



The Spiritual Journey of Consuelo Luz Arostegui

by Sondra K. Match

I have an incredible heritage,” says Consuelo Luz Arostegui, a well-known recording artist and singer of Ladino spiritual music, currently living in Angel Fire, New Mexico. “My ancestry is mixed, and I make peace with myself by embracing all of it.”

On her father’s side, Consuelo has the blood of Spanish “conquistadores.” She claims a connection to Ferdinand and Isabella who, in 1492, expelled the Jews and Moors from Spain. An ancestor funded Vasco da Gama’s expeditions to the New World; another brought the Andalusian horse to Florida.

From her mother’s side, Consuelo has the blood of those same Jews expelled by the Spanish King and Queen: converts to Catholicism known as “crypto-Jews,” who secretly continued to practice the Jewish faith. According to family tradition, her maternal grandfather, Carlos Avila Espinoza, descended from Baruch Spinoza, the Jewish philosopher, and from Saint Theresa of Avila, known to have Jewish heritage despite her crusader pilgrimage

and her founding of a reformed order of Carmelite nuns.

On his deathbed, Carlos Avila Espinoza confided to his cousin and attending physician, Dr. Miguel Millan, “Somos Judios” (We are Jews). This remarkable family revelation was kept quiet for the next fifty years until Dr. Millan himself was dying. A Chilean aunt confirmed the story, as did Consuelo’s step-grandmother who spoke of a “hidden rabbi” in her husband’s background. This grandfather served as the first Secretary General of the Pan American Union, now known as the Organization of American States.

Consuelo’s mother, a Chilean with Indian as well as Jewish heritage, was a professional painter of portraits and landscapes, who was acting on the New York stage when she met and married Martin Arostegui, Consuelo’s father. Consuelo was born in Chile.

Martin Arostegui was of Basque stock from Cuba. The Basques helped colonize Cuba in the 1500s, according to Consuelo. Mr. Arostegui headed the United Nations Office of Public Information. Due to his peripatetic position, the family moved from one foreign capital to another: from Athens, to Manila, to Rome, to Lima, and finally back to New York City.

From age 18 to 20 Consuelo worked as a tour guide for the United Nations. She spoke French, Italian, Spanish, and English. She had forgotten the Greek she learned as

a child in Athens. Later, she attended the New School of Social Research where she studied music and literature. “These are my passions still,” says Consuelo. She left New York City for San Francisco when she became pregnant with her first child. “But,” as she puts it, “I didn’t resonate with the American culture.” So, in 1973 she decided to move to Patagonia, the southernmost portion of South America.



Consuelo Luz

On her way to Patagonia, she planned to stop briefly in Taos, New Mexico, but she ended up living there for the next ten years. She met Jeff Kline, her future husband, who was living nearby in Las Trampas in the mountains. Jeff was Jewish, and when they conceived their first child, the couple decided to bring up the boy as a Jew. Consuelo had been raised by her “Nanny” as a Catholic. Her parents were somewhat indifferent toward religion. Jeff took her to her first Yom Kippur service at the old Beth Shalom synagogue in Santa Fe. “I loved it,” says Consuelo. “I was awed by the prayers. They were very powerful. It was like one thousand Catholic confessions but more efficient, and a good place to start” (to become a Jew).

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We encourage our readers to submit news, relevant announcements, and stories about New Mexico Jewish history and historical figures, to the above address.

The deadline for submitting articles for the September issue of Legacy is August 20.

Message from President Harold Melnick

I am writing this on the fly as my wife and I get packed for a two-week trip to Israel. It's an ecumenical trip – we are going with a Santa Fe group from Temple Beth Shalom and Christ Lutheran Church. It's been 25 years since I was last there. We'll be traveling all over Israel, with several days in Jerusalem, where I have a large family of orthodox cousins. My father's side of the family came from Ukraine and my mother's side from Poland. Some from my paternal cousins settled in Rio de Janeiro because they couldn't get into the United States.

This issue of *Legacy* is filled with useful information, stories, reviews, upcoming events, and a profile of Jeffrey Zamas, our Marvin Taichert Scholar. Our feature article recounts the personal journey of Consuelo Luz, singer and songwriter, whose Sephardic roots drew her to Judaism. If you saw the Brazilian documentary presented by NMJHS in April – or if you missed it, as I did – you'll want to read Stan Hordes's review. (I'm especially interested in this topic because of those relatives in Rio.)

Nancy Terr recounts the recent annual cleanup at Montefiore Cemetery and why it is so important. Steve Gitomer tells us how to go about finding our ancestral "hometown." We welcome two new board members: Barbara Baker, recently transplanted to Santa Fe from her native Charleston, and Robert Gale, pharmacist by training and retired executive from a healthcare corporation.

Not to be missed is the workshop on Jewish genetic diseases on August 5. It precedes the two-day conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies. I encourage you to attend both events. This is a really important occasion for New Mexico. (Did you know that there is a rare Jewish genetic disease that is treated with a medication that can cost as much as \$50,000 – a month!).

