



Should the Jews Return to Spain?

by Norma Libman

In 1492, following hundreds of years of escalating anti-Jewish violence on the Iberian Peninsula, Spain formally expelled its Jews. Along with the Muslim population and anyone else who was not Christian (i.e., witches, gypsies), Jews were given the choice of converting to Christianity, leaving the land they loved, or risking death if they stayed.

In the year 1000 there had been approximately a million Jews, a million Muslims, and a million Christians in the area. By 1492, 75 percent of the Jews were already gone, either by death, conversion, or actually leaving for other places. Of the remaining quarter of a million or so, probably about half went to Portugal as a result of the Edict of Expulsion. They were invited to Portugal by King Manuel, but four years later all those who accepted that invitation were forcibly converted to Christianity by the king. He committed this act in exchange for the hand of the daughter of Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain. And so, ultimately, the Inquisition found its way to Portugal.

Most of the rest of the Jews in Spain chose conversion, either sincerely or, more likely in many cases, professing a conversion to Christianity while clinging to Judaism in secret. For the Muslims, it was considerably easier. Islam had spread quite widely in the world by then and they had many places, ranging from Northern Africa to Indonesia, where they could safely make new homes.

But for the crypto-Jews, those who converted but decided to remain Jewish in secret, choices were more limited.

Still, within 50 years new possibilities were opening up in the New World, and many found their way to North and South America. For those who wound up in Mexico and what later became the United States Southwest, they were merely traveling to New Spain, not even leaving the mother country officially, but getting far away from the headquarters of the Inquisition – which is not to say that they found safety. By the 17th century the Inquisition had moved over to the New World, and trials and *autos-de-fe* took place in Mexico City, pushing more people farther north to join their co-religionists who had already made their way up to what would eventually become New Mexico and other parts of the United States.

Suddenly, in December 2012, Spain offered citizenship to anyone who can prove he or she are a descendant of Jews expelled in the 15th century. (Portugal has made the same offer and Germany has made a similar overture to Jews and their descendants who left that country during World War II to escape the Holocaust.) Why would Spain do such a thing now? And why would any Jews take them up on the offer?

First, why are they offering a short-cut to Spanish citizenship? Suddenly, in a time of growing anti-Semitism in Spain and the rest of the world, the Spanish government wants to bring more Jews into the country. In an article for the *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto Jews* (Vol. 6, Summer 2014, 135-147), Jonatas D. DaSilva pointed out that there are only 12,000 Jews in Spain, which has a population of 42 million, and suggests that low number may reflect the fact that various recent surveys

show Spain to be very anti-Semitic. For example, he said that “a report about European anti-Semitism published by the New York-based Anti-Defamation League says that 54 percent of Spaniards believe that ‘Jews have too much power in international markets’” (p. 136).

Some believe that Spain’s offer of citizenship is more about economics than a desire to right a wrong or to enrich the culture of their nation. This would be a great irony since the expulsion, too, was more about money than religion. While Isabella’s concern for saving souls was apparently sincere, Ferdinand and the Spanish government were more interested in keeping the coffers filled in order to support Spain’s operations as a superpower. When New Christians were discovered to be practicing Judaism in secret, they were tried for heresy,



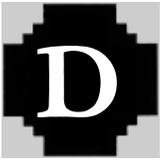
Norma Libman

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President's Column



Dear NMJHS Members,

It has been a pleasure to serve as your president over the past two years. I am especially grateful to all of those – past and present – whose efforts and enthusiasm have enabled us to reach our 30-year anniversary as a society.

During this special and significant year, there are a variety of exciting projects underway, including the Fall Conference, which will take place in Las Cruces on November 14-15, 2015. Under the direction of board member Dr. Richard Melzer, the society is also issuing our first anthology in order to commemorate the anniversary.



**NMJHS President
Naomi Sandweiss**

I want to especially thank our outgoing board members Anita Miller and Harvey Buchalter for their service and dedication. As always, the society thrives with member input and involvement. Please consider lending your talents to the organization as a committee or board member. I know that you will enjoy this edition of Legacy. It features a diversity of fascinating articles for your reading pleasure.

I look forward to seeing you at upcoming events and of, course, in Las Cruces! ☆

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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.

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Should the Jews Return to Spain? *(continued from p. 1)*

generally convicted if they didn't die in jail first, and their property confiscated. If they chose to leave Spain to escape forced conversion or death, they had to sell their property or businesses for whatever they could get in a hurry, generally at a great loss. And when they left Spain, if they were owed money, either privately or by the government, those debts were erased, leaving the Jewish lender impoverished and the borrower free of debt.

Now Spain is suffering the same economic problems as the rest of Europe and much of the world. While they speak of the richness these new citizens will add to their culture, it is also true that offering an easy road to citizenship to some Jews will not only bring in cash, but will surely result in new start-up businesses of all sorts throughout the nation. The offer does not require that the individual give up citizenship in his or her native country. This is a departure from earlier Spanish law and indicates how important they must feel it is to acquire these new citizens.

