



## Making a Difference: Fall Conference Celebrates New Mexico's Multi-Dimensional Jewish History

by Harvey Buchalter, conference co-chair



ake the journey to the Old West town of Las Vegas, New Mexico, and be rewarded with an unforgettable weekend of stimulating speakers, optional

tours, and meeting old friends as the NMJHS's Fall Conference gets underway, Saturday and Sunday, November 4 and 5, at the historic Plaza Hotel.

The conference begins Saturday at 9:30 a.m. with a guided tour of the Montezuma Castle, followed by a self-guided walking tour of the historic Plaza area.

Montezuma Castle was the first Fred Harvey luxury resort destination in Las Vegas. Now the home of United World College, the 90,000-square-foot structure is a fascinating combination of Queen Anne design and locally quarried sandstone and slate.

Conference registration and a dairy lunch at the Plaza Hotel will precede the welcome and opening remarks by co-chairs Linda Goff and Harvey Buchalter.

Keynote speaker, Professor Gil Ribak, from the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Arizona, will speak on the intriguing topic of an "outsider's" view of the Southwest. The outsider is the Yiddish author Sholem Asch—perhaps the best known, and certainly the most controversial, Yiddish writer in America in the first decades of the 20th century. His topic is "Mexicans Are Just Like Every Oriental People: The Southwest in Sholem Asch's Writing." Asch's perspective, that of a Yiddish-speaking immigrant on the peoples of the Southwest, promises to be an inter-

esting and rather exotic choice of topic for this year's keynote address.

The mid-afternoon program offers a more contemporary view of the culture and personalities in the Southwest. "Making a Difference: The Northern New Mexico Jewish Communities: The Stories of Los Alamos and Santa Fe," will be presented by David Israelevitz from Los Alamos and Marian Silver from Santa Fe.

Following the afternoon break, Justin Ferate will speak on "Judaism and its Relationship with Art: A Look at Artists and the WPA." Justin is an urban, social, and architectural historian and formerly the director of Tour Services for Gray Line New York.

The Saturday late afternoon program will then shift from visual art to poetry. Two Santa Fe-based poets, Joan Logghe and Miriam Sagan, will speak on "Wandering Poets: Our Years in the Desert." Joan Logghe served as Santa Fe Poet Laureate from 2010-12, and Miriam is the author of 30 published books including the novel "Black Rainbow," and "Geographic: a Memoir of Time and Space," which won the 2016 Arizona/New Mexico Book Award in Poetry.

Wine and appetizers will be served concurrently with the Silent Auction and Raffle before dinner. Our silent auction committee promises an offering of "can't

do without" items, and our raffle, always one of the most popular segments of the conference, should not be missed!

Dinner will be buffet style, served in the dining hall of the Plaza Hotel., followed by UNM Professor Emeritus Noel Pugach's talk on "The Role of Jews in Small-Town New Mexico: The Wertheims of Fort Sumner." Noel has done extensive research on the contribu-

tions of Jewish pioneers in the mercantile history of New Mexico and is a familiar speaker at the fall conferences.

The busy Saturday menu of offerings will conclude with a film that originally aired on PBS ¡Colores! several years ago, called "New Mexico's Jewish Settlers."



Harvey Buchalter

### Registration materials will be mailed early in September. You may register:

- online through the NMJHS website using PayPal
- by printing out the conference registration form on the NMJHS website
- via registration form included in the conference brochure
- by telephone call to the NMJHS Office at 505-348-4471

This documentary highlights the contributions Jews made to the culture and

*(continued on p. 9)*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Fall Conference Preview.....	1
President's Column.....	2
Holocaust Survivors Honored.....	3
NMJHS Lifetime Member Profile.....	6
Keynote Speaker: Gil Ribak.....	7
NMJHS Treasurer's Annual Report.....	7
In Memoriam: Haskell Sheinberg.....	8
In Memoriam: Aron Straser.....	10
In Memoriam: Robert Nordhaus.....	11
Calendar.....	12

## President's Column

**“An interesting historical story: Jews in the American Southwest and Free Masons”**



At the Montefiore Cemetery program held on Sunday, May 28, some interesting connections were revealed. During the morning in which Siddurim from Temple Montefiore were buried, Noel Pugach and Naomi Sandweiss presented a



*NMJHS President  
Linda Goff*

program with an overview of the historical importance of the Montefiore Synagogue and cemetery. Members of the Las Vegas Jewish community also shared personal family stories and memories of families interred at Montefiore.

During Noel's brief comments, he remarked on the connection between many 19th and 20th century Jewish men with the Society of Free Masons. He mentioned that several prominent New Mexico Jewish men were either buried in the Free Mason section of public cemeteries or in designated Jewish sections. Their headstones often were engraved with both Stars of David and the Freemason symbol.

As he pointed out, it was very common for Jewish men in the American Southwest to join their local Free Masons chapter, because it was one of the very few non-religious organizations that permitted Jewish members. Hence, many of the local Jewish community leaders became Masons and played prominent roles. For example, at the Las Vegas cemetery, there is an Ilfeld gravestone in the Masonic section. Similarly, in Las Cruces, there is a Freudenthal headstone in the Masonic section.

Mystery still surrounds the Free Masons and their secret pledges, symbols and symbolic practices. Some of the world's most well-known figures of the post-Enlightenment and world liberators/revolutionary leaders were Free Masons, including George Washington, Paul Revere, and Simon Bolivar.

