



THE HISTORY OF MAHI SHRINERS
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Mahi Shriners has a colorful and important history. It has always been regarded as one of the premier Temples in the United States and has been very influential in national Shrine matters through the years. More importantly, Mahi has played important role in the history of the Miami area. The “Magic City” and Mahi have grown together, through good times and bad. Many people do not realize the role that Mahi has played in some of the most important events in the city’s history and may be surprised to find out how high the Shrine was held in public opinion in years past. Every Mahi Noble should be proud of the contributions his Shrine Center has made in this community.

Miami’s first permanent residents arrived in the early 1850’s to a wild frontier of jungle and water. The United States Army had operated Fort Dallas near the mouth of the Miami River during the First and Second Seminole Indian Wars, but never kept a permanent force at the camp due to the harsh conditions. The landscape was not very enticing to Miami’s early residents and it would take another forty years before any real settlement of consequence was established. John Sewell, an early resident who would go on to become Mayor, summed up the early conditions in his famous quote, “If I owned Miami and Hell, I’d live in Hell and rent out Miami.” Birds, snakes, alligators, panthers, and mosquitoes roamed the banks of the Miami River, the only means of travel through the dense landscape from the Everglades to the clear blue waters of Biscayne Bay. The locals made friends with the Miccosukee Indians who made their way to the mouth of the river to trade at Brickell’s General Store. On the north side of the river, a determined widow from Cleveland, Ohio named Julia Tuttle had purchased over 100 acres of land, including the former Fort Dallas. An astute entrepreneur, she was willing to subdivide her holdings to the right investor. In the mid 1890’s, she found that investor in Henry B. Flagler, co-founder of the Standard Oil Company along with J.D. Rockefeller. The wealthy oilman had left Standard and moved to Florida for his wife’s health. The ensuing years found him involved in the ownership of several hotels and railways. No other man was as important in the development of the east coast of Florida as Flagler and Tuttle was able to secure his casual interest in Miami. Deals were made, land was swapped, a town site was laid out, and construction started on a resort hotel at the mouth of the river. Most importantly, however, was the arrival of Flagler’s Florida East Coast Railway in 1895. Miami was now connected to the rest of the world and ready to grow.

No one can say for sure when the first Masons arrived, but it is a good guess that some of them worked for the railroad and began holding Masonic communications soon after its arrival. Biscayne Bay Lodge was established in 1898, making it the first chartered Blue Lodge in Miami. At the same time, a new Masonic organization was making a name for itself in the northern United States.

The order, which had been established in 1872, was called the Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine. The Shrine, as it was quickly known, was quite different from other Masonic Orders in as much as it was strictly based on mirth and fellowship among Masons. It included lavish productions and ceremonies based on the mystique of the Arabian Nights lifestyle of the Middle East, which was enjoying popularity at the time. Each chapter or "Temple" of the Shrine had jurisdiction over a large area and worked to bring Masons together for fun and frivolity.

The Order had reached Florida by 1888 when Morocco Temple was chartered in Jacksonville. It would have sole jurisdiction over the state until 1918, when Egypt Temple was created in Tampa. It was that same year that there were enough Shriners in Miami to start considering the formation of a Shrine Club. On December 14, 1918, a meeting was called of all Shriners in the Miami area to form the Miami Shrine Club. After weeks of preparation and further notices, a charter was obtained from Morocco Temple. The first official meeting of the Club was held on January 23, 1919 at the Seybold Building in Downtown Miami. Approximately 20 Nobles were present that night, the majority of which were members of Morocco. However, Miami was a melting pot of people from all over the country and several Shrine Temples were represented. The meeting was a complete success and by that summer, the group was starting to talk about becoming independent from Morocco.

On June 5, 1919, a motion was introduced that a committee be appointed to devise means to finance a trip for each Noble of the Miami Shrine Club to the next Imperial Session to be held in Portland, Oregon, in 1920. This was the first step towards securing a Shrine Temple for Miami by showing the delegates at the convention that the group from Southern Florida was united and determined to succeed. By August, the Club had voted to petition the Imperial Council, the national governing body of the Shrine, to establish a Temple in Miami. A committee was appointed to suggest a name for the new Temple. They eliminated all but two, "Babylon," which was submitted by Noble Fred Delaney, and "Mahi," which was submitted by Noble John Bez. The Nobles voted for the name Mahi which when loosely translated from Arabic meant moon or fish, either of which were appropriate for the Miami area. Additionally the name of the Club was changed from Miami Shrine Club to Mahi Shrine Club. Noble John B. Orr was elected President on January 8, 1920. He would go on to be the most influential Noble in Mahi's early days. In February of that year, another committee was appointed to draw up a petition for visiting Nobles to sign, requesting the Imperial Council to grant Miami a Temple.

In May, Nobles John B. Orr, Frank Stoneman, and Fred Delaney traveled to Portland, Oregon as delegates from the Club. They stood on the floor of the convention and pleaded their case to secure a Temple for Miami. The timing couldn't have been worse for it was at that convention that the hotly debated

subject of establishing a flagship charity for the Shriners took center stage. This included the famous “Bubbles Speech” by Atlanta’s Noble Forest Adair, which is widely recognized in Shrine history as the defining moment of the transition from a purely social order to a philanthropic one. Thus, the business of establishing new Temples took a back seat to the business at hand and the Mahi Shrine Club’s petition was denied. The delegation made the long train trip home thinking of the disappointment they now had to convey in Miami. Upon hearing the bad news the Club, although frustrated, was not discouraged, and immediately appointed the same Nobles to return to Des Moines, Iowa the following year and make the same plea to the Imperial Council. This time persistence won and on June 16, 1921, dispensation was granted. The Nobles were ecstatic and thus began the official long and heralded history of Mahi Temple. That summer a meeting was held to elect a Potentate. Club President John B. Orr was elevated to this position and appointed the rest of the officers. On August 4, 1921, it was resolved that the Mahi Shrine Club cease to exist, and all assets be assigned to Mahi Temple. Uniforms were purchased for the Band and Patrol, as well as the Ceremonial Divan robes. Shrine Clubs were granted to West Palm Beach, Palm Beach, and Lake Worth. During the Imperial Visitation, January 13, 1922, Imperial Potentate Ernest A. Cults presented the Dispensation to the Temple and installed the provisional officers. The following day one hundred and seventy-three candidates walked the hot sands in Mahi Temple’s first Ceremonial held at the St. John’s Casino on Miami Beach. This locale at 22nd Street and Collins Avenue next to the Roney Plaza Hotel was a favorite spot for many Mahi social functions during the early years. Three months later, April 26, 1922, the Mahi’s second Ceremonial produced thirty-six surprised but happy new Shriners.

Potentate John B. Orr and Recorder Fred W. Delaney were elected representatives to the 1922 Imperial Council Session at San Francisco and instructed to apply for a charter, the final step necessary for an autonomous Temple. At 10:15 a.m., on Thursday, June 15, 1922, the charter was granted to Mahi Temple, thus the first part of the long journey that started back in 1918 reached a happy end. A meeting was called on February 2, 1923, for the purpose of the official visitation of Imperial Potentate James McCandless and Imperial High Priest and Prophet David Crossland, who brought with them the charter of Mahi Temple. Noble John B. Orr was installed as Potentate; Frank B. Stoneman as Chief Rabban, Charles Ketchum as Assistant Rabban, Henry R. Pridgen as High Priest & Prophet, E. B. Donnell as Oriental Guide, John Seybold as Treasurer, and Fred Delaney as Recorder. The parade during the 1923 Imperial Council Session at Washington, D. C. was the first in which our uniformed units (Band, Chanters, Patrol) participated as members of a chartered Temple.

Since the inception of the Shrine Club in 1919, Mahi had met at the Seybold Building, then at the Burdine-Quarterman Building, both in Downtown Miami. However, by 1923, the Temple membership was growing at a rate that necessitated

larger quarters for the meetings. At the same time, the Scottish Rite Bodies were building a magnificent structure at the Miami River and Northwest 3rd Street. Since there was only one other Masonic building in Miami, Biscayne Temple, the Scottish Rite had decided to erect a temple in which to house as many of the Masonic organizations in the city that needed quarters. A site was purchased from Harry Tuttle in 1921 fronting the river in Fort Dallas Park. However, before any action was taken, the land was swapped with the City of Miami for the site at Third Street and N.W. North River Drive, where the present building was erected. The contract for the building of the Temple was awarded to none other than Illustrious John B. Orr, Potentate of Mahi. Orr was a pioneer contractor and builder, who constructed the Temple without profit to his company. Built at a cost of \$350,000, including the land, it is an imposing edifice covering the major portion of five lots overlooking the Miami River on one side, and Lummus Park on the other. Kiehael and Elliot, an architectural firm of Pittsburgh and Miami designed the building in a splendid example of Egyptian architecture. Rising three stories tall with four Doric columns on the Third Street side, it is beautifully embellished and the Ziggurat-shaped mass of the roof capped by a cupola is quite striking when viewed from the river. The cornerstone was laid on October 6, 1922 and by August of the following year the Temple was completed enough to occupy. Mahi Temple was the first tenant to move in and began holding their Stated Meetings and Ceremonials in Miami's new Masonic Center. The Temple was finished and formally dedicated on March 12, 1924.

The movement by the Shrine to start a system of children's hospitals was well underway by 1924. Units were already opened and functioning in Shreveport, Honolulu, San Francisco, and Minneapolis. That spring, momentum began in earnest within the Mahi membership to build a Unit in Miami. A plot of land on Collins Avenue in Miami Beach was donated and a drive to raise funds began. On April 24, 1924, a resolution was passed by the Nobility to build a Shriners Children's Hospital at the Miami Beach site. By 1925, an architect had been hired and in September of 1926, a motion passed to begin construction. The project was set back by the great Hurricane of that month and the ensuing bust in South Florida. The idea was abandoned completely in 1931 when the Imperial Council ruled that the Colorado Corporation, the governing body of the hospitals, was the only party who could build and open Shrine Hospitals. Since Mahi would not be permitted to open their own facility, all monies derived from donations and the subsequent sale of the Miami Beach property were placed in trust for the use of local needy children. This fund grew through the years and the administration of the same was often a topic of discussion through the years. A resolution was passed in 1948 to create a permanent fund to help the Imperial Council establish a hospital in Florida. This was a combined effort of Egypt, Mahi, and Morocco Temples. This fund would be the genesis of the Tampa Unit, which opened in 1984. Before this facility was built, patients sponsored by Mahi were usually sent

to Greenville, South Carolina for treatment.

In November of 1924, representatives of the Mahi Band went on the floor of the Stated Meeting and reported that the Scottish Rite facilities were inadequate for their practices since they usually were in conflict with one of the other tenants. The Patrol also complained that the parking lot was not big enough for them to practice their drills in. The meeting erupted in a frenzy of speeches, most of which were in favor of Mahi building their own facility. This would be the first recorded occurrence of many in the records of Mahi Temple where the Nobility discussed creating their own home. It was a controversial issue that would surface periodically for the next forty years.

The early and mid 1920's were a progressive time in Miami. These were the so-called "boom years" and Miami was known as the "Magic City" because of the explosive growth that had occurred in the short 25 years since its incorporation. The city and its surrounding suburbs had become a top tourist destination as well as an ideal place to live. Hundreds of real estate transactions were being recorded each day and fortunes were made overnight. Trainloads of people and building materials arrived several times each day and the town was in what many described as "frenzy."

One of the most successful stories of this time was that of developer George Merrick. He had transformed his family's plantation west of town into America's first planned city, Coral Gables. Strict codes for architecture and zoning were implemented and by 1925, the city was really taking shape. Plans included Mediterranean inspired buildings, entrances at major intersections, a country club, a luxury hotel, and a world-class university. In the promotional material for Coral Gables, Merrick described a city of tropical splendor whose Edenic gardens would inspire the highest social order. The pamphlet was embellished with images of "grand halls, noble arcades, libraries and cloisters," When Merrick dreamt of this great tropical city, he dreamt of a great university as well. He pictured an institution that would become a leader in the study of the arts, literature, and architecture. When the city began to take off, he published a text exhorting the citizens of Miami to contribute to the University's \$10 million Campaign, to which Merrick alone had pledged \$5 million and 160 acres of land. Merrick believed his University of Miami, as it had been named, would be the meeting point of the Americas, "where the foundation may be laid for everlasting peace on the Western Hemisphere: where commerce will receive its greatest impulse." However, UM needed all the help it could to get off the ground. At the time, the word was out that the real movers and shakers in town were members of Mahi Temple. These were the captains of industry and the pillars of the community. Several of the Nobles had built homes in Coral Gables and were well known in the community. William Jennings Bryan, a popular politician and Shriner, had suggested the "Pan American University" as early as 1916 and was in support of Merrick's proposal. His name was immediately identified with the fundraising efforts of the school.

