

HISTORY OF THE KINGSFORD-MAROUBRA HEBREW CONGREGATION 1946-1983

by

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There were very few Jewish families living in the Maroubra area prior to 1946, as Maroubra was then a sparsely populated suburb with many empty building blocks. When at the end of World War II new flats and cottages were erected, an influx of Jewish immigrants from Europe arrived. Amongst them was Dr Siegfried Cohn, a strictly orthodox Jew from Germany. He regretted that one had to have a very long walk or use transport to attend a religious Service. He also was determined to organise religious instruction for the youth of the area. Late in 1946 he visited Jewish families to ascertain whether there was interest in starting Shabbat Services nearby. A meeting was called in the home of L. Stoliar and it was unanimously decided that there existed a necessity of Jewish Communal life in Maroubra. Shabbat Services were immediately commenced in Mr Stoliar's home; although it was not always possible to have minyan, the start was promising. Rev C. Stanton lent the first Sefer Torah and Mr A. Schultz made and presented a portable Ark and Parochet. After a while these Services were moved to the home of Mr R. Glick.

For the first time High Holyday Services were held in the Maroubra Masonic Hall in 1947. There was intensive advertising, but it was still surprising to see attendances of between 50 and 60 people at these Services. All hiring expenses were recouped. The Services were conducted by Dr Cohn, Dr H. Wachtell, Mr Glick and Mr Travers.

Following this success, the Jewish Board of Education was approached and a meeting arranged to discuss the formation of an Educational Centre. In January 1948 classes began in a converted shed kindly lent by Mr Sharp (father of Mrs Rosie Hersch). In the beginning 8 children attended, this number was soon increased to 14, and after further increases the classes were moved to the Scouts Hall.

The next step was to send out invitations for a Foundation Meeting of a proper Congregation on 18 July, 1948 in Bell's Ballroom, Kingsford (which is now the South Juniors Club). About 100 people attended, amongst them representatives from the Great Synagogue and other Sydney Jewish organisations all promising support. Guest speaker was Rabbi Porush who delivered an address on "The Synagogue in our Modern age". A provisional Committee was elected and given the task of preparing a constitution and to arrange the first general meeting.

This was held on 22 August, again in Bell's Ballroom. The proposed constitution was read and approved with slight amendments and the following Office Bearers were elected:

President:	Dr S. Cohn
Vice-Presidents:	Dr. H.H. Wachtell and Mr. R. Glick
Hon. Treasurer:	Mr Waldberg
Hon. Secretary:	Mr Alexander
Committee Members:	Messrs Braham, E. Hertzberg, Schultz, Stoliar and Symon.
Trustees:	Messrs M. Bless and J. Silberman.

At a later meeting, Mr Alexander resigned and was replaced by Mr Braham as Secretary. The High Holyday Services in 1948 were again held in the Masonic Hall and early in 1949 the Scouts Hall was hired for Shabbat Services.

Good progress had been made but there still was no Synagogue Building in sight

as the promised outside financial help had not been forthcoming. Now, Dr Cohn enlisted the help of Dr Fanny Reading, founder and long-term president of the National Council of Jewish Women. She inspired her Maroubra "girls" asking them to knock on the door of every Jewish family in the district regularly, once a week, to collect money. These small amounts of pennies and shillings added up until, together with some slightly bigger donations, there was enough money in hand to pay a deposit on the land at 635 Anzac Parade, the price of which was £1250. The consent of all Congregation members was required and was given at the extraordinary general meeting convened for this purpose. In its issue of 10 March, 1950 the *Sydney Jewish News* described the purchase as follows:

"THEY PURCHASED A PADDOCK! A piece of land in Anzac Parade lies neglected and fallow: weeds and brownish grass encroached, as it stands forlornly, a 25 x 90 block. How is it possible to become enthusiastic by just standing and peering at this uninspiring sight? But there is a man to whom this piece of earth signifies a new lease of life and the restoration of his faith in humanity. He stands and gazes at the land, deep in thought, envisaging a House of G-d and a home of study for the children. Dr Cohn is his name, a kind-hearted family medico doing his sacred duty under conditions still new to him. For Dr Cohn is president of the newest baby of the Jewish communities in Sydney, the Kingsford-Maroubra Hebrew Congregation, and he is a very proud man. On this block of land the people will build a Synagogue to accommodate a Yom Tovim capacity of 500. At a recently held meeting, Dr Cohn had remarked with justifiable pride that in the course of time this Congregation would become a valuable part of Sydney Jewry."