By the way, this August workshop is in lieu of the annual fall conference this year. But don't worry, conference fans, the fall conference will be back next year, possibly in

conjunction with a Jewish historic society in a neighboring state. In fact, if you can't wait, there is a cruise to the Caribbean sponsored by the Texas Jewish Historical Society in February. Check out the details in *The Roundup*, a new feature in *Legacy* written by Sondra Match that highlights activities of other Jewish historical societies.

Last but not least, please take note of our advertisers. They help bring *Legacy* to you in addition to supporting the work of the Society. Patronize them when you can, and let them know that you appreciate what they're doing for NMJHS. ☆



Harold Melnick,
NMJHS President

The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society and the Texas Jewish Historical Society are planning a joint meeting in El Paso for the fall of 2008. Details will be worked out over the summer.

Meanwhile, the Texas Jewish Historical Society invites NMJHS members to attend its semi-annual meeting in Amarillo, October 5-7. Noel Pugach will deliver a paper at the banquet on the Loewenstern family that began in Nara Vista, New Mexico, and moved to Amarillo in 1929. Noel has interviewed descendants of the family in Amarillo. For further information, contact Robert and Jo Ann Holt, datatek@arn.net, 806-355-2287.

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Meet Our Marvin Taichert Scholar – Jeffrey Zammas



Jeff Zammas first became involved with the NMJHS board last fall as the Hillel student representative from the University of New Mexico. He was introduced to Hillel at UNM in January 2006 and is still actively involved. He has a keen interest in crypto-Judaism.

Jeff recently graduated with a BS in Nursing from the Accelerated BSN program at UNM. Before moving to Albuquerque, Jeff lived for three years in Santa Fe. He managed Starbucks on the Plaza for a year before returning to school for a nursing degree. While completing his prerequisites, he worked at St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe.

Jeff's mother grew up in the Flatbush area of Brooklyn. Her grandparents were Russian Jews who immigrated before 1900. Jeff's father came from Queens, where his parents lived after emigrating from Greece early in the 20th century. Jeff's parents met in high school in Miami, Florida, where Jeff and his older sister were born and reared.

In 1992, Jeff graduated from the University of Florida with a BS in Industrial &

Systems Engineering. After graduation, Jeff lived and worked in San Francisco and Oakland, California for 10 years. He worked in the computer industry for eight years before transitioning into retail management at Starbucks in 2001.

What got Jeff into nursing? Ever since he was a young child he had wanted to be a doctor. He was actually a premed student at the University of Florida interested in neurosurgery. However, in 1988 Jeff's uncle had triple-bypass surgery and Jeff looked into his family health history. He found lots of heart disease and cancer. Considering his genes, he thought he should find a less stressful career.

So, Jeff switched to something "easy" – engineering. It was not a field in which he had much interest, but it had great job potential. During those years as an engineer Jeff remained interested in medicine. He decided to return to school to pursue a career in healthcare. Jeff will start work at the UNM Hospital in the intensive care unit. In another 2 to 3 years he hopes to return to school to pursue an advanced practice nursing degree in anesthesiology.



Jeffrey Zammas

Jeff recently returned from two weeks in Turkey where he visited Istanbul, Kusadasi, Pammukale, and Kapydokya (Cappodocia). In June, Jeff will travel to Oaxaca, Mexico, for two weeks to learn about traditional Mexican healing.

Jeff lives with his girlfriend, Kelly, who works at Advent Solar as a database analyst. They both enjoy the outdoors, cooking, traveling, local museums and the arts. Jeff has two wonderful Australian shepherds, Zora and Django, who love to hike and play in the surrounding mountains and dog parks. ✧

NMJHS thanks the following contributors who made the showing of the Brazilian documentary in Santa Fe on April 29 a resounding success.

**Rabbi Leonard Helman
Gerald and Carey Gonzalez
Claire Grossman
Marjorie Weinberg Berman and
Paul Berman
Paul Kaufman, MD
Judie Fein and Paul Ross**

Condolences are extended to NMJHS Past President Claire Grossman on the passing of her mother, Dr. Jean W. Rothenberg at age 98. Dr. Rothenberg founded the Cincinnati Speech & Hearing Center, which provides rehabilitation, research and public education about hearing loss. She served as president of its board and worked at the center for twenty years. Donations in Dr. Rothenberg's name are being accepted by the NMJHS.

The New Mexico State Archives and the Center for Contemporary Arts are sponsoring Home Movie Day "A World Event" on Saturday, August 11. If you would like to take part in that event, contact Sibel Melik at the New Mexico State Archives in Santa Fe at 505-476-7959 as soon as possible for pre-screening.

NMJHS is also interested in your old home movies. If they turn out to have historical interest we'll copy them and include them in our archive collection and return the originals to you. Please contact Sibel.

