



A German-Jewish Refugee Finds Love and a Home in New Mexico

by Lilo L. Waxman

Long ago from far away I came by ship to the shores of the United States. It was 1936 and I was just 16. Three years previously Hitler had staged a takeover in Germany, my country of origin. I have always been an optimist and that is why this portion of my youth as an immigrant felt more like an adventure than a feeling of sadness for leaving our home in Bad Homburg, Germany, near Frankfurt am Main.

As a teenage immigrant I was looking forward to meeting my great uncle Ludwig Ilfeld and his family in Las Vegas, New Mexico, the real Wild West. For years while in Germany, I read books by Karl Mai depicting the American West with cowboys, Indians, mountains, horses, cattle, wolves, and coyotes. The author had never been to America himself, but his books were well known throughout Germany, and still are today.

For me, going to America was a fascinating adventure. I came with my father, Dr. Gustav Lang, my mother Edith, and

younger brother William. We were very lucky to leave at that time before it got so very bad in Germany with pogroms and



Lilo Lang married Arnold Waxman in 1939 at Temple Montefiore in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

deportations to the death camps. Before Hitler, we lived in our beautiful town, a spa well known throughout Germany and many other European countries. Our comfortable life stopped when Hitler took power.

We left behind my paternal grandfather, who died the day after Kristalnacht at age 89. He was too old to emigrate with us. My father's sister, who remained to take care of him, died in a concentration camp.

WANTED
Interim volunteer to run NMJHS office in the JCC a few hours a week while administrator Bobbi Jackson is on medical leave for several weeks starting July 14. Please contact Noel Pugach at npugach@unm.edu or 505-323-2067.

Bad Homburg, with a population of 19,000, was known for its healing springs. It also was the summer resort of the Kaiser. My father, a dentist, was a respected person in that town. His family and my mother's had lived there for generations. We had a three-story house and beautiful garden with servants to take care of everything. My brother and I went to school, and life was pleasant, much like it is living in a city in the United States today. I was able to finish high school in Bad Homburg, where I studied French and, fortunately, English.

After my parents realized that the situation in Germany was getting worse, they wrote to my grandmother's brother Uncle Ludwig. His uncles, the Ilfelds, had established a mercantile empire throughout New Mexico based in Old Town Las Vegas. In 1892 Uncle Ludwig settled in Las Vegas, New Mexico. When he received my parents' letter he started the complicated procedure for us to gain entry to the U.S., which since 1924 had limited immigration drastically. As family members of a U.S. citizen we were allowed to immigrate, but Uncle Ludwig had to sign an affidavit stating that he would be responsible for our family so that we would not be a financial burden on the United States government. Getting out of Germany had its complica-

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Legacy is a quarterly newsletter published by the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society
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Albuquerque, NM 87109

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Administrator: Bobbi Jackson
Office Hours: 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday

Editor: Dorothy C. Amsden
Contributing Editor: Naomi Sandweiss
Layout: DT Publishing, Santa Fe
Printing: Minuteman Press, Albuquerque
Mailing: Adelante, Albuquerque

Message from President-Elect Noel Pugach



At the NMJHS board's annual meeting on May 4, 2008, I was elected president of our Society. Installation of new officers will take place at the next board meeting on June 29 in Albuquerque. These include Dorothy Amsden (vice president), Robert Gale (Treasurer), Stephen Part (recording secretary), and Anthony Amsden (corresponding secretary).

I am very honored that the board has placed its confidence in me to lead our valued Society for the next two years. I will devote my energies to the mission of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society to promote the study and advancement of knowledge of the Jewish experience in New Mexico and to educate the public about Jewish contributions and the role of Jews in our region.

I hope to follow in the footsteps of previous presidents, most recently Harold Melnick, who have advanced the role of

the NMJHS. I will rely on their experience and seek their counsel. I also welcome the input and suggestions of all of our members. Please do not hesitate to offer your approval or your criticism. You may contact me at npugach@unm.edu or 505-323-2067.

Your input is essential for us to serve the membership and the larger public. We will plan to continue our highly successful programs, but we will also search for fresh ideas and approaches. I am happy to announce that former president Lance Bell has agreed to serve as program chair. Share your ideas for future programs with Lance at zozobra2@comcast.net.