Additionally, he had many friends in Mahi. Thus on September 3, 1925 the Managing Regent of University of Miami appeared before the Mahi Stated Meeting, pleading for assistance and donations to establish this much needed institution of higher learning. The request was granted and a formal resolution was passed lending the support of Mahi to the school. The history of the University reflects the activity of Mahi Temple and its gracious generosity.

In September of 1926, a powerful Category 4 Hurricane roared across South Florida leaving a path of destruction from Perrine to Pompano Beach. Hardest hit was the young and vibrant City of Miami where the eye of the storm had passed directly overhead. Looking back on the damage that occurred, there is a haunting resemblance to that of Hurricane Andrew some 66 years later. The City was devastated both physically and economically. Newspapers around the nation carried the headlines, "Miami wiped out!" To the residents and businesses in the area, it would seem that Miami really was wiped out. The preceding "boom" years had been filled with explosive growth, however as early as 1925, the bubble started to burst. Building supplies were hard to come by and the railroad and cargo ships could not keep up with the demand. Shady land deals that involved fictitious property were beginning to be exposed and defaults on loans increased steadily. When the storm struck on September 18, 1926, it brought the Great Depression to South Florida a full three years earlier than the rest of the U.S. It was time for the community to band together and rebuild. Proudly, Mahi Temple was at the forefront of this effort. By 1926, most of the influential businessmen and municipal officials in the area claimed membership in Mahi. In the aftermath of the storm, it was that leadership within the fraternity that spearheaded the relief and rebuilding efforts. Mahi was the first fraternal organization in Miami to start the relief effort by making \$1000 available to any needy resident who applied for the same. (This would be close to \$10,000 today) In the following months, Mahi did what it could to help the community.

In October of 1926, Potentate Orr suggested that Miami needed something to lift its spirit and proposed a New Year's Day football game involving the newly established University of Miami's team who, for obvious reasons, had recently been nicknamed the "Hurricanes". The Nobility got behind the suggestion and a proposal was sent to University President Dr. Bowman Ashe. The idea started to take shape and the game was set. On Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1927, the Hurricanes defeated the University of Havana in front of 350 spectators, mostly Nobles of Mahi. Although the game was played 38 days earlier than originally proposed, the idea remained to make this a New Year's Day game and continued to be supported by Mahi. In the following years, the game became part of the Palm Festival, which was the predecessor of the Orange Bowl Classic. Hence, Mahi had a big part in the formation of one of the premier College Bowl Games in the United States.

In the desperate year of 1927, two outrageous land proposals found their

way to Mahi. In August, a representative from George Merrick's Coral Gables Land Company appeared before the Nobility with a grandiose offer. He had heard a rumor that Mahi may be trying to host a convention of Shriners from all around the U.S. and felt that this would be a great opportunity to sell land in the southern sections of the city. His proposal was to convey 53 acres of land to Mahi, just south of the University of Miami across the South Dixie Highway. The land would be leased to Mahi at \$1 per year for 99 years provided they built a Clubhouse and 18 hole golf course. The land company would then in turn pay Mahi a commission on the 60 adjacent lots to the links upon their sale. After much consideration, it was decided that Mahi did not have adequate funding to build such a facility and that it would be ethically wrong to solicit real estate during a convention. Therefore the lucrative proposal died. To this day, some maps show the south fork of the Coral Gables Waterway as the Mahi Canal and an official plat map in the lobby of the Coral Gables City Hall shows the Mahi Country Club. This indicates that this proposal must have been taken very seriously by the City at that time. The second land proposal came in October of 1927, also from the Coral Gables Land Company. This one involved the construction and development of a fishing resort in North Key Largo. Again, the land would be leased to Mahi, providing they built the resort and the sale of the adjacent lots would pay a commission. At one time George Merrick had envisioned another Coral Gables on this, the largest of the islands composing the Florida Keys. After the bust, there was little interest in this project or the completed city. Mahi apparently felt the same and no further mention of this proposal appears in the records.

Amidst all the ideas being floated to restart the construction boom in the devastated city, there was more to be rebuilt than homes and businesses, something of far greater importance. That something was Miami's damaged economy. A plan had to be formulated to let the nation know that Miami was still here and was better than ever as a place to visit or even settle down. It was perhaps sometime in late 1926 that the leaders of Mahi decided that the best way to rebuild America's confidence in the city was to invite their brother Shriners down for a visit. The Temple would seek to host the 1928 Imperial Council Session, which would bring tens of thousands of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine to Miami, most of who were the nation's movers and shakers. The task was no easy situation. Putting on a convention of this size would require a huge volunteer workforce, cooperation from local merchants and businesses and most importantly, money. Lots of money. However, anyone who doubted that it could be done was sorely mistaken. As mentioned, Mahi was populated by some of the biggest names in town that could make big things happen. By the time the delegation left to make its pitch in Atlantic City in May of 1927, close to \$200,000 had been raised as seed money, mostly from the cities of Miami, Miami Beach, Coral Gables, and Dade County. The Imperial Council, however, was hesitant to agree to the proposal, but the impressive and well thought out proposition presented by Mahi was enough to

persuade the delegates to award the convention to Miami. The planners would have less than a year to put together what they thought could be the greatest spectacle ever held by the fraternity.

Thus, the work began. Committees were formed, hotel rooms were secured, donations from businesses were sought, and countless plans were created, re-thought, and created again. Every aspect of this event had to be spectacular in nature if the goal of re-establishing Miami was to be achieved. The first order of business was to come up with a marketing scheme and logo. A contest was held amongst the Nobility of Mahi to come up with a catchy slogan to entice Shriners to attend the festivities. The winning slogan ended up being, "Come on fez, Miami Sez!" This campaign would be seen in countless newspapers and magazines that winter. Locally, Mahi envisioned creating an Arabian Village or "Garden of Allah" in Bayfront Park where parades, stage shows, and exhibitions could be held. The convention delegates had to be convinced that Miami was a place of fantasy and mystique.

By February of 1928, work had begun on this mammoth project. Two pillars adorned by Arabic mystical figures were erected at N.E. 3rd Street and Biscayne Boulevard and marked the entrance to the village. An extravagant grandstand was built at N.E. 1st Street to house the Imperial Potentate and other Officers when reviewing parades and other street entertainment. Across from this were enough bleachers to hold 20,000 spectators. Around the corner and down Flagler Street, each Temple of the Order was represented by a large fez, inscribed with its name, placed on top of streetlamps. The Olympia Theatre, in this vicinity, was to be the headquarters for the business sessions. Delegates would be housed in the numerous large downtown hotels such as the Everglades, McAllister, and Columbus. When those rooms were filled, the Nobles would be housed in private homes, apartments, Pullman rail cars or on passenger steamers docked at the nearby Municipal Docks. In addition, arrangements were made to have two U.S. Navy Destroyers and two submarines available, which would serve as an additional attraction by being open for tours. More importantly, this would also allow thousands of sailors to get shore leave and spend money in the city at the same time. Preparations were also undertaken within the surrounding community. Arrangements were made at venues of all sorts throughout Dade and Broward Counties to host parties and banquets. This tactic was used to enable delegates to get away from the business district and see what the surrounding suburbs were like, those suburbs which might entice them to relocate to the area. To assure a pleasing presentation, any area of the city considered plagued by blight was cleaned up. Any unsightly roadside junk or leftover hurricane debris was carted off. Dense underbrush and landscaping were tended to and any displeasing trees or shrubs were removed. The County even gave trees away to any homeowner who would plant it in their front yard. Across the bay, Miami Beach was just coming into its own and several events were planned for the many bathing casinos on the

seashore. To this end, the telephone poles on the County (MacArthur) Causeway were decorated with colored canvas cutouts of butterflies. Local automobile dealers donated luxury “open” type cars for the use of important delegates. Busses and limousines were hired to transport delegates to various hotels and points of interest. There would be no reason for anyone not to travel around the city.

And so, the stage was set. The 25,000 Delegates began arriving in late April and the Session officially began on May 1. For the next three days, Miami was transformed into one big party, a party that the city had never seen before. Days were filled with competitions, parades and street shows. Nights were filled with galas, banquets, dances, and more parties. It was also at night that the most spectacular events were held. Each night transparent canvas was strung along the roofline of the Royal Palm Hotel and lit from behind with spotlights. Ballerina dancers would then perform in front of the lights, creating a silhouette effect on the canvas that was quite the sight from the ground. A lighted boat parade was held in which boats of every size sailed in front of the park, much like today’s Winterfest Parade. However, the most interesting nighttime show involved a new type of light called the “aurora” light. This equipment consisted of the brightest spotlight available at the time and a revolving beacon in which different color shades were used to send out beams of light onto the sides of downtown buildings and into the nighttime sky.

Needless to say, the convention was a huge success. For months, Delegates sent letters to Mahi thanking them for the wonderful time they had in Miami. Most claimed that they had never seen such a beautiful city or been treated so well. As for the city, the seed of recovery had been planted and began to grow. The Imperial Shrine Session was soon followed by the national Elks and Lions Conventions later that year. Tourism began to flourish again and by the early 1930’s, South Florida was back on the map and not affected by the Depression as much as the rest of the nation. As for Mahi, the event ended up costing the Temple over \$2000, but it was agreed that this was a small price to pay to help the city in which it operated. Mahi would go on to host 3 more Imperials in 1952, 1961, and 1971. Whether or not the Imperial Session helped save the City of Miami is up to interpretation. The area would of surely bounced back eventually, had the Convention not been held. However, the Nobles of Mahi Shriners can be proud that their organization took charge in the community and did its best to help accelerate the recovery by holding one of the most spectacular events in the city’s history.

Even with the success of the convention, money was still tight and problems were still arising. Members of all the Masonic Bodies were being dropped for non-payment of dues. Many were out of work and simply did not have excess money to meet their fraternal obligations. The Scottish Rite Temple had been open for five years, yet was operating at a loss. So many members had been dropped that dues income had dwindled. Unfortunately, there was still a mortgage on the

building that had to be paid. In February of 1929, the finance company began foreclosure procedures on the building. A proposal was submitted to Mahi to take over the building, cover the operating expenses and pay only the interest on the note. This would keep the building within Masonry and perhaps allow it to be given back to the Scottish rite at a later date. However, Mahi was facing the same problem as the rest of the fraternity with members dropping left and right. It was decided that Mahi simply did not have the resources available to manage the building and declined to assume control. A search for a suitable meeting place began immediately. Several sites were looked at but through the connections of Past Potentate Orr, space was obtained in a handsome building at Northeast 14 Street and Biscayne Boulevard, across from the famous downtown Sears & Roebuck store. This building had just been built and the entire second floor was available. Additionally the owners agreed if the Shrine would sign a lease, they would name the building after them. Thus in March of 1930, the Mahi Temple Building was in business. As for the Scottish Rite Temple, it was taken over by a theatre company and operated for several years as the Temple Theatre.

That spring, Potentate E.L. Stapp accompanied Imperial Potentate Leo Youngworth to Cuba, where Masonry in general was very strong. During the visitation, Brother Gerardo Machado, President of Cuba, was created a Shriner. The reception was so successful that Stapp agreed to return and create as many Nobles as they could provide. Thus, on July 4, 1930, Mahi Temple held its first Ceremonial on foreign soil at Havana. This would be the first of many pilgrimages to the island nation both for leisure and for creating Nobles. The Band, Patrol, Director's Staff, Chanters and countless other Units would make the trip in order for Mahi to put on a parade on the streets of Havana. What a time these trips must have been. Mahi would charter a special train through the Florida East Coast Railway. The delegation would embark from the Miami station in Downtown Miami and ride the rails to Key West, where the entire train would be transferred to a steamship, which would in turn sail the 90 miles to Havana. Needless to say, there was plenty of hospitality on the way down and back.