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GENEALOGY CORNER: Finding the Family Hometown

by Steve Gitomer

Finding just where your ancestors came from can be a challenging task. Haven't we all heard that we originated in Russia, Poland, Lithuania, or elsewhere? But that's like saying you come from America. Your next research question should be, Can you be more specific: what town or province or region or guberniya?

So, as a persistent amateur genealogist, it's time to find out the answer. If you are fortunate and have living immigrant family members, ask them! If not, there are a number of excellent documentary sources, some available online, others from federal, state, or local government entities, still others from the Mormon (LDS) Church's extensive genealogy collection.

If you are a regular reader of *Legacy*, you have seen the excellent two-part article that Nancy Greenberg wrote about the U.S. Federal censuses. These sources may give you information about the country of birth of your immigrant family member but generally not the precise hometown.

One source I can suggest is connected with citizenship. Do you have the Certificate of

Citizenship often proudly displayed by the new citizen? This document can be your key to finding a wealth of "application forms" used to facilitate the citizenship process in local courts with jurisdiction. Documents that may be available, but will need some significant sleuthing, are the "Declaration of Intention" and the "Petition for Naturalization." These documents will give you the birthplace of the applicant and dates and places of birth of the spouse and children. In addition, these documents can include the name of the ship and the date of its arrival in America.

You can also try to find ship passenger lists. These manifests are available from the Passenger Arrival Records for the various U.S. ports (New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans, Galveston, San Francisco, Seattle, and others). All of the lists are kept at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., as well as at some regional branches. If your immigrant family member came through Ellis Island, there is an excellent online database with ship passenger lists available for downloading. Searches using precise names or alternate spellings may help you find and display the manifest with your ancestor's name.

For example, my wife's grandfather, Aaron Kaufman, emigrated to the United States from Palestine in the early 1900s. From family lore we knew that he had arrived at Ellis Island. After a few minutes of online searching on the website www.ellisland.org, it was a simple matter to find him listed arriving with his wife Mollie, confirming his Turkish nationality and his last place of residence as Jaffa, Turkey. I needed to look further to find his birthplace.

Birth, marriage and death records can also provide hometown information. These records are available in jurisdictions where the birth, marriage, or death occurred. A handy booklet, "Where to Write for Vital Records" may help your searches – contact the U.S. Government Printing Office for a copy or look online at Cyndi's List, www.cyndislist.com, under "United States Index."

Unusual sources to find the name of that elusive hometown include 1) World War I draft cards; 2) original Social Security application forms; and 3) the Hamburg Emigration Lists. Each of these sources has limitations, but if you can find that family member's hometown, it's worth the effort.

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Workshop and Conference on Crypto-Judaic Studies

by Stan Hordes



The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies will hold its annual conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, August 5-7. Because of the importance of this gathering to New Mexico Jewish history, the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society decided not to hold its own annual conference, which usually takes place in November. Instead, preceding the SCJS conference, NMJHS will conduct a one-day workshop on Jewish genetic diseases. We invite our members and others interested to attend one or both events.

Workshop on Diseases Associated with Jewish Populations

A unique and informative program will be presented by the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society. "Jewish Genetic Diseases and their Presence among Hispanic Populations in the U.S. Southwest: An Interdisciplinary Workshop," will be held on Sunday, August 5, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at the Doubletree Hotel.

This program will foster greater communication and collaboration among geneticists, clinical physicians, historians, anthropologists, and genetic counselors actively engaged in research regarding certain genetic diseases found among Jewish populations in New Mexico and the U.S. Southwest. For decades researchers in these fields have been conducting their studies in a methodological vacuum, resulting in incomplete and inadequate work products.

Diseases to be discussed include Gaucher's, Pemphigus Vulgaris, and the BRCA I genetic mutation associated with breast and ovarian cancer.

By bringing together leading experts from diverse and complementary fields for a day-long program, these specialists will learn how colleagues in related disciplines conduct their research and analysis. The program is expected to serve as the catalyst for more elaborate workshops in the future. Ultimately it may spur the formation and development of interdisciplinary teams doing comprehensive studies on the relationship between ethnicity and genetic diseases.

Topics to be examined during the workshop include the presence of genetic diseases associated with Jewish populations that have appeared among Hispanics in recent years.

Scholars and practitioners from the fields of history, anthropology, genetics, genetic counseling, and medicine, will share the results of their individual research, with the ultimate end of developing models of collaboration.

This workshop will be held at the Doubletree Hotel in downtown Albuquerque, 201 Marquette NW, beginning with a continental breakfast at 9:00 a.m. The program starts at 10:00 a.m. and concludes at 4:45 p.m. in time for the opening of the SCJS conference.