In the pages of this issue of *Legacy*, you will find information on a number of exciting upcoming events and programs. In August we are sponsoring a lecture on "Jews in Rock and Roll" by Baron Wolman, with a raffle of his famous photographs. Do

contribute your books and other saleable items to our annual Labor Day weekend book sale at Wild Oats in Santa Fe.



Noel Pugach,
NMJHS President-Elect

This fall we invite you to attend our first joint conference with the Texas Jewish Historical Society in El Paso. If genealogy is your cup of tea, come to a genealogy class that NMJHS will offer in October in Santa Fe. These activities inspire my faith in a bright future for the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society.

Dr. Noel Pugach is professor emeritus of history at the University of New Mexico where he continues to teach courses on U.S. Foreign Relations and Jewish History. Dr. Pugach has been active in NMJHS for a number of years, during which he has guided the NMJHS Video History Project and the production of booklets on prominent Jewish New Mexican families. ✧

Roundup

by Naomi Sandweiss



Since the lazy days of summer have arrived, let's take a lighthearted look at Jewish contributions to popular culture.

Everybody knows that the Teddy bear was created in honor of Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt. But did you know that a Jewish immigrant couple, Rose and Morris Mitchom, invented the stuffed toy? The Mitchoms, refugees from Russian pogroms, ran a small store in New York. After Roosevelt's famous encounter with a young bear, Rose cut and stuffed a piece of velvet into the shape of a bear, which the couple displayed in their shop window, labeling it, "Teddy's bear." Roosevelt adopted it as a 1904 campaign symbol and the Mitchom's enterprise eventually grew into the Ideal Toy Company. Many more fascinating stories of

American Jewish history can be found at the American Jewish Historical Society site at <http://ajhs.org/publications/chapters/index.cfm>.

Since it is an Olympic year, it is a good time to recall Jewish Olympians, like Samuel Berger, the First Olympic Heavyweight boxing champion who took his gold medal at the St. Louis Olympics in 1904. And while most everyone is familiar with Mark Spitz, Tiffany Cohen won double gold Olympic swimming medals at the 1984 Olympics. More on famous Jewish athletes and others can be found online at the Jewish American Hall of Fame at <http://www.amuseum.org/jahf/>.

Up, Up & Oy Vey? If your plans include travel to Cleveland in the Fall, don't miss the exhibit *The Superhero: Golden Age of Comic Books 1938 -1950* at the Maltz

Museum of Jewish Heritage. Superman himself was created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster. If you're in a comic book mood, get your hands on the book *Up, Up & Oy Vey: How Jewish History, Culture, and Values Shaped the Comic Book Superhero* by Simcha Weinstein.

For a taste of Victorian Jewish amusements, browse the online archives of *The American Jewess* (1895 - 1899), the first English-language publication directed to American Jewish women. Editions can be found at the Jewish Women's Archives at www.jwa.org. Where else can you view an illustration of Sarah Bernhardt's "latest" gown or receive diet tips circa 1896? "Do not lie in couches, back in rockers or sit on easy chairs" is the advice of one doctor. My suggestion? Make sure that all of your reclining this summer is on a hammock! ✧

Rock-and-Roll Nostalgia Trip with Legendary Photographer Baron Wolman



Who is the photographer who immortalized rock-and-roll icons of the sixties? Baron Wolman, of course, now a resident of Santa Fe. This is your special opportunity to hear this legend speak about his historic rock-and-roll photography on Sunday, August 24, at 2 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center in Albuquerque.

Wolman, first chief photographer for *Rolling Stone Magazine*, will take the audience back in time, when many rock-and-roll greats were just blossoming. It all happened in Haight-Ashbury, a district of

sent Wolman a check for \$50; overnight his hobby became his career.

Baron's big break came in 1967, when *Rolling Stone* founder Jann Wenner invited him to join the original staff of the magazine. Best known for his informal portrait style where, as Wolman explained, "I tried to capture a piece of the musician's soul," his photo images are intimate and compelling, and his prints are widely collected.

During his relatively short "tour of duty" with the *Stone*, Wolman photographed many of the icons of music including Janis Joplin, Jerry Garcia, Jimi Hendrix,

Carlos Santana, Miles Davis, BB King, Pink Floyd, James Taylor, and many more heroes and heroines of the 1960s music scene.



Baron Wolman and Friends

San Francisco, and Baron Wolman was there with his camera. Wolman will also discuss his take on the history of Jews in rock and roll.

Have you ever wanted to own a Wolman photograph of Janis Joplin, Jerry Garcia, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, or George Harrison? This is your chance. Five signed and framed silver gelatin prints will be raffled and auctioned off.

