

## REMEMBRANCES: YOM KIPPUR 94

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When Rabbi ~~Ward~~ asked me to talk about my religious experiences and about how my background differed from the other congregants, I wondered if I had a story to tell, especially when I remembered the incredible stories told on past Yom Kippurs about members who survived concentration camps, overcame anti Semitism, changed their lives by conversion, plus many other remarkable experiences.

I began to think about my childhood, having been born and raised in Santa Fe, I realized that my life, both religious and social, was quite different than the so called average Jewish child. In retrospect, I realized that it was nontraditional, but quite a wonderful way to grow up. So, perhaps, I do have a story to tell, if for no other reason than it is part of the Jewish history of Santa Fe.

I guess you could say that I was a <sup>second</sup> generation New Mexican- being that my mother has lived here since she was a baby. My grand parents, who were both German immigrants came to Albuquerque in 1905, and then moved to Santa Fe to start the first fashion department store in 1912, the year that New Mexico became a state.

I was born in the old St. Vincent Hospital in 1932. At that time there was no temple, no Rabbi, no religious school, in fact, there was no formal Jewish religious life. There were about ten Jewish families who made up the community. Names like Gans, Livingston, Taichert, Kahn, Kempenich, Bell, Pick, and my family the Blatts and the Petcheskys come to mind.

The families held services in their homes, but not on a regular basis. My father, who had grown up in New York, and had studied to be a Cantor, often led the services. I never hear the Kol Nidre that I don't think of him. On the High Holidays many of us went Albuquerque to Temple Albert. When someone died here it was difficult to find a minyan to say Kaddish.

How then does a child growing up during that time, in this community, have a sense of religious values? I don't know, perhaps by osmosis, and also because my family never let us forget who we were, and never let us forget our Jewish roots. Santa Fe was truly, and still is, a utopia in many ways. I loved growing up here where there was no prejudice, and it never seemed to matter what you had, but who you were and what you had to offer as an individual. It was a very close knit community where everyone knew everyone else, and all had a mutual respect for one another, as well as there background and religion. I felt just as comfortable, and still do, in a Catholic or Christian church as I did in a Temple. In fact, one of my friends say I was the only person in the church that was still awake at the end of the Christmas midnight mass.

But despite the lack of formal education, I always had a deep sense of my own religion. I used to laughingly tell my folks that "I had to fight for my religion."

Later the Rabbi from Albuquerque came up about twice a month for Sunday School and I was