Mahi continued the process of recovery and again hosted another national convention, although on a smaller scale. The Shrine Director's Association of North America met in Miami in April of 1931. Delegates again were treated to a great time and like 1928, a great number of them would return to make the Magic City their permanent home. By this time, the cities of Miami, Coral Gables, and Miami Beach recognized the value of Mahi Temple in the community and were most appreciative of their efforts. They knew Mahi's support of an event meant success and prosperity for all involved.

In May of 1931, the University of Miami came calling upon Mahi again. Facing bankruptcy, they needed help keeping the school going. Noble Don Henshaw, an avid supporter of UM, came before Mahi and asked the Nobility to sponsor the formation of a new Fraternity, Sigma Nu Sigma. This fraternity would

be for the sons or brothers of Masons. Masons who would encourage their sons and brothers to attend the University so that they could be part of the Masonic family. This would help to build enrollment and the income to the school. This project helped somewhat but the school ended up declaring bankruptcy in August of 1932. Luckily, the University made it through the rough times and emerged in the latter part of the 20th century as one of the premier private universities in the nation. Again, Mahi had done its part to help.

Sorrow came to Mahi on August 28, 1932. On that date Illustrious John B. Orr, one of the “founding fathers” and first Potentate serving from 1920 to 1926, passed on. Jack, as he was called in the fraternity, toiled long and diligently in the building of the Temple, but he is remembered perhaps better for the inspiration he built into the lives of the early members. His vision of a successful Shrine contention in Miami was the basis of all that Mahi is today. Soon after his death, a bronze plaque was ordered in his memory to be displayed at the Shrine Building.

On February 15, 1933, President Elect Franklin D. Roosevelt was scheduled to speak in Miami. Roosevelt was elected in November 1932 as people looked for leadership out of the economic disaster, but in those days, the President didn't take office until March. Roosevelt had come south for a fishing vacation and was coming to Bayfront Park in Miami for a brief speech before boarding a train back north. Also in the crowd was Anton Cermak, mayor of Chicago, and several of Miami's most influential residents. As was common in the early years, Mahi Temple was also in attendance with their Band and Legion of Honor Unit. However, the most notorious bystander that night was Giuseppe Zangara, an unemployed Italian bricklayer who blamed his economic situation on the U.S. Government. Roosevelt's limousine pulled in front of the park's bandstand, a microphone was brought to the car, and Roosevelt lifted himself to the top of his seat to make a brief speech. When he finished, Cermak moved to the side of the car, spoke briefly to Roosevelt, and then started to walk back. Somebody sitting in a chair on the aisle stood up to leave, and Zangara scrambled onto the vacant chair, drew a five-shot revolver he'd bought in a local pawnshop for \$8 and fired all five shots at Roosevelt. Several bystanders claimed they deflected Zangara's aim, including members of Mahi's Legion of Honor. None of the shots struck Roosevelt; one hit a Miami woman, another grazed a vacationing New York cop, a Newark woman was hit in the hand, a Florida man received a minor head wound. The fifth bullet struck Mayor Cermak in the right armpit and entered his right lung. Zangara was overpowered by the Mahi Nobles and taken to jail by the police. Cermak was taken to Jackson Memorial Hospital where he lingered until his death on March 6. Zangara was tried and sentenced to death for the death of the mayor. The Nobles who had subdued Zangara were hailed as heroes and once again, Mahi was looked upon with favor by the community.

Better times prevailed and Mahi and the rest of the Masonic Fraternity

started to emerge from the depression. The best news of all was that the Scottish Rite Temple had been reclaimed by the Scottish Rite. The joyous announcement that the building would soon be rededicated was made to the Mahi Nobility on February 7, 1935 by Noble Jimmy Donn. Donn, the founder of the Exotic Gardens Florist and owner of Gulfstream Racetrack, was the leading advocate of the Rite in the 1930's and placed his own money on the line to buy back the Temple. He would later serve Mahi as Potentate in 1945.

In late 1937 a movement was afoot once more for Mahi to build its own building. A committee was formed to locate properties suitable for a "mosque" as Shrine buildings were referred to in those days. They returned the following year with several suggestions that included: the Douglas Road Entrance Building, the German-American Club, the Tribune Building, the Burdine-Quarterman Building, the John Sewell Residence and a horse ranch with stables in the northwest part of the city. Prices in those days ranged from \$30,000 to \$75,000 and the investment seemed a bit high for the time. The Nobility could not pass a resolution to buy any of the properties and the search for a permanent home went dormant once more. Mahi did move back into the Scottish Rite Temple in 1942, when the Shrine Building was needed by military for office space. This would remain the site of their meetings for the next 21 years.

Two successful Shrine Appreciation Days sponsored by the City of Miami were held in 1938 and 1939. These were well-received events held in the Royal Palm Park downtown. The Shrine would parade, hold a concert, and provide mirth for the entire day. At the 1939 celebration, Miami's legendary Mayor Everest G. Sewell, who served multiple terms, was escorted to the stage to give a speech. He was provided with a "hot" seat near the podium but did not sit down very long. He began his speech by remarking that dealing with Mahi was a "shocking" experience. The good-natured humor that was abundant in those days was readily accepted even by government officials, something that would surely be frowned upon in today's society. Mahi's legendary Ceremonials would find its initiates being paraded down Flagler Street, the main thoroughfare in town. Some would be wearing dresses, some would be covered in makeup, and some would even be locked up in a birdcage. Of course, every man involved was there voluntarily and was proud to be joining the ranks of Mahi. The passing parade would fill the downtown streets with hilarity and the public loved the Shriners.

In April of 1941, Mahi held its first Shrine Fair and Exposition at Northwest 8th Avenue and Northwest 23rd Street near the Seaboard Airline Railway Station. This was one of the first organized fairs in Dade County and would evolve into the Dade County Youth Fair many years later. The event included a circus and midway, complete with mechanical rides and games. Local schoolchildren were admitted free on the first day and treated to a matinee show. For the next several years, crowds of 80,000 plus people attended the event. In 1946, Mahi entered into an agreement with Dade County and the City of Miami to

create the Dade County Fair. The purpose statement of this event read as follows; “to further the interests of agriculture and allied industries, industrial, commercial, domestic, and instructional activities by establishing a medium in the community through which these and like enterprises may be visualized by means of exhibits, displays and demonstrations that may create incentive to greater accomplishments and progress in the development of our community.” Much like the present day fair, the event included animal exhibits, a horse show, fruit and vegetable contests, student art and science projects and general educational displays. The government officials were especially pleased to showcase Agriculture, at the time Dade County’s second largest industry behind tourism. The income derived from the fair was used for supporting the Crippled Children’s Fund and the Pilgrimage Fund. More importantly, Mahi was praised once again for its community efforts. The Miami Baseball Stadium was built on the site of the fairgrounds in 1949 and the event was forced to downsize into several parking lots. By 1951, a report in Mahi Magazine indicated that attendance had been dismal at the recent fair and that the following year was in doubt. After five dedicated years of building up the event, Mahi decided to place its efforts behind its circus and let the county take over the fair. In the spring of 1952, the fair was moved to a location on North Kendall Drive in Southwest Dade County followed by a move to the former Tamiami Airport in 1972. Today the Miami-Dade County Youth Fair is one of the largest fairs and expositions in the United States running 17 days every spring. Another success story with a little help from Mahi.

World War II burst on to a country just recovering from a depression at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and immediately sent society into a tailspin. Miami was affected much more by the war than other cities in the U.S. Its strategic location on the Atlantic coast brought danger from the waters offshore. No one knew for sure if there would be an invasion or whether German U-boats were lingering offshore. The latter was proved by the torpedoing of many freighters off Miami Beach and the Keys. Blackout shades were installed and a city that had always been known for its beautiful nighttime lights was darkened for four years. Almost all the area hotels were taken over by the military and Miami was transferred into a huge training camp. One in three soldiers who were sent overseas passed through Miami during the war and none forgot the beauty and fantastic climate they had encountered. This would later prove advantageous to the area when tens of thousands of these veterans returned to the place where they had trained to make their permanent home. The records of Mahi Temple show that the membership immediately went into action. Many of the younger Nobility voluntarily joined or were drafted into the service and immediately shipped out. The older Nobles stood tall and determined to protect their beloved city from the dangers of war. One documented occasion occurred on December 18, 1941 when the newly appointed Miami Civil Defense Air Raid Warden stood before the Mahi Stated Meeting requesting volunteers for neighborhood Wardens and the assistance

of the Uniformed Units of the Temple. Since the Nobles were accustomed to marching and the division of ranks, they were deemed the perfect residents to assist with the war efforts. Some Nobles were put in vital positions and others simply drove trucks. All, however, were considered a blessing by the Dade County Civil Defense Department.

The other major home front campaign taken on by Mahi was the selling of War Bonds to help finance the fighting. In April of 1943, at the height of the War, Mahi Temple spearheaded a campaign to raise money for the War Effort by selling War Bonds in Downtown Miami. Instead of simply manning a table and counting on the patriotism of bystanders to bring in money, the Shrine created a publicity event that included entertainment to draw in the crowds. Mahi set up a complete display in front of Burdines Department Store on Flagler Street that included performances by the Mahi Band and Mahi Clowns. Three Nobles portraying Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito, the leaders of the Axis Powers, were “jailed” while three Nobles portraying Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, the Allied leaders, looked on. Since many of these Nobles were too old to go to war, they felt it was their duty to help at home by raising money for our troops overseas. An unofficial figure states that Mahi raised over \$5,000,000.00 in Bond sales from 1942-1945, another stupendous act by the Miami fraternity.

The postwar years began with a renewed optimism for the future of the United States and Miami. Few could see the explosive growth that South Florida was about to encounter. It was during this time that another longstanding Mahi tradition would begin. For many years Illustrious C. Norman Howard, Potentate in 1946, had pushed for a Shrine Football game to be held in Miami. The contest would bring together the brightest stars of college football and fill a void between the end of the regular season and the New Year’s Day Bowl Games. The proceeds derived from such a game would go straight to the Shriners Hospitals to help fund their growing budget. Howard thought that if Christmas night were available in the Orange Bowl Stadium, it would be the perfect time and venue for such a contest. His faith in this idea finally materialized when the first Shrine North-South Football Game was held on December 25, 1946. Like many other events that Mahi had established, this game would become another Miami tradition. The contest grew in popularity and evolved into an important post-season event. By the 1960’s the game was being televised nationally by ABC Television and brought in great ratings with no competition on Christmas Day. Although Howard was recognized as the founder and was closely associated with game, it was Illustrious William C. Brown, Potentate 1960, who nurtured and brought the event to its peak in the late 1960’s. The contest was a great undertaking and took the work of hundreds of Nobles to be successful. The games continued until 1973, when television contracts were cancelled and scheduling conflicts began to be difficult.

