

shows in 1930s. In 1963 he was elected to the first world governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, the Universal House of Justice, and lived at the headquarters on Mt Carmel in Haifa, Israel, for 25 years until he retirement in 1988.

"We don't have any priesthood in the Bahá'í Faith at all," he said. Instead the Bahá'í Faith operates on a system of freely elected governing councils set up in communities world-wide and claims to have over six million followers. The system was founded in 1800s by a Persian noble man and teaches world wide peace, unity and harmony, based on a single God represented by all the world's religions. Today the 88 year old former distinguished English TV announcer, actor, publisher and spiritual messenger travels the world visiting Bahá'í communities. "I enjoy my life now because everywhere I go I meet my spiritual brothers and sisters," David said.

David Hofman

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One of the first television presenters who went on to advocate the Baha'í faith

DAVID HOFMAN was an actor, writer and publisher who, during the 1930s, was among the first television presenters in the world. He was also a highly respected member of the Baha'í faith, serving for 25 years on the religion's international governing council.

Born in Poona, Hofman set off to see the world after a brief spell in the RAF. His travels took him to Canada where he worked as a clerk in lumber camps, an actor, an insurance salesman and as a radio announcer. By this point, Hofman had formulated his own ideas about global justice and governance. However, a meeting with the distinguished architect William Sutherland Maxwell and his family — all devoted early adherents to the Bahá'í faith — challenged Hofman's thinking. The Baha'í peace programme corresponded almost exactly with Hofman's own. In time, he was overwhelmed by the "palpable feeling of warmth and unity" around the Maxwells and embraced the faith.

A period in Hollywood saw Hofman appearing in swashbuckling serials and becoming acquainted with such legends as Greta Garbo. In 1936 he settled in Britain and, while pursuing his acting, responded to an advertisement for television announcers for the BBC's first daily transmissions. Hofman became the only male television presenter in the world, chauffeured each day to Alexandra Palace where he spoke to the small number of homes that had television. He was amused once to get a call from Moss Bros, who offered to provide dinner suits in return for

his public endorsement. When war broke out, the transmissions shut down and Hofman returned to the stage and appeared in a number of short propaganda films, playing the devil. He was also employed as an announcer on the BBC Empire Service.

After the war, Hofman married the former the US Olympic athlete Marion Holley. Moving around the country, they founded Bahá'í

groups in Northampton, Birmingham, Oxford, Cardiff and Watford.

Hofman set up his own publishing house — George Ronald Publishers. The company specialises in books of religious interest. Its first publication was his own book, *The Renewal of Civilisation*, since translated throughout the world. In 1983 he wrote an acclaimed literary biography of Canon George Townshend, a Church of Ireland official who had resigned his duties to promote the Baha'í faith.

In 1963 the Baha'í community — which has no clergy — elected its international governing body for the first time, and

Hofman was among the members voted on to it. Based in Haifa, he served for five five-year terms, until his retirement in 1988.

He is survived by his second wife Kathleen, a daughter and a son.

David Hofman, actor, TV announcer, writer and Baha'í dignitary, was born on September 26, 1908. He died on May 9, 2003, aged 94.

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