

JEWES OF ORANGE COUNTY

OUR STORY

A GOLDEN AGE

1961-1990

These years were a golden age for Orange County Jews, as they were for Jews across the nation. Antisemitism, while still around, moved into the background, and OC's Jewish community grew by leaps and bounds. Starting with only two synagogues in 1961, by 1990 Orange County had 24, along with 12 Jewish agencies and schools.



Jewish surfing legend Dorian "Doc" Paskowitz, an icon in the surfing community, is credited with introducing surfing to both Israel and to Palestinians in Gaza. Unfortunately, there was a clear culture of racism in the largely white surfer community, particularly in the 1960s. Doc's son Izzy shared a story of how his father, a devoted Jew, upon seeing a surfer with a swastika painted on his board, got a hammer and smashed it to pieces.



1967 The John Birch Society was started in 1958 and found fertile ground in conservative Orange County. Unfortunately, hate groups have deep roots here.



In 1967, Sharon Bernstein was one of only five Jews in her high school, and when she entered the Miss Anaheim Pageant it was suggested that she change her last name to have a better chance of winning. She refused to do so, and went on to win against 23 other contestants.

July 6, 1965: The Jewish Community Council of Orange County, OC's first Federation, is officially incorporated to provide needed communal services.

1965



Hebrew Academy, the first Jewish day school in Orange County, opens in Huntington Beach in 1969. It is followed by Tarbut v'Torah in Irvine, Morasha Day School in Mission Viejo, and most recently, Irvine Hebrew Day School in Santa Ana.



1969

According to Rabbi Bernard King of synagogue Shir Ha-Ma'alot, "In 1969 there were still areas restricted to Jews — the Santa Ana Country Club, Emerald Bay, Crystal Cove." Rabbi King was very active in interfaith work and was named one of the 100 most influential leaders of Orange County over the past 100 years by the *OC Register*.

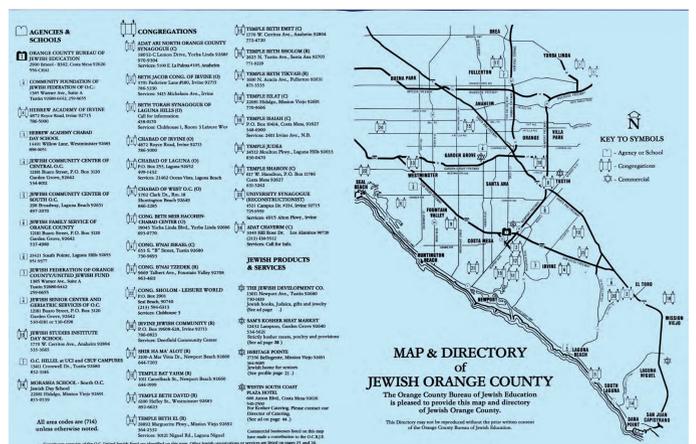
Edmon J. Rodman and his wife Brenda grew up in Anaheim and remember it as mostly idyllic, but antisemitism did exist. Brenda recalls how a swastika was burned into their front lawn in the 1970s, and Edmond mentioned that a neighbor once ran out of her house and screamed, "Keep that f—ing Jew dog out of my yard!" when he was walking his dog.



1978

In 1978, Harriett Wieder made history when she became the first woman, and the first Jew, elected to the Orange County Board of Supervisors. In 2004, the Harriett M. Wieder Regional Park in Huntington Beach was opened to the public.

In 1981, Holocaust survivor Mel Mermelstein successfully sued the Institute for Historical Review, which claimed that Jews were not killed in gas chambers in WWII. Judge Thomas T. Johnson declared that "... the fact that Jews were gassed to death at Auschwitz... is not reasonably subject to dispute. It is simply a fact."



1990-1991 Map of Jewish Orange County