Mahi joined the Southeastern Shrine Association in 1940 and immediately

began seeking its annual convention. This came to be in September of 1947 with Mahi hosting what was then called the "Little Imperial." 10,000 Nobles and their Ladies made their way to South Florida to enjoy the largest Shrine gathering in Miami since 1928. Delegates were housed in Miami and Miami Beach, with the Everglades Hotel as headquarters. Local officials, many of whom remembered the rewards of the 1928 gathering, offered their full cooperation. They arranged for buildings to be decorated, streetlamps to be adorned by Shrine paraphernalia and the free use of many city properties. The session included competitions, concerts, and a three-hour long parade down Flagler Street and Biscayne Boulevard. The Miami Herald noted that there had never been a larger crowd gathered on the steps of the Dade County Courthouse than the one that assembled to see the parade. Some of these parade Units were invited to participate in the halftime show of the University of Miami – Baylor Football Game. Golfing, boating, and sightseeing were also high on the list of the attendees. As in '28, the visiting Nobility loved Miami and called the session one of the best. The biggest note of interest of this convention, however, is how Mahi managed to pull it off immediately following one of the worst hurricanes in Florida history. Many long time Miami residents will recall the fall of 1947 for the massive floods brought on by several tropical systems. On August 18, a tropical storm passed through the Florida straits, dumping massive amounts of rain on the peninsula. This was followed a month later by a strong category 4 hurricane that struck just north of Ft. Lauderdale on September 17. Hurricane force winds were felt from Vero Beach to Key Largo and the storm included severe rainfall. This storm still holds the one-minute record for wind speed in Florida at 155mph and damage was widespread. The heaviest losses were in and around Ft. Lauderdale with few buildings escaping damage. Further south, Miami received major wind damage with several hangars destroyed at Miami International Airport. Several areas of the county were flooded and 3 out of 5 homes in Miami Springs were underwater. The Mahi Host Committee must have been on pins and needles knowing their event was only a week away. On September 22, to add insult to injury, a tropical storm packing 60mph winds and dumping more rain passed over the area just three days before the opening of the convention. However, in the face of adversity, the gathering went off without a hitch. In fact, there is no mention of the storms or any damage in the October Mahi Magazine, which summed up the event. This only goes to show that hurricanes were once an accepted part of Florida life, and dealt with accordingly. The final punch of that disastrous fall was a category 1 hurricane on October 12 that entered the state at Cape Sable and moved northeast through the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale areas. The previous three storms had dumped massive amounts of rain on the region, but the fourth was by far the wettest. What followed was the complete flooding of most of western Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. In Miami Springs and Hialeah, for example, some sections of the downtown areas were covered by 5 feet of water. Boats replaced cars and the waters were slow in

receding. This led to the development of the South Florida Water Management District whose purpose was to prevent this disaster from happening again. Mother nature certainly cooperated by allowing the Southeastern Convention to be held in between storms and before the widespread flooding. Had the timing been a little different, the event surely would have been canceled and affected Mahi's status to hold future events.

With the Temple's activities branching out in all directions, and the Nobles spending more time engaging in those activities, the ladies felt it was time to pitch in, too. Several ideas were considered and in 1948, an organization called the Iham Ladies Club was formed. The word "Iham" is, of course, Mahi spelled backward. However, there was nothing else backward about the ladies. With Evelyn Floyd serving as the first President, Iham went about doing good and having fun doing it. Their main purpose would be to assist the temple in raising funds for the Hospitals and transportation fund, while providing activities for the thousands of Mahi ladies. Perhaps the most well known accomplishment of the Club was the Iham Follies. This cabaret type talent show ran from the 1950's through the 1980's. Club members and their Noble husbands would perform to a packed house. This was the club's main fundraiser and helped put many dollars into the coffers through the years. The ladies' donations have been legendary and even included a hospital van to transport our patients to Tampa in 2000.

A project that took five years to complete came to reality in November of 1949. When Illustrious James Donn was Assistant Rabban in 1944, he donated several acres of land at Northwest 18th Avenue and Northwest 28th Street in Miami to Mahi. This bequeath came with the stipulation that a swimming pool be built by Mahi for the underprivileged youth of Miami. Children of means could swim at their family pool or other private bathing clubs but the average child spent many hours in the waters of the lakes and canals that dotted the landscape. Several drownings had occurred over the years in the numerous rock quarries around the city. It was Donn's dream that a large public swimming pool could meet the needs of these children, and more importantly, save some of their lives. A resolution was finally passed in 1948 lending Mahi's support to the project and donations started coming in. The temple would fully fund the construction of the pool and deed it over to the YMCA upon completion. The project moved along with members of the Director's Staff donating their time on masonry and electrical work. The public opening and dedication was held on November 27, 1949 and included speeches from the Divan and City of Miami Commissioners. A gala barbeque was held at the site to celebrate the occasion. Once again, Mahi was hailed by the media as one of the most important organizations in the city. The YMCA moved to a new facility on Northwest 17th Avenue in 1972 to make way for Dade County Public Housing on the Mahi Pool site.

It was also in November 1949 that a very important person, United States President Harry Truman, was voted an Honorary Life Membership in Mahi by the

Nobility. On December 3 of that year, a delegation headed by Potentate Hiram Blakey traveled to Key West, the place where Truman spent most of his vacation time away from Washington. The group was taken to the Little White House on the grounds of the U.S. Naval Base where they were given an audience with the President. Truman was presented a solid gold shrine membership card as well as a certificate naming him an Honorary Grand Master of Florida. Known for taking Masonry very seriously, Truman was touched by the gesture and was genuinely appreciative of the honor. The event made all the local papers including the front cover of the Miami News. More good publicity for Mahi. Before becoming President, Truman had served as Grand Master of Missouri and was made a Shriner in Ararat Temple, Kansas City. Many Nobles continued to correspond with the President after he left office in 1953. He continued to vacation in Key West until his death in 1972.

Perhaps the most defining moment in Mahi history occurred in the fall of 1950. For years, the recurring argument that Mahi should own its own facility had raised its head. Time and time again proposals were made, sites were offered and wild ideas were presented. However, by 1950, Mahi was in good shape. It had close to 4,000 members and was financially sound. The post war years had seen a boom in candidates and membership skyrocketed. That year another proposal was brought to the table, but this time it was very well received. A year earlier Noble Roger E. Kopplow (Potentate 1975) recommended a site on the Miami River near Northwest 15th Avenue. The suggestion snowballed and the committee called on their realtor, Noble Cecil J. Mobley. Mobley, who would go on to be Potentate in 1963, was a very prominent realtor in the Miami area, specializing in large estates. He had a listing at 1500 Northwest North River Drive on the Miami River, the Sam Murray Residence. Adjacent to this property were 18 vacant lots, comprising 4.62 acres. This was a choice area of the city near the Miami Country Club and on the most beautiful and wide section of the river. Mobley inquired about the land and the committee toured the site and coming away with a very good feeling. For the first time in 28 years, there was somewhat of a consensus among the Nobility, and they liked what they saw. There was very little opposition and it seemed that Mahi would finally be purchasing property. A resolution was drawn up, voted upon, and approved. Thus on October 5, 1950, Mahi Temple agreed to purchase 4.62 acres on the Miami River for the sum of \$66,000.00 and instructed the committee to start having plans drawn up for a Mosque. However, there was more. At the same meeting, a movement began in earnest to acquire the Sam Murray Residence as well. The Nobility knew that it might take several years to build a facility, so why not utilize this adjacent property as a Clubhouse and office space in the interim. Again, a resolution was drawn up, voted upon, and approved. Thus on November 2, 1950, Mahi Temple agreed to purchase the Sam Murray Residence for the sum of \$45,000.00. After years of disagreement, heated discussions, and outrageous proposals, Mahi finally had a home of their own. It would take another 12 years

for the first shovel of dirt to be moved on the site, but the process had definitely begun.

The Sam Murray Residence was a spectacular place. For those Nobles who remember it, the home brings back fond memories of many social occasions spent in the comfort of a grand riverside estate. The home had been built in 1919 by Simpson Bobo Dean, an important newspaper publisher during the city's early days. It was situated in what was considered the "privileged" side of town on the beautiful Miami River. Large estates graced each side of the river, the north being known as St. John's Park and the south being known as Grove Park. It was a two-floor house with a basement, a South Florida rarity. The main floor was about six feet off the ground and the basement floor was sub grade. This led to Mahi having excellent storage space underneath the main structure, although it was prone to flooding in heavy rains or tropical storm surge from the river. The Mariners Unit held their meetings in the basement for many years. The main living areas were surrounded on all sides by screened porches to let the cool Miami breeze through. There was a grand parlor, a dining room, and a study with fireplace, a bathroom, and gourmet kitchen on the main level. Upstairs included five bedrooms and two baths which were reached by a grand oak staircase with landing. The ceilings were high with ornate wood trim and hanging chandeliers. Tong and groove wood floors were found without and most of the doors were French style. Outside, the home had very straight lines with all windows covered by aluminum awnings. A portico was located on the north side with a driveway running through. Two grand concrete stairways ascended into the structure on the east and south sides. There was also a carriage house, with space for two autos and upstairs apartment. Perhaps the grandest feature of all was the ornate landscaping. The second owner, Sam Murray, had been friends with David Fairchild and Hugh Matheson and had several exotic tropical plants and trees on the grounds. Several of the Washingtonian and Cuban Royal Palms that were planted in the 1920's still sway in the Miami breeze today. There were vast open lawns on the north and south sides, with the south being the grandest. The view from this side of the house was spectacular with a beautiful St. Augustine lawn unfolding to the palm tree lined river. Down on the river, Murray had erected a cannon raised from the wreck of the H.M.S. Winchester off Elliot Key in the 1930's by Matheson. This gun still points at Grove Park today and was restored by the Mariners Unit in 1974. When Mahi took over the property, the intention was to make the estate fully functional as a clubhouse. First and foremost, the Recorder's Office would be relocated from the Scottish Rite. The upstairs bedrooms would be converted into Unit rooms and the dining room area was made into a lounge. The rest of the building was completely retrofitted and was formally opened as the "Red Fez Club" on June 8, 1952, just in time for the Imperial Session, which was held in Miami that year. The Nobility immediately took to their new home and the Clubhouse was an unqualified success. The only functions that the new facility

could not handle were Stated Meetings and dinner dances or banquets. There was no room for any large crowd whatsoever. In order to accommodate some intermediate events, Mahi built a 2300 square foot dining room on the backside of the house as well as a large terrazzo patio in 1954. This addition is commonly known today as the Felix Strothman Oasis Room. Many remember that this dining room was accessed by descending a long interior ramp from the original structure. It also had a main entrance off the patio. It included a beautiful polished terrazzo floor, Arabian décor, restrooms, and a small stage. Many of Mahi's smaller events were held in this room through the years and it continues to be a vital part of the Shrine Center today. It should be noted that a large garage was erected at the same time as the Oasis Room. This building has hosted the Director's Staff, Chanters, and Mahi Band through the years as well as serving as the main storage area for parade vehicles. In 1959, when the State Road 112/Airport Expressway was being built, many houses had to be displaced. One of these homes found its way to the Mahi property thanks to Noble Frank Leonard of Russell Housemovers. The three bedroom, one bath house was placed on the north lawn of the Clubhouse property, close to North River Drive. This structure would serve as the office of the Recorder, North-South Game, and Circus until the mosque was built in 1963.

The success of the 1928 Imperial and 1947 Southeastern Conventions prompted Mahi to seek more of these events. Not only did they generate income for the Temple and local economy, but they rewarded Mahi with much prestige and honor among Shriners. By the early 1950's, it was becoming clear that only a handful of cities could host these gatherings. Most of them did not have enough hotel rooms to handle 20,000 to 30,000 people. It seems a strange analogy, but the Imperials were once greeted by municipalities much as the Super Bowl is today. If the infrastructure wasn't there, the event could not be held. Miami, however, had gone through a second boom of sorts in the late 1940's and was very capable of handling large events. Many large hotels were built, especially on Miami Beach. The soldiers that had trained in South Florida during the war were now returning in droves for vacations or to permanently settle. This meant a need for houses and hotel rooms. The city had a fine auditorium, modern stadium, and lots of attractions. Therefore, Mahi was granted the 1952 Imperial Council Session in May of 1951 at New York. The convention was somewhat of a duplication of the 1928 festivities with one big difference. Now, Miami had the 55,000 seat Orange Bowl Stadium. The Bowl was used to host the parades and pageantry of the session. Opening night, June 16, 1952, included a full pageant and show entitled "Our America of Yesteryear." The gala parade was also held there later in the session. The Miami Municipal Auditorium was the site of the meetings and the Biscayne Terrace Hotel served as the headquarters. It was noted in the September 1952 Mahi Magazine that there were a larger number of motorized Units than ever before. Bands and Marching Units had been the stronghold of the Order from its earliest days, but the twentieth century was catching up as strange cars, go-carts,

dune buggies and motorcycles dominated the parades. One interesting note is the donation of 15,000 coconuts by the City of Miami for delegates to mail home from the convention as a novelty.

