

Donald Bean
President: 1963-1967

Please note, in preface, that all of this information, including dates and places, was given to me in an interview with Mr. Donald Bean in his home in Society Hill when he was 103 years old. He had a little help - very little - with dates from his son Skip, who was with us. He had easy recall of most of his life, and it was a delightful hour.



Donald Bean has an association with Rodeph Shalom that dates from well before his presidency of our congregation, which was 1963 to 1967. Donald and Fahnya Schorr Bean were married by an RS rabbi on October 25, 1942. However, his in law family, George and May Broude Schorr, were married at Rodeph Shalom sometime around 1917, and the family were members even then. The Schorr family came to Philadelphia from Odessa, and the Broude family from Minsk. It was only natural that Donald and Fahnya would be members of the congregation, and raise their three sons, Henry, George and Skip within our congregation.

Mr. Bean was born on January 19, 1916 in Newark, N.J. His mother was also born in Newark, and his father immigrated to America from the Ukraine town of Tarnopol, very near Kozlov. They met and married in Newark, March 25, 1915. Donald was the oldest of three children, having a younger brother who died at the age of 91. The youngest child was his sister, Gloria, now 91 and living in Washington, DC.

The family worshiped at Temple Israel in Cranford, N.J., where he was a Bar Mitzvah, and Mr. Bean graduated from Southside High School in Newark in January 1934. He graduated from Lafayette College in 1937, and then Harvard Law School in 1940.

He then began his law career, and it was at that time while working as a young lawyer, he met, in Mr. Bean's words, "the Jewish maiden" to whom he was introduced by a lifelong friend, Richard Seitz, his living mate at Lafayette. Miss Fahnya Schorr had just graduated from Smith College in 1940. They were married in 1942, while Mr. Bean was serving in the United States Navy during WW II. After his commission expired, they moved to Philadelphia, and Mr. Bean began his legal career at Wolf Block Schorr and Solis-Cohen.

Donald and Fahnya Bean were blessed with three sons, Henry, George and Skip. All attended Religious School and were B'nai Mitzvot at Rodeph Shalom. One of their grandchildren was also a Bat Mitzvah at Rodeph Shalom, a fourth generation connection to RS.

One of the events that happened while Mr. Bean was President was the wise purchase of a piece of property adjoining the synagogue building on Green Street. Donald remembers it to be about a quarter of an acre, costing \$2,500. The original extension to the sanctuary and main building, and part of the parking lot, were established on that piece of ground.

Mr. Bean, at the beginning of his law practice, was a general practitioner of law. Over the years, as the Law became more specialized, he became a specialist in Real Estate Law, and ended his career as chairman of the real estate group at Wolf Block. The size of his practice was always limited by his desire to do his own work, rather than delegating. He enjoyed drafting documents, and as son Skip reports, in moments of pride, he referred to his hands as those of a skilled Italian artisan!

Perhaps his love of, and appreciation for real estate inspired him to buy that piece of property during his presidency that began the expansion of our wonderful Rodeph Shalom Synagogue.

Written by Bettyruth Walter