

## Meet Our Board – This Month's Profile is Dorothy Corner Amsden



Incoming NMJHS vice president Dorothy Corner Amsden writes the Genealogy Corner feature in this newsletter each quarter and organizes workshops for budding and experienced genealogists researching their Jewish roots. She hopes to form a network of Jewish genealogists in New Mexico to help each other with their research, to mentor beginners, and to provide the critical mass for sponsoring conferences and inviting notable speakers to New Mexico.

Born in the Bronx of New York City, Dorothy grew up all over the United States. Her family settled in Albuquerque in 1956 where she attended high school and then the University of New Mexico, majoring in French with a strong math minor. Graduate work through Middlebury College took her to Vermont for a summer and then a year at the Sorbonne in Paris, resulting in a Masters degree in French.

In 1966, Dorothy went to work for IBM in Los Angeles as a computer programmer in Federal Systems Division, eventually switching to technical writing. While with IBM, she lived in the Washington, D.C. area for four years before returning to California.

Interest in learning more about her Jewish roots led Dorothy to Israel in March 1973 as a temporary immigrant. She lived at the absorption center in Ashdod for five months, attending ulpan classes five hours a day, six days a week to learn Hebrew.

At that time, the Soviet Union was allowing Jews to emigrate to Israel. Half the class spoke Russian. Other students were from the U.S., France, Canada, England, India, and Denmark. Lessons were entirely in Hebrew. Getting to know the Russians required communicating in a new language, as none of them spoke English and Dorothy doesn't speak Yiddish.

After completing the ulpan, Dorothy and her western friends quickly found jobs. The Russians waited. "The government will find a job for us," they said. Dorothy noticed a job ad in the *Jerusalem Post* at the Weizmann Science Press, whose offices are located in Jerusalem, applied and was offered a position as copy editor of the *Israel Journal of Mathematics*. When she went back for a visit to Ashdod, she found her Russian friends still waiting for a job.

On Yom Kippur that fall, Dorothy, her housemate, and a friend from Tel Aviv were spending a quiet day at their apartment on Rashi Street not far from Mea Sha'arim when the sirens went off. The three women agreed to turn on the radio to Kol Israel and heard codeword troop callups. Switching to the BBC, they learned that Israeli front lines had been overrun.

During those terrible weeks, the men went off to the front and the women ran the offices. For civilians, it wasn't quite as grim as the 1967 war, when the dividing line ran right down the middle of Jerusalem. The secretary in Dorothy's office re-

counted how she and her two small sons had spent those six days and nights in the basement of the apartment house.



Dorothy Corner Amsden

Dorothy worked six days a week for 1000 lira per month (\$200), which was considered a good salary for a woman. She edited articles from prominent mathematicians in many countries in English, French, and once in German. In spite of the war, she made sure the monthly journal came out on schedule, shepherding it through the author review and press process to completion.

Arriving home to New Mexico penniless after 16 months in Israel and 4 months in London, Dorothy found work at UNM and eventually got a job offer as technical writer and editor from Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, as it was called in those days. In the fall of 1975, she moved to Los Alamos and has been there ever since. The following spring, she met her husband to be, Tony Amsden. They will celebrate 30 years of marriage this July.

Besides researching her own family genealogy since retiring from the Lab in 1997, Dorothy serves on the board of the Los Alamos Concert Association, is secretary of the group Citizen Support for the Civic Center, enjoys working in her garden, and gives private French lessons. Why is she doing genealogy when she has no children of her own? "First of all, to satisfy my own need to know where I come from. And then, to share the findings with cousins all over the world and their children."

### IN TRIBUTE

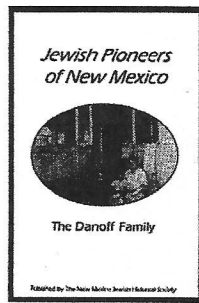
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### IN MEMORY

of Ken Kastner  
NMJHS Member

### SAVE THE DATE

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ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
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Genealogy Workshop  
Santa Fe  
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