And what is the appeal of this offer to Sephardic Jews, descendants of the forced converts, the expelled, the murdered? Fernando Peinado wrote in *TheSpectrum.com*, July 18, 2014, that the Spanish government expects most of the applications for citizenship to come from Israel, "where crowds have lined up outside the Spanish Embassy and consulate to request information." He also said that many Sephardic Jews in Miami and New York "have directed queries to organizations like the American Jewish Committee, which the Spanish government consulted during the drafting of the bill." Clearly there is an interest and some of it is about a cultural attachment to Spain that exists for some people despite the horrible things that happened to their ancestors there. Author and lecturer Daniel Diaz-Huerta said in an interview with me, "My interest in pursuing Spanish citizenship under

the recent legislation that allows dual citizenship to descendants of Sephardic Jews is really quite simple: I wish to honor my faith and ancestors . . . my Spanish/Hebrew heritage."

Chip Espinoza, an educator and consultant, echoed this sentiment in an interview with me. "My grandfather always told us we came from Spain," he said. "He instilled a love of Spain in us. Even my eight-year-old daughter, who never knew her great-grandfather, has an affinity for Spain." Getting Spanish citizenship would be "a closing of the loop," he said.

But, again, some of getting citizenship is economic. Spanish citizenship confers membership in the European Union and all the privileges that go with it, from the ability to live and work in any member country, to a passport that can sometimes get one through a European airport more quickly than can an American passport. It is not necessarily the case that those who acquire Spanish citizenship would actually live in Spain. Israelis, however, are currently suffering from an extremely high cost of living, and some might feel they would benefit from actually moving to Spain and enjoying a more financially comfortable life.

It is also worth noting that there have been a number of reports of difficulties in applying for this supposed easy gift of citizenship. In a two-part article in the January 31 and February 21, 2014, issues of *Forward.com*, Josh Nathan-Kazis detailed his attempts to get Spanish citizenship and the many roadblocks he encountered, possibly because the Spanish government is still working out the criteria for citizenship. Descendants of Conversos can trace their ancestry through Inquisition and Catholic Church records, which were meticulously kept. Nathan-Kazis went to Spain with a variety of documents proving his Spanish heritage and was told by Maria Royo of the Spanish Jewish Federation, "This is

just a piece of paper." At that point he knew, said Nathan-Kazis, that "this was going to be harder than I thought."

Espinoza has also encountered difficulties. "There is a language proficiency test," he said. "It is a little ambiguous as to what they want. It is still a discussion."

Clearly the dust has not entirely settled on this issue. Sephardic Rabbi Marc D. Angel, in a June 29, 2014, issue of *TimesofIsrael.com*, calls his reaction to the new Spanish policy as mixed. "On the one hand," he said, "reconciliation is a good thing, even after five or more centuries. On the other hand, is this particular policy a real act of reconciliation or is it rather only a gesture that will appeal to few Sephardim in an attempt to soothe the Spanish conscience?"

His answer to this question is that if atonement is what Spain wants, "it needs to correspond directly with the nature of the sin." This, he said, is hatred of the Jews and Judaism. And the atonement must be a commitment to fight anti-Semitism and eliminate religious and ethnic fanaticism.

"Spain needs to be outspoken in its opposition to religious fanaticism wherever it manifests itself," he said. ". . . [H]ow wonderful it would be if Spain would be a world leader in helping Sephardim – and all the Jewish people – to live in a world free of anti-Judaism, anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. That would be Spain's great gift to humanity for our generation and the generations to come." ☆

Postscript: On March 26, 2015, the World Jewish Congress announced that Spanish legislators had approved the law to grant citizenship to descendants of expelled Sephardic Jews, under certain conditions, and that they expect the law to go into effect in May 2015. NL

Forced Journey: The Saga of Werner Berlinger

by Rosemary Zibart

Several years ago, I wrote *Forced Journey: The Saga of Werner Berlinger* (Artemesia Press, 2013) about a Jewish boy who escapes Nazi Germany and comes to the U.S. in 1939, hoping his father and sister will follow. *Forced Journey* tells of Werner's struggles in New York City to create a new life for himself – get an education, find friends, care for others. In his journey, Werner travels from Second Avenue to Park Avenue to Harlem and back, always cherishing the dream of a safe home for himself and his family.

When people hear about the book, they often ask if I have a personal connection to this story or to the Holocaust in general. I have to say no, not at all. My family, on both sides, has lived in the United States for several generations.

The original idea for *Forced Journey* occurred about 20 years ago via a college professor named Dr. Hal Marienthal. He was a sharp, gregarious, and very interesting man who had taught film and directed plays for many years. Occasionally in our class, he'd say something like . . . "I came to the United States at age 13 with just the clothes I was wearing." Once when I visited his office to talk about my work, he told me that his father had handed him a ship's ticket from Hamburg to the U.S. The family was living some distance from Hamburg, but his father just said, "The ship sails in three days. You've got to get there on your own." It was the late 1930s and extremely difficult to find a way out of Germany. Hal managed to get on board that ship and he never saw his father or younger sister again. This story intrigued me and kept simmering in my mind for several years.

