



## Mein Lebn

by Harvey Buchalter

*Mein Lebn, written in Yiddish and translated by Harvey Buchalter in 2014, details the exuberant life of Israel Rouchomovsky, a life that survived countless tragedies to produce unique works of art that are treasures of the Jewish people.*

*Many years after the publication of Mein Lebn, Melissa and Tom Alexander of Los Alamos, NM, rediscovered Israel Rouchomovsky's autobiography on their bookshelf in the original Yiddish. Melissa's curiosity about the life and times of her relative prompted her to share his life with us.*

### Part I

**I**f you were to compile a list of famous Jewish artists from the turn of the last century, the name Israel Rouchomovsky would most likely not top the list. Not an Amadeo Modigliano or a Camille Pissarro, Israel Rouchomovsky nevertheless became a world-wide sensation because of his involuntary involvement with one of the most famous – or infamous – art scandals ever perpetrated in Paris, the capital of the art world, the site of the Louvre Museum. His name and deeds were plastered on the front pages of European gazettes. Parisians followed him through the streets seeking his autograph; collectors sought his work; post cards and merchandise of every sort displayed his face and his creations. The notoriety of the Tiara of Satafarnass, believed by experts to be the finest gold crown to emerge from a distant Grecian colony in Crimea, was the *cause celebre*.

Israel could never have imagined he would emerge from the town of Mazer, an inhospitable place for Jews, in Minsk Province. In the early chapters of *Mein Lebn*, his autobiography, he described the town's "shtetl-blotteh," muck so thick that "even horses couldn't move their hooves in the mud"; the "heck-

dish," the poorhouse on the hill, "a place of filth and hopelessness"; the Jewish houses "scrunched up, one against the other stuffed with paupers, tradesmen, up to five in a room with 'gangs' of soot-faced, starving little children." It was a tiny, miserable world of Jewish merchants, artisans, female shopkeepers and old men who spent the daylight hours davenning, always looking back over their shoulders for a way to dodge the "filthy Jew" epithets from their neighbors.

A world based on faith and God's imminent intervention and redemption was on the cusp of change. The Jewish version of the Enlightenment, the Haskalah, had made its plodding way into Mazer. Young men read the forbidden books coming from Warsaw and Odessa that challenged this old world of "disorganized and monotonous davenning" with new, modern ideas. Secular learning, Zionism, respect for Jews, resounded on the pages of these prohibited readings. Young Jews devalued them "as if they were slices of honeycake." Even with these changes in thinking, Israel Rouchomovsky's genius as a sculptor and jeweler had little opportunity to blossom.

Israel was not destined to become either a melamed or a shopkeeper. He realized that his world was a world of artistic creation, and this time of intellectual fervor was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to leap into the art world. The

occasional artisan or watchmaker, Torah scribe or jeweler, taught Israel the basics of tool-sharpening, engraving, and gem-setting. This left him to find his own way in

his craft by practicing on Purim groggers and Chanukah dreidlach, using homemade tools, tools that actually served him well in his career as an artist. Fortunately, Israel was an only son, exempt from the Czar's compulsory army service, thus free to travel – to Odessa, Warsaw and Kiev, where he refined his craft. And as was the custom, a wife was found for him, courtesy of his mother. Meira, the love of his life, was selected

*(continued on p. 3)*



Harvey Buchalter

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## President's Column



his has been a far from quiet summer. From the situation in Israel and reverberations throughout Europe and the rest of the world, topics of Jewish interest have been in the news and in our hearts over the past few months. In moments such as these I believe it is more important than ever to celebrate and share our Jewish history and experiences.

This month's *Legacy* certainly accomplishes this. Harvey Buchalter's article entitled "Mein Lebn" is a fascinating view into the world of an artist who emerged out of a

muddy *shtetl*. Buchalter, an NMJHS board member, translated the book and gives us a taste of the tale in his article. Buchalter also recently used his Yiddish skills as a consultant to the television show *Manhattan*, which portrays Los Alamos during the Manhattan Project.



**NMJHS President  
Naomi Sandweiss**

This *Legacy* issue also celebrates Dorothy Amsden, past president of the Society, who has held almost every volunteer position with the organization. Dorothy certainly deserves our thanks for her many talents and dedication to NMJHS. Members would not be surprised to learn that five people are now performing the work of one Dorothy!

In her piece, *Legacy* editor Dianne Layden reports on incidents of anti-Semitism at Albuquerque's Nosh Deli and how the community provided overwhelming support to its owners. Finally, Anita Miller gives us the highlights of the not-to-be-missed Fall 2014 conference on November 15-16. The conference, entitled The Jewish Merchants of Albuquerque: Building Businesses and Community, features multiple panelists, a tour, film and more based on Albuquerque's Jewish merchants. Please plan on joining us for the event and get in your registration forms as soon as possible to take advantage of early bird rates.

Enjoy this informative edition of *Legacy*. ☆

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## Many Thanks for Your Contributions

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Dorothy Amsden (through the Los Alamos National Laboratories Vecinos Volunteer Program)  
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## Mission Statement

The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is a secular organization that welcomes all interested people, regardless of religious affiliation. Its mission is to promote greater understanding and knowledge of New Mexico's Jewish history within a broad cultural context.

**NMJHS is now on Facebook and Twitter. Please "like" us at <https://www.facebook.com/NewMexicoJewishHistoricalSociety> and follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/NMJewishHS>.**

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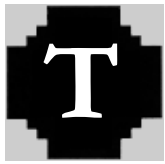
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# New Mexico Jewish Historical Society Annual Conference

## November 15-16, 2014

### The Jewish Merchants of Albuquerque: Building Businesses and Community

by Anita Miller



The annual conference of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society will take place on Saturday and Sunday, November 15 and 16, at the Jewish

Community Center in Albuquerque. The conference, beginning after lunch on Saturday, November 15, will feature discussion of “The Jewish Merchants of Albuquerque: Building Businesses and Community,” and will emphasize those merchant families who came to Albuquerque and environs between 1930 and 1950.

