

History Maker: Marian Silver, Recipient of 2013 Hurst Award

by Lance Bell

Some people study history, some people live history and some people make history. In Marian Silver's case, as well as her parents' and grandparent's case, their contributions to New Mexico Jewish history and the community at large are notable.

This year, Marian Silver is the recipient of the Dr. Allan and Leona Hurst Award, which recognizes outstanding service to the Society and to New Mexico Jewish history. Marian was honored at the NMJHS Annual Meeting on June 9 for her outstanding contributions to New Mexico Jewish history and dedicated community service.

Marian, a Santa Fe native, arrived in a much more simple time in New Mexico history. Born in 1932 into a well-known and successful family line of merchants, the Uhfelder, Petchesky and Silver family names earned a fine reputation in Santa Fe. Her family also helped in cementing the fair and trustworthy standing and the overall goodwill of the Jewish business community at large.

Many northern New Mexicans shopped in downtown Santa Fe at Jewish-owned businesses because of families like the Silvers who were fair and offered quality goods for reasonable prices. It was common knowledge in Santa Fe that quite a few of the downtown merchants were of the Jewish faith. Marian's family operated a business on the Plaza from 1912, the year New Mexico achieved statehood, until the day the store closed 1988.

Marian's grandparents, Johanna and Emil Uhfelder, emigrated to the United States from Koblenz, Germany, in the late 1880s and ended up in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. They moved to Albuquerque in 1905, and seven years later they relocated to Santa Fe. Marian's grandmother, Johanna, who had a vision and a keen business sense, took the risk of purchasing a building on the Plaza in 1927. Of historical note, her husband Emil was the first treasurer at Temple Albert in Albuquerque.

The Uhfelder family business, originally called the White House and later the Guarantee, was later owned and operated by the Silvers and Marian's brother Gene Petchesky. The Guarantee was a ladies ready-to-wear and shoe store that sat prominently on the northeast corner of the Plaza (the nucleus of downtown Santa Fe) within the building known as the Catron Block. It was known as "the store with more."

Marian Petchesky met Abe Silver, Jr., in New Orleans, where she was attending Sophie Newcomb College, part of Tulane University. Abe was a sports writer and golf editor for the *Times-Picayune* newspaper. They married that same year, 1951, in Santa Fe, at Mar-

ian's grandmother's house because there was no temple in Santa Fe. They helped run the family store for many years until it closed.

In fact, the Silver family still owns and leases out this beautiful retail and of-

fice space today. On the front of the building (west side) under the portal you will find a historical plaque with the address 53-55 Old Santa Fe Trail.



Lance Bell presents Hurst Award to Marian Silver.

Today the Catron Block is occupied by retail stores, and an attorney, John Silver, who is Abe and Marian's son. The Silvers also have two daughters, Margaret and Carolyn.

When I asked Marian for her thoughts on how the diverse Jewish population has grown here in Santa Fe and throughout the state, she replied, "There is a 180 degree difference." She remembers back before there was a synagogue in Santa Fe. The Jewish community would gather in people's homes. "We all had respect for each other." Usually meetings occurred with other Jewish families at the poker table. "We never considered ourselves competitors, we were all in business together!"

Barney Petchesky, Marian's father, who had studied to be a cantor, acted as lay leader before a part-time rabbi was hired. Barney was known for his ability to speak and sing Hebrew beautifully.

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Marian Silver