A few years later, I happened to read a newspaper article about the "one thousand children" – a website that had been created on behalf of the 1,000 or so Jewish children who had managed to escape Nazi-held Europe and found refuge in the United States. I remember the excitement this article generated. It was as if the story had been percolating in me all this time. That very night I started writing *Forced Journey*. I knew how it would begin and I knew how it would end.

In retrospect, I realize I chose this subject for deep, personal reasons.

Like any Jewish child growing up in the 1950s and hearing about the Holocaust, I was completely horrified that such a thing could happen. I can remember being 10 or 12 years old and lying in bed at night imagining the

thousands of Jewish men, women, and children who perished in such a horrible way. As I grew older, I had a difficult time reconciling how such evil could exist in the world alongside the goodness and beauty in life.

The knowledge of the Holocaust remained like a wound in my heart that needed to be healed. When I started writing *Forced Journey*, however, I wasn't thinking in philosophical, much less therapeutic, terms; I just thought I was telling the story of an imaginary boy named Werner Berlinger and his experience in coming to the United States. I wrote in first person (though that was later changed to third person) because I felt I knew him so well, his speech, his manners. It wasn't until I had finished the book – until I had written the final pages about his extreme grief, his near-extinction and ultimate survival – that I began to understand why I had written this book. In a sense, I am the boy Werner Berlinger. His shriek

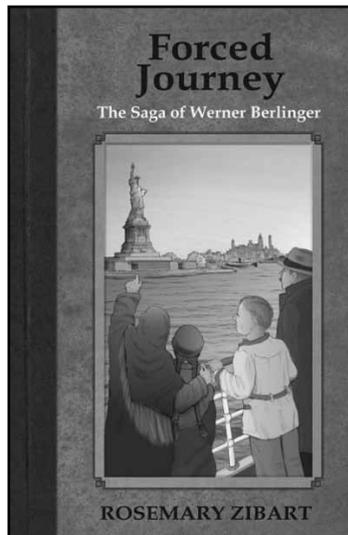
"Where are they? Where are they?" is my own shriek of horror at realizing what has happened and having to grapple with that horror, that grief, that immense loss – not just a personal loss but loss of innocence, loss of belief in the goodness of humankind.

In some ways, writers do write for themselves. They write the books they need to read in order to resolve the deeply conflicted elements in their hearts. Writers are "successful" when they can take readers on the same ride, when their readers achieve the same catharsis through reading the story. In the best of possible worlds, the writer creates a sort of communion with others – the sharing of what's most painful and meaningful in their lives. They hope their work will convey whatever little piece of sense or understanding they've gained in their struggle. I burst into tears when I wrote the last pages of *Forced Journey* – that's how cathartic it was for me.

In researching the book for several years, I learned more than I could wish to know about the Holocaust, especially the children who escaped – both in the Kindertransport that enabled 10,000 children to go to Britain and in the smaller exoduses to Sweden (400 children) and the United States (about 1,400 children). Eleanor Roosevelt had proposed legislation in the late 1930s that would have admitted 10,000 children (like Great Britain), but the bill was tabled in Congress. Of course, these minuscule numbers are dwarfed in relation to the 1.5 million children who couldn't escape and were slaughtered.



Rosemary Zibart



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An Outstretched Arm: New Mexico Jewry and the Rescue of German Jews in the 1930s

This speech was presented on November 15, 2014, at the NMJHS Fall Conference at the New Mexico Holocaust & Intolerance Museum in Albuquerque.

by Noel Pugach

The position and future of Germany's 525,000 Jews darkened throughout the 1930s following the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. Although they had no specific plan when they came to power, Hitler and a variety of ideologues left no doubt as to their hatred of and hostility towards Judaism, as well as their evil intentions regarding the "Chosen People." Hitler, in *Mein Kampf*, offered a rough outline of their future program.

The persecution of German Jewry unfolded as soon as the Nazis seized the machinery of the state and turned Germany into a dictatorship. The pattern was repeated in other countries as Germany brought them into its expanding empire. Jews were beaten, humiliated, excluded from cultural affairs, government service, and the professions; their businesses were boycotted; and some were sent to the growing number of concentration camps. Then in 1935, the infamous Nuremberg Laws deprived them of citizenship and protection under the law, as well as categorized them as an inferior race and forbade sexual relations with Aryans. In 1937-38, the regime seized or forced the sale of Jewish businesses and nullified the autonomy of Jewish communal organizations. Then, on November 9-10, 1938, the regime launched a brutal pogrom, beating and killing Jews and sending thousands to concentration camps, though most were subsequently released. This day of terror is known as Kristallnacht, whose 76th anniversary we observed last week, because the sound of breaking glass echoed throughout Germany as almost all synagogues and many Jewish businesses and homes were torched and destroyed. All of these steps were designed to force German Jewry to emigrate and purify Germany, a land inhabited by Jews for two thousand years, making it *Judenfrei*.

