

Temple Beth El Celebrates 50th in Grand Style

By Susan Kramer

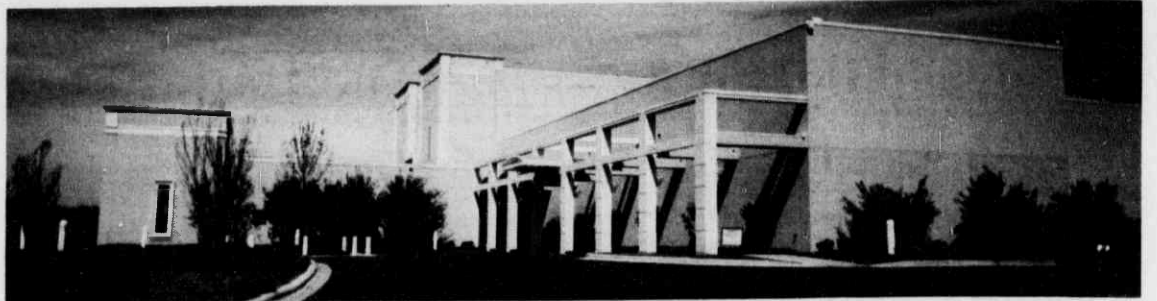
On April 22-24, Temple Beth El of Charlotte, North Carolina marked its first fifty years with a three-day celebration that included something for every member of the congregation. The theme for the celebration was "L'Dor Va' Dor—From Generation to Generation." There were quiet moments of worship, a glittering evening affair and a program presented by the children of the Religious School that incorporated song, dance and a recreation of a play written by renowned author and founding member of Temple Beth El, Harry Golden.

Friday night's Shabbat worship service presented a scene the eight founding families of the temple could scarcely have imagined fifty years ago: 300 worshippers gathered in a magnificent sanctuary to remember and praise their vision. One by one, as Rabbi James Bennett

read their names, many of the founders and charter members, past presidents of the Temple, the Sisterhood and Brotherhood, made their way to the front of the sanctuary. Then, as Dr. John Blizzard sang, Sonny Melasky, one of the founders lit a candle and passed the flame on to Judith Neiman, another founding member, who in turn, passed her light on to her neighbor. Soon, seventy five candles glowed in the darkened sanctuary and the congregation rose and recited the Shehechyanu.

Rabbi Julie Spitzer, Director of the Mid-Atlantic Region of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, brought greetings and Mazel Tov from the national movement and Commissioner Lloyd Scher read a proclamation from the Mecklenburg County Commission declaring April 22 "Temple Beth El Day" in Mecklenburg County.

Saturday was no less exciting



Temple Beth El

Photo/Rita Mond

beginning with morning services at which Andrea Eckert became a Bat Mitzvah. As her family passed the Torah from generation to generation, the theme of the weekend "L'Dor VaDor" was quietly underscored.

Later that evening, the Silverman Social Hall was transformed into a wonderland of black, white and gold as two hundred guests gathered for the black-tie fundraiser dinner. It was an elegant affair, marked by soft candlelight and the wafting scent of orange blossoms from the magnificent floral arrangements that graced each table. An unfortunate accident cancelled the appearance of entertainer Dennis Wolfberg. Even that did not dampen the evening as Brad

Greenberg quickly arranged for two other comedians to "pinch hit." Mickey Gold, President of Temple Beth El, noted "You have to think that this is just one more example of how our Temple has been able to overcome adversity through the years." However, no adversity was in sight. On Sunday, the Religious School presented its program to honor the Fiftieth Anniversary. After a moving talk by Mike Tanner, one of "Schindler's Jews" commemorated in the movie of the same name, the seventh grade class performed a play. Written originally by Harry Golden for his seventh grade Sunday school class 40 years ago, the play traced the origins, founding and perseverance of the State of Israel. The kinder-

garten through third grade, led by Nancy Segal, performed a Hebrew dance. Rabbi Bennett led the fourth through sixth grades in a set of rousing songs that ended with the Shehechyanu.

Family and friends gathered on the Temple's grounds under a pictureperfect Carolina blue sky for a picnic. Steward Scher provided toe-tapping music as children ran and played among the crab-apple trees.

It was a wonderful transition for the congregation; from a Friday night that looked back in praise, to a Sunday morning that looked forward and rejoiced. It was, simply, Temple Beth El, preserver of the past and hope of the future.

Hunt Signs Cooperative Agreement with Israel

North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. signed an historic memorandum of understanding with the state of Israel on April 28. The agreement, co-signed by Counsel General of Israel Arye Meikel, paves the way for economic, cultural and educational exchanges between the two governments.

Last October, Hunt established the North Carolina International Commission with Israel as its first target country. The memorandum is a tool to help the commission foster economic development, facilitate university and industrial alliances and promote the exchange of arts, culture and education. The

International Commission has been called a model for other states by chambers of commerce and U.S. and Israeli officials.

"This project will enable North Carolina's citizens to learn about Israel...about their arts, social sciences, science, technology, agriculture and economic trade. We trust Israel's citizens will also learn a great deal from their contact with us," Governor Hunt said at the signing.

"As economies globalize and advanced technologies emerge, new strategies are needed for North Carolina to stay competitive," said William L. Cassell of Greensboro, co-chair of the

International Commission. "The commission will work directly with the Israeli government and business officials, actively providing the services necessary to give our companies the greatest access to Israeli markets." In the past three years, North Carolina's annual exports to Israel have averaged nearly \$65 million. The goal is to nurture that growing market and to increase employment and economic opportunities in both regions.

Three task forces have been established as part of the International Commission and are

already at work, matching North Carolina companies with their Israeli counterparts. The goal of the primary task force is to increase employment and economic opportunity for North Carolina. Another task force will set up university-industrial alliances. The third task force will work to create exchange programs in the arts and edu-

cation. Charlotte members of the task forces are: Jeanne Corwin, Steven Kropp, Richard Osborne and Emily Zimmern-Economic; Harold Josephson-University/Industrial Alliances; Amy Blumenthal, Natalie Cohen, Patty Gorelick, Daniel Levine, Marcia Simon and Jeanne Rauch of Gastonia-Arts/Education.



Charlotteans present at Governor's mansion for signing of NC/Israeli agreement, (L-R) Marcia Simon, Emily Zimmern, Counsel General Arye Meikel, Gov. Hunt, Harold Josephson, Jeanne Corwin, Kathy Hargett.



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