Beth-El, the Brotherhood’s first incarnation was short-lived. The Temple board minutes of October 1925 state that the Brotherhood could meet at the Temple any time except Friday evening. The men apparently did not meet often enough to keep the chapter afloat, because the Brotherhood is not mentioned again in the minutes for a decade. The chapter’s early existence was forgotten.

A subsequent Temple anniversary book asserts that Beth-El’s Brotherhood began in 1932, with Joel Rosen its founding president.<sup>33</sup> Joel Rosen’s son, Sam,



**PASTA CHEFS**, left to right, Dick Greenman, Richie Minker, Bob Greenman, and Ralph Landau, prepared the pasta for Brotherhood’s 1988 Mickey Goldman Spaghetti Supper.

says that is news to him. The anniversary book’s assertion also runs counter to correspondence between Rabbi Harry Merfeld and Brotherhood national headquarters. Merfeld wrote that he had planned to organize a chapter in 1932, but “during the present economic stress . . . it is not possible to organize a club of any kind.”

Rebirth was around the corner. In 1935, Brotherhood rebounded. Beth-El’s trustees invited three non-voting Brotherhood representatives to attend each Temple board meeting. Subsequent minutes do not mention any of them in attendance.

The next official mention of the men’s organization came during the congregation’s annual meeting in January 1948. “Henry Simon, . . . the president of the newly reorganized Brotherhood, . . . announced that since the rebuilding of our Temple, the Brotherhood would take an active interest and would assume its full share of responsibility.”

The following year, when charismatic E. M. (Manny) Rosenthal assumed the presidency, Brotherhood got down to business—show business!

Brotherhood’s *Cowtown Follies of ‘49*, a variety show that played to a full house at the Paschal High School auditorium, put Brotherhood in the limelight. It mushroomed into an organization bursting with camaraderie and creativity. The *Follies* were produced by Dan Gachman, a former dance band leader, with an assist from Norm Sonkin, billed as a former “hooper” on the Chicago nightclub circuit. Allen Rayel dimmed the lights, while Sisterhood took charge of the box office. Lauded in the credits were Morris Schwartz, a comedian familiar to Fort Worth Little Theater audiences; Harriet Friedson, a Paschal High School drama student; and Burton Davis, a former University of Texas cheerleader. Manny Rosenthal, who coordinated publicity

**THE DERBY DANCE**, held in 1960 at the Pioneer Palace, brought to life a popular 1950s board game. Participants grabbed a hobby horse and trotted forward or backward around a track, depending on the spin of a dial.

with Eleanor Wilson at the *Star-Telegram* and Jack Gordon at the *Press*, was touted in the program as a “very good comedian” who got his training while on active duty with Uncle Sam.

For an encore, the Brotherhood produced *Slashion Parade of 1950*. Men in drag took to the stage at the Temple Center, performing a skit written by Joy and Seymour Spiegel, with piano accompaniment by Don Gernsbacher. “I dressed those guys,” recalled Joy Spiegel. Another year, she assisted with a production of *Kosher Carmen*, a Yiddish spoof on the French opera.

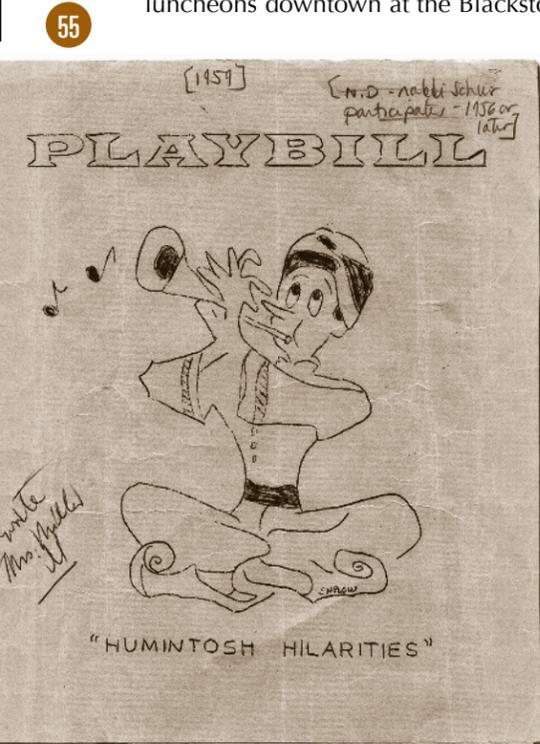
During these years, Brotherhood members developed a strong rapport with Rabbi Milton Rosenbaum—strong enough to persuade the Temple board to rescind a 1953 vote against raising the rabbi’s salary. At Brotherhood’s insistence, Rosenbaum’s pay increased from \$9,000 to \$9,300. Rabbi Rosenbaum attended Brotherhood meetings, including stag dinners at The Big Apple restaurant. At one “men’s night out” at the Cattlemen’s Café in 1952, the rabbi spoke about “Jewish Humor.” Two years later, the Brotherhood instituted monthly luncheons downtown at the Blackstone, where the rabbi

brought the men up to date on Jewish current events worldwide.