After some initial hesitancy, almost all German Jews wanted to leave their homeland by the mid-1930s. However, they confronted two very difficult and complex problems. The first was that the Nazi regime pursued erratic and contradictory policies. On the one hand, it wanted the Jews to leave; on the other, there were officials who wanted to use the Jews for ransom and blackmail, insure the stability of the economy, and plunder Jewish assets at home and abroad. There were also harebrained schemes to resettle them on reservations in Poland and Madagascar as slave labor. Sometimes they forced Jews onto ships to various destinations; other times they denied them exit papers.

The other problems were perhaps more daunting. If they could get out, where would they go? Most of the world by the late 1930s did not want them because of the Great Depression, anti-Semitism, or internal political problems. Initially, Palestinian Jewry was reluctant to welcome them because these capitalist, highly educated Jews would not fit into the struggling, semi-socialist society that the Pioneers were trying to build. And when the Yishuv changed its views, the British colonial rulers sought to limit Jewish immigration out of fear of antagonizing the restive Arab population.

By the late 1930s, desperate German Jews were willing to go – and did go – almost anywhere: Europe, Palestine, the Far East, the Americas, South Africa, but especially the United States. But the U.S. was not willing to welcome them because of the impact of the Great Depression, growing anti-Semitism, isolationism,



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and political wrangling. The restrictive legislation passed in 1924 (the National Origins Act) was rigorously enforced by government bureaucrats, who created numerous hurdles and a mass of red tape, forms, and affidavits to deter and discourage Jewish immigration no matter how much Jews were suffering. Their actions were supported by Congress and

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the American public, which did not want immigrants to compete for jobs or be a public charge. And President Roosevelt, who was not anti-Semitic, did not want to spend political capital on these Jews and was overwhelmed by other problems. In addition, the large American Jewish community was limited in what it could do: It had not yet achieved great wealth, it was mired in the problems of the Depression, it was not politically powerful, and it was very anxious about the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism.

But tens of thousands of these German Jews did make it to our shores, in part because of the efforts of Jewish institutions, the lawyers they employed, and philanthropists, but also due to the generosity, determination, and assistance provided by their relatives and friends who had emigrated to the United States from the mid-19th century. Several hundred had settled in New Mexico, where they became successful businessmen and ranchers, some of whom were wealthy and well-established in New Mexico society.

It is this fascinating story that I will address, and it brings out interesting themes and many interconnections. I cannot delve into all of the characters in the tale in the limited time I have been given. So I must be selective. Some names may be well known to those in the audience; others have limited currency.

While most of New Mexico German Jews arrived from the 1850s to World War I, there was never a complete cutoff of the migration from Germany to the new 47th state. During the transitional period of the 1920s, several Kahns joined close relatives in New Mexico. But I will focus on Rudolf Dreyer, who came on a lark and indeed discovered and fell in love with the Land of Enchantment.

Rudolf was born in Bielefeld (Westphalia), Germany, in 1907 and received a modern education in the town's gymnasium. In 1929, this single 22-year-old was looking for an adventure. Max Nordhaus, the president of the Iffeld Company (the

premier wholesale house in the state) was visiting his family in Germany and upon meeting Rudolf encouraged the young man to work for the firm in Albuquerque. Max had married into the Staab-Shuster clan and Rudolf's mother was a Shuster. The Staabs had created a leading merchant house in New Mexico in the 19th century. Rudolf was eager to try it out for a while and he was so happy here that he decided to stay permanently.

As Rudolf rose in the management ranks at Iffeld's, he met and married Clare Weiller in 1937, a member of four related Alsatian Jewish families that played an important role in the commercial life of downtown Albuquerque since the late 19th century and were major figures at Temple Albert. Rudolf and Clare had two daughters, Joan Dreyer Allen, who just passed away, and Nancy Dreyer Blaugrund. Later in the 1930s, Rudolf, the new arrival, brought over his mother "Oma" Wally, and helped to rescue several of his German and Czech relatives, notably Ilse Blaugrund and her sister Lotti Sternberg. In 1944, he felt he owed a debt to the United States and joined the U.S. Army, even though he was too old to be drafted. He was assigned to the Quartermaster Corps, and for several months he and Clare lived in Washington, D.C.

Upon returning to Albuquerque after the war, Rudolf met Louis Zork, who had established Zork Hardware in El Paso. Zork encouraged Rudolf to open an independent store under the Zork name. Zork provided some of the capital and owned a share in the enterprise. Others also invested in it. Rudolf's store was a success.

Meanwhile, Rudolf was involved with the Albuquerque Civic Symphony and nurtured it through its difficult period. He later helped to found the New Mexico Symphony and served as its president. He was also on the board of the June Music Festival, was treasurer of the Community Concert Association, and served on the Child Guidance Board. He loved music and he left an important legacy to our community, repaying it and the nation for

embracing him. Rudolf suffered a stroke in 1968 and a year later doctors found a brain tumor. He died in 1969 and is buried in Congregation Albert Cemetery. His widow Clare is still alive and celebrated her 100th birthday in December 2014.