Wolman began shooting seriously while on U.S. military duty in West Berlin, Germany. On the front lines of a potential World War III, Wolman photographed and penned a story about the then-new Berlin Wall. His hometown paper, the Columbus (Ohio) *Dispatch*, published the entire piece, photos and text, and then

NMJHS will have a raffle and auction of five of Wolman's legendary framed and signed silver gelatin prints. The 11-by-14 prints of Jerry Garcia and Janis Joplin will be part of the raffle ticket sale. The 11-by-14 prints of Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison will be part of the silent auction. The larger 16-by-20 print of George Harrison will be auctioned off live.

You can buy raffle tickets at the door or beforehand by contacting Bobbi Jackson, the NMJHS administrator, at 505-348-4471. Raffle tickets are \$5.00 each or six for \$25.00. Only 500 raffle tickets will be sold. Wolman's prints will be available for viewing before and during the event.

Admission to this special event is \$3.00 for members and students and \$6.00 for non-NMJHS members, payable at the door. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, contact Bobbi Jackson. ☆

**Happy birthday to Rolf Beier
from Lilo L. Waxman**

**Happy birthday to
Pearl T. Ilfeld
From The Waxmans and
Bill Lang**

**Congratulations and happy
90th birthday to Mildred Terr
of Las Vegas
from your family**

**Welcome to new
NMJHS members**
Kay Goldman
Robert Arthur Kammer
Veronica and Alan Neuman
Virginia Prihoda

Friends of the Society
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Gay Block Steve & Beth Moise
Edward Gladden

**In memory of Robert Ilfeld
from Betsy Nordhaus Messeca**

**In memory of Robert Ilfeld
son of Max Ilfeld and
grandson of Ludwig Ilfeld
from
Lilo L. Waxman,
Dr. Harold Waxman,
and Bill and Hermine Lang,
cousins of Robert**

**In memory of Robert Ilfeld
From Nancy and David Paxton**

GENEALOGY CORNER: Missing in Bolechow

Book Review by Dorothy Corner Amsden

Daniel Mendelsohn, *The Lost, A Search for Six of Six Million* (New York: Harper Perennial Edition, 2007), 516 pp, \$15.95.

The larger sweep of history does not always allow for the human scale. It covers events, strategies, logistics, confrontations, annihilations, mass migrations, depredations, and deprivations. What makes it possible for us to understand the impact of history on those who lived at the time are newspaper reports, personal accounts, scholarly studies, and historical novels.

Add to that list detective stories. Daniel Mendelsohn writes about his efforts to learn the stories of six of his relatives who died during the Holocaust. In his book *The Lost, A Search for Six of Six Million*, the reader becomes his silent partner as he undertakes a lengthy and ultimately rewarding course of action to learn what really happened to his grandfather's beloved brother Shmiel Jaeger and Shmiel's wife and four daughters.

It is also a story of a small town, Bolechow, where the Jaeger family came from, in what is now Ukraine, not far from Lviv (Lvov in Polish, Lemberg in German). For several centuries this region in eastern Galicia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Around 1900, Bolechow had a population of about 12,000 people; about half were Jews, the rest Poles and Ukrainians.

As a boy growing up on Long Island, Daniel Mendelsohn used to listen to his maternal grandfather Abraham Jaeger's stories about Bolechow and his lamentations that his older brother Shmiel chose to make his life there instead of emigrating to the United States like his other brothers and sisters. The stories of the Jaeger family fascinated young Daniel. He overheard snatches of adult conversations in Yiddish after the war about what had happened to Shmiel and his wife and four daughters. They were lost. No one

knew what had happened to them except that none of them survived.

Old photos and stories of Shmiel and his family intrigued the boy. He soon came to realize that he bore more than a little resemblance to his great-uncle. After Abraham Jaeger died in 1980, Mendelsohn found letters that Shmiel had written to his brother Abraham and other American relatives in the late 1930s for help in getting his family out as the situation worsened in Bolechow. Their plight seized his imagination. What more could he possibly learn about them?

His account took some incredible detective work and amazing persistence. Mendelsohn started making contacts with distant family members and other people who had lived at one time in Bolechow. Out of a population of 6,000 Jews before the war, he learned that 48 survived the Holocaust. They formed an association of Bolechow survivors that kept them in touch with one another even though they had settled in far-flung places.