Throughout the 1950s, Brotherhood also sponsored bimonthly *oneg Shabbats* and joint meetings with the Ahavath Sholom Mens Club, including a dinner with Dick Maegle, the Southwest Conference star who later played with the San Francisco ’49ers and Dallas Cowboys. Brotherhood awarded gifts and prizes to Religious School students, sponsored the annual *Lag B’omer picnic*, and held a men’s retreat at the Baker Hotel in Mineral Wells. Installation dinners were jacket-and-tie affairs with wives in attendance. When the Sisterhood launched a project to



**SEYMOUR SPIEGEL** wrote, produced, and starred in *Kosher Carmen*, a 1950s spoof on the French opera. The cross-cultural production was set at Fort Haysa Hazen, Yiddish for “Camp Hot Pants.” Left, Spiegel clenches a rose in a classic Carmen pose. Bobby Gernsbacher, below right, plays Corporal Don Jose, whom Carmen woos, then jilts.



**HUMINTOSH HILARITIES**, a musical comedy produced by Brotherhood and Sisterhood, was performed in the 1950s.

repaint the Temple interior, Martin and Jack Siegel donated paint for the kitchen, while other Brotherhood members provided the labor.

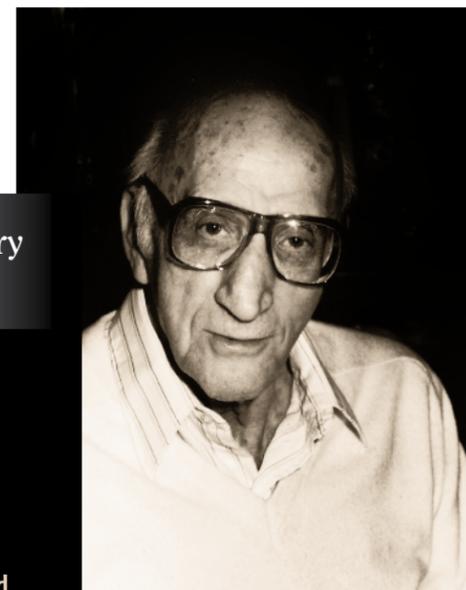
The 1950s heralded the start of the Brotherhood’s most enduring social get-together—the Mickey Goldman Spaghetti Supper. M. M. (Mickey) Goldman was the vivacious founder of the White Rose liquor distributorship. With a cigar in one hand and a wooden spoon in the other, he jovially cooked up a pot of pasta at Brotherhood gatherings. A flier promoting the spaghetti dinner features a mustachioed chef raising a fork full of noodles and declaring: “Lika Da Spaghetti. Coma to Brotherhood Mickey Goldman Spaghetti Dinner . . . Lotsa . . . beer-n-chit chat. Fabulosa gin rummy. Bringa Yo \$1.00 -n- come.”

Brotherhood turned more serious during the 1960s, with guest speakers focusing on atomic fallout (“Test results of the Hydrogen Bomb at Eniwetok”), civil rights, the Vatican’s ecumenical pronouncements, and a visit from Democratic Congressman Jim Wright.

At the start of the 1970s, Wally Nass reinvigorated the Brotherhood with a two-year presidency. Nass, a

Family Camp for Living Judaism. After Nass’s two terms, Brotherhood slowed down. Periodically, Wally Nass stepped in to galvanize a project. Len Schweitzer filled his shoes in 1974, reprising past activities such as a Howdy Dance, the spaghetti supper and guest speaker forums. Brotherhood assigned Bud Schwartz (with his wife, Rosalie) to initiate a Yom Kippur break-the-fast, now overseen by the Ritual Committee. The group also produced a memorable evening of dance promoted as “Last Tango at Beth-El.” Then decline set in again.

Jerry Weiner picked up the ball during the mid-1980s. “Apathy conquered,” he declared in the Beth-El Bulletin. This time the cure for apathy was an ambitious project — landscaping the Temple grounds. The gardening venture, led by David Echt and master gardener Guy LaMere, built momentum. It involved grading, sodding, weeding, tree planting, installing an automatic

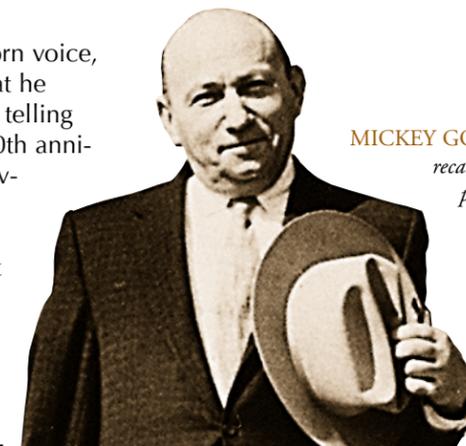


**WALLY NASS** gave heart and soul to the Brotherhood.

### Mickey Goldman Award for Extraordinary and Continuing Service to Beth-El

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Norma Greenberg        | Corrine Jacobson     |
| Wally Nass             | Nell Hall            |
| Beanie and Marion Weil | Ruby Kantor          |
| Lilaine Goldman        | Leonard Schweitzer   |
| Charles Miron          | Sheldon Anisman      |
| Livia Levine           | Irwin Krauss         |
| Phil Ackin             | Luann and Rusty Feld |
| Dick Rubin             |                      |

