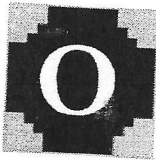


# Annual Membership Meeting Attendees Treated to Fascinating Presentation

Staff Report



On June 27, 40 members gathered at the Jewish Community Center in Albuquerque for the Annual Membership Meeting of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society (NMJHS).

Dr. Noel Pugach, outgoing president, convened the meeting, honoring Dr. Stan Hordes with a lifetime membership. Hordes is a founder of the society, a former president and long-time board member. Pugach was then recognized by incoming NMJHS President Dorothy Amsden, who presented him with a special gift—a Baron Wolman photograph of Beatle George Harrison.

Outgoing board members Lance Bell, Norman Budow, Sheila Gershen, Gerald González, Stan Hordes, Stephen Part and Nancy Terr were recognized for their contributions; incoming board members Sandra Brintall, Ron Duncan-Hart, Anita Miller and Naomi Sandweiss were welcomed onto the board.

Following the official meeting, attendees heard a fascinating presentation, "In Her Own Voice: Doña Teresa and Intrigue at the Palace of the Governors," co-presented by Dr. Frances Levine and Gerald González. Levine, Director of the New Mexico History Museum and Gerald González, J.D., former NMJHS Board Member, shared their extensive research on the wife of an early New Mexico governor, who was the only New Mexico woman tried by the Inquisition. Doña Teresa de Aguilera y Roche, born in Italy in 1623, was the daughter of a prominent Spanish diplomat and Irish-born mother. A literate and worldly woman, Doña Teresa could speak and read in several languages.

Doña Teresa and her husband, Bernard López de Mendizábal, arrived in Santa Fe in 1659 to begin his term as Governor of New Mexico. Immediately, friction began between the Mendizábals and Fran-

ciscan church leaders over matters that included increased privileges for Pueblo residents and the perceived excesses of the Governor.

The feuding continued, and in 1662 the Governor and his wife were arrested by Inquisition officials on charges of blas-



Gerald Gonzales and Dr. Frances Levine present at the Annual Meeting. Photo courtesy of Harold Melnick.

phemy, heresy and "Judaizing." In all, 26 people testified against Doña Teresa; charges included not responding to pious greetings, bathing on Fridays with too much ceremony, changing bed and table linens on Fridays, and laughing while reading books.

The Governor and his wife were removed to an Inquisition prison in Mexico City. Gov. Mendizábal died in September 1664 before his case went to trial. Doña Teresa's trial began four days after her husband's death. She was not allowed to view or hear the charges against her, but Doña Teresa prepared a lengthy written defense. In seven pages, Doña Teresa described the social landscape of Santa Fe and identified those who might have testified against her to protect their own reputations and to cement their own alliances. That year, the Inquisition lost its zeal and Doña Teresa's case was suspended in December.

Doña Teresa was released, and never returned to New Mexico. She died in 1680 in Mexico; her heirs donated her remaining assets to the Catholic Church.

González and Levine differ in their assessments as to whether Doña Teresa and her husband really were practicing Judaism in secret. In Levine's view, Doña Teresa's worldliness and non-conforming behaviors made her an easy target for her husband's enemies. González, a descendant of Jews from Portugal and Spain, notes that Doña Teresa's circle of friends in Santa Fe included other families now identified as conversos or crypto-Jews.

Regardless of one's conclusions, the story of Doña Teresa and her family provided the audience with a rich and fascinating account of the life and times of those living in both Santa Fe and Mexico during the 17th century. ✧

For further reading about Doña Teresa, please see "In Her Voice" by González and Levine in *All Trails Lead to Santa Fe*, Sunstone Press, 2010.

Naomi Sandweiss received the 2010 Dr. Allan P. and Leona Hurst Award, which recognizes a person who has rendered outstanding



service to the Society and to New Mexico Jewish history. Twelve Hurst awards have been presented

since 1998. Naomi volunteered for the Jewish Pioneers Project, interviewing descendants and writing the NMJHS booklet on the Gusdorf family of Taos. She writes a regular column for the *Legacy* and serves as *Legacy* editor. Naomi is currently compiling *Jewish Albuquerque 1860-1960* for Arcadia Books, due out in early 2011.