

Rabbi Eli Bohnen, 83; had served at Temple Emanu-El, Army veteran

PROVIDENCE — Rabbi Eli A. Bohnen, 83, rabbi-emeritus of Temple Emanu-El, who was described by a friend as "a rare humanitarian," died yesterday at Miriam Hospital. He was the husband of Eleanor (Rosenthal) Bohnen.



"He was a very beloved rabbi," said Rabbi Wayne Franklin of Temple Emanu-El. "He cared about everybody." "And," he added, "there was a dignity and propriety about him, a kind of elegance you don't see anymore."

Rabbi Franklin also credited Rabbi Bohnen with "building up the congregation" at Temple Emanu-El, and said "he was a very prominent rabbi, locally and nationally."

"Rabbi Bohnen was one of the rarest of humanitarians who ever lived in New England," said Mitchell Sugarman, owner of Mount Sinai Chapel, who had known him for years.

"He always tried to help other people. He always looked out for other people, and never wanted anything for himself."

"Every family he's ever served in times of anguish ... he's just gone out of his way, far and above the call of duty," Mr. Sugarman said. "He just lived to help other people."

Rabbi Bohnen, of 500 Elmgrove Ave., was born in Toronto, Canada, a son of the late Max and Nellie (Brill) Bohnen. He lived in Providence since 1948.

He was a graduate of Harbord Collegiate Institute, Toronto, and received a bachelor of arts degree in Semitic studies from the University of Toronto in 1931. He was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York in 1935, and received a doctorate in Hebrew literature from the seminary in 1955.

He was an assistant rabbi at Congregation Adath Jeshurun in Philadelphia from 1935 to 1939. From 1939 to 1948, he was a rabbi at Temple Emanu-El in Buffalo, N.Y.

Rabbi Bohnen was a World War

II Army veteran. He served from 1943 to 1946 as chaplain in the 42nd Infantry "Rainbow" Division. He was stationed at Camp Gruber, Okla., and then served in France, Germany and Austria as the division's assistant chaplain, with the rank of major. He entered the Dachau concentration camp with the liberating troops.

After the war, he was an adviser on displaced persons to the commanding general, and worked with Jewish displaced persons in Salzburg and Bad Gastein, Austria.

In 1948, he became senior rabbi at Temple Emanu-El in Providence, and in 1973 was named rabbi-emeritus. He also served as president of the Rhode Island Board of Rabbis, and as president of the Rabbinical Assembly, International Organization of Conservative Rabbis.

Rabbi Bohnen received the Bronze Brotherhood Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1964. In 1977, he received the Max Arzt Award from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He received a service award from the board of governors of Israel Bonds for serving as the Rhode Island chairman of the Israel Bonds Campaign.

He served on the boards of the United Fund, the Council of Community Services, the Community Workshop, the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, the Jewish Community Center, and the Providence Hebrew Day School.

Rabbi Bohnen received honorary doctor of divinity degrees from the Jewish Theological Seminary, Brown University, and Roger Williams University. He received a doctor of humane letters degree from the University of Rhode Island.

Besides his wife, he leaves a daughter, Judith B. Levitt of Providence; a son, Michael J. Bohnen of Newton, Mass.; a sister, Sarah Smith, and two brothers, Daniel and Abraham Bohnen, all in Toronto; and five grandchildren.

The funeral was to be held today at 1 p.m. at Temple Emanu-El, Morris Avenue. Burial was to be in Lincoln Park Cemetery, Warwick.

BOHNEN,
Rabbi ELI

OBITUARIES

RABBI ELI BOHNEN

PROVIDENCE — Rabbi Eli A. Bohnen, 83, rabbi-emeritus of Temple Emanu-El died Dec. 1 at Miriam Hospital. He was the husband of Eleanor (Rosen-thal) Bohnen.

Rabbi Bohnen, of 500 Elm-grove Ave., was born in Toronto, Canada, a son of the late Max and Nellie (Brill) Bohnen. He lived in Providence since 1948.

He was a graduate of Har-bord Collegiate Institute, Toronto, and received a bachelor of arts degree in Semitic studies from the University of Toronto in 1931. He was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York in 1935, and received a doctorate in Hebrew literature from the seminary in 1955.

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Besides his wife he leaves a daughter, Judith B. Levitt of Providence; a son, Michael J. Bohnen of Newton, Mass.; a sister, Sarah Smith; two brothers, Daniel and Abraham Bohnen, all in Toronto, and five grandchildren.

The funeral was held Dec. 2 at Temple Emanu-El, Morris Avenue. Burial was in Lincoln Park Cemetery, Warwick. Arrangements were made by Mount Sinai Memorial Chapel, 825 Hope St., Providence.

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He was a graduate of Harbord



—1982 Photo

RABBI ELI A. BOHNEN

Rabbi Bohnen served from 1943 to 1946 as chaplain of the 42nd Infantry "Rainbow" Division. He was stationed on Oklahoma, and in France, Germany and Austria as the division's assistant chaplain, attaining the rank of major. He was awarded the Bronze Star and the Army Commendation Ribbon. He entered the Dachau concentration camp with liberating troops.

After the war he was an adviser on displaced persons to the commanding general, and worked with Jewish displaced persons in Salzburg and Bad Gastein, Austria.

BOHNEN, Rabbi Eli A.

December 1, 1992. Beloved husband of Eleanor (Rosenthal) Bohnen. Residence 500 Elmgrove Ave. Dear father of Judith B. Levitt, Providence, Michael J. Bohnen, Newton, MA. Dear brother of Sarah Smith, Daniel and Abraham Bohnen, Toronto, Canada. Devoted grandfather of Jonathan, Debra, Andrew, Sharon and Debbi. Funeral services 1 p.m. Wednesday at TEMPLE EMANU-EL, Morris Ave. at Sessions St. Relatives and friends are invited. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to your favorite charity. At the family's request, Shiva will be private. Arrangements by MOUNT SINAI MEMORIAL CHAPEL.