Mahi was now coming into its own as one of the premier Shrine Centers in the nation. It boasted a large membership approaching 5,000, an ability to host large conventions, and a unity that was unmatched in Shrinedom. The Temple now had several Units including the Legion of Honor, Chanters, Patrol, Potentate's Corp, Band, Director's Staff, Oriental Band, and Drum Corps. There were now Shrine Clubs in Vero Beach, Fort Pierce, West Palm Beach, Ft. Lauderdale, Hollywood, Key West, and Havana, Cuba. In an official letter from the Imperial Potentate in April of 1954, Mahi was recognized as one of the leading Temples. The correspondence went on to praise Mahi as the most progressive, fastest growing, and most modern in the order as well as being the recipient of nationwide favorable publicity due to its status in the community and its hosting of conventions. Potentate Henry Kopplow and his Divan were truly honored. September of 1954 found Mahi hosting another Southeastern Shrine Association Convention. Again, the Temple was an outstanding host and the visiting Nobles praised Mahi and the City of Miami for their warm hospitality. Delegates were beginning to expect Miami to host conventions every few years since the events held in the city were always the most successful of any in the United States. Competitions, concerts, and a gala parade were featured once again. However, the most memorable event during the gathering was the "Southern Barbeque" held on the grounds of the Red Fez Club. Noble Jimmy Thompson was quoted as saying his barbequed chicken was the "most southern" that could be eaten. A report in the Mahi Magazine stated that the crowd filled the main clubhouse, the newly added Oasis Room, and the terrazzo patio. At one point, it was standing room only and the food line stretched for what seemed like a mile. To show Mahi's willingness to accommodate everyone, the barbecue's start time was moved up from 6:00pm to 4:00pm to allow the members of Yaraab Temple, whose train left at 6:00pm, to partake in the festivities. A small gesture, but one in many that gave Mahi a fantastic reputation time and time again. The success of this convention led to a movement to secure another Imperial Session. That work would begin in earnest in the next few years and resulted in the awarding of the 1961 convention. The Mahi train of success kept right on rolling.

In January of 1955, Mahi sponsored its first Horse Show. The event was held at the Dinner Key Auditorium in Coconut Grove in association with the Florida Horse Shows Association. Horses from all around the state were brought in to compete in a variety of competitions. The outlying areas of Dade and Broward County were filled with ranches and farms where the four-legged creatures made their homes. Additionally, a number of Mahi Nobles had horses and regularly entered them in competitions of this type. A Mounted Patrol Unit had been formed in Mahi the previous year and was headed by City of Miami

Police Chief Walter Headley. The group was an instant success and was a hit at the 1954 Southeastern Convention held in Miami. Most importantly, however, was the establishment of a ranch to house the horses on N.W. 25 Street in Western Dade County. Participants were invited to visit this facility at their leisure. At the time of the show, there was no organized event of this kind held in Miami and the Unit decided to put one together. The influence of Mahi, and perhaps of Chief Headley, was enough to make Beaux Arts of the Lowe Gallery relinquish their contract for a ball at the auditorium on the same day as the show. Attendance was moderate, however, and the event was not held again.

Mahi presented its first candidate for Imperial Outer Guard in July of 1955. Illustrious B. Hiram Blakey had served as Potentate in 1949 and had expressed interest in the position for several years. In the spring of that year, Mahi passed a resolution unanimously endorsing Blakey for the position. This resolution was forwarded to Egypt Temple in Tampa and Morocco Temple in Jacksonville for their approval as well. The backing of three of the largest Temples in the Order sent a clear message that Blakey was ready and qualified for the office. His Masonic record included being a Past Master of Miami Temple Lodge, past head of all four Bodies in the Scottish Rite, an Inspector Honorary General 33° and an overall highly regarded member of the Miami Masonic Community. He had been quite successful as Potentate of Mahi dispersing over \$80,000 to local charities that year as well as opening the YMCA Pool. He also formed the Potentate's Corps Unit, which would later evolve into the Ambassador Corps, as well as a Shrine Club in Havana, Cuba. Noteworthy in Blakey's professional career was his position as Executive Vice President of Burdines Department Stores as well as being Past President of many Retail Professional Associations. Blakey traveled with confidence to Chicago that summer with the support of his Florida brethren. However, after sizing up the competition at the last minute, he felt the timing was wrong and asked that his name be withheld from the election of Imperial Outer Guard. The Blakey Campaign regrouped and set its sights on the Detroit Session in 1956. At this meeting, Blakey was nominated and competed in the election. He received a disappointing 147 votes out of 783 on the first ballot and 97 on the second. Gentlemen that he was, Blakey moved that a unanimous ballot be cast for Noble Charles Merrill of Moslem Temple for the position. "Hi," as he was known, and the Mahi delegation were disappointed but proud of finally getting a candidate on the ballot for the Imperial Line.

The Nobility continued its patient wait for news on their proposed home throughout the mid to late 1950's. After the Miami River property had been acquired in 1950, the Permanent Building Committee was charged with submitting building proposals for approval. This process was drawn out over many years with inquiries on zoning, affordability, and choice of design. More importantly however, Mahi had spent \$111,000.00 on the acquisition, leaving limited funds for construction. The original idea was to only purchase the vacant property, but was

later amended to buy the Sam Murray Residence as well. This cut into the available construction funds and would delay the process for 12 years. There was a growing movement to officially set a construction deadline through a vote of the Nobility. Finally, on October 1, 1958, a resolution was presented by Past Potentate Hal Ingoe to build a new Mosque on the vacant property. This vote was to set two objectives. The first was that a special fund named the "Book of Gold" be established to expedite the funding of the construction. Although there had been a building fund for many years, it never had approached the \$150,000.000 estimate for the erection of the facility. Therefore, it was necessary to speed up the process through a dedicated campaign of fundraising. The second objective was to create a Mosque Committee that was charged with meeting a deadline for construction. The resolution stated that construction of the building must be contracted for not more than five years from the date of adoption or October 1, 1963. This would insure the seriousness of the issue and streamline the design and planning stage of the project. Many glorified speeches followed talking about the long wait for a building and the happiness of Mahi having its own facility. The resolution passed on a vote of 303 for, 11 against.

Although there had been many building proposals over the years, the most popular was an auditorium type building, complete with offices, Unit rooms, and a club and banquet hall. A set of blueprints in the Mahi archives, show a proposed, sprawling building along the lines of the Dade County Auditorium on the vacant riverfront property. A later proposal shows a building very similar to the ultimate design, built on the south side of the Mahi Clubhouse and connected to the same. This idea must have gained some merit through cost cutting measures. Since Mahi already had a Club with Unit and banquet rooms, those features would be deleted from the main building proposal to lower the costs. By April of 1961, the facts emerged at the Stated Meeting. Mosque Committee Chairman Illustrious Harry Ebright P.P. reported The Book of Gold was proving to be unsuccessful and that Mahi had made little progress towards the construction of the facility. However, a new proposal had come to the table. The Committee was now looking into developing the property into six 14 story apartment buildings, containing 504 units, complete recreational facilities, swimming pools, and of course a modern, 3,500 seat auditorium. The apartments would shadow a elderly public housing project that was taking shape just downstream on the south side of the Miami River known as the Robert King High Towers. The Mahi project would cost approximately \$7,500,000.00 and be financed entirely by the Federal Housing Administration. Mahi would then have a 40-year mortgage in which to pay back the agency. The most attractive part of the deal was that the project would require no front money from Mahi at the onset, as the FHA would be providing 100% of the funds. A motion was made to let the committee look further into this proposal and things were looking up. Unfortunately, less than two weeks later, Potentate James Hathaway received a letter from Imperial Potentate George Mattison Jr. regretfully

informing him that he could not approve of Mahi's entry into the project. After careful consideration by the Imperial Legal Department, it was determined that such a venture with the federal government was not in the best interest of the Shrine since regulatory problems could prove costly after the completion of the project. The FHA would have the upper hand and could impose demands concerning repairs or upgrades to the facilities at any time, with little refute by Mahi. Therefore it was considered too much of a risk and promptly denied. Mahi would have to go back to stage one.

While the trials of trying to build a mosque were incomplete, a definite reality was that Mahi would be host to the 1961 Imperial Shrine Session. Many facets of the 1928 and 1952 versions would be repeated, however this time the attendance was expected to top 75,000 people, the largest convention Miami had seen up to that time. Advance reservations were phenomenal and the delegates were expected to spend upwards of \$15,000,000.00, more money than had ever been spent in the city. Then, of course, there was the prospect of many returning to the area for their future vacation and/or home site in the years ahead. This of course garnered funding from Miami, Miami Beach, and Metropolitan Dade County. At the Denver Session in 1960, an advertising blitz had occurred including the distribution of pamphlets, palm tree displays and the serving of fresh Florida orange juice by beautiful swimsuit models. All of these tactics worked and by the time everything was tallied, close to 100,000 people had attended the famed event. The Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce proclaimed it the "Biggest, Smilingest, Grandest party ever held on Miami Beach, Miami or the surrounding area." The biggest events of the Session were the daytime and nighttime parades. The Miami Herald reported that 500,000 people lined the streets of Miami to view the spectacle along with the 30,000 who bought tickets to watch it pass through the Orange Bowl Stadium which itself had been transformed by decorations into a virtual Mecca. Of course, the usual competitions, concerts, and other events were also held. One unique feature of the Session was the "Holiday on Ice" show that was performed every night at the brand new Miami Beach Auditorium. This show was brought in exclusively for the Shriners and was a popular attraction for the delegates and their families. Also noteworthy was the donation by the Oldsmobile Division of General Motors of 206 Delta Eighty-Eight Convertibles used by visiting Potentates and the Imperial Divan. Once again, Mahi was praised as a host by the visitors and local officials. Again, Miami's economy had received a boost because of Mahi.

Later that year it was announced that Mahi had been chosen to lead off the King Orange Jamboree Parade on New Year's Eve in downtown Miami. Local officials were indebted to the Shriners for having infused so much money into the area through their conventions. Therefore it was a simple choice that Mahi should have top honors in the parade. As noted, the Orange Bowl Festival had evolved from the University of Miami football games sponsored by Mahi in the late 1920's.

By 1935, the event was known as the Palm Festival and progressed to become one of the leading National College Bowl Games. The other important feature of the Festival, aside from the football game, was the glittering nighttime parade through the streets of Miami. This event was a spectacle of floats, marching bands, and other participants. With the advent of television, an opportunity arose to show the rest of the country that New Year's Eve in Miami was clear and warm in stark contrast to the cold conditions up north. By 1961, all three major television networks were broadcasting the parade, or a portion of it, live to the nation. This publicity was invaluable and helped tourism in the state on a yearly basis. It was indeed an honor for Mahi to be showcased on national television and was great exposure for the Shrine in general. Most every Mahi Unit entered the parade and the Divan was featured on a glamorous float. This practice continued until 1974, when a bit of fun by the Director's Staff backfired. Traditionally, the last float in the parade was the Orange Bowl Queen and her Court. The Staff decided it might be fun to pull up alongside this float as it moved in front of the filming area. The Committee and NBC were not pleased and Mahi was removed from the national broadcast. However, they continued to be featured on the local portion, which ran from 7:30pm to 8:00pm. The popularity of the event continued for many years and the Shrine continued to be one of the largest participants. Unfortunately, Mahi was not invited to participate in the 1996 event. The Nobility was inflamed and the committee's action brought Mahi patriotism to its strongest level in years. This led to several Nobles donating money to take out an ad in the Miami Herald, protesting the decision through an open letter to the committee. The letter was written by then Recorder Illustrious Robert Alexander and was well received by the Nobility and the public. The following year Mahi was once again invited to participate. In 1997, NBC did not renew its contract with the parade and the nationwide telecast ceased. It struggled along for five more years, but without the network and corporate sponsors it became a money loser and the 2001 edition was the last. Many Miamians felt great remorse about the loss of such a longstanding tradition, including the Mahi Nobility. However, they were able to look back on their involvement with fond memories.