On another note, be sure to read in this issue a sneak preview of this year's Fall Conference, “Making a Difference: 20th Century Jews and Their Legacies,” which will be held at the Plaza Hotel, November 4 & 5, in Las Vegas, New Mexico. You should already have received your ‘SAVE THE DATE’ postcard.

*Have a Wonderful Summer! ☆*

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NewMexicoJewishHistoricalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/NewMexicoJewishHistoricalSociety)  
and follow us on Twitter at  
<https://twitter.com/NMJewishHS>.**

### MAZEL TOV!

**Congratulations to the New Mexico History Museum, Fresco Books, and the authors of *Fractured Faiths: Spanish Judaism, The Inquisition and New World Identities*. The book, which accompanied the New Mexico History Museum exhibit of the same name, was edited by Roger L. Martinez Davila, Josef Diaz, and Ron D. Hart. A Gold Medal Winner, it also received the Independent Press Award for 2017.**

## NMJHS Officers and Board of Directors

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## Mission Statement

The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is a secular organization that promotes greater knowledge and understanding of New Mexico's diverse Jewish experiences within a broad cultural context.

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## Albuquerque Holocaust Survivors Honored: Part II

Part I of this article was published in the Spring 2017 issue of *Legacy*. Copies are available at the NMJHS office or at [NMJHS.org](http://NMJHS.org): click Legacy Newsletter.

by Dianne R. Layden

**O**n December 8, 2016, Holocaust survivors Evy Woods, Riva Wolf, and Asya and Michael Limanovich were honored by the Global Embassy of Activists for Peace in the House of Representatives chambers at the New Mexico State Capitol.

The Global Embassy's Traces to Remember project seeks to foster an awareness of genocide by commemorating the Holocaust, honoring survivors, and keeping alive their testimony. Exhibited for each survivor is a plaque in the shape of the Star of David, with handprints of the survivor and descendants as evidence that Nazism did not annihilate the Jewish people. The survivor's story and a description of the Holocaust accompany each plaque.

The four Albuquerque survivors are from Germany, France, Russia, and Poland. At the ceremony, they described their lives as children fearfully fleeing, hiding, and depending for survival on help from strangers and good fortune. Also, Maya Limanovich, daughter of Asya and Michael, told of her coming to the United States and bringing her family 13 years later.

Regina Turner, founder and executive director of New Mexico Human Rights Projects (NMHRP), located the survivors. Since 1995, over 400,000 students and 600 teachers have participated in NMHRP programs to combat prejudice and violence in many forms. The Anne Frank exhibits NMHRP brought to Albuquerque in 1995, 2000, and 2010 were viewed by over 250,000 visitors from around the state. The exhibits, Regina said, provided a safe venue for Holocaust survivors to tell their stories. Though the number of survivors has dwindled since 1995, NMHRP continues to bring able

survivors to speak to students in middle and high school classrooms.

Three survivors and the Limanovich daughter offered to tell their stories to *Legacy* readers. Part I of this article presented the Holocaust narratives by Evy Woods and Asya Limanovich, and Maya Limanovich's story of her and her family's immigration to the United States. Part II presents Michael Limanovich's Holocaust narrative in his own words.

### Michael Limanovich

I was born on May 3, 1927, in Olechnovichi, Poland. My mom and dad had five children: my older brother, my beautiful sister, myself, and two younger twin brothers. My father had a lumber business and my mother had a beer brewery.

By political decision of Germany, Russia, and Poland, our town became a territory of the Soviet Union on September 17, 1939. The Bolsheviks confiscated my parents' businesses and scheduled our family for departure to Siberia. But my father's former employees signed a petition and our family was able to stay in town.

The Second World War in Russia started on June 22, 1939. We were not able to evacuate because visas were necessary to cross the border into Belarus. We did not have them or the time to get them. Bombs were falling from the sky. Our town was occupied by Nazis.

On the sixth day of the war, a tow truck pulled a broken tank next to our house. A German officer walked into our home

and ordered my mother to cook for them: breakfast, lunch, and dinner. When the officer found out that we were Jewish, he advised us to keep our religion secret from the German military officials.

He recommended that my father escape and rescue the children. Soon, two German officers arrived in our town and the violence and torture began, not only by the Nazis but also local collaborators.

They would go into the houses and push people against the wall and

demand gold, jewelry, watches, and other valuables. It happened in our home, too, of course. My brother was not fast enough in giving his watch to them, and he was beaten with the dull side of a dagger. His arm was broken. For entertainment, the Nazis ordered people to fill trash cans with coal and then forced them to run a certain distance with these heavy 70-kilo cans

with a two-minute limit. Those who could not make it were shot.

In August, 1941, the ghetto was formed in our town. All Jews were sent to work for 14 hours a day. One day, Nazi SS officers visited our ghetto. They ordered people to take only necessities and be ready to move. I was working in the field at that time and found out from other children, who came to tell the news to their parents. Hearing this news, I got up on a horse and galloped away. Local policemen with a dog saw



Dianne Layden



Young Michael Limanovich

(continued on p. 4)

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**Albuquerque Holocaust Survivors Honored Part II** *(continued from p. 3)*

me, followed, caught and beat me, and returned me to the ghetto for departure.

We were placed in a cattle car. The car was attached to a train full of Jews coming from Austria. The destination was Death. My friend and I cut a hole in the cattle car window, pulled our skinny bodies through that hole, and leaped from the moving train into the cold darkness. It was the last time I saw my family. Not all of us who jumped survived. My brother Eli was shot and killed by Nazi soldiers. Running in the dark forest, escaping the moving cattle car, I could only hear the shots that likely killed my brother.