Unfortunately, Dr Cohn was not spared to witness the fulfilment of his dream. He passed away in 1951, and it was not till 1954 that the first building, the present Communal Hall and, 1956 when the Kindergarten Hall, which bears his name, were completed and dedicated. But all Congregation members and future generations owe a debt of gratitude to Dr Cohn and his co-workers of those early years.

After Dr Cohn's untimely death, Dr Wachtell was elected to the presidency, a position he held until 1959, and to which he brought his organisational abilities and great enthusiasm. In various capacities, such as Vice President and Hon. Secretary he remained on the Board of Management until 1971. In appreciation of his contribution to the founding and organisation of the Congregation, he was made an Honorary Life Member in 1982.

Let us cast our mind back to 1950. Financial progress was still painfully slow. Various suggestions were made to try and obtain a cheap pre-fabricated building, but until the debt on the land was paid off, this was not practical and hired halls had to do for the time being. For a short while even two different halls were needed on Shabbat, as there were disputes regarding the kind of Services required, but eventually the dissenting members left the district to join another Synagogue.

In April of that year, Rabbi Dr B. Gottshall arrived in Sydney and asked whether the Maroubra Congregation could contemplate engaging a Minister. Unfortunately, lack of funds made this impossible but before leaving for Newcastle (later to New Zealand and then to Brisbane) Rabbi Gottshall conducted the Pesach Services in Bell's Ballroom. For the first time, also, a Youth Service was held, and the then newly appointed Board Member, H. Kresner, addressed the children.

In 1951 the Maroubra and District J.N.F. Committee was founded, the first such suburban Committee in Sydney. A close co-operation with the Congregation began thereby and children's functions, U.I.A. meetings and other ventures have been organised jointly and regularly. The co-operation was made very easy by the fact that

many of the J.N.F. Maroubra members were at the same time members of the Congregation's Board of Management.

Membership increased regularly, but despite the strenuous effort of the Council ladies, not a single brick had been purchased. Regular Services continued in hired halls, but in 1952 an event occurred that accelerated everybody's endeavours. It was announced that the then Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, Rabbi Brodie, would visit Sydney. The main purpose of the visit was for the Rabbi to open and dedicate the newly erected Chevra Kadisha building in Woollahra, but it was obvious that he intended to meet as many of the Jewish Congregations as possible. Could one dare to invite such a personality to an empty piece of land, and a very untidy one at that? The question was hotly debated but eventually the decision was taken to go ahead. All hands were on deck to clear the land, a marquee was hired, and a foundation stone was ordered. The Chief Rabbi graciously accepted the invitation for a Sunday afternoon function. The unforgettable date was 2 March, 1952. Rabbi Porush was consulted on the proceedings and it was at that time that he suggested a Hebrew name should be given to the Congregation. *K.K. Yeshurun* was unanimously approved of.

On the day itself the weather was favourable, so that the actual ceremony could take place in the open where hired chairs had been placed. The foundation stone was placed on a table with a fine cover, next to plans for a future Synagogue building. In the presence of many dignitaries from Jewish organisations, representatives of the N.S.W. Government and the Randwick Council, members and guests, the stone was "unveiled" by the Chief Rabbi. Afterwards the marquee came to good use for the splendid afternoon tea which the Council ladies had prepared. Needless to say the opportunity was taken to ask for donations to the building fund, and owing to the inspiring address by Rabbi Brodie and Syd Einfeld's renowned fundraising talents, the amount of £800 was pledged. The possibility of acquiring a building had come a littler nearer.