By the spring of 1962, the Mosque Committee was finally making some progress. When the grandiose plans for high-rise apartments and an auditorium were cancelled in April 1961, they had to go back to the drawing board. After careful review of all plans to date, the committee decided to return to the idea of building a scaled down auditorium with general offices. They revived the blueprints of the Mosque that had been proposed as an attachment to the Mahi Clubhouse. However, limited space, negative test borings, and having to close a portion of Southwest 15th Avenue derailed the proposal to build on this site. Therefore, it was decided to locate the building across the street on the vacant property, where there were no drawbacks and plenty of room for future expansion. The original plans would simply be revised and enlarged to incorporate a

freestanding structure, and reversed so that the entrance would face west instead of east. This plan followed the idea that Mahi would continue to utilize the Clubhouse for their lounge, banquet facilities, and Unit Rooms, but have the convenience of having their meetings and large events just across the street. Their vision was to build a basic structure that could be easily expanded in the future with a balcony, riverside lounge, and restaurant. Therefore, on June 7, 1962, a resolution was approved to begin construction on the \$270,000.00 structure. The Mahi Mosque Building Corporation was immediately formed and Noble Joseph Moretti was named Director. This was set up as a non-profit entity to avoid the overhead and profit costs of a general contractor. This also allowed the project to accept donated materials and labor. By having Moretti on board, the corporation was able to pull building permits by itself. A temporary construction office was then built to serve as headquarters of the project. Interestingly, while excavating the foundation for the Editorial Without Words Statue on the front lawn of the auditorium in 2003, workers hit a solid concrete floor. They had found the location of this former office. The Nobility was ecstatic and enthusiasm was high. Mahi would finally have its own Temple.

Potentate Ernest R. Williams and the Mahi Divan broke ground for the new Mosque on November 19, 1962 in front of 700 Nobles, friends and guests. Several speeches were made praising the progress that had been accomplished after so long a wait. The traditional gold shovel ceremony was held as the Divan moved the first dirt on the site. This was immediately followed by the first heavy equipment preparing the ground for a foundation. The magnificent 25,000 square foot, air conditioned structure would be modern and functional. It would include a carport, foyer, ladies' powder room and restroom, men's restroom, Recorder's office, Potentate's office, projection room, auditorium, stage area, work area, dressing rooms, kitchen area and riverfront patio. By the first week in December, all the footings had been poured and concrete block began to rise. The Mosque would actually be two concrete buildings, connected by a steel structured center. The lobby and offices would be on one end and the stage area would be on the other. These would be traditional concrete block and stucco sections. In the center, a labyrinth of steel would support the auditorium area with its 25-foot high ceilings. This system would provide 17,500 square feet of "no column" space, ideal for almost any large function. By March of 1963, all of the structural steel work had been completed and the building was ready to be dried in. Throughout the rest of that year, the building was outfitted with fixtures and furnishings to bring the project to completion. The Installation of Officers for 1964 was the first function held in the Mosque on February 8 of that year. Potentate Malcolm McAllister made sure that the event was colorful and vibrant to reflect the rebirth of Mahi in their new facility. This was quickly followed by a Valentine's Dance on February 15. The formal dedication of the facility was held on March 7, 1964. Deputy Imperial Potentate O. Carlyle Brock dedicated the Temple to God, charity, and the

Masonic Fraternity in front of a crowd of over 2,000 Nobles, ladies and guests. Illustrious McAllister went through a long dissertation thanking the key players in making the Mosque a reality. After 43 years of speeches, planning, fundraising, trials, and tribulations, Mahi finally had a home of its own.

Since the beginning, Mahi had sponsored a circus here and there. However, starting in 1965, the Temple entered a 20-year period of consecutive events. Circuses were used by many Shrine Centers around the country as their chief means of fundraising. In many cases, the local Shriners were in a better position than anyone else to secure a quality circus and hold it in the best facility in town. Mahi was no different and held the first of these circuses at the Miami Baseball Stadium on October 15, 1965. For the next two decades, these events were held at the larger venues in town including the Orange Bowl Stadium, Tropical Park Race Course, Hialeah Park Race Course, and Flagler Dog Track. A large midway of carnival rides would line the parking lot. The only way to get to the show was by walking down this midway. This boosted revenues and the rides sometimes brought in more money than the main event. The circus was usually performed by the larger, well-known show companies who presented three rings of the most modern and thrilling acts of the day. During most of the 1970's, the shows starred Carl Walenda and Family performing their dangerous high wire act. The more risk involved, the better the crowd liked it. Winn Dixie Supermarkets was a corporate sponsor for many years and the partnership got circus advertising into hundreds of stores within the chain. These events continued through the 1980's when they began to experience a sharp decline in attendance. As Miami grew into a cosmopolitan metropolis, it began to lose some of its smaller "hometown" feel and the public stopped responding to events like a circus. In April of 1998, Mahi tried one last time when a three-ring show was performed in the Orange Bowl Stadium. Although a thorough advertising campaign, including telemarketing, was completed, attendance was dismal. However, the midway generated adequate revenue and from that point on Mahi decided to concentrate on this effort. Every November the Shrine Center sponsors a carnival at the Central Shopping Plaza in Miami. This event has proven to be successful, with little effort by the Nobility. Additionally, it keeps the Shrine's name out in the public.

When the Mahi Mosque was opened in 1964, it was functional, but not complete. In the following years several projects included in the original plans were finished. The sidewalk and ramp to the parking lot were poured and extensive landscaping installed. A large lighted sign, complete with a marquee, was erected on North River Drive. On the interior, a beautification plan was completed with the installation of wall draperies, valances and a grand chandelier in the middle of the auditorium. A sound booth was also constructed in the southwest corner where a spotlight could be operated. A plaque recognizing the donors to the terrazzo floor fund was installed on the wall in between the main lobby doors. In 1968, Dade County contracted with Mahi to lease their east parking

lot. Parking was a headache at the Metro Justice Building just down the street and the county needed additional spaces. Therefore, they converted what was essentially a graded, vacant lot into a first class parking lot with pavement, curbs, streetlights, and a formal gated entrance. This was done at the county's expense and the amenity added much value to the facility. Mahi would realize an income from the lease as well as have use of the lot after 5:00pm and on weekends. This project brought the Mosque's parking capacity to 617 cars. Later that year, on December 5, 1968, the facility was formally dedicated when Most Worshipful Clyde S. McLaren, Grand Master of Masons in Florida, presided at the cornerstone laying ceremonies. The building was now 100% complete and was serving Mahi well. A proposal was made in 1970 to expand the Mosque to include a restaurant, lounge and meeting rooms. This addition would be built on the riverfront patio on the south side of the building. Initially, the membership gave the go ahead to proceed with plans for the project, but financing for the \$300,000.00 project could not be agreed upon and the project died. There were rumblings for a similar project in 1986, but it also failed for lack of support. The building would remain essentially unchanged for the next 22 years. The Nobility did approve the construction of a seawall and promenade in 1971 due to the erosion of Mahi's shoreline on the Miami River. This beautiful bulkhead and walkway was constructed along the entire length of the Mahi property and included tie offs for boats and promenade style lighting. This was a vast improvement over the jagged, rock lined shore that it replaced and gave the property a handsome appearance from the water. Several proposals were made over the years to construct a marina on the river. However, none of these plans ever made it off the drawing board due to the rejection of the Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps, which is responsible for navigation on the river, informed Mahi that their property was located on the widest part of the river and navigable ship channel. This was the only place on the river that two ships could pass each other or be turned around. Therefore, no vessels could ever be docked permanently in a Mahi marina or seawall without hindering navigation on the river.

Mahi Temple celebrated its Golden Anniversary in style in June of 1971 by hosting another Imperial Council Session. This would be the fourth time that Miami hosted the event and each successive convention had topped the last. The 1961 Imperial had been quite successful and delegates were eager to get back to Miami, even suggesting that the city host the event on a triennial basis. Mahi had petitioned the Imperial Council for the 1968 session and was denied. They then regrouped and obtained the 1971 meeting. By December 1970, Director General and 1971 Potentate Illustrious Joe Moretti, had received requests for over 20,000 hotel rooms. This surpassed any previous Imperial held in Miami. Delegates were housed from Ft. Lauderdale south to Key Biscayne. One report indicated that there were Shriners in every beachfront hotel or motel from Hollywood to South Beach. Again, the local community watched in awe as the Shriners held Unit

competitions, gave public concerts and strutted in two spectacular parades. The main difference of this session was the location of most of the events on Miami Beach. The Fontainebleau Hotel was used as the headquarters and its ballroom served as the meeting hall and marketplace. A unique aspect of the 1971 parade was its routing through the center of the Miami Beach Convention Center. Bleachers were set up inside the main hall and thousands watched the parade go by in air conditioned comfort. This had never been done before on a large-scale basis. Both the day and night parades had over 12,000 participants. The crowds were especially receptive to the Key West Shrine Club's Conch Shell Band, a musical group whose sole instruments were conch shells. Another notable highlight was the pageant held for newly elected Imperial Potentate C. Victor Thornton. Since Thornton was a Texas native, the stage of the Fontainebleau Ballroom was adorned with thousands of yellow roses. One participant described it as the most beautiful array of flowers they had ever seen. No one knew it at the time but this Imperial Session was Mahi's last hoorah. As time went on, it became difficult to undertake such a gigantic affair due to declining membership and inflation. Miami and the beaches entered somewhat of a recession in the 1970's and the influx of immigrants was beginning to change local cultures and perceptions. The Mariel Boatlift in 1980 brought many criminals to South Florida from Cuban jails and crime skyrocketed in the city. Miami achieved the undesirable label of having the highest murder rate in the United States. This led to Time Magazine doing a cover story on the area entitled "Paradise Lost." Miami had become, in the eyes of many, including Shriners, an undesirable place to visit due to the media coverage. This kind of publicity hurt tourism immensely and it took many years to recover. Mahi would, however, go on to host its last large event when the Southeastern Shrine Association Convention was held in 1981. The Temple also hosted the Florida Shrine Association Convention in 1978 and 1984.

Mahi reached its peak membership in 1973 at just under 8,000 Nobles. At 52 years old, the Temple operated consistently and was progressing nicely. The circus was approaching its 10th season, parade participation was excellent and Mahi now boasted 12 Shrine Clubs. However, beginning in 1974, a few events began a slow, but consistent downward trend in membership and active participation. In the spring of that year, Past Potentate Illustrious Bill Brown announced that the Hughes Sports Network no longer was interested in broadcasting the Mahi North South Shrine Game. ABC television had bailed out a few years earlier and syndication had been meager at best. Attendance was down as the Major Bowl Games were beginning to dominate college post season play. The Orange Bowl's rise in importance was beginning affect scheduling at the stadium. The City of Miami wanted the days prior to the January 1st Game for field preparation and other considerations. Additionally the National Football League's Miami Dolphins, the stadium's other tenants, were dominating the playoffs and often had home field advantage. This put the Shrine Game in between

a rock and a hard place. Without the lucrative money from the television broadcast, the game simply could not go on. Then by early summer, it was learned that a discrete campaign was brewing to form a new Temple in the Lake Worth/Palm Beach area. This was in Mahi's jurisdiction and came as somewhat of a shock to the Divan when they received a formal letter the week before the Imperial Convention stating the new Temple's intentions. 1,000 signatures had been obtained and a petition was written. All was in order and the group from Palm Beach was in full compliance with Imperial regulations. Then at the 100th Imperial Council Session in Atlantic City, Amara Temple was granted a dispensation despite the objections of a majority of the Mahi membership. Mahi Potentate Illustrious Robert Lambdin made a heartfelt plea on the floor of the session to deny the new Temple, but was quickly rebutted by speakers from Bahia Temple in Orlando and Araba Temple in Ft. Myers, who were in favor. The vote was 477 for and 194 against. In one swift moment, Mahi lost jurisdiction over Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River Counties, a portion of Okeechobee County and a total of 599 Nobles who demitted to the new Temple. However, in the spirit of friendship, brotherly love and simple good taste, Potentate Lambdin asked and was granted the privilege of fezzing Amara's first Potentate Illustrious Wayne L. Akers. From that moment on, Mahi and Amara have enjoyed a fine relationship and have become a good friends and neighbors. In the early 1980's there was a small movement to create a new Temple in Broward County, but nothing became of it. This was quickly followed by a resolution to relocate Mahi to the Pembroke Pines area. This proposal was overwhelmingly defeated.