My friend and I spent the night in the forest, and in the morning went to a village and asked for food. We were caught by collaborators, who placed us in a basement. We escaped through the basement window and started running toward the woods. Somebody saw us and informed on us. A Nazi policeman tried to reach us by bike. We moved into an open field. The policeman had a gun and fired at us. He killed my friend at that moment. I did not realize it right away and dragged my friend by his arms some distance. Finally, I understood – the weight on my arm – my friend was dead.

I reached the forest. For some time I did not have any food. I was so hungry that I was forced to find a ghetto in search of food. The ghetto in this other town was much larger than ours, more than 1,000 people. After a while, SS soldiers came to this ghetto, too, and the same expulsion procedures were repeated: Elderly people and children moved to one side, and the strong and the healthy to another.

I understood that elders and children were sorted to be killed, with the healthy for difficult physical labor. I was lucky to be able to sneak into the working group. The Nazis sent us to a concentration camp called Krasnoye. We crushed rocks daily – a difficult manual task. After

a while, I managed to escape. I had no choice but to escape to another ghetto called Rodoshkovich. My plan was to join my aunts in the Vilna ghetto. I finally reached Vilna in November 1942.



**Regina Turner, New Mexico Human Rights Project**

By the end of 1942, the Nazis in the Vilna ghetto selected 15-to-17-year-olds for departure to Tilzit, East Prussia. I was one of them. In Tilzit, we lived in barracks: one for girls, the second for boys, and the third for Nazi soldiers.

Shortly after, we found that we were chosen to be subjects for medical experiments. I was there for 11 days. The oldest of us, a 17-year-old boy, organized the escape. Fifteen of us succeeded. We made a small wooden frame, put it between the wires, and crawled out of this horrible place. Then we divided into small groups of two to three teens and ran away in different directions.

One boy and I reached the railroad and found a place to hide. It was a storage box for oil and oakum under a train wagon. Our goal was to reach Olechnovichi. On the way, we spent the nights in barns or haystacks. The weather was harsh: freezing cold and snowy. My friend had no winter clothes. I tried to warm him up by putting his legs into the sleeves of my

*(continued on p. 5)*

**Albuquerque Holocaust Survivors Honored Part II** *(continued from p. 4)*

coat, but it helped only for short periods of time. Eventually, he told me: "I can't do it anymore. I am going back to the ghetto; what happened to my relatives will happen to me." We said good-bye to each other and I continued my journey alone.

For a short time, I found some family friends who hid me in their basement under empty barrels. Soon after, the police found out about me, and so as not to jeopardize the lives of my savers, I decided to run again.

I arrived at a farm. The owner needed help and hired me. One day, we were taking a bath and when I undressed, the farmer recognized that I was Jewish. On the next day, he went to the Farmers Market. His aunt and housekeeper came to me and said: "He likely will report you to the local police. Run!"

The women gave me food and matches, and I was on the run again. I stayed in the forest. I knew the forest well, as before the war my father used to buy wood there. I made a campfire; my pillow and blanket were evergreen branches. I woke up every half-hour and turned myself over to keep warm. Periodically, I came out of the woods and moved closer to the road searching for food. Sometimes, a few kind people gave me food and I went back to the campfire. There were lice everywhere. The most terrible aspect of the whole thing, or so it seemed, was I had to take off my clothes from time to time and hold them over the flames to get rid of the lice. My clothes had multiple holes. Every morning I added a little wooden stick on the side to keep track of time. I stayed in the woods for 71 days; 71 sticks.

In April 1943, I made a decision to look for partisans. On April 13th, I found

them. The partisans did not want to accept me. I did not have any weapons and I was 15 years old. One of the com-



*Ceremony in Santa Fe, December 2016. Global Assembly of Activists for Peace. Left to right: George Panchesnikov (Irina's husband), John Woods, Evy Woods, Michael Limanovich, Irina Limanovich (Maya's sister), Asya Limanovich, Maya Limanovich, Riva Wolf, Regina Turner, New Mexico Rep. Idalia Lechuga-Tena.*

manders of the platoon agreed to take me in this group. The first things that I had there were a warm bath and clean clothes. Until the last day of my life, I will remember that bath!!! For the first time in two years, I had a good night's sleep.

In the partisans' group, we fought the Nazis with dignity. After the liberation in July 1944, our group was dissolved. Everyone went back home to their families. I was 17 years old and had no family and no place to go. One of the former commanders became a director of a collective farm. He accepted me as a mechanic and truck driver.

I started searching for my family and found out from a former worker of my father that the train with my parents, sister, and brothers finally stopped. Nazi soldiers ushered the people from the cattle cars onto trucks. The trucks had hoses that ran from their exhaust pipes to compartments in the back. Then the Nazis drove the trucks to Trostenez, which is nine kilometers south of Minsk, until everybody inside was thought to be dead.

The Nazis tossed the bodies into open pits behind an abandoned brick factory.

Then bulldozers pushed dirt over the bodies of the Jews. Some people were not dead when the Nazis covered them. For some time after the bulldozers stopped piling dirt, the ground continued to crawl.

