

Strathfield Was a Way of Life

I moved to Strathfield as a child in the early 50s and my family, as always, made it their first job to join the local Shul. Strathfield Shul. I have many abiding memories of happy days at the Shul including:

- Mid-week cheder when Rev Goran would attempt to teach a motley crew of 5 to 13 year olds to read Hebrew and understand the Jewish festivals
- Sunday cheder which was a little more structured with classes according to age and ability
- Shabbos in the little Shul upstairs in the house
- Playing in the gardens, especially at the far end before the new Shul was built, and in the Succah, hiding in the bushes and the cane that grew there
- Shul fetes which raised the much needed funds to build the new Shul
- My barmitzvah, not just in the Shul when Rabbi Porush came from the Great Synagogue and a very young Cantor Winkler sang for us, but also the reception in the converted Shul that evening – what a day and then what a night it was
- Youth Dances in the big room downstairs in the old building
- Aaron Shaw calling Hakofahs in his inimitable style every Simchas Torah with a tag for every name
- The communal meeting as a “call to arms” so to speak, for the Yom Kippur war – the Shul, in its role as a meeting hall, was full. Members calling out their donations to be recorded
- The regular phone calls to help make a minyan – as one of four sons plus our dad, we were a rich resource when a minyan was needed, not to mention the rest of our family, who between us could make a minyan on our own
- And the meetings! So many meetings! As a child I watched when there would be Shul meetings at home, first just to run the Shul and then to do with building the Shul and next I knew it, I was 18 and co-opted onto the board and then I was part of the meetings.

Being a member of Strathfield was a way of life. It was the way it was back then when people still had time, when the Ladies' Auxiliary never had to buy in food or engage a washing up person and when catering for any size crowd was never a problem. It was a time when roles were defined and everyone was happy with their roles, when life was just a little slower and, dare I say, a little more enjoyable...

by Rod Hyman
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