The conference will begin with a speaker, Harvey Buchalter, who will discuss “Why Albuquerque?,” questioning why Jews from the East or West Coast or Europe would even consider a city like Albuquerque, at that time thought to

be in the “middle of nowhere.” It will continue with a panel of descendants of those original merchant families, who will talk about their family businesses and reminisce about growing up in Albuquerque. Considering that so many merchants dealt with Indian craftsmen and women, having started businesses dealing in Indian arts, there will then be a panel of descendants of those merchants who will discuss their family businesses. Following the second panel there will be a cocktail reception and silent auction, and dinner and entertainment.

Sunday will open with a brunch and a film of Jewish merchant settlement in the West, followed by a wrap-up of the conference. Attendees will then move downtown for a walking tour, where original and still-operating Jew-

ish businesses got their start. The walking tour will end at the Holocaust Museum on Central Avenue, where there will be a discussion of Jews who, because of family ties, came from Europe to Albuquerque during Hitler’s advance in Europe. Snacks will be served.



Anita Miller

For out-of-towners who wish to attend for the weekend, reservations may be made at the Hilton Garden Inn, 5320 San Antonio NE, east of I-25 on San Antonio, 505-314-0800. ☆

#### *Mein Lebn* (continued from p. 1)

for her innate ability to pummel dough into an otherworldly transparency. And Israel made it abundantly known that she was also very beautiful.

With a new wife and children on the way, Israel was forced to make a decision. As it turned out, good commissions in Odessa for engravings, rubber stamps, and commemorative coins helped him decide. He stated rather defiantly, “All I wanted to do was work with my hands,” even if in those times an artist – or an artisan – was considered a rather lowly profession for a “worthy Jew.”

#### Part 2

Israel persevered as a sculptor, a pioneer in the world of micro-miniature creations. He created an articulated “skeleton” of gold, a work with movable joints that could be held in the palm of

one’s hand. Commissions arrived, as did more children in the Rouchomovsky household. With a full house to feed, Israel had to take to the road for work. He arrived alone in Kiev, a city that was off-limits to Jews except those with proper “papers.” After staying clandestinely for a short time, he returned to Odessa, where he lived with his family for the next 10 years.

#### *Events in Odessa turn his life around*

He became a master sculptor and jeweler in Odessa, an artist with a growing reputation. Shin Hochman, a wheeler-dealer in ancient gold objects, offered Israel – and he accepted – the commission of a lifetime: 1,800 rubles (about \$1,200) to fashion a tiara of gold in the style of Greek craftsmen. Hochman supplied all materials for this months-long endeavor. The finished

work authentically portrays scenes from the famous Battle of Troy, depicting the armies of Agememnon and Achilles as they struggle for control of this ancient port city of the Aegean coast. The completed tiara is composed of over 100 figures, each meticulously crafted. The sources for the tiara are illustrations of amphorae from the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and Russian and German archeological texts.

Israel also informed the reader that it was a time when many forgeries were produced by unscrupulous artists. He stated, “Many were fakes made to look old.” The truly clever sculptors and their accomplices buried their forgeries in the Crimean earth so that they would be later “found” by treasure hunters, ultimately ending up in prestigious museums, such as the Louvre in Paris. Hochman ultimately sold the tiara to

**Mein Lebn** (continued from p. 3)

another, who successfully convinced the experts of the Louvre that it was the recently found Tiara of Satafarnass, a king in ancient Crimea, and that its worth was beyond compare.

Israel, stuck in Odessa, a thousand miles from Paris, at first knew nothing of Hochman's resale of the tiara, but eventually learned about it from a friend who showed him a recent article in the French gazette, "Le Figaro," headlining that the "Tiara of Satafarnass" would be on display in the premiere art museum in the world, the Louvre, whose experts proclaimed it to be one of the greatest finds of the (new) 20th century. The price paid by the Louvre: \$250,000 francs, more than a million dollars, perhaps the largest sum ever paid by a museum for a "genuine" work of art.

Poor Israel did not know what to think or how to deal with the situation: On the one hand, his work would be on prominent display in the Louvre, the most prestigious venue. On the other hand, others were enormously enriched by his labor. Then there is the fact that he would not be recognized as the sole creator of this magnificent object. To further complicate the matter, the rabbi whose advice Israel sought almost convinced him that it would be a "catastrophe for the Jews" if Israel admitted that he was complicit in this "forgery," and that he had to remain true to his people by renouncing any claim to be its creator.

While the experts at the Louvre swore that the tiara could not possibly be a fake and that their purchase was wise, other experts pointed out inconsistencies in the work. They argued about its authenticity and simultaneously pointed their finger at Israel – his reputation as a master craftsman now established beyond the borders of Odessa – as the likely artist. When the investigative reporters of the day queried him about the possibility of the tiara being a hoax,

Israel said, "Well, yes and no. As long as I have not seen the tiara with my own two eyes, I remain in the dark."

Even so, the tiara remained on display in the Louvre Museum for five years. But suspicions take on a life of their own, here feeding the French public's clamor for details about the greatest hoax possibly ever perpetrated. Journalists from all over Europe jumped at the chance to whip up circulation for as long as possible. "Le Matin," for example, demanded Israel's sketches of the tiara to prove that he was the creator of the crown. The world-wide press showed up at his door in Odessa, reporting that even though Israel lived a humble (if not miserable) life, his previous creations proved that he was an artist beyond compare. Meanwhile, the experts at the Louvre were still holding out hope that the tiara was indeed genuine, and that their money did not go to waste by purchasing a fake.

