

A Look Back in the 100 Years of North Shore Congregation Israel: The War Effort.

By Merle A. Branner

On December 7, 1941, the Sunday morning service was led by the Men's Club with guest speakers Dr. Woldenberg, Abel Fagen and Mr. Robert Koretz. By the time the service was over, life would be changed in the country forever as it became known that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor. "December 7, 1941 A Date Which Will Live in Infamy," stated Franklin D. Roosevelt in his address to Congress asking that a State of War be declared between the United States and Japan on December 8, 1941. That same night 16 members attended the Board of Trustees meeting.

North Shore Congregation Israel was already active in the war effort. On March 10, 1941, the Board of Trustees appointed Sisterhood President Rose Grauer and Men's Club President Robert Koretz as heads of the Army & Navy Committee. They provided home hospitality for the service people at Fort Sheridan and Great Lakes, mostly for Sunday dinner invitations for those who attended services. Additionally, the Army & Navy Committee maintained a register of the young



Rose Grauer

men and women in the congregation who were called to service. They established contacts for them in other communities and sent them Temple bulletins and announcements through the mail. The Army & Navy Committee also worked with the Young People's Club to provide the entertainment and hospitality for the men and women at Fort Sheridan and Great Lakes. The Men's Club Community Annual Dance on April 15, 1941 was called a Military Ball in honor of the 50 male guests stationed at Fort Sheridan and Great Lakes.

On May 12, 1941, Rabbi Charles E. Shulman convinced the Board of Trustees to extend services over the summer. He felt it was important that the temple have a brief service on Sunday mornings based on the fact that Jewish boys stationed at Fort Sheridan would be increasing in numbers. Cantor Landsman and Mr. Cookson were engaged to furnish the music and Assistant Rabbi Arthur Bluhm, whom the congregation had sponsored to gain his release from a concentration camp in Krefeld, Germany, conducted the service. ¹

On September 8, 1941, the Finance Committee received the Board of Trustees approval to invest \$3000 from the Alschuler Memorial Fund and any future funds in United States Defense Bonds.

¹ Rabbi Bluhm and his family arrived in Glencoe on March 13, 1939. He became the assistant Rabbi at NSCI until October 10, 1941, until he became the Rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel in Amarillo, Texas.

Robert Adler and Rose Grauer served as co-chairpersons for the Jewish Welfare Board for the North Shore, November 10, 1941. On March 9, 1942, the Board unanimously “Resolved, that upon notification, we suspend for the duration of their service the dues of all members of the Congregation entering the armed forces of the United States; and that all of the privileges of Temple membership be made available to their families.” Additionally, the Men’s Club announced they would not have a community dance and would use the funds to provide entertainment for servicemen. Then, on March 13, 1942, there was an Executive Board Meeting to discuss what to do if Rabbi Charles Shulman accepted an appointment as a chaplain in the Armed Forces. The Board also unanimously approved the sale of defense stamps and bonds through the temple office.

In May of 1942, Robert S. Adler and Dr. Max Woldenberg were both were granted a leave of absence from the Board due to their entering military service.

The NSCI confirmands of the 1930s became the soldiers of World War II. By May 10, 1943, the NSCI Young People’s group headed by Mrs. Schulman (Rabbi Schulman’s wife) suspended all activities for the duration of the war due to the fact that most of the young men were in military service. In fact, there were also four young women from NSCI who enlisted in the military: Dorothy R. Flesham (WAAC) Army, Alys L. (Eiseman) Moss (WAVE) Navy, Martha Anne Stein (WAVE) Navy, and Miriam Cohn (WAC) Army.



Dorothy R. Flesham

The Sisterhood was actively cooperating in all Red Cross and Civilian Defense work and conducted a first aid and home nursing classes at the temple. They also helped service people find housing for their families. Rose Grauer stated in her memories book that “Some of us would really just walk the streets and ring doorbells to find apartments for the servicemen. Some of the estates on Sheridan Road have separate garages and coach houses. The second floors were usually unused finished rooms because their help usually slept in the main house. So, we asked people if they would furnish them just sparsely, so a serviceman and his wife could live there. And they did. We had a lot of people who did.”²