What I have told you sounds like a nightmare or a horror story, but it is simply my story. I tell it to you because it's important that we don't forget. When we take away a group's humanity because of their race or religion, or for any other reason, we make it possible for atrocities to happen. ✧

*Dianne Layden is a retired college professor and writer in Albuquerque.*

### Welcome New Members

#### New Members

Philip Goldstone  
Diana Presser  
Carlos Villareal

#### Life Members

Sheila Gershen

### Many Thanks for Your Contributions

#### Pioneer

Stanley Biderman  
Lance Bell for Research Fellowship  
Ron Taylor  
Nancy and Arthur Hartington in honor  
of Kathryn Rubin  
Linda and Ed Goff in honor of Harold  
and aj Melnick's 64th anniversary

#### Friend

Walter Halpern for Montefiore  
Cemetery  
Jennie Negin and Harold Folley  
Michael and Linda Platt in honor of  
Bob Gale  
Pauline and Mel Eisenstadt  
William and Kathleen Kahn Mahon in  
honor of Kathryn Rubin

## NMJHS Lifetime Member Profile: Halley Faust

*Editor's note: This is the first in a series of profiles of NMJHS lifetime members.*

by Sarah Winger

**N**MJHS Lifetime member Halley Faust and his wife, Ruth Anne, came to the Santa Fe area 11 years ago and have become active members of the community. He has been involved with others in creating and growing Santa Fe Middle East Watch ([www.sfmew.org](http://www.sfmew.org)), serving as clinical associate professor of Family and Community Medicine at the University of New Mexico, and serving on the University's Preventive Medicine Residency Advisory Committee. Halley is a former member of the Board of Governors of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, former president of the American College of Preventive Medicine, and manages Jerome Capital, LLC, a venture capital fund, which invests primarily in medically-related high-technology early-stage companies.

Halley completed his residency in preventive medicine at the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan, where he earned his Master's of Public Health, and then was on the faculty of the Department of Epidemiology. He had previously received his medical degree from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia and subsequently received a Master's of Arts degree in Philosophy from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, where he was also on the adjunct faculty teaching epidemiology and the philosophy and ethics of medicine. He also held faculty positions at the Universities of Kentucky, Connecticut, and Hartford, and has held various jobs with HealthAmerica and Aetna.

In 1991, Halley created Medmax Ventures, LLC, a venture capital firm that invested in high-technology medical Israeli companies, creating about 1000 jobs in Israel at the time of high Russian immigration. He continues to participate in U.S. politics, supporting the state of Israel as the political chair of the New

Mexico chapter of the American Israel Public Affairs Committees ([www.AIPAC.org](http://www.AIPAC.org)), and through Santa Fe Middle East Watch (SFMEW), a beneficiary organization of the Jewish Federation of New Mexico. He is also on the development committee of Mazon, the Jewish response to hunger ([www.mazon.org](http://www.mazon.org)), and



*Halley Faust, NMJHS Lifetime Member*

active with the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry ([www.nacoej.org](http://www.nacoej.org)).

SFMEW's mission is to provide accurate, truthful and balanced information to the greater Santa Fe area on Israel and on the Israeli/Palestinian dispute. The SFMEW was created to "correct the record when there is an anti-Israeli presentation whether through lecture or media, to educate the population about the history of the dispute and the region, and to provide speakers and support for the pro-Israel community," according to Halley. The SFMEW also works to become and remain involved in community events to promote a positive image of Israel.

A little known fact is that Israel is New Mexico's number two exporting partner (second to Mexico). Given the prominence of Israel in the economics of New Mexico, SFMEW works to strengthen

economic ties further.

Halley and Ruth Anne, a former Montessori teacher, have two sons and four grandchildren. They are current members of Santa Fe Chabad, Kol BeRamah, and HaMakom, and since moving to New Mexico, have enjoyed learning and studying the rich history of the Jews of the Southwest. They are interested in identifying the parallels of the history of the Jews in the Southwest with that of Ruth Anne's paternal grandparents who settled in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1913. As merchant pioneers, her grandfather sold groceries by dogsled and her grandmother was a schoolmarm from Iowa. In addition, Ruth Anne has a strong identity with Israel; her maternal grandparents grew up in Mea Shearim, Jerusalem, in Jewish Palestine in the 1890s.



*Sarah Winger*

Halley and Ruth Anne have become lifetime members of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society to fulfill their "responsibility to help to maintain Jewish heritage within New Mexico and to help explain the unique history to the rest of the world." Halley hopes that his lifetime membership gift will help the Society use membership funds in a beneficial way and hopes that NMJHS will pass this history on to future generations. "We have to let our young folks know what others have done; that we are a part of the diverse and interesting history of the Southwest," he says. "As the younger generation learns about Jewish history, it instills pride and encourages pride, along with a commitment to our Jewish heritage."

(For more information or to contribute to Santa Fe Middle East Watch, visit [www.sfmew.org](http://www.sfmew.org)) ☆

## Mexicans Are Just Like Every Oriental People: The Southwest in Sholem Asch's Yiddish Writing

by Gil Ribak

**T**raveling from Chicago to California by train in 1920, renowned Yiddish author Sholem Asch recorded in his travel log his impressions of the Southwest, which were published in 1921 as part of his collected works in 12 volumes. When Asch woke up one day, the train was already chugging through New Mexico. The writer used a quote from the first chapter of Genesis to describe the landscape: "And the Earth was unformed and void, and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the earth." Asch wrote that he could see "no tree, nothing green," but also felt he experienced a religious epiphany in the quiet wilderness, as if "I heard the heartbeat of the world." As he traveled

through Arizona and Southern California, he believed that the Grand Canyon resembled the Judean desert, and was fascinated by the various ethnic groups that populated Los Angeles.