lanky six-footer with a booming, foghorn voice, embarked with Len Schweitzer on what he termed an “ambitious project—a book telling the history of Beth-El to observe our 70th anniversary.” The result was a velveteen-covered volume that earned so much ad revenue it paid for itself and covered the congregation’s \$11,000 assessment toward the creation of the Greene



**MICKEY GOLDMAN’S** legacy is recalled with a spaghetti supper and an award for congregants who go over the top.

sprinkler system, and filling basement window wells with gravel. A call went out for congregants to dig up sprigs of monkey grass to transplant from their back yards to the grounds at Broadway and Galveston. When rain cancelled Brotherhood's annual *Lag B'omer* picnic, the men good-naturedly rescheduled it for midwinter, indoors, to coincide with *Tu'b'shvat*, the Jewish arbor day. The picnic began with a tree planting, a tradition that continued for six or seven years.

By the end of the decade, Brotherhood membership had sunk to another low. During Julian Haber's presidency from 1990 to 1991, the chapter launched a membership drive that won an NFTB award for the affiliate with the largest percentage of membership growth in the United States.

Meanwhile, the Mickey Goldman Spaghetti Supper had expanded in 1988 to honor the congregant of the year. Longtime Temple Administrator Norma Greenberg was the first so honored, with a plaque lauding her "extraordinary and continuing service." This tradition continued uninterrupted for 14 years, until 2002, when the proposed date for the Spaghetti Supper conflicted with Super Bowl Sunday. It could not be rescheduled due to a full calendar of activities and was expected to resume in 2003.

Beth-El's Brotherhood has enjoyed more than a decade of continuity. Activities remained in high gear under Rusty Feld's successor, Mark Pritchard. The congregation benefited. Events run more smoothly and more convivially when the Brotherhood's cadre of energetic men participate.

Feld, a fourth-generation

**MARTY RUBINSON** lights a fire under Brotherhood.

Background flier invites the entire Jewish community to a 1974 *Lag B'omer* picnic.

### Brotherhood Presidents

Joel Rosen	1932	Fran Prinz	1954-55	Bill Boardman	1967-69
Henry Simon Sr.	1948-49	Ray Zimmerman	1955-56	VACANT	1969-70
Manny Rosenthal	1949-50	Jerry Murad	1956-57	Wally Nass	1970-72
Allen Rayel	1950-51	Louis Weltman	1957-58	Mitch Stenzler	1972-74
Milton Simon	1951-52	Paul Schwartz	1958-59	Len Schweitzer	1974-76
Dore Goldstein	1952-53	Ralph Uhrmacher	1959-60	Dave Echt,	
Joe Bronstein	1953-54	VACANT	1960-61	acting president	1976-77
		Earle Scharff	1961-62	Les Kreisler	1977-78
		Joe David Antweil	1962-63	VACANT	1978-81
		Sheldon Anisman	1963-64	Jerry Zodin	1982-83
		Henry Simon Jr	1964-65	Ronald Goldman	1983-84
		Ted Hoffman	1965-67	Jerry Weiner	1984-86
				Dick Rubin	1986-88
				Marc Moise	1988-90



Art Lederman

**RUSTY FELD** shoots video footage during the groundbreaking ceremony, Oct. 18, 1998, for Beth-El's Briarhaven Road Temple.

congregant, made it his goal to prove that Brotherhood can be a "vital arm" of Beth-El. The group has shown it can be counted upon for ushering at services, erecting the *sukkah*, frying latkes at Hanukah, and grilling hot dogs and hamburgers at outdoor events. For comic relief, Brotherhood began hosting an annual dog show, where

a prize is awarded for the canine that "looks most like its owner." Brotherhood's mitzvah program sends members on convalescent calls and provides rides to Shabbat services for congregants unable to drive. When the congregation moved from Broadway Avenue to Briarhaven Road, Brotherhood members packed and bar-coded 3,000 library books, helped set up computers, and purchased an outdoor gas grill, and a basketball hoop with balls. Brotherhood also provided books for bar and bat mitzvah candidates.

The Brotherhood's camaraderie fosters personal growth and introspection via programs on men's health as well as NFTB modules focusing on Men and Shabbat, Men and Pesach, Men and High Holy Days. Observed Feld, who served concurrently in 2002 as North Texas Council president and assistant secretary of the national federation: "With the base built in the past five years, we are hopeful that Brotherhood won't fade away as it has in the past, but will continue functioning as a strong arm of the Temple." 🌟