Admission to the workshop is \$12.00 for NMJHS or SCJS members, \$20.00 for non-members, and \$5.00 for full-time students, inclusive of the continental breakfast. Seating is limited, and attendees are encouraged to call Debbie Blackerby, NMJHS Administrator, at 505-348-4471 or write to her at nmjhs@jewishnewmexico.org. To view the workshop program, and obtain additional information on this event, please consult the NMJHS website, www.nmjewishhistory.org, or call Stan Hordes at 505-255-6564.

The program is funded by generous grants from Genzyme, the Kaiserman Family Foundation, and Steve and Connie Robinson through the New Mexico Community Foundation.

Crypto-Judaic Conference to Discuss Voyages of Cultural and Spiritual Discovery

The Seventeenth Annual Conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies will be held at the Doubletree Hotel in Albuquerque, August 5-7. The meeting will include presentations by scholars from Mexico, Canada, Israel, Great Britain, and the United States, and by descendants of crypto-Jews from New Mexico, Puerto Rico, Colombia, and Mexico who will share observations about their voyages of cultural and spiritual discovery.

The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies was founded in 1991 with the mission of fostering research and sharing of information regarding the historical and contemporary development of crypto-Jews of Iberian origin.

This year's SCJS conference includes several papers on crypto-Judaism in fifteenth-century Spain; a panel on how historians, anthropologists, and sociologists do their

work; and presentations on manifestations of crypto-Jewish identity through art forms and poetry, featuring noted New Mexican and Texan artists. Highlighting the meeting will be an appearance by renowned flamenco producer and dancer Lili del Castillo of Albuquerque. She will show and discuss the video of her dance drama "Revelaciones," which she performed originally for the NMJHS over ten years ago.

The SCJS will extend special recognition to Cary Herz and Dr. Richard E. Greenleaf. Cary Herz's moving photographs on New Mexican crypto-Jewish themes will be published later this year by the University of New Mexico Press. Dr. Richard E. Greenleaf, professor emeritus in history at Tulane University, has written dozens of books and articles on the history of the Inquisition in Latin America that have inspired the work of generations of scholars. Also honored will be SCJS member Martin Sosin, President of the Sosin-Stratton-Pettit Foundation, whose grant to this conference makes possible expanded attention to the arts and crypto-Judaism.

NMJHS members can receive a discounted registration for the SCJS conference of \$125.00 (on or before July 1; \$135.00 after July 1). Registration includes admission to all sessions, continental breakfasts on Monday and Tuesday, lunch on Monday, and dinners on Sunday and Monday.

For more information, contact Gloria Trujillo, Conference Coordinator, at gtruj@sbcglobal.net. ☆

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The Spiritual Journey of Consuelo Luz - (continued from p. 1)

She and Jeff were part of the Chavurah in Taos, under the leadership of Chava Carp. They located a Czechoslovakian Torah, rescued from the Holocaust, that they kept at their home in the mountains. Consuelo began to explore her Jewish roots. Although she never did a formal genealogical study, she knew that her ancestors came from Spain.

Music was a tradition on both sides of her family. Her paternal grandmother was a piano prodigy; her mother's cousin a Chilean folkloric singer. Consuelo's aunt, Tía Delia, taught her the first song she learned on the guitar. Consuelo's Taos rabbi asked her to learn the Hebrew prayers in Spanish. The words were in Hebrew but also in a "strange form of Spanish," Ladino, which is similar to 15th century Spanish.

Consuelo adapted these "prayer songs" to music. They stemmed from many sources: Egypt, Morocco, Salonika, Turkey, Tangiers. "I realized the music was beautiful and powerful," says Consuelo. She researched other ballads and, after visiting Spain and contacting Gypsies there, she incorporated their music into her Ladino repertoire. Listen to "Una Noche Al Lunar," One Moonlight Night, on Consuelo's CD *Adio*.

Consuelo moved to Santa Fe and for 15 years sang and played guitar at services at Temple Beth Shalom. Recently, she has joined HaMakom where she was formally converted to Judaism by Rabbi Malka Drucker.

During the past two years Consuelo has given up her singing career. She retreated to Angel Fire where she cared for the woman who raised her. On January 1st of this year, her beloved "Nanny" passed away. Presently, she is writing a book about the "end times." It is a fictional account of her "interfaith journey."

"I am in a moment of transition in my life," says Consuelo, who is deciding in what direction to go. Her guitarist, who recently moved to Spain, is urging her to follow him. Spain is experiencing a Sephardic revival and the guitarist thinks her music could be very popular there. Says Consuelo, "My music is very specialized. It sounds best in a spiritual environment like a temple."

But Consuelo is pulled in another direction — toward music as a healing tool to bring together diverse cultures, such as the Hispanic and the Jewish. "My music is the expression of my personal integration; people don't know that the basis of

Spanish culture includes Jewish, Arabic, and Gypsy." She is learning more about "sound therapy" — the healing aspect of music — at Northern New Mexico Community College. Whatever she decides to do with the rest of her life, Consuelo's beauty, charm, and musical gift will continue to move the spirit of all those she encounters.

