

Betsy Nordhaus Messeca: 2015 Hurst Award Winner

by Sharon Niederman

In recognition of her outstanding service to the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society and to New Mexico Jewish history, the society is pleased to honor Betsy Nordhaus Messeca with the 2015 Dr. Allan P. and Leona Hurst Award.

A descendant of New Mexico's Nordhaus and Staab Jewish pioneer families, Betsy herself is a bit of "living history." She has continued her family's distinguished tradition of dedicated community service.

Betsy has worked with the New Mexico Anti-Defamation League, Women's Housing Coalition, and Hadassah tutoring program, as well as NMJHS. In April, 2009, she joined the NMJHS board and immediately found a way to combine her love of New Mexico history with the preservation of Jewish New Mexico history. Starting in 2010, she spearheaded a project to save the panels created for the breakthrough

Jewish Pioneers of New Mexico exhibit at the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe. Through her efforts, and with a grant from the Jewish Federation, the Jewish Community Center displayed two exhibitions of the panels, the panels were displayed at museums in northern and southern New Mexico, and education modules were developed from them. In addition, plans for a permanent exhibit at the JCC are underway.



Betsy Nordhaus Messeca

Following her growing up in Albuquerque's North Valley, the daughter of Bob and Ginnie Nordhaus, Betsy attended Vassar College where she studied sociology and European history.

Her distinguished professional career took her from housing and urban development in New York to real estate banking management for Chase Manhattan in New York and Paris. She went on to executive language training and founded a real estate development firm in Paris.

Meanwhile, she contributed her efforts to international volunteer work of relief and development fundraising for Africa, adult continuing education in Paris, and publishing in Luxembourg.



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In 2001, Betsy and husband Michel returned from Europe to make their home in Albuquerque. They continue to ski at Sandia Peak, the ski area founded by Betsy's father, Bob Nordhaus, with Ben Abruzzo, and spend time in the summer at Trout Springs, the historic family summer home above Las Vegas, New Mexico. They have two children and several grandchildren living in Israel, where they frequently travel.

It is with great pride and gratitude that NMJHS adds the name of Betsy Nordhaus Messeca to the honored list of Hurst Award recipients.✧

Two Jews in World War II Shanghai *(continued from p. 3)*

bigotry or revenge. Others retreat in fear, depression or self-loathing.

Gellert and his late wife, Frances, responded by creating a vehicle for education and inspiration: the Holocaust & Intolerance Museum of New Mexico. This small museum, which opened in January of 2001 in a storefront on Central Avenue in downtown Albuquerque, bears witness to many acts of oppression around the world, including the Holocaust, the Christian genocides (Armenian, Greek and Assyrian) of Ottoman Turkey, Rwanda, the Native American cultural genocide, and American slavery.

The effect of seeing these historical events represented side by side is transformative, inspiring a realization that hate

is not isolated to one period, place or people but a constant force that requires our vigilance. By extension, the museum acknowledges *all* people targeted for race, religion, practice, sexuality or belief. It seeks to help us recognize the steps by which prejudice leads to genocide.

The museum calls on us not just to remember the past but to be alert and responsive to oppression and hate we witness in the present, out of the Gellerts' conviction that these acts affect us all. A sandwich board facing visitors as they exit the museum asks: "What can you do to make a difference?"

In June, about two months after this interview, Werner Gellert suffered a stroke, and he has been living since then at the

St. Catherine Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center in Albuquerque. Calef is in the care a member of the Jewish Federation of New Mexico.

His legacy, the Holocaust & Intolerance Museum of New Mexico, 616 Central Avenue SW in Albuquerque, continues to spread his message. The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., offering exhibits, community projects, and a lending library. School classes and other group visits are available, (505) 247-0606. ✧

Clandette Sutton, author of Farewell, Aleppo: My Father, My People, and Their Long Journey Home, published by Terra Nova Books, lives with her husband and son in Santa Fe.