In 1988, the historic S. Bobo Dean residence that had been purchased by Mahi from Sam Murray in 1950 was reaching the end of its useful life. The 68 year old structure had been cosmetically restored time and time again throughout the years, but a complete renovation was never undertaken. An inspection by a local engineer revealed the news that many had already expected. The structure would need massive repairs to be brought up to code. Mahi was now faced with a dilemma. The structure could be renovated and modernized at an exuberant cost or it could simply be razed. Was it worth saving the treasured, historic riverfront home that had served Mahi so well for so many years? Or was it simply time to economize and modernize by tearing it down? Unfortunately, the latter was the decision. It was decided that the 1954 Oasis Room addition would be preserved as a meeting and dining room, but the rest of the structure would be flattened. The Miami Shrine Club, which had operated the building on and off since the 1950's, began to pack up the buildings items and salvage whatever was deemed valuable. The upstairs bar was disassembled, moved, and reassembled in the Oasis Room. The Units that met in the building had to relocate to new quarters, including the Mariners, who had an extensive facility in the basement. In the summer of that year the bulldozers rolled in and began tearing down the heralded structure. It was also decided to raze the old recorder/circus office at the same time, as well as the

fountain that graced the north lawn of the estate. In just a few days, one of Mahi's most recognizable features was gone for good. In the years following the removal of the home, several local historians took issue with its demise. In Don Gaby's book on the Miami River, he claimed that Mahi had hastily torn down the structure to make way for a parking lot. He was later informed of the true facts.

With the Shrine Clubhouse gone, Mahi had to come up with a plan to house the several Units that had been displaced and were technically homeless. A plan was quickly formulated by the Holding Corporation to relocate the executive offices to the north side of the auditorium in a 3,500 square foot addition. This would free up space on the second and third floors where multiple Units could be housed. By 1991, construction had started on the office annex. This modern facility would include a reception area, conference room, restrooms, kitchen, file storage area as well as house the Recorder's, Potentate's, Transportation, and Public Relations offices. The addition stretched from the front double doors to the roll up door on the north side of the building and included a ramp and formal entrance with landscaping. Previously, this area had been a lawn with umbrella trees. As for the upstairs areas, they were renovated to house the Mariners, Provost Guard, Legion of Honor, Greeters, and Past Masters Units. The south ticket booth in the lobby was replaced with a door which provided access to the new rooms from outside. Both projects were complete by the end of the year.

Mahi's jurisdiction was put to the test on August 24, 1992 when powerful Hurricane Andrew ravaged the area. Greater Miami had not taken a direct hit from hurricane force winds since Hurricane Betsy in 1965. Additionally, Miami-Dade County's population had nearly doubled in those years, with most of those new residents having no hurricane experience. Andrew was the first named storm of the 1992 season and meandered in the central Atlantic for several days, even being downgraded to a depression at one point. But as the hurricane continued on its due west course it picked up speed. By Sunday, August 23, South Florida was preparing for what the Miami Herald newspaper called "the storm of our nightmares." As residents hunkered down that night, no one could imagine the fury that would plummet the area early the next morning. Andrew's eye crossed the coast in South Dade County around 4:00am with winds estimated at 150-175 miles per hour. Houses were destroyed, roofs were torn off, and trees were snapped in two. The hurricane left a path of destruction never seen before in any United States natural disaster. 26 deaths were directly attributed to the storm and numerous injuries occurred in the days that followed. The storm was rated a Category 4 on the Saffir-Simpson Scale at the time, although further research resulted in the storm being upgraded to a Category 5 in 2002. At \$23 billion in damage, it was the costliest disaster in the nation's history. At the Mahi Shrine Center, the Miami River had risen five feet above normal high tide and flooded the grounds. Luckily, Downtown Miami and the Beaches were spared the fiercest winds of the storm and escaped with moderate roof and tree damage.

The Shrine and all of Masonry immediately sprang into action. Volunteer teams were assembled, donations started coming in and goodwill towards each other was at its best. The Mahi Shrine Auditorium became a staging area, receiving donations of goods from all around the country. All 17,000 square feet of the ballroom was covered with canned foods, water, clothes, machinery, and an array of other items. Getting the goods to the victims would be problematic however. The Grand Lodge of Florida provided the relief committees with a list of all Masons south of Kendall Drive. The volunteers went from door to door, checking up on the members. Some addresses could not be located due to the lack of landmarks. Known buildings, trees and even street signs were no longer there and made the job of locating some houses next to impossible. The goal was to find out if the brothers needed anything from food and shelter to just plain cash. Luckily, there were no reports of any serious injuries among the brethren and their families. These would be the days that would try the best of men, but Mahi and all of Masonry worked together to help each other through the difficult time. Recovery from the storm took up to a decade in some cases and Andrew has become legendary in the hearts and minds of South Florida's residents. Even today, the hurricane is often used as a reference point in people's lives when trying to recall times and places; much like the 1926 Hurricane was to a previous generation. Aside from the trials of some of the members, the biggest effect from the storm to Mahi was the cancellation of the Florida Shrine Association Convention, which was to be held that October in Miami. The infrastructure of the Mahi Nobility and entire community was such that it was impossible to operate the meeting in an efficient fashion. Even Illustrious Lenny Ettinger, Potentate that year, was displaced from his home in the Perrine area. People's lives had been turned upside down and the work of a convention was last on many Nobles lists. Therefore, it was decided that cancellation was the best option. This annual event is now held in the month of May, prior to the Hurricane Season.

In 1993, a new tradition started in Mahi. On the way back from a Shrine Director's Association meeting, Illustrious Thomas Jackson, Potentate, and some other members of the Director's Staff began tossing around the idea of a fundraising degree. The idea was to create a society of friends and brothers based on the folklore of the Everglades and to initiate members several times a year. The degree would be known as the "Order of the Anhinga", named after the famous bird found fishing or sunning his wings in the waters of South Florida. Initiates would be led down a trail symbolic of the Everglades and arrive at a teepee where they would be obligated by the Chief of the Tribe. Members would then be given an authentic Seminole Indian jacket that could be worn to various Shrine events. The idea was a great success and raised over \$10,000 in its first year. Since its inception, the tribe has gathered a few times a year at special events to confer the degree and holds its famous shrimp boil from time to time. Mahi is known throughout Shrinedom for the colorful jackets of the Order.

There had been some rumblings within the Nobility since the Mahi Clubhouse had been torn down in 1988. Most of the talk had been about the condition of the Oasis Room. Nobles felt that the set-up was bad and the décor needed updating. The Divan and Holding Corporation responded with a renovation project that was completed in late 1995. New drywall was put in, eliminating the mosaic desert scenes that had graced the walls since the 1960's. A hallway was created in front of the bathrooms, to create some long overdue privacy. A new food serving area was installed with extensive cabinetry. The floor was lined with decorative ceramic tile and new carpeting was installed in the dining area. New round tables, chairs and barstools were purchased to upgrade the existing furniture. However, the highlight of the project was the new U-shaped bar installed at the south end of the room. The bar was lined with beautiful dark wood and topped with a liquid plastic surface. Before the pour, plaques were installed listing the names of contributors to the renovation project. Pins from various Past Potentates and Shrine Centers were also placed on the bar top. The result was a unique and rather handsome bar that serves Mahi to this day. The Oasis Room was renamed the Felix Strothman Oasis Room by the Divan in 1999. Strothman and his wife LaVonda had managed the building off and on since 1969 and were a fixture at Mahi events. After his death in 1998, a Ceremonial was named in his honor as well as the renaming of the Oasis.

The world was fascinated with the turn of the century in 1999 and wondered if the year 2000 would bring chaos due to computer glitches and prophecies. Mahi made it into the 21st Century unscathed and went about the business of Shrinedom. The Temple was holding its own, but long term growth and prosperity were doubtful. The Ft. Lauderdale Shrine Club had been closed and sold and would soon be followed by the sale of the Gold Coast Shrine Club in 2001. Membership now stood at 2,500 Nobles, down from Mahi's peak of 8,000 in 1973. The bumper crop of members that had joined in the post war years were starting to pass away and started a steep decline in membership. Not since the Great Depression had Mahi experienced such a steady loss of members as the 1980's and 1990's. The Divan continued to look at the problem and came up with a suggestion. Since the Temple could no longer operate on dues income, fundraisers would have to be increased. However, these events often failed to bring in projected income. The only other viable option was to sell the property and downsize. If Mahi could cash out of the immense equity it had in its riverside property, the money could be used to relocate to a smaller, but better facility. The remainder of the funds would be placed in trust and the interest derived from them would help fund the budget every year. Thus on April 6, 2000, the Nobility voted to put the property up for sale. The Divan immediately had the property appraised and listed it with a broker. In turn, a relocation committee began touring potential sites for the relocated Mahi Shrine Center. Most felt that a move to the west and north near one of the major

expressways would be the best option and the committee identified several sites. Now the wait was on to see if the property could be sold.

In the fall of 2002, Mahi experienced a sad situation rarely heard of in any organization. For the first time in its history, a sitting Mahi Potentate died in office. Illustrious Robert R. Miller succumbed to a lengthy illness on September 21. He had struggled through his term with the goal of completing his year as Mahi's leader. Unfortunately, he was unsuccessful in this endeavor. One week later, as the Nobility mourned for its leader, Illustrious Paul Newman, P.P., Recorder, became ill at a convention. He immediately began seeking medical treatment and eventually entered the hospital for several weeks, passing away on October 26. Within the course of five weeks, Mahi had lost its two most important officers. The Nobility was shocked and saddened by this unusual course of events. Sympathetic greetings poured in from around the state as the Divan tried to regroup as a body. Noble Joe A. Fleites, Chief Rabban, had to step in and assume the duties of both Nobles.

In November of 2002, a local developer made an offer for the Mahi property of \$14.6 million. Other offers had been made, but the Divan felt that they were too low. If the plan to rebuild and put enough money in the bank as an endowment was to succeed, the price would have to be \$10 million or greater. Since this was the highest bid to date, it was brought before the Nobility, who quickly rejected it as being too low. Acting Potentate Joe Fleites asked the Nobility for instructions on how to proceed. After much discussion, a motion was passed to take the property off the market and hold tight. A recurring figure of \$25 million kept coming up as a satisfactory sale price. Until that kind of offer came in, the Shrine Center should stay right where it was.

A feeling of unity started to rise amongst the Nobility and in April of 2003 they approved the erection of a great statue representing the purpose of Shrinedom in front of the Auditorium. The "Editorial Without Words" sculpture by Harrison Covington was a statue that was found at most Shrine Centers and Shrine Hospitals in North America. At a cost of \$10,000, this was an expensive proposition. In order to fund the project it was decided that brick pavers would be installed around the base of the structure and would be available for engraving at a cost of \$100 per brick. The statue was ordered from the dealer in Orlando and the Nobility elected to have custom lettering put on the fez so that it will resemble a "Mahi" fez. This made the statue a one of a kind. A steel reinforced solid concrete slab was poured, topped with seven courses of concrete block and capped by another slab. The statue was set atop the foundation and bolted down in June of that year. The foundation was graced by Florida Keystone and included a bronze information plaque. The statue was dedicated by Illustrious Joe Fleites and local District Deputy Grand Master Noble Uviel Morales at a formal ceremony on September 11, 2003.

Surprisingly, at the May 2003 Stated Meeting, several Nobles stood up and suggested capital improvements to current facility. A total of \$300,000 was

allocated for this project and work began that summer. On the outside, the auditorium and outlying buildings were pressure cleaned, sealed and painted, inside and out. The beautiful artistic sign with the shrine symbol and Mahi name facing the Miami River was also re-done. Several trees were trimmed back to increase visibility, including the removal of a 65 foot Australian Pine near the river. A high quality, metal picket type fence was installed around the Oasis Room property and main auditorium parking lot. On the inside, the ceiling in the auditorium was lowered several feet and new lighting was installed. The lobby was redecorated with new carpeting and both restrooms were completely gutted and replaced with modern, handicap accessible facilities. The Nobility praised the work and the first alterations to the auditorium since its erection in 1964 were complete. Just as it looked like Mahi was staying put, change was just around the corner.

In the summer of 2003, another local developer began eyeing the Mahi property. However, this time the interested party was very serious and persistent. When asked for a selling price, they had been told that the Nobility had set it at \$25 million. When they made a formal offer at that price the Divan was shocked. Would the Nobility reconsider selling for an additional \$10.4 million over the last offer? The proposal was first read at the October 2003 meeting. After sitting over for 30 days, the question was called for by Illustrious Joe Fleites. In a sign that the Nobility was somewhat unified on the decision, there was no discussion on the resolution. It then passed by a 9 to 1 margin. In one of the most historic moments in Mahi history, the Nobility had voted to sell the Shrine Center. Illustrious Roger Kopplow, Past Potentate in 1975, pointed out that Mahi had realized an excellent return on their initial investment. "We purchased this property in 1950 for \$111,000. \$24,889,000 is not a bad profit!" said Kopplow.