Rudolf Dreyer and Max Nordhaus were also connected to my next subject, Wolfgang Mueller. Mueller came from the prolific Shuster family, which lived near Paderborn, the home town of the Nordhaus family. Indeed, his father Ernst was trained for his Bar Mitzvah by Max's father Jacob, who served as cantor and religious leader for the Jewish community in the region. Wolfgang felt the sting of Nazism when he was ejected from the Leibnitz school in Hannover for refusing to give the Heil salute in his classroom. After his Bar Mitzvah, his parents sent him to school in England. But because of the restrictions on sending money out of Germany, Max Nordhaus came to the rescue and arranged a way to pay for his tuition. Max also invited him to come to New Mexico to work for the Iffeld Company. Wolfgang was thrilled and was prepared to come before he graduated high school. Max secured all the papers and affidavits for Wolf, who arrived in the United States in July 1936. His distant cousin Rudolf Dreyer greeted him at the train station with the sad news that his patron had suddenly died. Max's wife and daughters, then in mourning, were surprised when Rudolf brought Wolf to their home, as Max had not told them about their guest or when he would arrive. Wolf faced a predicament. Nevertheless, Elizabeth and her daughters welcomed the stranger and brought him to the family's mountain retreat at Trout Springs near Las Vegas. Wolf experienced tennis, horseback riding, and trout fishing in the midst of "the paradise" of the Sangre de Cristos.

Six weeks later, Rudolf Dreyer took him back to Albuquerque and put him to work in the hardware department of the Iffeld Company, which he managed. Wolfgang

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started as a “gofer,” but quickly was given added responsibilities. Meanwhile, he carefully observed the efficient Rudolf and other managers at the company. After a few years, Wolf was put in charge of government contracts and was involved in bidding on them. He expanded his contacts, dealt with major buyers, and gained further promotions. He soon earned a good salary and could buy a car.

Wolfgang was drafted into the Army Air Corps in 1941 and was discharged in January 1945. He declined a permanent position as a translator attached to the Air Corps because he had enough of “regimentation.” He sought his old job at the Ilfeld Company and was offered the position of manager of the tire department in Las Vegas. Wolf thought the salary was too low and returned to the Washington, D.C., area where a sister lived. Wolf eventually made a career in the perishable food business, married, and raised a family. Wolf retired in 2009, and died last year.

Wolf never regretted leaving the Ilfeld Company. But he retained a deep love for New Mexico, especially its stunning beauty, his adventures on horseback and fishing on its streams, and his fond memories of the friends he made here. He spoke nostalgically about them at the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society’s Fall Conference in 2010 in Las Vegas.

I now turn to Leopold and Joanna Boehm Seligman. Joanna, better known in Albuquerque as Hanni, was born in Beuthen, Germany, in 1894 and later married Leopold Seligman, born in 1880 in Werden. Leopold remained in Germany while his brothers Siegfried, Julius, Carl, and Ernest emigrated to New Mexico. For Leopold became a major entrepreneur and fashioned the third largest garment manufacturer in Germany. He had a factory in Berlin and also one in Manchester, England. In 1938, Leopold was warned by a connection in the German police to leave Germany as quickly as possible. Thus, in September 1938, two months before Kristallnacht, Leopold, Hanni, and their son John left for the United States.

Their daughter Ruth had moved to the United States in 1936, living with the Seligmans in Bernalillo for a while; their son Rudy was studying in England.

Leopold’s brothers, who owned the Bernalillo Mercantile Company, and his sister had urged him to come to the United States and the family sponsored them. Rudolf Dreyer may have also played a small part. Leopold and Hanni left behind their factory and Berlin mansion, which were seized by the Nazis, though they managed to take out some other assets. Still, they had to rebuild their lives and they did so in amazingly quick fashion. Hanni began sewing clothing in their home with help from family members. Jane Weiller Gins Thompson recalls how she modeled clothes for them in their living room. But from these beginnings, the Seligmans created Pioneer Wear, which at one point had hundreds of machines and workers in their factory on Yale Boulevard in Albuquerque and sold goods all over the world. Leopold died in June 1946 and the factory was run by Hanni (who became president) and the children for a number of years. Hanni and Leopold were active members of Congregation Albert, and Hanni was one of the first women to serve on the Temple’s board. She died in 1974.

My final subject is Fritz Scheuer, whose arrival in New Mexico remains somewhat clouded. Fritz was born in Essen in 1910 to Julius and Henrietta Scheuer. Fritz graduated from the gymnasium in Essen and worked in retailing. It is not clear when he arrived in New Mexico, but his son Ralph is certain it was between 1934 and 1936, when he went to work for the Herzstein branch store in Nara Visa and later at Herzstein’s Ready to Wear in Clayton. Simon Herzstein established it after a fire destroyed the old general store, M. Herzstein and Company, in Clayton, and it was known all over the region for carrying fine brands. Nor do we know for sure who sponsored Fritz. Kathryn Rubin believes that Gus Kahn played a role. However, Ralph thinks it was Simon Herzstein, even though they were not related.