If you wish to listen to Consuelo Luz's music, her latest CD, *Adio*, is available for purchase at [www/consueloluz.com](http://www.consueloluz.com); click on "Buy CDs," which links to Cdbaby.com.

Sondra Match moved to New Mexico 10 years ago to retire. Two years later she was working again, this time for the New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department where she directs programs using older workers as mentors and business liaisons. Most of her work experience has been with national human service organizations in New York City and Washington, D.C. Sondra collects art pottery and has two dogs: a Tibetan Terrier and a Brussels Griffon. She loves travel, movies, classical music and opera, swimming, reading, and beading. ☆

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Finding the Family Hometown - (continued from p. 4)

Any male born between 1873 and 1899 was required to register for the draft during World War I. Registration varied with the local draft board, and depended on place of residence. Larger cities had a number of local draft boards, and registrations were filed according to draft board. You need to know where your male foreign-born family member was living during the 1917 or 1918 draft registration.

There is a finding aid available for the larger cities, connecting address with draft board number. My grandfather Harry Gitomer and his five brothers fit the registration requirements. They all lived in rural Cumberland county in New Jersey, which had only a few draft boards. It was easy to find my grandfather's draft card with his signature plus those of his eligible brothers confirming the family lore that he was born in Lubny, Poltava, Russia (today's Ukraine). Aaron Kaufman's place of birth was confirmed from his draft registration card – it was Jerusalem, Turkey.

Social Security Application forms provide another resource, with a special set of constraints. The applicant (your immigrant

family member) needed to be of working age in 1936 or after. You will need additional information to obtain a copy of the form: the applicant's death certificate and actual Social Security number. Note that the Social Security Death Index contains a handy collection of Social Security-related information. It is the place to obtain the deceased family member's Social Security number, date of death, and other useful information. This index is available online at <http://ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com>.

Finally, there is the interesting collection of the Hamburg Emigration Lists. These were created by the Germans for the Port of Hamburg, a major European embarkation point for emigration to the west. These lists cover the period from 1850 to 1934. It is possible to find a reference to an emigrating family member that contains useful information not found in U.S. arrival records.

So, let me wish you happy hunting in finding the name of your ancestral hometown. Hopefully one or more of the sources mentioned in this article will help. Perhaps you will be able to pay a

visit in person, armed with the knowledge that you have a solid lead for the name of that hometown. Finding the geographical location of the hometown is a subject of its own!

Steve Gitomer has been researching his family genealogy for more than 30 years. He is particularly knowledgeable about Ukraine and Belarus. A retired physicist from Los Alamos National Laboratory, he is having the time of his life consulting for organizations that send him to the former Soviet Union and other interesting places. ☆

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Diana Stein sends her greetings and warm wishes to her friends at the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society. She regrets to inform the members that she has suffered from serious illnesses in the past few years, which forced her to close her landmark store on the Plaza in Las Vegas and to move in with her daughter in Grants. Consequently she has not been able to participate in the Society's activities.

Diana hopes that her condition will soon improve so that she can resume some normal activities. She would like to write about the history of Jews in northern New Mexico, which she knows intimately.

We wish her a speedy and full recovery.

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Montefiore Cemetery Cleanup 2007

Story and photo by Nancy Terr

In 1881 the large Jewish Community of Las Vegas, New Mexico, established the Montefiore cemetery just west of town, adjacent to the Masonic cemetery. This was one of the first Jewish cemeteries west of the Mississippi; the other large one was in San Francisco. Melanie LaBorwit, area historian and former board member of NMJHS, pointed out the stones and explained the history and the important role of the Montefiore Cemetery when she spoke at this year's annual cleanup on May 6.

Melanie explained that the Jewish citizens of Las Vegas were quite involved in civic affairs and that many were Masons and Woodsmen. Several are buried in the Masonic Cemetery, which existed before Montefiore, and some have headstones in Montefiore in the style of their fraternal organizations. She noted that the cemetery headstones reflect the vibrant Jewish history of Las Vegas and trace the migration of many pioneer merchants and other families from Europe. Although there are stones marking the death of infants, a majority of the older population passed away in the 1930s.

Marvin Taichert founded the Montefiore Cemetery Association in the 1980s to care for and clean the cemetery as a mitzvah for his family. He began an annual cleanup,



George and Dorothy Hoffman help with cleanup, claim no relation to Julia and Nestor Hoffman.

complete with picnic and talk, which continues to the present day. Marvin passed away in 2001.

Attendance at this year's cleanup was a little low, due to rumors of cancellation after the snowflakes of the previous day. The volunteers who showed up were members of the Las Vegas Jewish community, students from the United World College,

Society members, and friends from around northern New Mexico. The group trimmed trees, cleaned grave sites, fixed fence posts, and cleaned away debris, under the direction of Ted Herberger.