The developer was offered a generous contract in terms of time, having until November of 2005 to finalize and seal the deal. In the interim, plans were unveiled for a impressive mixed use project consisting of three 34 floor buildings. The project was to include retail shops, offices, town homes and condominiums all set in modern skyscrapers towering over the Miami River. Everything went as planned until August of that year when the Federal Aviation Administration stepped in and informed the developer that they would have to trim 10 floors off of the buildings because they interfered with the flight approaches for Miami International Airport. This turned the project upside down and led to more delays. A firm deadline of November 11, 2005 was established as the closing date; however the developer did not show up at the closing. After several weeks of negotiation, the two sides could not reach an agreement. A lawsuit ensued and Mahi entered a prolonged period of litigation. In 2007, another developer entered the picture and offered \$34million to take over the purchase and release the original developer from the deal. A contract was presented to the Mahi Nobility but was defeated by 8 votes. Many questioned the terms and details of the contract and the vote was almost an even split of for and against. In the meantime the lawsuit was ongoing. Finally in August of 2008,

the suit was settled out of court. Both parties walked away from the deal and the developer retained the deposit monies. It was now back to square one for the sale of the building, but with one huge difference. The real estate market had gone bust in response to a growing U.S. recession and selling the Mahi property for \$25million seemed unattainable. It would take several years for anything further to develop.

While the Nobility waited for the sale of the building to become final in the mid 2000's, the state of Florida entered one of the most active periods of hurricane activity it had ever experienced. From August 2004 to October 2005 nine storms made landfall in the sunshine state, five of which affected Mahi's jurisdiction. In 2004 Tropical Storm Bonnie struck the big bend area in August with little fanfare but was closely followed by Category Four Hurricane Charley which made its way up the Charlotte Harbor. Charley was similar in size and strength to Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and dealt a devastating blow to Southwest Florida, especially Punta Gorda and Charlotte County. Later in the month a slow moving, very large and very wet Hurricane Frances made landfall near Martin/St. Lucie County line and brought hurricane force winds to the coast between Miami and Daytona Beach. The Category Two storm wasn't a powerhouse but meandered for nearly 40 hours as it crossed the peninsula. September brought Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne. Ivan was a Category Three monster and roared into the western panhandle, bringing an extreme tide to Pensacola Bay and, in fact, destroying the Interstate 10 Bridge across that body of water. Of note is the fact that the entire Florida Keys were evacuated when it looked as if then Category Five storm would come close enough to have an effect on the island chain. Later in the month Hurricane Jeanne, another Category 3, followed a course eerily similar to that of Frances and struck the coast at the exact same spot. For a time it looked as if the storm might hold its westerly course and barrel through the Palm Beach area, leading to a greater affect on Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. However the Treasure Coast north of the area was buffeted with even stronger winds than Frances less than a month earlier.

2005 brought more storms, but this time with a greater effect on South Florida. The season got started a little early when Category Two Hurricane Dennis roared up from the Caribbean and passed just west of Key West in July. The effects of the storm were felt as far north as Miami where most of the trees on the Mahi Shrine Center property were mangled by heavy winds. A houseboat across the river was sunk as well. The storm's effects were not great enough, however, to stop the official visit to the Miami area of Most Worshipful John F. Kavanaugh, Grand Master of Masons in Florida which was held at Mahi on July 9, 2005. Then in late August, South Florida was visited by what would become one of the most infamous storms in history, Hurricane Katrina. Katrina made its way through the Atlantic and meandered through the Bahamas before coming ashore at Hallandale Beach on August 25 as a Category One hurricane. It was thought at the time that the storm would follow a westerly path along the county line on its trek across the

area, but much to the surprise of the populous, Katrina's eye turned southwest and traveled through north Miami-Dade, even passing over the National Hurricane Center at Florida International University. It was the first such time in modern history that an eye wall had directly affected the weather station. The cyclone then skirted much of the Florida Keys before turning back towards the northwest. Damage was widespread with extensive tree and roof damage in addition to a massive loss of electricity. During its passage through Miami, Katrina peeled the roof off a portion of the Oasis Room and took down several trees on the Mahi property. The storm took the area by surprise and there was much disbelief that a weak storm with 80mph winds could have inflicted so much damage. The next day the Miami Herald newspaper ran a headline asking the question that was on the mind of most bewildered residents, "This was a One?" Katrina went on to strengthen into a massive Category Five storm and impacted the Louisiana/Mississippi coasts with a 23 foot storm surge and 130mph winds. The disaster is well documented in history books as one of the worst disasters in United States history, with the flooding of and subsequent destruction of most of New Orleans. To add insult to injury, Hurricane Rita soon followed and slammed into the Texas coast near Beaumont as a Category Three. For a time it was thought that the storm would be as strong as Katrina and perhaps even affect the same area. The storm also did a first class scare job on the Keys which was becoming well acquainted with the drill due to threats and impacts from Charley, Ivan, Dennis and Katrina.

It was not until October, though, that an unusual, yet potent storm outdid all of its predecessors as far its impact on South Florida and the Mahi Shrine Center. Hurricane Wilma cruised through the Caribbean slowly gaining strength along the way. However on October 19, the casual observer began to really pay attention when the storm evolved from a Category One to a Category Five in a span of ten hours. It was on that day that Wilma's eye wall contracted to a mere two miles in diameter and registered a barometric pressure of 882millibars, the lowest such reading ever documented in the Atlantic Ocean. The powerful storm headed for the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico where it lingered for a day before heading on a collision course with South Florida. The storm had fluctuated in strength but had maintained a Category Three level as it approached Cape Romano near Marco Island. Moving at a rapid 22mph, the storm raced across the Everglades and exited the east coast near Jupiter on October 24. The media immediately looked to the Greater Naples area as the impact zone, but it was the east side of the cyclone that had caused the greatest destruction. For the first time since Hurricane Donna in 1960, much of the Florida Keys experienced a massive storm surge. Water was 6-7 feet deep at Key West, Marathon and Islamorada. Up the coast, the metro areas were hard hit, with many claiming Wilma to be the worst storm in Broward County in 60 years. Roofs were torn off, trees were mangled and the sea rushed into the western banks of Biscayne Bay. In both downtown Miami and downtown Ft.

Lauderdale glass littered the streets as skyscrapers had their windows blown out by the ferocious winds. Power lines were down everywhere and the largest loss of electricity ever felt in the area kept homes and businesses in the dark from Key West to Vero Beach.

However, the most shocking part of Wilma's passage to the Mahi Nobility was the damage caused at the Shrine Center. Never before had a storm impacted the grounds the way that this one had. First and foremost, the roof of the auditorium was stripped off. The resulting inundation of water soaked the upstairs unit rooms and caused serious damage. The sliding glass doors in the main hall were blown in and debris scarred the building on all sides. Two trees were down and palm fronds littered the grounds. The two plate glass windows behind the bar in the Oasis Room were blown in and the roof peeled back. It took months to get everything back in order after the storm.

In 2007 a special visit was made to the Capitol in Tallahassee. Under the leadership of Illustrious Sir Jorge Sibila, assisted by Noble Richard Rennick, the Mahi Divan was granted an audience with Governor Charlie Crist. It was the first such meeting between Mahi and a high ranking government official in decades. The group met with Crist and had a nice discussion about the Shriner's purpose and how the fraternity desperately needed more exposure to the public and government in particular. He was presented with an encased honorary green Mahi fez that read "Governor" and was quite taken with it. In days past the Shriners were well known in "City Hall" but as time went on political correctness stopped many good men from becoming associated with fraternities or special interest groups, no matter how noble their purpose. The meeting with Crist was an honorable effort to get the Shriners back into political circles.

As time marched on, it crept up on the Mahi Shrine Center. The damage from Wilma continued to fester and the building began showing advanced deterioration. As Mahi's bank balance continued to dwindle it was time to revisit the idea of selling the property. The prior sale was to occur in 2005 but didn't happen. The lawsuit that ensued lasted until August of 2008. By that time, it was agreed to start marketing the property once again. A host of offers arrived but none were adequate. The reason for this was the crisis in the national real estate market. South Florida was hit particularly hard since a large amount of new housing had been built in the preceding years. These houses, condos and commercial listings were now sitting vacant with no one to buy them. Foreclosures ran rampant and properties were lost everyday. It was one of the worst financial crises in American history. As for Mahi property, the previous sale had been for \$25million. That figure was now out of reach and even if an individual or group could come up with that price, banks were not loaning money for construction.

For two years there were no appreciable offers for the Mahi site. Then in early 2011 a developer came forward with a vision for the site. They were willing to pay \$26million. For the first time since 2003, a solid offer had been brought to

the table. The contract was reviewed, discussions were held and on August 25, 2011 the Mahi Nobility voted to sell the property.

During the due diligence period of the contract it was time for Mahi to start gathering its belongings and get ready to move to a new home. As the closing date of April 1, 2014 came closer, preparations were made to vacate the building. 92 years of “stuff” had to be sorted and packed. Historical items were retained and anything deemed surplus was discarded or donated to local blue lodges and allied bodies. A final farewell to the Shrine Center was held on March 1, 2014. Over 140 people gathered to say their goodbyes. It was a fitting ending for our beloved home of 64 years. The day included a tour of the Miami River, a New Orleans style “funeral” & memorial service for the building and a barbecue dinner. It was a bittersweet day as the Nobility said goodbye to their home of 64 years but looked forward to the prospects of a new and better facility.

The developers who purchased the property were to build “River Landing” a mixed use project including a six floor stacked retail shopping center and two towers consisting of moderately priced condominiums. In a way, many of the members felt good about having a beneficial community project replace our former home. It will bring much needed shops and restaurants to the area as well create a picturesque river walk. The Nobility decided at a 2013 meeting that the Editorial Without Words Statue would be left in the custody of the developer to be implemented into the project. Since the project will have a retail component, thousands of people will be at the site each day. What better place for the statue to be than where it will be seen and serve its purpose? An agreement with the developer insures that it will have a prominent place with a marker telling who and what Shriners are and what we do. This was a win-win public relations victory. A replacement statue will be purchased to grace our new facility wherever it may be.

After moving everything out of the old facility Mahi relocated to two leased warehouses near Miami International Airport. All the paraphernalia, equipment, records, vehicles and treasured junk was to be stored here during the interim period between homes. The Recorder’s office, Miami-Dade Hospital patient transportation office and Director’s Staff Unit also were located at the site. The Stated Meetings were held, alternately, at the Broward and Homestead Shrine Clubs from 2014-2017. This arrangement was not ideal leading to only local Nobles mostly attending each meeting. Starting in February of 2017 the meetings were held at the Courtyard by Marriott Miami West near the Florida Turnpike and NW 106 Street. This seemed to be a better approach with higher attendance. Meanwhile, Mahi leadership continued to search for new property to build a replacement facility. It was agreed to seek out the mid-point between Florida City and Deerfield Beach which yielded northwest Miami-Dade County. Contracts were submitted on three sites in 2015; an existing building in Miramar, a vacant parcel in Hialeah Gardens and another on Okeechobee Road near the Florida Turnpike. Opposition was strong on each site and there was little consensus about much of

anything. This division, together with some zoning issues, led to all three contracts being cancelled. Over the next two years several other sites were looked at but nothing was quite the right fit. The search for a home would continue.

And so we come to the closing of Mahi's history to this point in time. The past 95 years have certainly been interesting for the Shriners and South Florida. Many in the Nobility have watched Miami grow from a southern resort town to a bustling metropolis that serves as the gateway to Latin America. They have also watched their fraternity expand and contract with the changing times. No one knows for sure what the future holds for Mahi, or Masonry in general, but there is guarded optimism and great anticipation that the relocation of our Shrine Center will spark new interest in Mahi and that the membership will embrace a new facility with many social and recreational facilities. Perhaps this will begin a new, even greater chapter in our history. Only time will tell. For now, we can look back through the decades and be proud of what Mahi has accomplished, both in Shrinedom and in the community. Every Noble can be proud to say, I am a member of Mahi Shriners.