The Herzsteins had employed and trained young German Jews in their enterprises since the 1890s. Perhaps Simon was just trying to help a Jewish refugee and their paths fortunately crossed.

Fritz worked his way up the ladder and, after World War II, he was made a partner. Fritz was very intelligent and a meticulous manager. He essentially ran the store for the next decade as Simon joined his family in Denver. Fritz and Simon sold the store in 1955. Fritz then moved to Santa Fe where he opened a highly successful ladies clothing store right off the Plaza. Meanwhile, he married Doris Kahn and they had three sons. One of them, Ralph, is an attorney in Santa Fe. Fritz retired in 1979 and moved to Palm Springs, California.

I wish I could discuss how other German refugees were rescued by their New Mexico relatives and how they made the transition to a new life in the Southwest. There are fascinating stories about Franziska and Isidore Koenigsthal, who were aided by Joseph and Emma Wertheim of Carlsbad. Their son Arthur, who took the name of Kingston, still lives in Carlsbad. The family of Gerda Liselotte Lang, better known as Lilo Waxman, was sponsored by her Ludwig Ilfeld relatives and brought to Las Vegas, New Mexico. Lilo later married Arnold Waxman of Mora County and moved to St. Louis, where he practiced dentistry. Lilo has a special place in this Holocaust Museum as she donated the striking dollhouse that was in her family’s possession for six generations. Betsy Messeca recently told me that her Nordhaus family brought the Eicholz sisters and the Oppenheimer family to Albuquerque. Max Nordhaus paid for the house in which the Eichholzes lived. And there are the Gottliebs of Cubero, who rescued many of their clan. Und so weiter, and so forth.

What observations and conclusions do I draw from the examples I have provided? First, when the Nazi regime sought to eliminate German Jewry from its midst

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Forced Journey (continued from p. 4)

Since the book was published, I've visited various cities to give book signings and I've made an effort to meet individuals who escaped as children. These include Gunther Aron of Santa Fe and Werner Zimmt of Tucson, both of blessed memory, and Lottie Strupp of Nashville. Hearing their first-hand accounts inspires me to write more stories, because each story is poignant in its own way.

Gunther escaped as part of a Berlin trade school that relocated to England the day before World War II began. How amazing – a hundred boys were saved! Werner said he got out on a fluke because the physician at the American Embassy in Berlin, who was notorious for refusing to issue permits for any trivial reason, happened to be absent the day Werner went

for a physical. Lottie left Stuttgart with her little sister and spent a year in England with a Jewish couple before heading to the U.S. and reuniting with her own family. But the bond she created in that one year with her British foster father endured a lifetime.

To me, a writer's role is similar to that of a sculptor who sees a figure in a block of marble and works with all her skill to reveal this figure to others. We delve into the stuff of human existence and bring to light its shape, its essence. Both Jewish and non-Jewish writers are drawn to write about the Holocaust, I believe, because the material is so compelling that it demands attention; it demands that people grapple with the most ultimate questions of human existence. The

quest, as I've said, is personal as well as public.

I particularly like writing about the period of WWII because there was a much clearer division between the forces fighting for good and evil. The Allies were definitely the forces of liberty stopping the forces of tyranny and prejudice. I write about young people because for them, it was often a time of hardship and dislocation and tremendous challenges – so there are many possibilities for personal growth. In fact, the theme of my books *Forced Journey* and *True Brit* is “*Sometimes you have to travel far to find your best self.*” ☆

Rosemary Zibart is an author and playwright in Santa Fe. For further information, consult www.rosemaryzibart.com.

An Outstretched Arm (continued from p. 7)

in the 1930s, which would prove to be a precursor to the Shoah, and our American government, like so many others in the so-called civilized world, closed their doors, Jews around the world made a great effort to rescue their families and brethren. That was also true of the small Jewish community in New Mexico, which was settled by a significant group of German Jewish immigrants from the mid-nineteenth century to World War I. They had stayed in contact with their families in Germany through correspondence, and some even visited them in Germany. Meanwhile, they had established themselves in the state's economy and social and political life. And they used their resources, financial and political, to save family members and non-relatives. They provided ship passage, supported them financially until they could get on their feet, often gave them jobs in their enterprises, and helped them adjust to the very different environment of New Mexico. In addition, they dueled with Washington's formidable bureaucracy, filing the required affidavits and other forms guaranteeing that they would not be a public charge. When necessary, they contacted congressmen and senators to intervene in behalf of relatives. The

Wertheims enlisted the help of Congressman John Dempsey to secure the release of Isidore from the Buchenwald concentration camp. But they were not always successful. The Bell family of Santa Fe asked Senator Carl Hatch to intervene with Secretary of State Cordell Hull to admit their 15-year-old nephew Aaron Lerman from Lithuania in 1939. But their efforts failed and young Aaron perished in the Holocaust.