On October 9, 1942, NSCI held their first U.S.O. Party with 60 people in attendance. These U.S.O. parties continued nearly weekly throughout the war with 60 to 95 people in attendance each week. Rose Grauer said, “The Salvation Army had headquarters in Highwood, and they did a lot of this work, too. There were also a lot of other groups. Gradually we became one big USO

² Grauer Caspary, R.L. (1988). A History, Tape Writer, Lincolnshire, p. 69.

and it embraced everybody. We even went up to Waukegan to give parties, because Great Lakes is nearer to Waukegan than it is to the North Shore or to Chicago. They had a USO Club and would give affairs there. We got so we knew a lot of the boys. Each religion had its own chaplain and the Jewish boys would have a Friday night Service and we would take food for them to eat after the Service. We usually took girls with us, too. So, it really got to be something great.”³

Rose later said “We served the young men coming back in their USO Clubs where they would meet. Some I invited home. We sponsored so many romances. We'd take girls up to the USO Clubs all the time, or we had them in our homes. We had a piano at our house, and we'd have parties at home. A lot of romances and weddings were developed during those days. We have a very nice family who lives in Highland Park and they met at my house. A couple of other people I see call me Cupid because they met through our parties. I'm an old Cupid now, but those were very rewarding days. You did what was necessary, and you felt what you were doing was necessary and was serving a real purpose.”⁴

³ Ibid., 70.

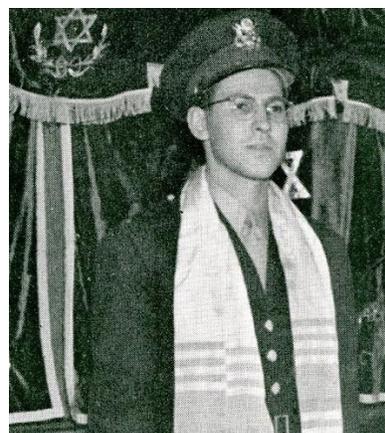
⁴ Ibid., 71.

The Sisterhood had received approval from the Board of Trustees to sell War Bonds on January 11, 1943, and by May 23 of that year, had raised \$250.00 in War Bonds and \$2,500.00 in War Savings Stamps.



Rabbi Charles E. Shulman

Rabbi Shulman accepted an appointment as a chaplain in the Armed Forces. Rabbi Shulman's last Sunday morning service and farewell ceremony was held on January 25, 1943, just before his induction into the Navy on February 3, 1943. The congregation was left in the good hands of Rabbi Richard C. Hertz who had been Assistant Rabbi since August of 1942 until July 15, 1943 when he also requested the Board of Trustees to allow him to volunteer as an Army Chaplain. Rabbi Hertz was called to service in mid-September 15, 1943 and was invited by the Board to rejoin the rabbinical staff of the Temple upon his discharge from the armed forces.



Rabbi Richard C. Hertz

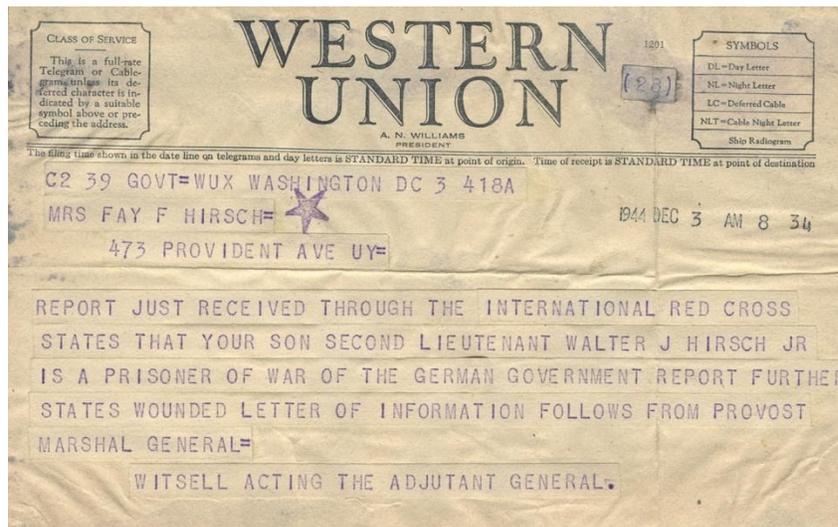
Rabbi James A. Wax, assistant Rabbi at the United Hebrew Congregation of St. Louis, served our congregation from 1944 – 1946. Rabbi Waxman sent a personal letter to each service member expressing the interest of the congregation in the soldier's welfare and desire to hear from them.

