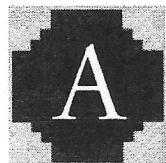


Abraham S. Chanin – 2007 Recipient of Dr. Allan Hurst Award

by Naomi Sandweiss



Abe Chanin knows how to tell a good story. Luckily for those with an interest in Southwest Jewish history, he has made it his business to unearth and save numerous stories of the Jewish Southwest. In recognition of his accomplishments, Abraham S. Chanin received the 2007 Dr. Allan Hurst lifetime achievement award at the December 2007 New Mexico Jewish Historical Society annual meeting in Santa Fe.

The award, named in memory of one of the Society's founders, recognizes a person, persons, or organization that has contributed to New Mexico Jewish history, culture, and community for a substantial period of time. (See sidebar for previous recipients.)

Born and raised in Tucson, Arizona, Chanin's family includes some of the earliest Jewish residents of Tucson. Chanin traces his family from Tucson to their rabbinical origins in Eastern Europe. In the book, *Cholent and Chorizo: Great Adventures of Pioneer Jews on the Arizona Frontier*, Chanin recalls how his father, Isadore Chanin, son of an Orthodox Rabbi, trained a Mexican-American butcher to keep a kosher section in his Tucson meat market. One side of the butcher shop sold kosher meat, while the other sold ingredients for chorizo.

Determined not to let the stories of other pioneering Western families get lost, Abe and his wife of sixty-one years, Mildred, crisscrossed the state of Arizona interviewing historic figures for an earlier book, *This Land, These Voices: A Different View of Arizona History and Those Who Lived It*. "As we traveled some 7,000 miles," Chanin recalls, "we came to the

realization that the stories of pioneer Jews not only were great but they were being lost." In 1988, with the funding of Leona G. and David A. Bloom and support of the University of Arizona College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Chanin established the Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives.

The Bloom Archives gathers the Jewish history of Arizona, New Mexico, and West Texas into a research center, along with crypto-Jewish resources. The collection includes family histories, original memoirs, and historic photographs and is open to scholars and the public. In addition to continuing research into pioneer Jewish history of the Desert Southwest, the Bloom Archives also serves as a repository for



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materials on crypto-Jews who are tracing their family histories back to Spain and Portugal. In 1998, the Archives were transferred to the University of Arizona Library.

Chanin has been an active member of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society since its founding in 1985, serving as a board member and newsletter contributor. Along the way, many have admired Chanin's contributions, including Stan Hordes, who is an NMJHS board member, former president, and first recipient of the Dr. Allan Hurst Award. "I admire Abe's absolute devotion to gathering materials and making them available to scholars," notes Stan. "Abe is a pioneer in Southwest Jewish history with a Midas touch."

Amazingly, Chanin's accomplishments in Southwest Jewish history took place alongside a very successful journalism

career. In 1941, Chanin began reporting for the Arizona Daily Star where he worked in a variety of positions for 36 years, including sports editor and editorial director. Later, he taught journalism at the University of Arizona from where he retired as Professor Emeritus. In 1979, Chanin authored the book *They Fought Like Wildcats: A Reverent, Sometimes Irreverent History of Athletics at One American University — the University of Arizona*.

Abe and Mildred Chanin moved to Albuquerque in 2003 to be near their daughter. They remain involved in Society activities and committed to sharing the stories of Southwest Jewish history. "Whether Jewish or not, everyone should know about Southwest Jewish history," asserts Abe. "Jewish pioneers are forerunners of the building of the Southwest". ☆

NMJHS Recipients of Dr. Allan Hurst Award

NMJHS created the Dr. Allan Hurst Award to honor a prominent member of the Society and one of its founders who died in 1989. The award recognizes a person, persons, or organization that has contributed to New Mexico Jewish history, culture, and community for a substantial period of time. The first award was bestowed in 1998.

1998	Stanley M. Hordes, PhD
1999	Walter Kahn
2000	Henry Tobias, PhD
2001	Melanie LaBorwit
2002	Claire Grossman
2003	Taos Jewish Center
2004	Leah Kellogg
2005	Rabbi Leonard A. Helman
2006	Noel Pugach, PhD
2007	Abraham S. Chanin, PhD