After the majority of the cleanup was completed, the group had a "Día de los muertos Judios" [Day of the Jewish dead] with a remembrance and picnic at the gravesites. Following Melanie's talk, Harold Melnick, NMJHS president, described the mission and projects of NMJHS. The third speaker of the day was Lewis Terr of the Montefiore Cemetery Association, who explained the role of the association, its policies, and plans for expansion.

The annual cleanup serves not only to keep the cemetery in good condition, but to foster awareness of Jewish history in northern New Mexico and ensure the continuity of the Jewish presence in Las Vegas. Many thanks go to Gunther and Geri Aron of Santa Fe, who organize this event every year, and to Lewis Terr for the picnic lunch. ✧

The NMJHS is soliciting historical papers and photographs for inclusion in its archival collection at the New Mexico Records Center and Archives. For more information, contact NMJHS at (505) 348-4471 or nmjhs@jewishnewmexico.org.

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Film Review: Crypto-Judaism in Brazil

by Stan Hordes



On Sunday, April 29, NMJHS screened an important documentary on the phenomenon of crypto-Judaism in northeast Brazil. “Star Hidden in the Backlands,”

whose Portuguese title is “A Estrela Oculta do Sertão,” was directed by Brazilian film makers Elaine Eiger and Luize Valente. The film represents an enlightening, entertaining, uplifting account of crypto-Jews from rural Brazil emerging from the shadows of history to explore their five-hundred-year-old heritage.

Eiger and Valente did a masterful job of weaving personal narrative, informed scholarly opinion, subtle imagery, and an engaging plot. The film grasped and held the attention of the standing-room-only audience at The Film Center at Cinema Café in Santa Fe. The expert historians and anthropologists who were interviewed in the film presented an excellent cultural context, guiding the view-

ers through complex issues without losing their attention.

What hit me between the eyes was that one could have substituted “New Mexico” for “Brazil,” issue for issue, and character for character. Customs such as marriage within the group, placement of pebbles on cemetery headstones, avoidance of sweeping dirt out the front door, and – most important – questions of Jewish and Christian identity, all discussed at length in the film, represent phenomena shared by both Brazilian and New Mexican descendants of crypto-Jews.

Luciano, a young, engaging medical doctor, is the film’s protagonist. He could have had a twin brother walking the streets of Santa Fe, offering the same observations about his heritage, questioning the same family traditions, and embarking on the same road in quest of a Jewish identity and acceptance by the mainstream Jewish community. Luciano’s assertion that, since he is already a Jew, he does not have to

undergo any formal conversion to Judaism, strongly resonates among many members of the New Mexico anusim* community.

“Star Hidden in the Backlands” demonstrates, in a moving and skillful manner, that many of the emerging crypto-Jews of Brazil are “neither Jewish nor Christian, and yet both Jewish and Christian,” an observation made by historian Dr. Anita Novinsky, who appears in the film. We can say the same applies to their counterparts in the U.S. Southwest, as well as in other places around the globe. ✧

A highlight of the event was a talk by Judith Fein following the film. Fein is an award-winning playwright as well as TV and film writer with extensive experience in radio, television, theater, and the Internet. During Fein’s travels to Brazil she has met with crypto-Jews who open up to her when they realize her interest in them as a fellow Jew.

* Anusim are Jews from the Iberian peninsula who were forced to embrace Christianity. ✧

Tribute to Carol Bergé

by Sheila Gershen



One of the important and ongoing missions of NMJHS is the collection of materials pertaining to Jewish writers and artists identified with New Mexico. These collec-

tions are housed at the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library in downtown Santa Fe, just around the corner from the Plaza. It’s a handsome building that previously housed the Santa Fe Public Library. In front is a very fine bronze statue of Fray Angélico by local sculptor Donna Quasthoff, who sculpted the bronze doors of the St. Francis Cathedral.

Once a year the NMJHS sponsors an event at the Library to highlight our latest acquisition. This spring the life and work of poet and author Carol Bergé (1928 - 2006) was the topic as we added her books and correspondence to our collection. Born in New York City and a member of the famous East Village literary scene in the 1960s, she traveled extensively and spent many years in New Mexico until her death here in 2006.

In addition to her lifelong career as a writer, her other passion was collecting and trading antiques. Bergé owned the Blue Gate Gallery in Santa Fe. She was an astute observer and ascerbic commentator on the human condition: her last book *Antics: Passionate Stories about Folks in the Antiques Trade*, published just before her death, sharply dissects many Santa Fe and Taos characters.

Throughout her life Bergé received many awards and honors and published 22 works of fiction and poetry. Her book *Acts of Love: An American Novel* (1973) was a popular success and probably her best known work. She also served on the Executive Board of American PEN, the worldwide human rights organization for the protection of writers and free speech.

As we were planning the literary evening we encountered another source who had known Bergé and was in possession of valuable correspondence and drafts of unpublished writings. She generously is donating all the material to the NMJHS, which will expand the Bergé collection.