With the new century, ordinary life in Russia became even more dangerous as pogroms and travel restrictions for Jews made life unbearable. With this additional incentive, Israel felt that he must protect his name and his honor. So he shipped his engraving tools to the Louvre and set up shop under the expert eyes of its staff, who continued to convince the public that self-taught Israel Rouchomovsky from Mazer and Odessa never possessed the requisite skills to craft the tiara. Meanwhile, Israel's workshop in the Louvre produced one magnificent piece after another, including an exact copy of the first Tiara of Satafarnass. All of this cemented his reputation as a genius worthy of Paris' deep-pocket collectors.

Life in Paris required many adjustments: learning to speak French; learning the customs of French Jews; tolerating the critiques of art columnists who wrote that his works left "nothing to see," because the viewer might need a magnify-

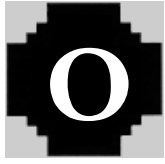
ing glass to fully grasp what was before him. Nevertheless, he appreciated the income from successful salon shows, the friendships he made, and the larger-than-life personalities he met from the world of Zionism who resided in Paris. It all made life worth living. Meira, his wife, and their seven children joined him in Paris, where the family very happily remained.

A casual introduction to Baron Edmond Rothschild, perhaps the wealthiest man in Europe, turned out to be a high-light in the life of Israel and his family. Rothschild soon became Israel's patron; essentially, Israel became the "court" sculptor and jeweler to the Rothschilds. The magnificent, telescoping micro-mezuzah, all of eight centimeters high and consisting of 1,111 Hebrew letters in three separate cylinders – which Israel described as "one of my favorite pieces" – emerged from this ongoing collaboration of artist and patron, as did many other works for Rothschild depicting Jewish design motifs or historical Jewish events from the past.

Life continued to be good for the Rouchomovskys. The interwar decades became increasingly inhospitable for East European Jews, even as life became fuller for Israel and his family. The children married, grandchildren became the joy of Israel and Meira's life, and art was produced as gifts for family and friends. His goal in the latter years of his life was to produce as many Jewish objects as he could for posterity. His love for his adopted land of France offered not even the slightest comparison to life in Russia, the land in which he would have remained if not for the Tiara of Satafarnass.☆

# In Memoriam: Gunther Aron

by Lance Bell



On August 27, 2014, Gunther Aron passed away at age 91. The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society family and the state of New Mexico lost

a beautiful human being and real mensch.

Gunther wore many hats at the Society. He was a past president, board member and, with his wife Geri, co-chair of the annual Congregation Montefiore cemetery clean-up in Las Vegas, NM. Also, both he and Geri were archive volunteers.

Outside of the NMJHS, Gunther was a notable New Mexican and recognized artist. He took a lot of pride in making Chanukah menorahs and candlesticks, as well as unique, one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces.

Gunther was born in Germany in 1923. In 1937, his parents sent him to the ORT school in Berlin, which enabled him and other boys to escape to England just before the war started. (ORT is a global Jewish non-profit organization that promotes education and training in communities worldwide.) In England, he contributed to the war effort by working as a tool and die maker until he was able to come to the United States in 1947. Two sisters and one brother were already in the U.S. His mother, father and a sister, disabled with polio, died at Auschwitz.

Gunther's wife Geri was his best friend and life partner. They met at the Old Town Art Fair in Chicago in 1953, married in 1956 and in 1968 bought the old school house in Lamy, which they made into a home and studio when they moved to New Mexico in 1973.

As NMJHS past president Stan Hordes observed, "Gunther and Geri spent many years organizing and rallying the troops each year for the annual Montefiore Cemetery clean-up in Las Vegas, NM.



Lance Bell

They considered themselves ambassadors and helped organize and publicize this important annual NMJHS event from its genesis." Geri noted, "Gunther liked the idea of helping a lonesome cemetery that had been neglected and wanted to help bring it back to life. Gunther found it a peaceful and pleasant place where they both would enjoy seeing the kids learn about immigrants who made New Mexico their home from another time."

In 1988, the Arons moved to Park Plazas in Santa Fe, not too far from the New Mexico State Archives building at Cerillos Road and Camino Carlos Rey. They enjoyed volunteering at the archives, assisting with digitizing the NMJHS collection. They also helped organize and promote archive programs and events.

Gunther's amazing artwork can be found in many personal collections throughout the country. The Chanukah menorahs and Sabbath candlesticks that Gunther designed helped light up many family homes. The last menorah he made was purchased by the late Claire Grossman, NMJHS past president. He continued making silver and turquoise pendants until shortly before his death.

At present, no memorial is planned. If you have any memories, stories or kind thoughts about Gunther, please share them with Geri at <http://www.legacy.com/guest-books/santafenewmexican/gunther-aron-condolences/172362142>.

For further reading and pictures, please see Jim Terr's website, [http://www.blueproductions.com/holo\\_transcript08.html](http://www.blueproductions.com/holo_transcript08.html), and Charles Rueben's article, "Gunther Aron: Bauhaus Sculptor," which appeared in the *Santa Fe Reporter* on December 25, 1980, <http://www.chucksville.com/menorah-Maker.html>.

The day after Gunther passed away, the following poem was written by Rosemary Zi-



Gunther Aron

## To Gunther Rosemary Zibart

The lock on life  
No matter how rusty  
resists the key

It grinds, it sticks  
it groans  
How fast I have  
held, how steady,  
how strong.

No matter  
the ordeal of days,  
the pelting rain,  
the creaking soul,  
I held, I held, I held.  
Yet now must let go.

bart, a Santa Fe author. She invited him to speak at signings of her young adult novel *Forced Journey: The Saga of Warren Berlinger*, whose story is similar to Gunther's escape from the Nazis. The poem and picture of Gunther are reprinted above with Ms. Zibart's permission and are found at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Far-and-Away-Series-by-Rosemary-Zibart-Illustrator-George-Lawrence/284724108219384>. ♣

# Tribute to Dorothy Amsden

by Noel Pugach

In 2004, the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society received a precious gift in the person of Dorothy Corner Amsden. Lance Bell and Stan Hordes recognized that she had much to offer the Society after she gave a genealogy workshop at the fall Conference, and they urged her to become a member of the board. Over the next 10 years, Dorothy served as genealogy chair, editor of our newsletter, *Legacy*, vice-president of the Society, and president for three years. In 2014, she decided to leave the board, but agreed to serve as interim editor of *Legacy* until Dianne Layden could assume the important duties.