Early in 1952, Vice-President Glick left the district, and in appreciation of all the work done by him, he was made an Honorary Life Member of the Congregation. Now, Rabbi Dr A. Grozinger, then a teacher at Moriah College, who had joined the Board of Management, was elected as Vice-President. He assisted in the Services as Honorary Officiant, gave Sermons and addressed the Youth on many occasions. As it was not yet possible to have Bar-Mitzvahs, it was arranged that sons of members who celebrated their Bar-Mitzvahs in another Synagogue were called up at Maroubra the following Shabbat and received a present. For the High Holyday Services the Masonic Hall was not only full to capacity, the Scouts Hall had also to be hired for an overflow Service.

During all this time suggestions abounded as to how it was possible to finance a building. Various endeavours had failed. The breakthrough finally came in 1954. The debt on the land had been paid off and a small sum was in hand. The Government had relaxed credit restrictions, and Dr Wachtell and the then treasurer, Mr Lithauer, found the courage to approach the Manager of the Maroubra Commonwealth Bank to ask for a loan sufficient to cover the cost of a building. To their joy, confidence was shown in the fledgling Congregation and the loan was approved. Tenders were called for the erection of a hall to seat 400 people with a small classroom and kitchen adjoining. A tender for £7,800 was accepted and building could at last commence. The High Holyday Services in 1953 were the last held in hired halls.

Early in 1954 Shabbat Services were transferred to the partly completed building at 635 Anzac Parade. On Rabbi Grozinger's insistence the first Shabbat saw a Bar-

Mitzvah, that of Mark (now Dr Mark) Spigelman. Many religious objects, furniture and furnishings were donated by organisations and individuals from within and outside the Congregation.

By the month of May the building was finally completed and invitations went out for the official Dedication Service on 30 of that month. It was a proud day for all those who had worked so hard over the years. To be truthful, it was a very plain building with no decorations, and uncomfortable chairs, money was still very scarce; but that could not dampen the Congregation's enthusiasm. They were proud of their building which was the first Jewish House of Worship in Sydney to be opened in the post World War II period. It was an all-purpose hall, the Ark could be closed off, which made the building suitable for both religious Services, social meetings and functions, and of course classes. Education, which before had only taken place twice weekly, could now be conducted also on Sunday mornings. On the first such Sunday 60 children presented themselves.

The Dedication Service was an impressive ceremony. Rabbi Porush gave the main address and Rabbis and Ministers from many Sydney synagogues participated, and many V.I.P. guests were present again. The building was erected but much work still had to be done to make it grow into a living Community Centre. Finance was still a big problem, the loan had to be redeemed and in the meantime interest had to be paid and running costs were high.

There was no money for a Minister's salary. Extreme good fortune was with the Congregation to have a man like Rabbi Grozinger who offered to fulfil all rabbinical duties in an honorary capacity, a kind offer which was accepted with profound gratitude. Now there was a properly functioning Synagogue, especially the children were well catered for. Rabbi Grozinger began to organise children's Services entirely conducted by the Youth, also a children's choir was started. The first Wedding was held, the chuppah being lent by the Great Synagogue. Post-Bar-Mitzvah classes were formed, and 1955 saw the first Bat-Mitzvah when Dr Wachtell's daughter, Jeannie, was introduced to the Congregation.

Gradually the task became far too much for an honorary Rabbi, and the financial position being improved Rabbi Grozinger left Moriah College and began his position as permanent Chief Minister of the Maroubra Synagogue. The induction was performed by Rabbi Porush and took place on the 4 March 1956. Again clergy from many other Sydney Synagogues were present. Thus began an extremely happy and fruitful association. Soon Rabbi Grozinger found a place in the hearts of all congregation members, his kind and understanding manner, his devotion to all facets of Synagogue work, especially his work with young people is unforgettable. If in his sermons he sometimes had a slight problem with the English language, this was more than compensated for by the warmth of his feelings and his very special talent in relating the biblical wisdom to modern living.