Tomás Jaehn, head of the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, was our host for the evening. He is the archivist of the NMJHS collection.

(continued on p. 11)

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THE ROUNDUP: News from Other Jewish Historical Societies

by Sondra K. Match



Can you top this? This issue of *Legacy* contains news of historical Jewish personages, who stand out both figuratively and literally.

From the Michigan Jewish Historical Society comes news of the earliest Jewish settler in Michigan: in 1762, fur trader, Chapman Abraham, arrived in Detroit in a Voyageur canoe. On April 29, 2007, a state historic marker commemorating his arrival was dedicated at the Michigan Tricentennial Park on the Detroit Riverwalk. A Jewish Boy Scout color guard marched while volunteers re-enacted the event and Senator Carl Levin spoke.

In its publication, the Texas Jewish Historical Society describes a man who literally topped all of us: Jake Ehrlich was 8 feet, 6 inches tall. He once held the title, "Tallest man in the world." Ehrlich, a Hollywood star whose stage name was Jack Earle, made nearly 50 silent movies during the 1920s. Born prematurely, he weighed less than 4 pounds and doctors did not think he would survive.

When the family moved to El Paso, Texas, Jake was a normal-sized 6-year-old. During the year following, he grew uncontrollably. The problem, unknown to his family at the time, was a tumor pressing on the pituitary gland. At 13, this "gentle giant" was already over 7 feet tall and depressed about his size. To cheer him up, his grandfather took him fishing in California. There he was "discovered" by Hollywood talent scouts and hired to make silent movies. Not surprisingly, one of those movies was *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

Jake's second career was in the Ringling Brothers circus from 1926 to 1940. Leaving the circus, he worked as a wine salesman in California. At age 46, Jake died of kidney failure.

More news from the Texas Jewish Historical Society. They are sponsoring a Southern Caribbean Jewish Heritage tour from February 3-10 aboard the Royal Caribbean's Adventure of the Sea. Prices for cabins range from \$1,039 (inside) to \$1,299 (balcony). The ship leaves from San Juan, Puerto Rico, stopping at Aruba, Curaçao, St. Maarten, and St. Thomas. Historic Jewish sites to be visited include House Bloemhof and Mikve Emmanuel in Curaçao. For further information contact Brentwood Travel at 1-800-527-1059, ext. 121 or ext. 114 or write to dkokorudz@brentwoodtravel.com.

In an article from the *Western States Jewish History*, Spring 2007, we learn that frontier newspapers used "boiler-plate"—articles with unusual themes—to fill up blank space. For example "Jews Live Longer," a "filler" in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of February 3, 1900, describes Jews as follows: "They withstand disease better than do Gentiles. They are temperate in all things and their meat is thoroughly inspected." Thus, the Jew "by reason of his temperance and sobriety . . . contrives, on the average, to live nearly twice as long as his more careless and imprudent neighbor."

This columnist was intrigued by a picture in the May 2007 issue of *Adelante*, the Las Cruces Temple Beth El newsletter. Depicted was a distinguished-looking, middle-aged man with "nerd" glasses and a receding hairline, clad in a black suit with white bow tie and starched white collar. According to the Southwest Jewish Archives at <http://parentseyes.arizona.edu/bloom/jaffa.htm>, Nathan Jaffa was mayor of Roswell in 1903 and later Territorial Secretary of State. He was an important figure in Roswell's development and is reputed to have discovered artesian wells.

NMJHS enjoyed its recent contacts with members of the Michigan Jewish Historical

Society and Jewish Community Council of Detroit during their April 26 – May 2 visit to Albuquerque, Taos, and Santa Fe. Professors Stan Hordes and Noel Pugach addressed the tour at its departure dinner in Albuquerque. Dr. Hordes spoke about crypto-Jews in New Mexico and Dr. Pugach described the German-Jewish migration to the State of New Mexico.

We write frequently about our illustrious Jewish pioneer ancestors. Some of them were famous. But we hear much less about infamous historic Jews. Harriet Rochlin, in an article titled* "Riding High: Annie Oakley's Jewish Contemporaries," tells us about Josephine Sarah (Josie) Marcus. In 1880, Josie ran away from her proper Jewish family in San Francisco.

In Tombstone, Arizona Territory Josie "hooked up" with Wyatt Earp, the town marshal. After the shootout at the O.K. Corral, Josie and Wyatt left town. They spent the next 50 years together, roaming the West with other "high living" drifters.**

Then there was Ida Levy, who operated a brothel in the early 1900s in the mining town of Butte, Montana. She was well known for her prosperous business, her excellent Jewish cooking, and her practice of closing shop from sundown to sundown once a year on Yom Kippur! All hail both our famous and our infamous Jewish ancestors!

* Reprinted in *Lilith Magazine*, Vol. 14, 1985-86.