Dorothy's path to her many achievements began in the Bronx, New York, where she was born in 1942. She was a civil servant "brat"; her father worked for the Federal government as an architect and the small nuclear family (Dorothy was an only child) moved every two years — from Sacramento to Kodiak, Alaska, to Little Rock, to Buffalo, and finally to Albuquerque, where her parents settled in 1956. Dorothy received her B.A. (University of New Mexico) and M.A. (Middlebury College) in French and became fluent in the language, especially after living in France as a student in 1964-65. Changing fields from the humanities to computer science, she worked for IBM for six years in Los Angeles and Maryland. By then, Dorothy had been exposed to many life experiences and many different communities; she had acquired a high degree of sophistication and insight. But more was to follow.



Dorothy Corner-Amsden

Up to now, Dorothy had been raised as a totally assimilated, secular "Jewess"; she had never been involved in Jewish life, culture, or religion. Both parents had encountered anti-Jewish discrimination. In 1973, in order to connect with her Jewish roots, she decided to live in Israel, where she worked as a copy editor for the Weizmann Science Press. Unwittingly, she chose an auspicious time, as the Yom Kippur War broke out a few months after she arrived. Dorothy's vivid account of Israeli anxieties, tensions, and feelings, and her experiences in Israel, appeared in the *The New Mexico Jewish Link* to mark the 40th anniversary of the shattering event. Over her 16 months in Israel, Dorothy learned some Hebrew, was introduced to Jewish history, practices, and religion, and acquired an appreciation of Israeli life and culture. Shortly after returning to New Mexico, she was hired as a technical writer and editor for Los Alamos National Laboratory. She retired in 1997. Meanwhile she met and married Anthony "Tony" Amsden.

In all the positions she occupied with NMJHS, Dorothy showed herself to be a dedicated, tireless, hard-driving, knowledgeable, intelligent, organized leader, and a perfectionist. And she had so many achievements. She made Jewish genealogy an important aspect of our agenda and used it to bring new people into the Society. As president, she tightened up the organization, oversaw the rewriting of the bylaws, supervised three highly successful fall conferences, broadened the membership of the board of directors, maintained our excellent reputation and credibility with the New Mexico Jewish Federation, and continued to partner with other organizations.

Dorothy sometimes revealed a hard edge, but she got things done.

In the remainder of this article, I want to focus on Dorothy Amsden as

editor of *Legacy*, where she made a great contribution, raising the quality and the stature of the newsletter. Dorothy and I had an extended conversation on how she viewed her role and how she looks on its future.

Dorothy, who wrote a column named, "Genealogy Corner," a play on her maiden name Corner, stepped in as editor when Bobbi Jackson, our former administrator fell ill and could no longer produce it. She served as editor from March 2007-March 2010, when Naomi Sandweiss agreed to take over so Dorothy could assume the role of president. One of the first things Dorothy did after she joined the board was to push for a new name for the newsletter over considerable opposition; it was simply known as the NMJHS Newsletter, too long and clumsy. The Society held a contest and *Legacy* won. The first issue with the new name *Legacy* appeared in December 2006. Then, rather than reproduce material from other Jewish historical newsletters, Dorothy insisted that *Legacy* publish original articles on the New Mexico Jewish experience, from the Spanish Era to the present day.



Noel Pugach

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**Tribute to Dorothy Amsden** (continued from p. 6)

She worried if enough writers would submit their work, but the constant flow of fascinating, relevant, refreshing, and readable articles proved that she was right. Over time, Dorothy cultivated able contributors to *Legacy*. Another innovation was to publish papers presented at our fall conferences, thereby integrating the work of the Society. She also sought to find a balance between popular history and scholarly research that would attract sophisticated and informed readers.

Another challenge was to develop a consistent, proper, and attractive format for the newsletter. With the collaboration of John Gravel of D'T Publishing in Santa Fe, she achieved that goal.

Dorothy admits that editing a quarterly newsletter is full of challenges, problems and stresses. They range from miss-

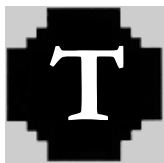
ing deadlines, coordinating the layout, printing, and mailing of the newsletter, last-minute insertions, and checking the calendar. And then she bemoaned the inevitable errors that escaped onto the printed pages. But she feels the effort was well worth the trials and tribulations. Editing *Legacy* brought Dorothy great satisfaction, pleasure, and pride. She delighted in the interchange with interesting contributors, learned so much from the job, and enjoyed overcoming the challenges.

Dorothy was well prepared for the roles she played. She had years of experience and well-honed skills as an editor. She loved to write and had been captivated by history. She was attentive to details and recognized their importance. She was hard driven and persistent, and some

people found her abrasive and nit-picky. But the results have been spectacular.

She has a number of recommendations for future editors: Insist on readability and interesting stories. Do not compromise on accuracy and distinguish between Bubbe Maisers (grandmother's tales) and family "traditional" stories, on the one hand, and historical fact and context, on the other. Actively solicit articles from knowledgeable people. Consider going to a larger type.

Dorothy Amsden has left the Society with a major legacy. We are indebted to her that she took on so many jobs and responsibilities. We wish her much happiness, satisfaction, and good health for many years. And we hope to have her back in some capacity. ☆

**HSNM Call for Papers 2015 New Mexico History Conference May 7-9, 2014**

The Historical Society of New Mexico invites proposals for papers and presentations for the 2015 New Mexico History Conference, to

be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, Albuquerque, New Mexico, on May 7-9 2015.

