

**2017 Hurst Award: Acceptance Speech** *(continued from p. 1)*

Our family, after that tragic death, consisted of three women trying to make ends meet. Since my mom was trained as a milliner, she created and designed lovely ladies' hats. She made beautiful hats for women for everyday wear and special occasions. She and my sister – who was also a very talented and gifted milliner – opened a hat shop that also sold women's dresses, gloves, and handbags. It was called Bertha's Shoppe, and we worked at it every day and persevered through the bad times. The store eventually was on Central Avenue, the most prestigious address for merchants. It was in this store that I learned retailing. The store was the only one of its kind in the entire city for many years.

After graduating from Albuquerque High School in 1940, I worked as a secretary for a timber company, a law firm, and an insurance agency, when I was introduced to a fine looking and totally appealing man named Leon Rubin from Raton, New Mexico, whose parents were immigrants from Russia or Poland. The Rubin family was well known in the state and, after all, most Jews knew of the other Jews around New Mexico because we were so few in number. Barney and Minnie Rubin were so happy we met and started dating that they promised \$5,000 to start our life together if we actually got married.

We married on January 6, 1946, and I moved to Raton to start our lives together. It was a monumental change for me, moving from my home in a larger city to a very small town in northern New Mexico, where we were the only Jewish family. Raton thrived on cattle ranching in the area, the railroad, and coal mining.

I ensured we remained Jewish and kept our Jewish identity by associating and becoming fast friends with the Jews in Trinidad, Colorado, where there were a number of very respected, warm, and inclusive Jews. It was a windfall that

there was a beautiful and historically noteworthy synagogue in Trinidad – Temple Aaron, where we all attended services and holiday celebrations. This became my religious community that I will always cherish and remember lovingly.

Temple Aaron is the oldest functioning synagogue in Colorado, and one of the one or two oldest west of the Mississippi still operating in its original location. It was built in 1889 and, at its zenith, had over 75 members around the turn of the twentieth century. A bit of history about Temple Aaron: It was founded and organized by Sol Jaffa, the first mayor of Trinidad and also of Santa Fe when he later moved to New Mexico. Later, in 1896, the Freudenthal family moved to Trinidad – a husband and wife and two boys, Alfred and Seymour. The foundation that has sustained Temple Aaron these many years was started by Alfred Freudenthal, a graduate of Harvard Medical School and a fine doctor. In 1925, Seymour Freudenthal took the bill to the Legislature in Denver that became law and established Trinidad State Junior College – the first junior college in Colorado.

The history and our impact on southeastern Colorado and northeastern New Mexico cannot be overstated. We have always been a small congregation but we felt it was terribly important to contribute to our towns and those who lived there, regardless of faith. Our associations with so many community leaders in the area were rewarding and always cordial.

Throughout my life, I have known very little anti-Semitism and discrimination. What a different world it was then in our unprejudiced communities!!

As the years progressed, these Jewish friends and Leon and I became the officers and directors of the Temple, ensuring it would never fall into disre-

pair and lose its identity. Professionally, Leon and I bought the store in Raton, "B. Rubin And Sons" at that time, from my in-laws in 1948 with Leon's brother, Irvin Rubin. We eventually bought out his interest in 1953, after which he and his family moved to Denver. Barney and Minnie Rubin had four boys and the other two, Sidney and Henry, had already moved away.

We operated the store, along with three or four other stores in Raton at various times, with our sons until 2010, when Leon was 90 years old and was probably the oldest merchant still in business in the State of New Mexico, going to work every day.

We lived in Raton and New Mexico almost our entire lives, until we moved to Colorado Springs in 2012. My wonderful husband died on New Year's Day in 2013, one day short of his 93rd birthday. Other than the war years and his final year in Colorado, Leon lived his entire life in Raton, most of it five blocks from where he was born.

We felt that being Jewish was always paramount to our lives, inheriting that belief from my mother and father. I felt that raising our two boys as Jewish as possible was also imperative to our cultural identity and background and heritage. Our Jewishness becomes even more vital when living in an outpost and away from the Jewish mainstream.

Realizing that if we want to have them be proud of their religion, I determined that I had to introduce them to as many other Jewish kids their ages through as many ways as possible. We sent them to Albuquerque to live with my sister's family for a summer when each was studying for his bar mitzvah, in 1962 and 1964. They studied with a rabbi there, Abraham I. Shinedling, and they had their bar mitzvahs in Temple

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