My keynote lecture at the Fall Conference will focus on that journey in the Southwest, but it will also present the life and career of Asch, who would have received a place of honor next to the big three Yiddish writers (Mendele Moykher Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, and I. L. Peretz), if it were not for his controversial and irreverent writings. Apart from writing about the phenomena of Jewish prostitution, women trafficking, and pimps, Asch also penned a trilogy about Jesus's life (part of it was published during the Holocaust),

for which critics accused him of encouraging conversion to Christianity. Yet Asch brought Yiddish literature into the mainstream of English-language readership, while remaining involved in Jewish public life. ✡



*Dr. Gil Ribak*

*Dr. Gil Ribak will be the keynote speaker at the Fall Conference. He is an assistant professor at the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Arizona. His book, *Gentile New York: The Images of Non-Jews among Jewish Immigrants*, was published by Rutgers University Press in 2012.*

## NMJHS Treasurer's Annual Report for 2016

by Rae Lee Siporin, Treasurer

**T**he year 2016 was one of transition: new treasurer, new president, new office administrator as of May; new bookkeeping firm as of June; new emphasis on budgeting by functional activities. Consequently, much remains to be done to continue the updating of the chart of accounts; full development of functional analysis; transfer of budgeting and review of financials to a reporting system based on functional programs.

A thorough review of the assets of the NMJHS holdings reveals a better-than-average financial position. This allowed for a slight relaxation of prohibition to spending. At the proposal of the treasurer, the board approved in concept an approach that allowed for what we are labelling a dual mini-grant program. One aspect of this is self-funding of new efforts by members of the Society. Examples include adding to the Visiting Scholars Program; adding support

for the Fall Conference; increasing the distribution of *Legacy* and funding the start of "self grants."

The NMJHS is a nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation, incorporated in New Mexico, operating on a cash-accounting basis, with the exception of payroll taxes. It has one part-time employee (office administrator).

For the calendar year 2016, the NMJHS had revenues of \$56,151 and expenditures of \$45,932, resulting in net income of \$10,219. Of this amount, \$5,000 comes from a grant from the Hertzstein Foundation for use in 2017. Thus, income of \$5,219 is available to carry forward, add to our reserve, and use for expenses in 2017.

Three sources of income provide 80.5 percent of revenue: Fall Conference 43.4 percent, membership 30.7 percent, and the new fundraising activity in the spring known as the Spring Conference

6.4 percent. Almost 50 percent of income to the Society comes from the two major fundraising efforts, the two conferences. Adding in the new research fellowship in Jewish history and culture, the Hertzstein, and Jewish Federation grants increases income to 96 percent.

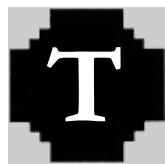
Ignoring specific programs and looking solely at donations (excluding grants), 12.8 percent of the gross income was raised. The two large grants raised an additional 13.6 percent of income. The inevitable conclusion: the Society should continue pursuing grants, individual donations, memberships, and the Fall Conference. These lay out the direction for fiscal stability enabling the implementation of the mission of the Society. ✡



*Rae Lee Siporin*

# In Memoriam: Haskell Sheinberg

Eulogy by Rabbi Jack Shlachter



There are two situations that cause problems for rabbis who compose eulogies.

One is when the person who has died is not loved at all by those who knew

him or her. The other is when the person who has died is so beloved by all that it is impossible to distill the myriad of wonderful comments, anecdotes, and reminiscences into a reasonable length hesped. I was confronted by the latter problem in trying to write about Haskell Sheinberg.

Let me begin with some biographical details. Credit for some of my remarks goes to Gabriel Weinstein, a graduate student at Brandeis who interviewed Haskell just a few weeks ago.

Haskell was born on Dec. 12, 1919, in Houston, Texas, and his parents were Polish immigrants who came to this country through Galveston.

Haskell grew up in a family with limited financial means. His father, Max, was a tailor, and during the Great Depression Max traded clothing for food with local farmers. A post-high school education was not on Haskell's radar until an English and homeroom teacher recommended he look into college, recognizing in the young Haskell both an interest and an aptitude for the sciences. Haskell was the first in his family to attend and graduate college, earning a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from Rice University. Haskell chose chemical engineering because of his interest in chemistry but also because chemical engineering was the hardest course of study at Rice. Haskell figured that if he could survive the chemical engineering curriculum, he would have a good shot at helping his family after he graduated.

Haskell spent a year working for a company that manufactured destroyers and then

joined the Army. He served in an Army Specialized Training Program at Ohio State University, taking courses in engineering and calculus, and then he was sent to Los Alamos in 1944 as an SED (Special Engineering Detachment) serviceman.

Haskell's first assignment in Los Alamos, working under the direction of Art Wahl, the co-discoverer of element 94, was the purification of plutonium. During the Manhattan Project, Haskell met Bea, a technician in the Women's Army Corps or WAC division. They were set up on a blind date by a WAC who knew that Haskell



*Haskell Sheinberg (left) and his two friends, Lance Bell and Harold Melnick, both past presidents of the NMJHS. This picture was taken in Santa Fe about a month before Haskell's death.*

and Bea were both Jewish, and the two hit it off so well that they were devotedly in love with each other for over fifty years.

Perhaps because he felt so connected to the Jews of Los Alamos, Haskell devoted time and energy to the community. He was active in the Los Alamos Jewish Center and served as chairman of the B'nai Brith Welfare Committee. Under Haskell's leadership, B'nai Brith paid for transportation for indigent patients to National Jewish Health in Denver and the Leo N. Levi Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas.