Conference sessions are 90 minutes in length. Most will consist of oral delivery of three papers or presentations, each approximately 20 minutes, including a moderator's introduction and questions from the audience. Proposals for individual presentations should be limited to one page in length, and must include presenter contact and biographical information, presentation title, a brief synopsis, and any technical support needed. Proposals for single presentations will be matched with similar topics to constitute a full session. The Program Committee invites proposals for topical sessions occupying the full 1½-hour period. These should include a proposed title for the session, names of

presenters, titles of topics, a moderator, and contact information for all panel members. Presenters must register as conference participants. Digital projection systems and other audiovisual presentation equipment will be available.

Papers on any aspect of New Mexico history, the Southwest or Borderlands are welcome. However, individual papers and full sessions related to the history, development and growth of Albuquerque and the middle Rio Grande Valley, to include the surrounding counties of Sandoval, Tarrant, Valencia and Cibola will be given special consideration. This can include, but is not limited to, a broad range of topics about the Pueblos, colonial Albuquerque, the Camino Real, the railroad, Route 66, TB sanitariums, Kirtland and Sandia bases, the influence of ethnic groups, and the region's colorful and influential personalities.

Deadline for submissions is November 30, 2014. Proposals may be submitted as attachments to email at

robertjtorrez@msn.com or by mail to HSNM Program Committee, P.O. Box 1912, Santa Fe, NM 87504-1912.



Notification of acceptance will be sent on or about January 1, 2015. To learn more about the Historical Society of New Mexico, visit [www.hsnm.org](http://www.hsnm.org), or if you have questions contact Robert J. Tórréz, program chair, at [robertjtorrez@msn.com](mailto:robertjtorrez@msn.com) or (505) 836-9699.

Editor's note: NMJHS board member Janet Saiers is president of the Historical Society of New Mexico. ☆

**NMJHS Welcomes New Members**

David Mandel  
John and Susie Sandager

# Alleged Hate Crimes at Nosh Deli in Albuquerque

by Dianne R. Layden

“Hate crimes are uniquely violent and traumatic.”<sup>1</sup>  
Walter Bouman, *The Law Enforcement Bulletin*

*Alleged Hate Crimes at Nosh Deli*<sup>2</sup>

**I**n January-February 2014, six months after Nosh Deli opened in Albuquerque’s Nob Hill area, anti-Semitic messages on priority mail stickers were posted on its door and on parking meters and utility poles along the street. The stickers appeared three times in three weeks.

The four messages were written in all capital letters: “From: The one who has lived with your lies. To the hypocrits [sic] who bullshit the world – kikes.” “From: The one you scarred for life scumbags. To the kikes who will die like rates.” “To: The kikes who gave me a black eye.” “To: The kikes who should die.”

Susan Seligman of the New Mexico chapter of the Anti-Defamation League sent a security advisory to all Jewish organizations in the state. She said the threat was the first reported in New Mexico in a couple of years. Seligman concluded probably one person was the perpetrator at Nosh Deli, noting, “It’s always the lone wolf that we are concerned about because we don’t know where they’re coming from.”

The incidents at Nosh Deli were featured in a blogpost on January 24, 2014, by Marc Yellin of AbqJew.com and in a front-page article in the February 2014

issue of *The New Mexico Jewish Link*, published by the Jewish Federation of New Mexico.<sup>3</sup>

In February, public support prompted over 100 people of diverse religious backgrounds to gather for a candlelight vigil at Amherst and Silver SE in front of the deli, and also one block south on Central SE, a main street, with signs protesting hate in Albuquerque. An op-ed in the *Albuquerque Journal* called for inclusion of Jewishness as part of New Mexico’s diversity.

hate messages. Nosh Deli remained open.

The Albuquerque Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the U.S. Department of Justice investigated the incidents.



*Dianne R. Layden*

APD put up cameras outside the restaurant, and the FBI set up a hotline for calls from people with information.

In March, John W. Ng of Albuquerque, 58, admitted posting some of the messages and was arrested. According to the complaint filed in court,<sup>4</sup> Ng referred several times to “f---ing

Jews” when speaking to an employee at his apartment complex, blaming them for a black eye and other injuries (the black eye was mentioned on a sticker) and for putting something into his food; he claimed Jews had been drugging his food for at least 20 years. Referring to a neighbor who is a World War II veteran, Ng said to “keep that f---ing Jew away from me.” When the employee told him she didn’t think the neighbor is Jewish, Ng responded that he acts like a Jew.

Ng confessed to a lifelong hatred of Jews and gave examples of perceived mistreatment, adding that a Jewish doctor diagnosed him as suffering from a bipolar mental illness. He doesn’t trust his doctor because he is Jewish. Ng’s apartment was near Tramway and Lomas NE. He frequented the Nob Hill

**Table 1, 2009-2012 UCR Data:  
Hate Crimes in New Mexico and United States**

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Number in New Mexico</i> | <i>% of U.S. Total</i> | <i>Number In U.S.</i> |
|-------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2012        | 2                           | .0003%                 | 5,790                 |
| 2011        | 28                          | .0045%                 | 6,222                 |
| 2010        | 24                          | .0036%                 | 6,628                 |
| 2009        | 15                          | .0022%                 | 6,604                 |

Nosh Deli owner Alisa Turtletaub-Young averred she was not intimidated.



*Alisa Turtletaub-Young*

The incidents were “unsettling,” but she was not going to be a victim. When she saw the mailing labels on the door, she thought she missed a delivery. Turtletaub-Young said she had not heard the word “kike,” a derogatory term for Jews, in many years: “It was like they’re sending me a message.” Hate speech in the diverse and generally liberal Nob Hill area surprised

her, but the community rallied behind her, expressing shock and dismay at the



**Alleged Hate Crimes** (continued from p. 8)

area and posted the labels at Nosh Deli so as many Jews as possible would see them.

Inside his apartment, FBI agents saw a stack of priority mail labels. When they told Ng to stop posting anti-Jewish notes, he said he wasn't sure he could. A few days later, on a car in the apartment complex parking lot, investigators found a label that bore a swastika and read, "[From:] The one who knows what a kike is. [To] one who is too ignorant to know they are one."