Second, like the German Jews who migrated to New Mexico before World War I, the new arrivals adjusted rather quickly to the state's mercantile system, culture, and society. Some like Fritz Scheuer had a thick German accent, but they quickly learned English and in many cases Spanish. And they became successful businessmen on their own in New Mexico: Rudolf Dreyer founded Zork Hardware in Albuquerque, Wolf Mueller his own produce company, Fritz Scheuer a clothing store in Santa Fe, and the Seligmans the major firm of Pioneer Wear.

Third, almost all stayed in New Mexico, even in some of its smaller towns, which they came to admire and love, as did their predecessors. Wolf wanted to carve

Contribute to the NMJHS Archives

In an effort to update and complete the NM Jewish Historical Society archives in Santa Fe, we invite you to contribute any documents, photos, programs, letters, or papers you might have about New Mexico Jewry, particularly pre-1945. NMJHS Archivist Pat Carlton, assisted by board members Paula Amar Schwartz and Rae Siporin, hope to enhance our holdings when submissions fit our guidelines. If you have CDs or DVDs, we can probably accommodate them in the files. If you have artifacts, please send photos. Send documents, photos, CDs, and DVDs to NMJHS, 5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109. Please contact Pat Carlton if you have questions: carlton505@comcast.net, 505-988-1596 (Santa Fe). Thank you.

Rae Siporin
Paula Amar Schwartz

a career for himself in the Washington, D.C., area, which he got to know during his service in World War II. And Lilo had

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In Memorium: Robert E. Herzstein

by Noel Pugach



Robert Erwin Herzstein, a star in the legal profession and a proud descendant of a prominent New Mexico Jewish pioneer family, passed away on

February 12, 2015, in Washington D.C.

Bob was born in Denver in 1931 to Sigmund Herzstein and Estelle Ruth Borwick. He was raised in Clayton, New Mexico, where his family were important merchants since the late 1890s. Morris Herzstein had led the way and brought out his nephew Simon to help him in his general mercantile business. After a fire destroyed the building occupied by M. Herzstein & Company, Simon, Bob's grandfather, opened Herzstein's Ready to Wear. Glimpsing the future of merchandising, Simon's new venture specialized in selling quality brand-name men's clothing and drew customers from all over the southern plains. His new store, built in the midst of the Great Depression, was designed by the famed New Mexico architect, John Gaw Meem. Simon had two sons, Sigmund and Simon Jr., and a daughter, Isobel Lord.

During World War II, Bob's father served in the military and was transferred to various posts, winding up in Denver. Bob graduated from high school in Denver, where several of the Herzsteins had settled after retiring from the business. Bob went to Harvard University, where he received his bachelor's and law degrees, and served in the Army at Fort Benning in Georgia and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. After release from the service, Bob and his wife, Priscilla (a classmate at Harvard Law School and on the Law

Review), stayed in Washington where Bob worked as a civilian in the legal department at the Pentagon.

They then tried to find jobs with a Denver law firm, but none were hiring women. So they returned to Washington and both were hired by the prestigious and politically connected firm of Arnold & Porter, the home of New Deal antitrust figure Thurman Arnold and Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas.

Bob was now launched on an illustrious legal and public service career. He acquired expertise in international trade and represented and advised both private corporations and governments. Bob "quarterbacked" the Mexican government in negotiations resulting in the North American Free Trade Agreement of 1993. He also served as an undersecretary of international trade at the Commerce Department during the President Jimmy Carter's administration.

Robert Herzstein's greatest historical legacy and claim to fame was his role in forcing President Richard Nixon to surrender possession of his Presidential papers and the infamous tapes. As lead counsel to several historians, political scientists, and reporters, Bob successfully challenged the deal Nixon made with the General Services Administration that allowed him to take his papers to his home in California. Consequently, the papers were turned over to the National Archives and made available to researchers and reporters, who uncovered additional information on

Watergate and other shenanigans of the Nixon Administration.



Robert Herzstein was widely admired and respected as an attorney and humanitarian. He promoted justice, human rights, and conflict resolution through such civic groups as Partners for Democratic Change, the International Human Rights Law Group, and the Appleseed Foundation.

Bob was a long-time member of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society and had a strong interest in its work. He provided me with insight and information about his family when I wrote the booklet on the Herzsteins, published by NMJHS. He was always helpful and delightful in our conversations and correspondence. Bob attended NMJHS' fall conference in Las Vegas in 2010 with his daughter Jessica and son-in-law Elliot. Afterwards, he took them to Clayton, New Mexico, to show them the community where he and his ancestors lived and worked. He told his children about the frightening dust storms that ravaged the southern plains during the Dust Bowl of 1930s. He recalled that the Herzsteins were among the very few Jews in Clayton, but added that everyone was friendly and inclusive.