At the Laboratory, Haskell "worked in" (meaning basically invented) powder metallurgy and particulate materials, fields in which he became internationally known

and respected, and Haskell gave invited lectures on his research all over the world. Haskell was a Fellow of Los Alamos National Laboratory, a Fellow of the American Society for Materials, and a Fellow of the American Powder Metallurgy Institute. He was an eager and respected mentor at the Laboratory and enjoyed sharing his knowledge with others. Haskell was an inventor on 26 domestic and foreign patents and an author on scores of scientific papers. In his characteristically humble fashion, Haskell expressed surprise at the 2005 dedication of the Haskell Sheinberg Conference Room in a secure area at the Laboratory. I love seeing the beautiful bronze plaque outside the room every time I am in the Sigma building where Haskell worked for so many years. In addition to these towering scientific achievements, Haskell had the dubious honor of causing the first plutonium hydride fire in history.

Of course, these are only the facts and do not do justice to a description of Haskell the person.

In his own words, Haskell said "My greatest achievement was fathering two wonderful sons – achievements at the Lab sort of pale by comparison." Haskell and Bea provided many opportunities for their sons, supporting their interest in music, tennis, debate, and cross country, and instilled lifelong teachings in them.

Those two sons, here with us today, are Michael (Moshe) and Art; Michael's wife, Raya, is currently in Israel, and Art's wife, Colleen, is here. Haskell is also survived by his brother Ed, by nine grandchildren,



*Rabbi Jack Shlachter*

*(continued on p. 9)*



**In Memoriam: Haskell Sheinberg** *(continued from p. 8)*

and by many great-grandchildren. Scores of friends had the privilege to know Haskell. I polled some of those friends at Shabbat services in Los Alamos and in Santa Fe. To a person, they spoke of Haskell's incredible sweetness, kindness, and gentleness. One person mentioned that while Haskell was a top-notch scientist, he always made you feel like Haskell was looking up to you rather than the other way around.

Haskell died on May 31, 2017, which happened to be the Jewish holiday of Shavuot. According to the Yerushalmi, Shavuot was also the date of King David's death. I'd like to share a few comparisons between Haskell and King David, but in fairness, I should tell you about David as well.

Let me begin with the story just before we first meet David in I Samuel 16. The prophet Samuel is in the process of searching for the next king of Israel to replace Saul who has been rejected by G\_d. Samuel knows that the future king is one of Jesse's sons, but he doesn't know which one. Samuel sees Eliav who was tall and handsome and is sure that this is the one, but G\_d says (I Samuel

16:7) "Do not look at his countenance and at his tall stature, for I have rejected him. For it is not as people see [it is not external appearances that matter]. A man sees what is visible to the eyes but G\_d sees into the heart." Then follows a succession of sons, but none of them is the right one, and Samuel asks Jesse if there is another son who is missing. Jesse says "There still remains the little one who is tending sheep." When David is brought in, he is described as "a redhead with beautiful eyes and good looking."

OK, so where's the connection? Haskell did not have red hair, those who knew Haskell only towards the end of his life knew of only one eye, and I can't judge whether or not Haskell was good looking. In fact, the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 63:8) tells us that Samuel saw David's red hair and got worried because the Biblical character Esau also had red hair, and Samuel worried that David would have tendencies toward violence similar to those of Esau. David's beautiful eyes, however, are a mirror of inherent kindness, and now we start to see the parallels with Haskell. Virtually everyone I know who knew Haskell described him as the sweetest, kindest, gentlest person they'd

ever known. And Haskell had a penetrating intellect and an inner eye that was exceedingly beautiful. I'd love to tell you also that there is a Midrash about King David being a powder metallurgist, but I've not yet found that source.

In any case, I would argue that both Haskell and David were giants in their respective communities. Through their eyes there was incredible kindness, and frankly, if I had to choose one of the two to spend time with, it would definitely be Haskell. I loved visiting him, hearing his stories, and feeling like some of Haskell's kindness might rub off on me each time I listened to him. He never uttered gossip or *lashon hara*, he was always entertaining, and there was an aura of contentment and warmth about him. As it says in I Samuel, "G\_d sees into the heart." There was no better heart for God to see into than that of Haskell Sheinberg. Haskell will be remembered by all who met him, and we ask that his memory serve as a blessing for us.

Amen. ✧

*Jack Shlachter is a rabbi and a Ph.D. physicist.*

**"Making a Difference" Fall Conference** *(continued from p. 1)*

commerce of Las Vegas during the heyday of the railroads rumbling through town when Jewish merchants dominated the stores on the Plaza.

After a buffet-style breakfast attendees will hear a panel discussion featuring long-time Las Vegas resident Diana Presser on "Jewish Life in Present-Day Las Vegas." The discussion will be followed by "Synagogue on the Santa Fe Trail: The Future of Temple Aaron," delivered by David London and Raton residents Kathryn and Randy Rubin. David, an attorney and amateur historian, is in-house attorney for the Montana, Wyoming, and Arizona chapters of The Nature Conservancy.

Kathryn Rubin is the "long-time matriarch of Temple Aaron" in Trinidad, Colorado, and long-time resident of Raton, New Mexico, currently residing in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In June, the NMJHS presented her with the Hurst Award.

Following a mid-morning break, Rabbi Jack Shlachter, a familiar presenter at recent conferences, will speak on "Fat Man and the Development of a Plutonium Bomb: A Crisis at Los Alamos and the Jews Who Solved It."