In April 2014, a grand jury indicted Ng on two misdemeanor hate crimes charges – on two different dates interfering with the Nosh Deli owner's federally protected rights by threatening her and interfering with her business because of her religion. Each count carries a maximum penalty of one year in prison. Both the prosecution and defense expressed concerns about Ng's competence. He was sent to a North Carolina prison hospital for psychiatric competence and dangerousness examinations. He cannot be tried in court unless he is competent.

In a personal communication, Ng's attorney, federal public defender Kari Converse, noted that to keep him in custody the government must prove he is

dangerous – that he poses a "substantial risk" of harm to persons and property.<sup>5</sup> Ng may suffer from schizophrenia. In August 2014, federal judge William Johnson, prosecutors Holland Kastrin and AeJean Cha, and Converse held a

orientation, or ethnicity."<sup>6</sup> The term includes incidents confirmed by police as bias-motivated and incidents perceived by victims to be bias-motivated because the offender used hate language or left behind hate symbols.

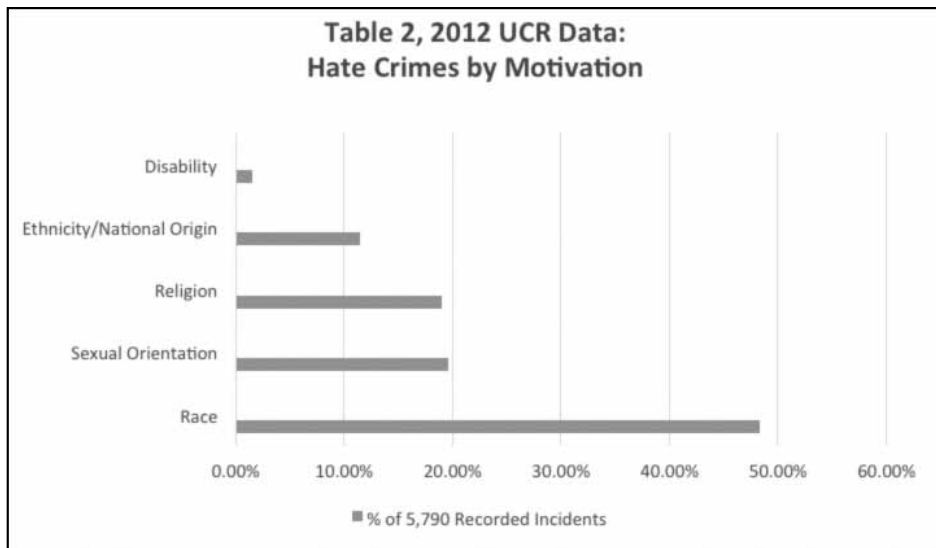


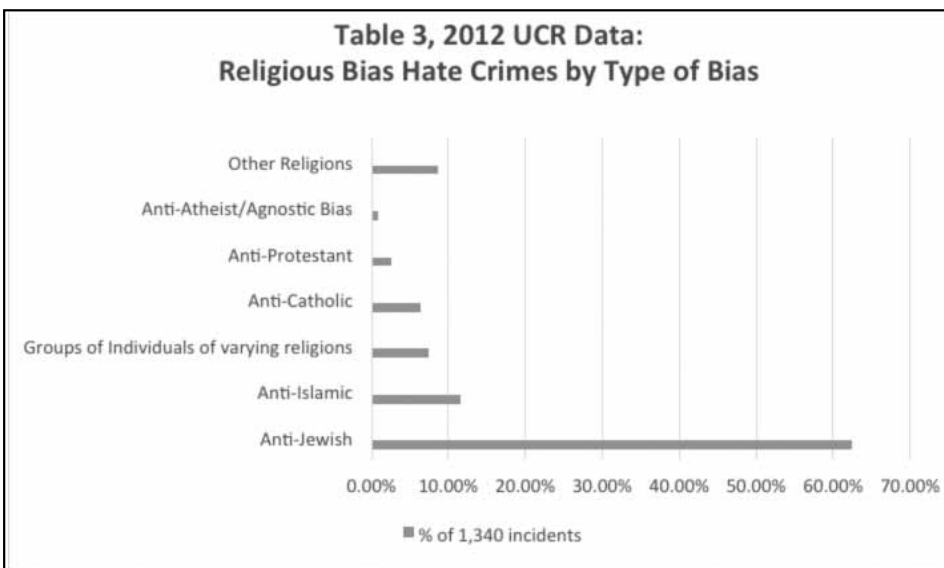
Table 2 provides a breakdown of the motivation of the 5,790 reported hate crimes in 2012:<sup>11</sup>

status conference, the latest step in the case.

*Hate Crimes in the United States*

"Hate crime" is defined by the Hate Crimes Statistics Act of 1990 as a traditional offense, such as murder, arson, or vandalism, that manifests "evidence of prejudice based on race, gender or gender identity, religion, disability, sexual

Hate crimes are described in an FBI publication as "uniquely violent and traumatic. Victims of these crimes feel degraded, isolated, frightened, suspicious of others, powerless, and depressed. Some victims experience severe trauma and denial about the incident, and some victims and families may feel emotionally disturbed for extended periods of time. This long-term stress can take a substantial toll on a family and the surrounding community" (Bauman 23).<sup>7</sup>



In 2012, 5,790 hate crimes were reported to the FBI by police in the Uniform Crime Reporting Program,<sup>8</sup> but UCR hate crimes data are vastly understated, as discussed below. In 2009-2012, New Mexico reported seemingly few, a fraction of 1% of the U.S. total, as shown in Table 1.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, in 2012, the highest numbers reported by other states were 910 hate crimes in California (15.8%), 715 in New York (12.3%), 617 in Michigan (10.6%), and 317 in Tennessee (5.4%).<sup>10</sup>

**Alleged Hate Crimes** (continued from p. 9)

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the motivation of the 5,790 reported hate crimes in 2012:<sup>11</sup>

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the 1,340 victims of religious bias in 2012 by type of bias:<sup>12</sup>

As noted before, UCR hate crimes figures are vastly understated. An annual average of 6,000-10,000 hate crimes has been recorded since 1995. By contrast, in 2007-2011, the biannual National Crime Victimization Survey of a sample of about 79,800 households and 143,120 individuals found an annual average of 259,700 reported hate crimes, far exceeding UCR figures – about the same number as in 2003-2006.<sup>13</sup> The NCVS has been gathering hate crimes data since 2003.