Beginning in May 1945, the temple produced a special Bulletin, called Reporting for Duty, that was sent to all service men and women. This bulletin reported where everyone was stationed, what they were doing and who had lost their life in service. The former Religious School Principal, Lt. M. S. Palles, wrote that he was an officer in charge of the Depot in the Supply Corps which supported the Navy's advance bases and fleet with supplies. On one visit to the shipping section he saw, to his surprise, matzah, wine, canned gefilte fish and Haggadahs for Passover being packed into wooden crates for shipment to advance bases in the Pacific. Palles was told that this shipment was a priority and was being delivered by plane to arrive on time. Capt. R. S. Lindenthal reported on his Yom Kipper Services in India. He said that the Chaplain gave an inspiring talk on "Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow – The Fate of the Jews."

In February 1945, Rabbi Shulman wrote from Australia in that he was the Assistant to the Fleet Chaplain and had covered over sixteen thousand miles under varying conditions. He was the first

Jewish Chaplain in Australia. On one his last stops on the continent before proceeding northward, he was waiting for a pilot and plane to assist him in delivering a cargo of about four thousand pounds of matzos and wine to various islands for Passover for the service men and women. Rabbi Shulman wrote that he spent several hours talking to Irving Berlin who was the son of a rabbi and had come to one of the islands with his Army show. Shulman wrote, “He carries his heritage with the dignity that Americans expect of those possessing religious association.”

Rabbi Richard C. Hertz wrote that he was stationed in Fort Ord., California, and had seen some North Shore boys. Mort Oman was heading to the Pacific; Lt. Al Alschuler, Jr. USNR was stationed nearby and visited for a day. Under the News Notes in the Bulletin, it was reported that Lt. Robert L. Weinberg and Lt. Walter J.



Hirsch, Jr. were taken prisoners of war in Germany and Caption Kenneth Cowan was injured while serving in enemy territory. He was hospitalized in England and then returned to the U.S. Both Lt. Robert L. Weinberg and Lt. Walter J. Hirsch, Jr. were released and returned home.

On January 4, 1946, a farewell dinner was given in honor of Rabbi Wax and his wife. That same evening, Rabbi Shulman returned from the service. On March 27, 1946, the congregation was notified that Rabbi Hertz would also be returning from service.

Throughout World War II, NSCI's efforts included financial contributions, one party per month at USO Clubs or Army Corps, monthly parties at Great Lakes Hospital, prayer cards (published by the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods) furnished to each member of the Armed Forces, magazines distributed to Great Lakes Hospital and hand looms, used in rehabilitation, created by the Men's Club Workshop and given to the Red Cross. In addition to the continuation of these activities, contributions to local blood banks and volunteering weekly at Red Cross Night were encouraged. Post-war activities were planned with regard to employment, legal rights, and medical problems to help servicemen and women return to civilian life.

On November 12, 1945, the Servicemen's Memorial Committee was formed by the Board. The committee recommended creating a memorial plaque to honor the 23 NSCI members who lost their lives in service. Their names also have appeared every year since 1945 in



the Book of Remembrance at Yom Kippur: Alan Bachrach, Allan L. David, Leon W. Fried, Benjamin H. Goodman, Jr., Albert Gordon, Alan Gottlieb, Harry Grant, Robert M. Hirsch, Robert P. Kahn, Donald S. Kraus, Jerome Lauer, David R. Lebeson, Harry W. Mintz, Edwin Sidney Meyerson, Jr., Ralph Arthur Raclin, William S. Rothschild II, J. Yale Schrero, Emile Hack Selig, Jr., Herbert W. Shulman, Murray M. Waxman, Robert L. Wolff, Jr., and Grigory H. Yarmitsky.

Robert P. Kahn

North Shore Congregation Israel's membership before World War II was 515 members (November 10, 1941). By the end of World War II, membership had grown to 758 (November 12, 1945). The temple was growing as the service men and women were returning. Part of the postwar plan (no "s" on plan) was to embrace the age group between 20 to 35. and to expand facilities to accommodate the growth.