Jack is both a rabbi and a Ph.D. physicist and is currently the leader of Theoretical Division, an assemblage of over 200

Ph.D. scientists focused on modeling and theory in the natural sciences.

This year's conference spans the decades from Sholem Asche's Yiddish-language description of travels to the far-flung Southwest, to the heady years of Jewish scientists' secretive work in Los Alamos, and everything in between. Please make plans to attend. This is a conference not to be missed!

(Guests arriving on Friday afternoon or evening may attend services at Temple Montefiore and the Oneg, sponsored by the NMJHS. Times will be announced at a later date.) ✧

## In Memoriam: Aron Straser

### “Is Everything Connected?”

by Stephan Helgesen



Not long ago I was watching a film with Nicholas Cage in which he played a professor of astronomy. This was an unusual role for the very talented actor, but he did it masterfully. One of the things he said to his university class hit home with me. He asked the question, “Does everything happen for a reason or is everything just a series of random occurrences?” As with so many things, I filed it away in the back in my mind for future reference.

Well, that thought came rushing up to my consciousness today as I attended the funeral of a dear friend who died on May 3rd at the age of 92. His name was Aron Straser, and he was a Holocaust survivor. In fact, he survived four different concentration/work camps in three different countries. I met him in 2012 and was able to persuade him to let me chronicle his years in captivity in a book that we wrote called *My Name is Aron*. We worked together for several months. I interviewed him about his teenage years growing up in a small Polish town called Smorgon that lay between the border of Lithuania and Russia. It started with his incarceration and then his eventual release five long years later.

Aron with his parents and two siblings were uprooted from their home and fled the oncoming Nazi army to the Russian border, but were turned away. (The Russians hated the Jews as much as the Nazis did.) It only got worse from there. They were captured and ordered to a ghetto. Aron’s father was killed while trying to barter for food. The family was split up. Aron’s mother and his twin sister were sent to one camp and he and his brother, Philip, were sent to another. Throughout the next four years, Aron and his brother were imprisoned in four different camps and his mother and sister ended up in two. Their treatment was brutal. All managed, however, to figure out how to stay alive by quickly learning each camp’s psychology for survival.

To make a long story of terrible human suffering short, three of the four were eventually reunited. (Philip died just a few weeks after the British liberated their last camp, Bergen-Belsen, in 1945.) This story was related to me amid bouts of tears (his and mine) in over seven hours of taped interviews.

This was not my first interview session with a survivor of World War II. Years earlier, I had coaxed painful memories from an American sailor who served in the Pacific Theater and recorded them for him and his family (it was the first time in nearly 60 years that he had been able to speak about



*Aron Straser and Stephan Helgesen*

his experiences). My time with Aron was equally difficult, but on a different level. I remember being hesitant at first to ask him questions about how men could be so inhumane to each other. It was actually Aron who assured me that he was up to the task because he had long forgiven his captors, and so we began and finished each session, totally drained.

We completed the interviews, and I started to plot the chronology and flesh out the chapters of his ordeal. When the book was finished and Aron had checked it for accuracy, he and I sat back and realized that we had not just written one man’s story of survival, but we had accomplished something else. We had ripped away the skin of our basic human existence and revealed a larger truth ... that life was both a series of random occurrences and critical decisions, some of which determined life or death.

While Aron’s time in the camps taught him how to overcome fear, it also taught him to bond with other prisoners and to forgive his captors. When Bergen-Belsen was liberated, some prisoners set upon their guards, beating and even killing them. Aron had an opportunity to join in, but refused. He said, “That would have made me no better than them, and it would have meant that I was reduced to being a man acting on revenge, and that was something that Hashem (the Jewish word for God) would have never forgiven. I couldn’t start a new life knowing that I had succumbed to the same kind of evil that put me in those camps.”

Aron was buried May 4th in a traditional Jewish ceremony in a cemetery in Rio Rancho surrounded by his family and many of his longtime friends. His body was laid to rest, but his spirit was felt touching each of us, in turn, as the Rabbi said the Kaddish and spoke of forgiveness and of the long life of a single soul that survived atrocities to spread a message of hope, reconciliation, and love for his fellow man. Aron’s life taught me that whatever belief we might have, whether it be in the randomness of life or the connectedness of our decisions, we are all on the same journey to be good human beings. Aron’s words rang just as true to me at his burial as when he said them to me the first time. Putting his hand upon my shoulder, he said, “Even the lowliest insect struggles to survive, not because he knows why, but because he knows he must.” Shalom, shalom, my friend. We will meet again. ✧

*Stephan Helgesen is a retired career U.S. diplomat. He is now a political consultant and author. He has written six books and over 700 articles on politics, economics and social trends. He can be reached at [stephan@stephanhelgesen.com](mailto:stephan@stephanhelgesen.com)*

*Editor’s Note: One of Aron Straser’s poems, entitled “In the Vilno Ghetto,” appeared in Yiddish in the Summer 2016 issue of Legacy. The English translation appeared in the Fall 2016 issue.*

# In Memoriam: Robert Nordhaus

by Rick Nathanson



Robert R. “Bob” Nordhaus was a high profile environmental and energy policy lawyer in Washington, D. C. He died at his home in Washington DC on December 24, 2016, at the age of 79.

Robert R. Nordhaus originally intended to become a tax lawyer, but being an outdoor enthusiast he gravitated into environmental law and eventually became an influential voice in federal energy policy.