Hate crimes are more violent than crimes overall. Whereas 13% of all crime was violent in 2011,<sup>14</sup> 92% of hate crimes were violent in 2007-2011, up from 84% in 2003-2006, as shown in Table 4. Seriously violent crimes included homicide, rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault, while other violent hate crimes were simple assault. Of these, the offender had a weapon in at least 25% of the cases and the victim was injured in about 17% of the cases. The remaining hate crimes were against property, including burglary and theft.

Notably, the numbers of hate crimes reported to police and arrests made dropped in 2007-2011 from 2003-2006. Some reasons why victims do not report are a belief that nothing will be done, fear of retaliation by offenders, reluctance by certain groups to have contact with police, and shame or embarrassment.

Also, the percentage of religious bias hate crimes more than doubled from 2003-2006 to 2007-2011, while that of racial bias hate crimes dropped. Expert Jack Levin concluded the rise in reli-

gious bias hate crimes may be related to a dramatic increase in Islamophobia in recent years.<sup>15</sup> In 2007-2011, whites, blacks, and Hispanics had similar rates of violent hate crime victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older – .9% for whites, 1%, for blacks, and 1% for Hispanics.

By location, during both survey periods, about one-third of the hate crimes occurred at or near the victim’s home. Those that were violent and committed by one offender dropped in 2007-2011 from 2003-2006, while the number committed by 2-3 offenders increased.

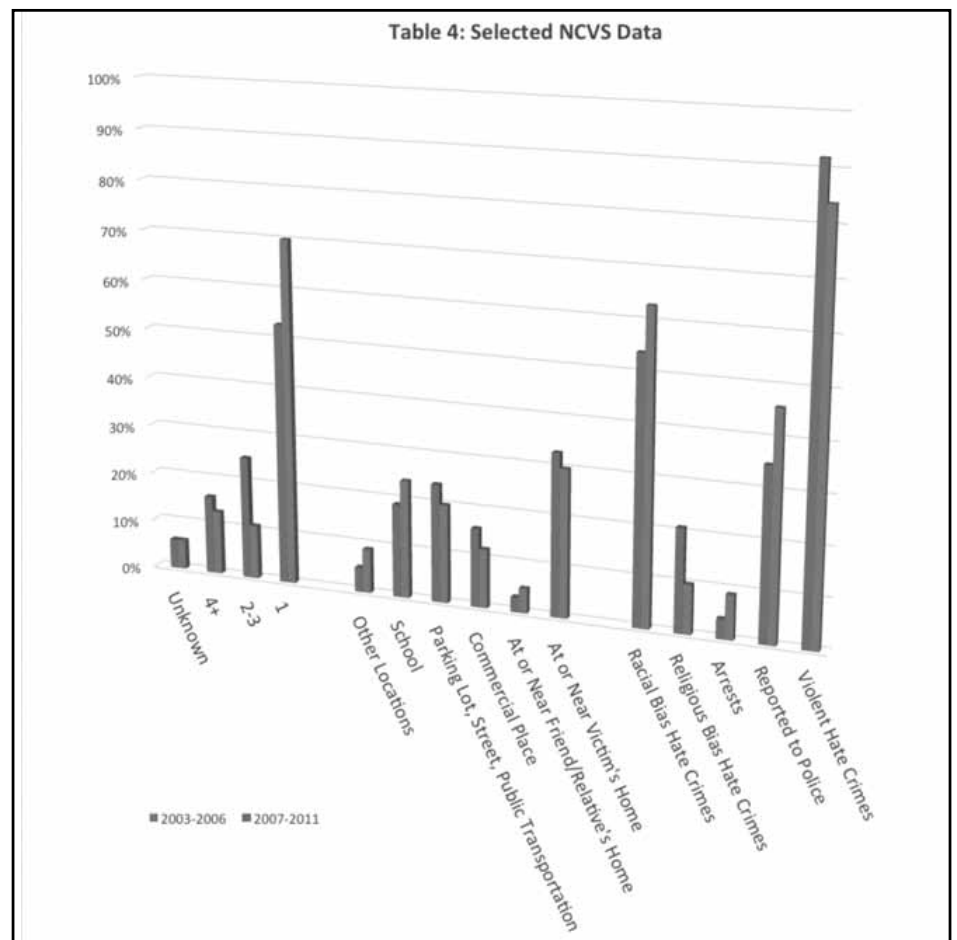
One reason for the disparity in UCR and NCVS data is while the Hate Crimes Statistics Act requires the DOJ to collect UCR hate crimes data, the law does not require states to submit UCR data. New Mexico is one state that reportedly does not participate. Also, law enforcement agencies in states that do participate are

not required to collect and report hate crimes data. According to the FBI, “in a given year, more than 18,000 agencies contribute data to the FBI; however, because of computer problems, changes in records management systems, personnel shortages, or a number of other reasons, some agencies cannot provide data for publication.”<sup>16</sup>

*Reflections of Alisa Turteltaub-Young*

“I’m proud to be a Jew,” said Alisa Turteltaub-Young when we met at Nosh Deli on August 19, 2014. Enamored with Judaism as a religion, she regards the Ten Commandments as core values.