Bob's wife, Priscilla Holmes, died in 2010. He is survived by his daughters Jessica and Emily and son Robert. ☆

An Outstretched Arm (continued from p. 8)

to follow her husband Arnold Waxman when he studied dentistry and established a major practice in St. Louis. But they retained fond memories and attachments to New Mexico. Those who remained in New Mexico became good citizens, contributing their talents and material

resources to their local communities and the state.

I think it is an impressive story, both from the standpoint of the old German Jewish community which helped to create modern New Mexico, and from that of

the refugees who transformed themselves into new Americans and realized the American dream. Out of the horrors of the Holocaust, we have some things to celebrate. ☆

The Amazing Life of Doña Gracia Nasi

by Peter Weinreb, Congregation Albert Volunteer



Author Andrée Aelion Brooks spoke about Doña Gracia Nasi and her contributions to Jewish history at Congregation Albert in

Albuquerque on May 2, 2015, and was the keynote speaker at Yom Limmud: A Day of Jewish Learning, Arts, and Culture in Santa Fe on May 3, 2015, on the subject of “Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean.” Andrée’s biography of Doña Gracia Nasi, *The Woman Who Defied Kings*, is currently in pre-production for a TV mini-series.

Doña Gracia Nasi was a Portuguese-born Jewish woman who succeeded her late husband in the family’s international banking enterprise during the Renaissance. She saved many converso

Jews from the horrors of the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal by running an escape network, enabling them to survive in Palestine and elsewhere.

Some of those she saved are the ancestors of converso Jews who later settled in northern New Mexico. Her considerable influence enabled her to organize an economic boycott of the prominent seaport province of Ancona, Italy, as a protest against the Inquisition’s burning of Jews there. Doña Gracia also knew Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and lobbied him for a permanent settlement in Palestine.

Andrée’s other publications include *Russian Dance: A True Story of Intrigue and Passion in Stalinist Moscow*, *Out of Spain*, and *Children of Fast Track Parents*. She currently lectures to Jewish audiences nationally about stories of Jewish history. Her web address is www.andreeaelionbrooks.com, and she can be reached at 203-226-9834 and andreebrooks@hotmail.com. ☆



Editor’s note: Ms. Brooks’ presentation in Albuquerque was arranged by Anita Miller of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society board of directors.

NMJHS ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, June 14, 2015 Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Fe

1 PM: Business Meeting

2 PM: Keynote Speaker: Anne Derse, Former U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania

CELEBRATE OUR 30TH ANNIVERSARY

New Mexico Jewish Historical Society

2015 Fall Conference in Las Cruces, New Mexico

Join us as the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society holds its 2015 Fall Conference, entitled “Legacies of the Jewish Communities of the Southern Southwest and Celebrating 30 Years of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society,” on November 14-15 at the New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Our preliminary program promises to bring together colleagues from the Texas and Arizona Jewish Historical Societies, as well as New Mexico friends, to celebrate the rich histories of our region. Participants include Emily Bois, Dr. Jeffrey Brown, Pat Siegel Hart, Dr. Rick Hendricks, Dr. Marie-Theresa Hernandez, Dr. Jon Hunner, Rabbi Larry Karol, Rabbi Stephen Leon, Dr. Richard Melzer, Dr. Noel Pugach, Dawn Santiago, Dr. Henry Tobias, Debra Winegarten, Dr. Dianne Layden, Jeff Diamond, Dr. Ann Ramenofsky, Debra Wechter Friedman, David Steinborn, Frances Williams, and Rabbi Paul Citrin.

Information about conference registration, lodging, and directions in Las Cruces will be available by mid-August.

Linda Goff, Chair
2015 NMJHS Fall Conference
lagoff@hotmail.com

NMJHS 2014 Fall Conference: The Jewish Merchants of Albuquerque



Naomi Sandweiss, President



Harvey Buchalter, Keynote Speaker



Panels, Jewish Merchants in Albuquerque



Noel Pugach, NM Holocaust & Intolerance Museum



Sharon Niederman, Downtown Walking Tour



Anita Miller, Conference Chair, Stan Feinstein, Naomi's dad, and Naomi Sandweiss, President

Silent Auction



Registration

New Mexico Jewish Historical Society
5520 Wyoming Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109

Membership in NMJHS

For information contact the NMJHS office at 505-348-4471 or admin@nmjhs.org to request a membership brochure. Alternatively, you can download a membership application from the NMJHS website www.nmjhs.org

Calendar of NMJHS Upcoming Events

Check for future events at www.nmjhs.org

June 14: NMJHS Annual Meeting, Keynote Address by Anne Derse, Former U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania. Tentative Topic: "Addressing the Legacy of the Holocaust in Lithuania." Co-sponsored with Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Fe: 1:00 PM, Business Meeting: 2:00 PM, Keynote Address, *NMJHS.org*.

November 14-15: Fall Conference, "Celebrating 30 Years: A Retrospective and the Jewish Communities of the Southern Southwest," New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, *NMJHS.org*.