The second big event of that period was the establishment of a Kindergarten, again, like the Hebrew classes, under the direction of the Jewish Board of Education. At first the little ones had to use the big hall, but very soon another smaller hall was added at the rear. Named the "Cohn Memorial Hall" in memory of the founder, this hall was officially opened on the 11 November, 1956 by the Hon. R.J. Heffron M.L.A., then N.S.W. Minister for Education but later to become the Premier of the State. From the beginning, Mr Heffron living in Maroubra took great interest in the development of this Jewish centre, particularly as far as the education of the children was concerned; he had been a guest at several functions.

The Cohn Memorial Hall did not only serve the Kindergarten, it was a complete

Youth Centre. Sunday lessons, Youth Services and other such functions were held in it. A few years later Kindergarten attendance increased to such an extent that more space was needed. The Board of Education opened another building for this purpose in adjoining Snape Street.

For many years both buildings operated as Kindergartens. Recently Kindergarten attendances diminished and only Snape Street is still working. The Cohn Memorial Hall is now rented out to Mt Sinai College. From the beginning a Kindergarten Parents' Committee was formed looking after the needs of the little ones but also assisting in other aspects of Synagogue work.

In 1957 there were 8 Bar-Mitzvahs and 7 girls celebrated their Bat-Mitzvahs. Cheder had now grown to 7 classes with 140 pupils and a Parents and Citizens' Committee started to work for the children. In conjunction with the local J.N.F. Committee popular children's parties were organised by the P. & C. members, talent quests, hobby competitions and annual picnics were started, the children were encouraged to perform puppet shows on Jewish subjects, and together with the Kindergarten parents the Demonstrations Seders were catered for. It must be remarked here that several of the P. & C. fathers later on joined the Synagogue Board, and even one of the Synagogue's presidents, Mr Steigman, started this way.

As funds were always badly needed, in 1957 the first Fete organised by Mr A. Levitus was held which developed also into an annual event. This was of extreme value not only from the financial point of view, it also proved a splendid opportunity to bring all the various groups and committees connected with the Synagogue together in friendly co-operation.

1958 saw the formation of the first Maroubra Synagogue Youth Club. M.S.Y. as it was called had many ups and downs over the years, for some time it was extremely popular with young people not only from the Maroubra area but also from many other Sydney suburbs. In recent years it was found that M.S.Y. could not compete any more with Zionist youth groups, Hineni and G.S.Y. with their better facilities and paid organisers, so this is one aspect of Synagogue life which did not survive.

1959 saw the end of an era when Dr Wachtell stepped down from the presidency which he had held so successfully for 8 years. In his last report Dr Wachtell expressed the wish that younger men should follow in his footsteps, and the Congregation elected Mr R.S. Stack as their new president, who at a later date was to become president of the Great Synagogue.

The National Council of Jewish Women's Maroubra group had over all the years been of tremendous help in many aspects, but as their ranks thinned the task became too much for such a small band of hard working women. Although they still continued to be of help, the time had now come to form a Synagogue Ladies' Auxiliary.

The names and faces have changed many times over the years but from that day on right to the present time an Auxiliary has always been and always will be an indispensable part of the life of the Synagogue. Catering and fund raising are the main aims of these helpful and busy women but they also perform willingly many other tasks too numerous to mention.

By 1960 membership had reached 390, and 20 Bar-Mitzvahs and 7 weddings were performed during the year. It became apparent that the Congregation had "outgrown" its home and something had to be done about it. Many suggestions were made such as to sell the property and try to find suitable land somewhere else to build anew. But to find something in the vicinity with easy access to transport and also parking facilities proved an impossibility. A new building committee was then appointed and given the task to investigate the possibility of enlarging and

beautifying the existing building. Before any plans could be drawn up it transpired that the next door property was for sale. This was an opportunity too good to miss as it promised the possibility of future expansion. Negotiations to acquire the land started immediately but it was not till 1962, when after Mr Stack's resignation Mr E. Steigman had been elected to the presidency, that the purchase was finalised. In his capacity of Honorary Solicitor Mr Stack played his part in the negotiations.