Nordhaus helped craft much of the ground-breaking federal energy legislation passed after the 1973 oil embargo – first with the House Legislative Counsel and then as counsel to the House Commerce Committee.

He was a member of the Energy Policy and Planning Office under President Jimmy Carter, served as assistant administrator of the Federal Energy Administration, and later was general counsel at the Department of Energy under President Bill Clinton.

“My dad had a very dry, sly wit, and he was a slow, deliberative talker,” said Ted, who is the executive director of The Breakthrough Institute, an Oakland, California-based energy and environmental think tank. “He was also a great legal mind” who went to Washington to become involved in environmental issues, “but was not a set-your-hair-on-fire environmentalist.”

Robert Nordhaus grew up in Albuquerque as part of a prominent family with long ties to New Mexico. He was an avid skier and fly fisherman, spending a lot of time on a family-owned ranch outside Las Vegas, New Mexico. As an undergraduate at Stanford University, he studied history and competed on the school’s downhill and cross-country teams.

After serving a year in the U.S. Army Reserve, he attended and graduated

from Yale Law School in 1963, where his father, also named Robert, attended law school, and who also had a keen interest in issues related to the environment and natural resources. Early on, Nordhaus wound up as a staff lawyer in the House Legislative Counsel’s office. There, he worked on a bill that would eventually become the Clean Air Act, and where he crafted a then-controversial provision giving the federal government authority to regulate as-yet unknown pollutants of the future.



*Robert Nordhaus*

Nordhaus believed that reducing carbon pollution was crucial to protecting the environment and the economy from the risks posed by climate change, according to his son.

Although Nordhaus lived in Washington he continued to maintain a home in Taos and frequently returned to the state. For many years he was a member of the board of directors of the Public Service Company of New Mexico.

“He had an incredible impact on energy and climate policy from his days at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, part of the Department of Energy,” said Pat Vincent-Collawan, chief executive officer at PNM. “He provided us with just incredible insights and counsel on our work around the San Juan (coal-fired generating stations) closure and around renewables and climate. He was still on the board when the Facebook (data center) work started, and he really encouraged us to make sure we had a green

tariff to serve customers like Facebook. He was very much ahead of the curve.”

Vincent-Collawan called Nordhaus “an intelligent, warm and caring friend with an incredible sense of humor” and said he knew “all aspects of regulation and kept up on what was going on everywhere in the country.”

The Nordhaus family traces its New Mexico roots back to the 1880s when Max Nordhaus came from Germany to help his brother-in-law, Charles Ilfeld, operate what was then one of the largest mercantile firms in the state. Later, Max took over the business and one of his children, Robert J. Nordhaus, became a prominent environmental attorney representing Indian tribes. He was also instrumental in spearheading the drive to create what is now the Sandia Peak Ski Area.

Robert R. Nordhaus is survived by his wife, Jean Nordhaus of Washington, D.C.; son Ted Nordhaus of California; daughter Hannah Nordhaus of Colorado; siblings Richard Nordhaus and Elizabeth Messeca, both of Albuquerque, and William Nordhaus of Connecticut; and two grandchildren.✧

*This article is based on an obituary that appeared in the Albuquerque Journal on January 5, 2017. Rick Nathanson, the author, is a Journal staff writer.*

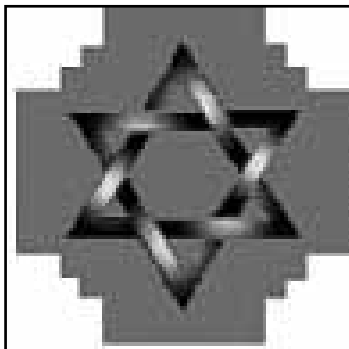
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For information contact the NMJHS office at 505-348-4471 or [admin@nmjhs.org](mailto:admin@nmjhs.org) to request a membership brochure. Alternatively, you can download a membership application from the NMJHS website [www.nmjhs.org](http://www.nmjhs.org)



## Calendar of NMJHS Upcoming Events

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

**August 4 through 30.** “The Las Vegas Jewish Community, Then and Now” is a month-long exhibit celebrating the Las Vegas Jewish community’s historical and contemporary influences. From the descendants of the crypto-Jews through the pioneer merchants and the first synagogue in the territory, including the continuing contributions of today’s socially active residents, the Jewish community has left an enduring imprint. The exhibit will include Judaica, historical photographs, art, story-telling, videos, and visual tours of the community. The public is invited to the reception at 6:30 on Friday, August 4 at the Las Vegas Arts Council’s Gallery 140 at 140 Bridge Street that kicks off the community’s Heritage Week, themed *Crossroads of Diversity*. The exhibit will then be open through August 30 from 1:00 – 4:00 pm, Tuesdays through Saturdays. Contact 425-1085 for more information.

**October 18 through November 1.** JCC Book Fest and Author Series. Presenting authors and books that stimulate learning and community conversation; promoting reading, writing, and public awareness of fiction and nonfiction; offering a variety of rich, stimulating in-person author programs with wide appeal. Details to follow. Jewish Community Center, 5520 Wyoming Blvd NE, ABQ.

**October 22.** To Life! Fundraiser for the Holocaust Museum, 6:00 p.m. Congregation B’nai Israel, 4401 Indian School NE, ABQ.

**November 4 and 5.** NMJHS 2017 Fall Conference, entitled “Making a Difference: 20th Century Jews and Their Legacies” to be held in Las Vegas, New Mexico. See cover story in this issue of *Legacy* for details.

Additional fall programs to be announced.