** A series of four articles appeared in the NMJHS newsletter about Wyatt Earp, starting in December 2005. Josie appears in the March 2006 issue on page 11. You can access these back issues on the NMJHS website. ☆

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Labor Day Weekend Book Sale

by Sheila Gershen

Labor Day may seem a long way off, and we're all looking forward to a wonderful summer, but when that weekend arrives, be sure to leave time to browse our fabulous Sixth Annual Book & Etc. Sale in Santa Fe at the Wild Oats Community Room from 10 to 4 on Saturday and Sunday.

Thanks to the expertise and hard work of local bookseller and NMJHS former president and former board member Shirley Jacobson, this is one of the most anticipated and successful fund-raising events for our Society. It's also an excellent opportunity to publicize the NMJHS and its mission to the greater public.

As in past years, we've gathered a remarkable array of new and used books on every imaginable subject, with irresistibly low prices. For the collector, there will be a select number of autographed first editions and rare books. We're also known for our fine selection of art books at bargain prices.

In the past we've had miscellaneous items, such as original costume jewelry from around the world and other unique objects. It will depend on the donations we receive from our members and friends, so

you never know what unexpected treasures may appear.

This year we'll once again stock body products imported from Thailand, made with natural tropical ingredients. They were the hit of last year's sale, and they are deeply discounted because they are donated by a member.

The entire weekend will be a bargain-hunter's paradise.

We have more than enough books for sale, but we can use other items such as knickknacks, clothing accessories, jewelry – whatever would help to unclutter your shelves and closets. And it all goes to an excellent cause!

To donate items for the Etc. part of the sale, call Shirley Jacobson in Santa Fe (Thursday, Friday, or Saturday 11:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.) at 505-670-8315.

We're looking for volunteers. We need help on Friday afternoon and evening (August 31) with transporting the books and setting up, or selling on the weekend. Please call Shirley. It provides lots of fun and camaraderie and is a good way to help NMJHS.

As in past years, the sale will be held at the Wild Oats Community Room in Santa Fe, which is the unattached building on Córdova Road just west of St. Francis Drive and the Wild Oats Natural Marketplace. It's a large, airy room with lots of parking out front. Wild Oats has hosted this event since its inception in 2002, and we appreciate their continued support.

That's Labor Day Weekend, Saturday, September 1, and Sunday, September 2, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. It's free, wheelchair accessible, and everyone is welcome! So bring your friends and family and enjoy browsing and finding treasures at bargain prices. ☆

Carol Bergé - (continued from p. 9)

The community made their tributes. Shirley Jacobson opened the event with remarks about Bergé. She read a passage where Shirley is amusingly described by Bergé, the writer. Then Margaret Randell, well-known poet, writer, photographer, and activist from Albuquerque, spoke of her literary and personal relationship with Bergé.

Randall Bell, lawyer and antiques dealer who handled Bergé's legal affairs, recounted moving and amusing personal reminiscences from his unique position as her attorney. Finally James Beech, who worked with Bergé to publish *Antics*, shared the experience and read from the book.

We are indebted to Meriom Kastner for supplying tasty refreshments enjoyed by everyone. Meriom's long-time contribution to our events has always added a sense of warmth and hospitality.

Carol Bergé had talent and drive, yet like many who choose a literary path, she believed that she lacked lasting success and recognition in her lifetime. Those who knew her agreed she would have enjoyed a sense of satisfaction with our tribute to her on that recent evening in May. ☆

Mission Statement

The mission of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is to promote greater understanding and knowledge of New Mexico's Jewish history. The Society's programs examine the state's Jewish heritage in all its diversity and strive to present this heritage within a broad cultural context. The Society is a secular organization and solicits the membership and participation of all interested people, regardless of religious affiliation.

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WANTED

Volunteer to serve as
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Duties: create and disseminate publicity to appropriate media for NMJHS events, design posters, rewrite Society brochure, and create materials to attract new members to the organization. Contact Harold Melnick at 505-466-2376 or harold.melnick@comcast.net.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Sunday, August 5, from 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., "Jewish Genetic Diseases and Their Presence among Hispanic Populations in the U.S. Southwest: An Interdisciplinary Workshop," Doubletree Hotel, Albuquerque, NM. Admission \$12 for NMJHS members, \$20 for nonmembers, \$5 for full-time students. RSVP 505-348-4471 or nmjhs@jewishnewmexico.org.

August 5 -7, "Seventeenth Annual Conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies," Doubletree Hotel, Albuquerque, NM. For program and registration information, go to www.cryptojews.com. NMJHS members \$125 on or before July 1; \$135 afterwards.

Labor Day Weekend, Saturday, September 1, and Sunday, September 2, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. NMJHS 6th Annual Book & Etc. Sale, Wild Oats Community Room, Cordova Road west of St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe. No admission charge.

Sunday, October 14, 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Genealogy Workshop with Professors Stan Hordes and Barry Gaines, Jewish Community Center, Albuquerque, NM.

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