The property contained semi-detached cottages. One was still tenanted, the other one was empty and was soon used for extra classrooms to lessen the congestion of the main Hall on Sundays. The acquisition put a strain on finances and all hands were busy again with new fundraising projects. The hope of a really beautiful House of Worship to be used exclusively for religious Services was Rabbi Grozinger's dearest wish and well worth every endeavour.

Whilst President and Board Members had innumerable meetings and discussions and heated arguments regarding the new building project, Rabbi Grozinger was anxious to improve the spiritual life of his Congregation. For the boys a Tephillin Club was started on Sunday mornings — the girls volunteering to make breakfast — and all pupils were encouraged to participate in the Great Synagogue's Bible Quiz with outstanding results. For the adults there were Hebrew lessons and monthly special Friday Night Services with interesting guest speakers. Wishing to get closer contact also with those Congregation members who attended Services only rarely, Rabbi Grozinger sought the assistance of a few helpers to start publishing a small Synagogue bulletin, called the *Yeshurun*. The first issue came out for Pesach 1961, seven years after the Hall had been completed.

The bulletin gave the Rabbi the opportunity for a religious message and for explanations about the meaning of Festivals. It also contained all details about Synagogue activities and had contributions from other organisations. Most of the cost was recouped by advertisements.

At that time, about 20 years ago, the cultural life of the Sydney Jewish community at large was far different from what it is today; one could almost have called it a desert. Rabbi Grozinger was determined to change this state of affairs at least as far as Maroubra was concerned. As a first step he invited the Rabbis of other orthodox Synagogues to participate in a Lecture series. Sceptics said it would never work, people just are not interested in culture, especially in the cold winter months. But it turned out that the four lectures on the subject of "Great Jewish Personalities in Ancient Times" on consecutive Sunday evenings, was such a success that about 80 people attended every time and it became an annual event.

In 1962 Chief Rabbi Brodie came to Sydney again and was given a reception in Maroubra. The Congregation was proud to show what had been done with "the paddock". Invitations had not only gone out to the Jewish community but to many non-Jews, the Mayor of Randwick and leaders of Churches and Public Schools in the district. All were extremely interested to meet a Chief Rabbi and the Hall was packed. Rabbi Brodie was pleased to meet many of the Congregation members, and the Ladies' Auxiliary served supper and made a presentation to Mrs Brodie who had accompanied her husband.

At that period membership had increased to over 400 and has remained so ever since. Over all the years Rabbi Grozinger had conducted all religious Services on his own, only for the High Holydays had Chazanim been engaged. Gradually, owing to health problems, the task became to be too heavy and it was necessary to engage a part-time Reader. The choice fell on Mr Zelig Guterson, who was inducted to this position by Rabbi Grozinger during the Friday Night Service on the 29 January 1965.

For a long time the building and fund-raising committees had been hard at work. The erection of a "War Memorial and Martyrs' Synagogue" was the aim. Appeals went out through letters, telephone calls and personal visits by President and Rabbi not only to Congregation members but to many prominent persons and organisations of the general Sydney community. Many pledges were received by individuals, for payments to be made over several years. The Chevra Kadisha was a donor.

Finally, after many negotiations, vacant possession of the second half of the existing cottage was achieved, and the contract for the erection of a modern and dignified Synagogue, designed by Mr H.A. Buhrig and costing \$70,000, was signed, the old cottage was demolished and building started almost immediately.

The 21st November 1965 was again a most memorable day in the history of Kingsford-Maroubra as this day saw the solemn consecration with an impressive, almost 2 hour long, ceremony. Again Rabbis and Reverend gentlemen from the other Sydney Orthodox Synagogues participated. Rabbi Porush gave the dedication address and Rabbi Grozinger an emotional and very moving sermon. His dearest wish was now fulfilled.