Turteltaub-Young came to Albuquerque from Los Angeles with her 11-year-old daughter Stella Blue and her mother Dianne, and opened the deli with five Jewish friends who are partners – she is the managing member. She saw swastikas on lockers in school while growing



**Alleged Hate Crimes** (continued from p. 9)

up, so she has faced anti-Semitism before, but she didn't expect to encounter prejudice in Albuquerque. People should love one another, she said over and over. She copes with the alleged hate crimes on her own, without counseling, and is grateful for the strong support from the community.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>Walter Bouman. "Best Practices of a Hate/Bias Crime Investigation." *The Law Enforcement Bulletin*. 72.3 (March 2003): 21-25 <http://leb.fbi.gov/2003-pdfs/leb-march-2003>.

<sup>2</sup>This section of the article is drawn primarily from news reports in the *Albuquerque Journal* and on websites of local television stations KOAT, KOB, and KRKE, *JewishPress.com*, and *JTA.org*, The Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

<sup>3</sup>Marc Yellin. "Writing Down the Laws." *AbqJew.com*. January 24, 2014 <http://www.abqjew.net/2014/01/writing-down-laws.html>, and "Anti-Semitic Message Stuck to Albuquerque's Nosh Deli." *The New Mexico Jewish Link*. 44.2 (February 2014): 1.

<sup>4</sup>*United States of America v. John Ng, United States District Court for the District of New Mexico*. Case No. 14-MJ-742. March 7, 2014. For a link to the complaint, see Hawa Konte, "Man to face judge in anti-Semitic vandalism case." *KRKE.com*. March 10, 2014 <http://krqe.com/2014/03/10/man-to-face-judge-in-anti-semitic-vandalism-case>, which has a link to <http://lintvkrqe.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/john-ng-complaint.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup>Kari Converse. Federal Public Defender Organization for the District of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico. *NM.FD.org*. Personal communication. August 21, 2014.

<sup>6</sup>Nathan Sandholtz, Lynn Langston, and Michael Planty. "Hate Crime Victimiza-

tion, 2003-2011." U. S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics. *BJS.gov*. March 2013 <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/hcv0311.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup>Bouman, *loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup>"Latest Hate Crimes Statistics." *FBI.gov*. November 25, 2013 <http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2013/november/annual-hate-crime-statistics-show-slight-decrease/annual-hate-crime-statistics-show-slight-decrease>.

<sup>9</sup>"2012 Hate Crimes Statistics, Hate Crimes by Jurisdiction, Table 12: Agency Hate Crime Reporting by State, 2012." *FBI.gov*. November 25, 2013 [http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2012/tables-and-data-declarations/12tabledatadecpdf/table\\_12\\_agency\\_hate\\_crime\\_reporting\\_by\\_state\\_2012.xls](http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2012/tables-and-data-declarations/12tabledatadecpdf/table_12_agency_hate_crime_reporting_by_state_2012.xls); 2011 <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2011/tables/table-12>; 2010 <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2010/tables/table-12-agency-hate-crime-reporting-by-state-2010.xls>; 2009 [http://www2.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2009/data/table\\_12.html](http://www2.fbi.gov/ucr/hc2009/data/table_12.html).

<sup>10</sup>"2012 Hate Crimes Statistics, Hate Crimes by Jurisdiction, Table 12: Agency Hate Crime Reporting by State, 2012," *loc. cit.*

<sup>11</sup>"Latest Hate Crimes Statistics," *loc. cit.*

<sup>12</sup>"2012 Hate Crimes Statistics: Victims." *FBI.gov*. November 25, 2013 [http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2012/topic-pages/victims/victims\\_final](http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2012/topic-pages/victims/victims_final).

<sup>13</sup>Sandholtz, Langston, and Planty, *loc. cit.*

<sup>14</sup>Mark Potok. "DOJ Study: More than 250,000 Hate Crimes a Year, Most Unreported." Southern Poverty Law Center. *SPLCenter.org*. March 26, 2013 <http://www.splcenter.org/blog/2013/03/26/>

[doj-study-more-than-250000-hate-crimes-a-year-a-third-never-reported](http://doj-study-more-than-250000-hate-crimes-a-year-a-third-never-reported).

<sup>15</sup>*Idem*.

<sup>16</sup>"A Word about UCR Data." FBI Uniform Crime Reports Home Page. *FBI.gov*. No date. <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr>. Resources <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/word>. ☆

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### Calendar of NMJHS Upcoming Events

Check for future events at [www.nmjhs.org](http://www.nmjhs.org)

Saturday and Sunday, November 15-16: NMJHS Fall Conference entitled “The Merchants of Albuquerque: Building Businesses and Community” takes place at the Jewish Community Center in Albuquerque (see Page 3 in this issue for more information.) SAVE THE DATE.

Saturday, November 15: Deadline for 1-hour, mini-course proposals for 2015 “A Taste of Honey: Jewish Learning at Its Sweetest” at the Jewish Community Center in Albuquerque, Sunday, February 1, 2015, 12-5 PM. Contact Phyllis Wolf, [phyllisw@jccabq.org](mailto:phyllisw@jccabq.org), 348-4500, or go to [JCCABQ.org](http://JCCABQ.org).

Santa Fe Jewish Film Festival, [SantaFeJFF.org](http://SantaFeJFF.org), Marcia Torobin, [admin@santafejff.org](mailto:admin@santafejff.org), 505-348-4459. Saturday, November 8, The Screen, 6:30 PM Dessert Reception, 7:30 PM Regarding Susan Sontag; Sunday, November 9, Center for Contemporary Arts (CCA): 4:30 PM Sukkah City, 6:00 DJ Pizza Party, 7:00 PM AKA Doc Pomus; Thursday, December 25, Flix & ChopStix Movies and Chinese Food (see website for details); Sunday, January 25, CCA: 10:30 AM Coffee / pre-film talk with Lois Rudnick, 11:00 AM The Dybbuk (in Yiddish with subtitles), 1:00 PM Brown bag lunch / post-film talk with Lois Rudnick.