In March 1966 Rabbi Grozinger completed 10 years as Chief Minister of the Congregation and was honoured with a special Kiddush and a presentation.

What a tragedy that he had only a short time left in which to enjoy officiating in his dearly loved new Synagogue. During the year his health deteriorated further and he passed away on the 2nd day Rosh Hashana at the early age of 49 years deeply mourned by his family and all who had known him.

In an endeavour to beautify the Synagogue even further, the Rabbi had inspired one of the Congregation members, Mr G. Stark, to design and make a Mizrach Wall depicting Jewish Festivals. The work was delayed and was not yet finished at the time of the Rabbi's death. So after completion, the Wall was dedicated to his memory. The lecture series held so successfully over the years was continued as "Rabbi Grozinger Memorial Lectures", also a special "Rabbi Grozinger Memorial Prize" is distributed every year to a deserving Cheder Pupil.

Rabbi Grozinger's presence was sorely missed, but he had built on firm ground and the work could go on. Mr Kresner, who had followed Mr Steigman during that year as President, looked after the educational needs; and Vice-President Dr Wachtell together with some other Board Members after the religious side until a new Rabbi could be found.

As already mentioned, in the very early stage there had been contact with Rabbi Gottshall. 1966 saw him in Brisbane and now Dr Wachtell went there to enquire whether he would consider moving to Maroubra. He consented and at an extraordinary general meeting the Congregation approved of the appointment.

But there was a problem. Rabbi Grozinger had owned his own home and now accommodation had to be found. Although financial circumstances were still strained it became possible to acquire a cottage in nearby Gale Road and Rabbi Gottshall and his family moved to Maroubra. The Induction Service was performed, again by Rabbi Porush, on 18 June 1967. Something like the old momentum gradually resumed in the life of the Congregation. Amongst other innovations discussion evening for the Youth were started in the Rabbi's home.

The next two years seemed uneventful but in 1969 some serious differences of opinion occurred in the Board of Management, resulting in the resignation of the President and some other Board Members. Mr M. Silberstein was made an Acting President until the next Annual meeting when he was confirmed as President. At the end of his first year in office he could report that the Congregation did not seem

to have suffered during the interim period, the financial position had improved slightly, and a new membership drive was on the way.

To the President's consternation and everybody's regret Rabbi Gottshall announced his intention to resign, owing to ill-health at the end of 1971, and again a new Chief Minister had to be found.

After endless correspondence, discussions and interviews the choice fell on Rabbi George Marcus. Here was a young and able man, eager to start on his career. Despite his lack of experience he was given a warm welcome and especially endeared himself soon to the Youth. Once more, Rabbi Porush was willing to perform the Induction Service, which was held on 26 March 1972. During Rabbi Marcus' first year at Maroubra a Young Marrieds' Group commenced to hold cultural evenings, the Cheder classes were improved through better discipline and another attempt was made to start a Youth Group, this time with a paid part-time Youth Director. The future seemed once more assured. It was a great pity that early in 1973, his second year in office, Rabbi Marcus gave notice that he did not intend to have the contract renewed after the end of the year, as he had married and preferred to live with his wife's family in Melbourne. Once more, within such a short time the burden to find a new Minister fell on Mr Silberstein's shoulders. He was fortunate in meeting young Reverend (now Rabbi) David Freilich and could arrange with him to serve for a while as Interim-Minister. This time the change-over was achieved without any interruption to Services at all as Reverend Freilich arrived only a week after Rabbi Marcus' departure.

It soon became obvious to everybody that the "Interim" would become permanent. Very permanent indeed; so far it has lasted for nine years and there is every indication that it will last for many more years into the future. Reverend Freilich went about his task with great dedication and sincerity. The introduction of weekday morning minyan (often before tried but never quite successful), many shiurim for men and women — the latter being given by Mrs Freilich — and always interesting sermons on Shabbat, all contributed to a marked upturn in the religious life of the Congregation from the very beginning, and further progress was made every year since.

At the end of 1974 Mr Silberstein retired and Mr J. Engelman became the new President. One of his first tasks was to organise Reverend Freilich's induction which took place on the 1 December of that year, again by Rabbi Porush.

An upsetting event occurred in 1976 when thieves broke into the Synagogue and it was discovered that two Sifrei Torah and all the silverware and many other religious items were missing. It was almost a miracle that the Sifrei Torah were later found; being of no use to the thieves, they had abandoned them in a gutter. But the loss of the silverware was hard to take and it took a long time to replace it all.

In February 1977 Reverend Freilich was given leave of absence and with his wife and small daughter he spent some time in Israel to continue his studies. Having obtained his Smicha he arrived home as Rabbi Freilich to a very warm welcome, just in time to officiate at the High Holyday Services. During his absence the Congregation was in good hands as Mr Willy Lederman conducted Shabbat Services. He is a knowledgeable young man with a pleasant voice, a popular Cheder teacher, who also acted as Chazan to assist the Rabbis during many High Holyday Services.

The whole Sydney Jewish community was saddened when in May 1978 Rabbi Gottshall passed away after a long and serious illness. It was immediately evident that something had to be done in Maroubra to honour the memory of the former Minister. It was decided to inaugurate a "Rabbi Gottshall Memorial Library".

Donations for the purchase of books were forthcoming from Congregation members and friends. On 3 of December 1978 Mrs Gottshall in the presence of her children, grandchildren and many friends performed the official opening of the Library with a very moving speech.

At the instigation of one of the Board Members, Mr R. Bahar, and with the help of Rabbi Freilich and a small committee, another Synagogue bulletin was launched in 1978.

Named the "Igeret" it is now a registered publication being issued four times every year. It brings messages from the Rabbi and the President, details of all congregational activities and interesting contributions from members and outsiders.

At the end of 1978 Mr Engelman after four years resigned as President and Mr A. Halm was elected to this position, which he too held for four years, resigning at the end of 1982. Mr Engelman could then be persuaded to stand once more and was unanimously re-elected.

The end of 1981 saw a very regrettable incident when wilfully a fire was started in the middle of the night in the Hall. Fire Brigade and police were quickly on the spot, but no sign of the culprits was to be seen. It was in a way reassuring that obviously no antisemitism was involved as two churches in the vicinity suffered the same fate the next night. Fortunately the Synagogue was not touched, but the damage to the interior of the Hall and part of the kitchen was extensive and a brand new piano purchased only a few months prior to the fire was a complete write-off. It took a few months but eventually the insurance money and an additional kind donation from a generous donor plus the effort by two Board Members, who are architects, did not only repair the damage but beautified the Hall.

Over the years the membership had undergone many changes, although the numbers have been approximately the same for some time. There are only very few of the original members left, many have passed away, others have moved to different districts and joined other Synagogues. Some of these, however, have become associate members and so keep some contact with Maroubra. Many more young couples with small children reside in the area now, to the great benefit of the Congregation. Although in the Board of Management some of the older generation's experience is of great value, young men are needed and are forthcoming to ensure the future.

Never was this trend more evident than in 1980 when an optimistic and enthusiastic group of young parents successfully led by Mr P. Phillipsohn, came together to investigate the possibility of starting a Jewish Day School in Maroubra. The year 1981 saw the beginning of Mt. Sinai College with one class housed in the Cohn Memorial Hall, vacated by the Kindergarten. The venture proved an enormous success, four classes were planned for 1983, and in a few years's time there will be a complete Infants' and Primary school in the vicinity.

The official opening ceremony was held in the Synagogue Hall. Although Mt. Sinai College is financially completely independent it has close ties with the Congregation, which is to mutual advantage. The co-operation is made easy by the fact that some members of the Synagogue Board are also on the College Board and Rabbi Freilich is their Spiritual Dean.

It is most likely obvious to all with experience in communal life that it takes more than Rabbis and Presidents, however devoted and conscientious they may be, to organise and run a Congregation. A great many highly motivated men and women have shared the burden. Space would not allow to name them all, but a few examples shall now be quoted:

Mr I. Goldberg is one of the few, who has been a faithful worshipper from the

beginning and now, over 80 years old is still in regular attendance. Together with his wife Jenny, one of the original Council "Girls", he went on a trip to Israel in 1980. On their return they presented the Synagogue with a magnificent gift, a Torah Scroll and beautifully embroidered Parochet. In appreciation of the continued help and interest and this highly valued gift, Mr Goldberg was made an Honorary Warden of the Synagogue.

The late Mr A. Kutner, a Vice-President for many of the early years, gave an enormous amount of his time helping the young Congregation in many ways. His energetic and popular wife Dora was the driving force behind the establishment of the Kindergarten and also was a great help with the Ladies' Auxiliary and other committees. When in 1965 they decided to leave Australia and settle in California, their departure was much regretted and Asher Kutner was made an Honorary Life Member. Many friends from Sydney stayed in contact and in 1980 after Asher's untimely death a donation was received from Dora with the wish that something should be done for the Youth in her late husband's name. The "Asher Kutner Memorial Youth Debating Competition" was inaugurated and promises to be an annual event, so keeping the name Kutner alive.

Another Honorary Life Member is Mrs Rosa Platus, now well over 90 years old. Together with her daughter, Mrs Milli Green she made use of her wide catering experience in the Synagogue kitchen where she put in many hours of work and showed the younger members what it means to serve the community.

When in 1977 the Constitution of the Congregation was changed to allow women to serve on the Board of Management, Mrs Viola Kempler was the first and is at present the only female Board Member. In addition to this arduous duty she has given many years of devoted service as Honorary Secretary and President of the Ladies' Auxiliary.

"Immerse yourselves in the waters of the Kehilla" is a good advice often given to Congregants by Vice-President Mr Alec Selig. That is just what he himself has done. Joining the Board 25 years ago he was Honorary Treasurer for 18 years, only relinquishing this post when he convinced himself that a young and very reliable replacement had been found. That did not stop Alec Selig's involvement which includes organising the annual Fetes, allocating Synagogue seats and many other duties. All this in addition to being Chairman of the Maroubra J.N.F. and U.I.A. committees and participating in other Jewish organisations. A feat hard to imitate.

Many exceptional families belong to the Congregation, as an example the Spigelmans can be mentioned. As already said, Mark Spigelman was Rabbi Grozinger's first Bar-Mitzvah boy, brothers Jim and Alan followed in his footsteps. Father, the late Mr Melech Spigelman, was for many years a Vice-President, and in appreciation of his hard work for the congregation was later made a Life-Vice-President. History was made in 1982 when Mark's eldest son, Ronald was the first second-generation Bar-Mitzvah boy in the Maroubra Synagogue.

Looking back at the beginning, one can say that Dr Cohn's dream has been entirely fulfilled. Although financial membership has never quite reached the 500 mark, counting the many children who are always welcome, the number is easily exceeded. Where once was an empty paddock there is now a beautiful House of Worship, a busy centre of learning for children and adults, a communal hall for all simchot and social gatherings, a Rabbi who is an inspiring leader helped by devoted men and women. Since 1954 when the first building was erected, 270 boys had their Bar-Mitzvah, 75 girls celebrated their Bat-Mitzvah and 145 couples started their married life under the Maroubra chupah. Without exaggeration one can say here is a valuable part of Sydney Jewry, and the future looks bright for the Kingsford-Maroubra Hebrew Congregation.

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Note — Mrs Litthauer was made a life member of the Congregation in February 1984. It is sad to record that Dorothea Litthauer did not live long afterwards to enjoy this honour.