Starting with his own elderly family members and Bolechow survivors in New York, Mendelsohn's search for knowledge took him to Poland, Ukraine, Israel, Australia, Sweden, and Denmark as one new contact led to another. The pieces of the puzzle were fragmentary and sometimes conflicting. As the survivors warmed to his quest, they tried to answer his questions, yet even then some held back information that was too painful to share.

Mendelsohn wanted to know how Shmiel's family had lived as well as how they had died. During his search he learned much about Bolechow where the Jaegers had lived for three centuries. The survivors that he visited plied him with Bolechow specialties, such as pierogis, kasha, and golaki, and told him stories about their town and their families. He

thought these tangential findings might be all he would ever know about Shmiel and his family, but there is more to the story that I leave you to find out for yourself.

Daniel Mendelsohn is a scholar of Greek classics who teaches at Bard College, located north of New York City on the Hudson River. Proustian in approach and language, the story of Mendelsohn's lost relatives make a compelling narrative. We learn their story through multiple digressions, a technique that serves to enrich the account and heighten the suspense.

... That's how my grandfather used to tell stories. The long windup, all that background, all those Chinese boxes; and then, suddenly, the swift and expert slide into the finale, the finish line where the connections between all the details you'd learned along the way, the seemingly irrelevant facts and subsidiary anecdotes he'd lingered over at the beginning, suddenly became clear.

Another interesting technique that Mendelsohn uses is a series of related digressions that refer to portions of the Torah. He weaves the story of Genesis throughout his narrative, from Cain and Abel to Abraham to Noah to Lot, juxtaposing the analogy of the Great Flood to the Holocaust. This device allows him to ask questions about the responsibility of God to his creation and how humans behave in times of great distress.

Dorothy Amsden serves as NMJHS genealogy chair. ✧

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

Las Cruces Forum: Judaism in New Mexico

by Noel Pugach

Temple Beth El in Las Cruces hosted an afternoon forum on New Mexico Jewry in the 20th Century, as part of its Centennial Speakers Series on February 17, 2008. Jeff Brown, Professor of History at New Mexico State University and moderator of the forum, invited me to be the keynote speaker and to focus my remarks on the Jews of northern New Mexico.


Given the limited time available and the vastness of the subject, I addressed three themes in my formal presentation. First, I discussed the persistence of the 19th century pattern of Jews establishing general stores in rural and small town New Mexico well into the 20th century. In support, I used the examples of the Danoffs in Gallup and the Wertheims in Porter and Fort Sumner.

Second, I noted the return of Jewish merchants to the Plaza in Santa Fe, but showed how they differed from earlier Jewish businessmen. To illustrate my point, I talked about the jeweler Solomon Spitz and Emil and Johanna Uhrfeld, who founded the White House.

The lecture concluded with a brief discussion of the extraordinary changes that occurred in the Albuquerque Jewish community during the 1960s and 1970s, made possible by the influx of Jews after World War II and the postwar transformation of American Jewry. These led to the creation of new local Jewish institutions and a new leadership.

Following my talk was a panel of three Las Cruces residents: Bea Kline, Frances Williams, and David Steinborn. They focused on southern New Mexico, Las Cruces in particular. Williams and Kline provided overlapping but different perspectives on the early history of Temple Beth El and its founding. David Steinborn, a very influential business and civic figure in the city, added information on Jews in Doña Ana County as well as on the Temple. A vigorous question-and-answer period followed.

The forum was generously funded by the New Mexico Endowment for the Humanities, the NMSU Bookstore, and Temple Beth El. Such programs are extremely valuable in educating the public about the rich history of Jews in New Mexico and producing more information on the subject. ✧



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Mission Statement

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

The New Mexico Jewish Historical Society is a beneficiary agency of the Jewish Federation of New Mexico.

Congratulations to NMJHS Board Member Stephen Part

La Cueva High School social studies teacher Stephen Part received four competitive awards this summer. One is a fellowship from the American Bar Association to attend a workshop on “Federal Trials and Great Debates in U.S. History” and a decision session of the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. An additional two fellowships are from the National Endowment for the Humanities that will take him to Ellis Island in New York City and to Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. In August Mr. Part will attend a workshop on “The American Judiciary” in Washington, D.C.

Summer Film Schedule

NMJHS is partnering with the Santa Fe Film Center to show the following films on Sundays at 4:15 p.m. at the Film Center, 1616 St. Michael's Drive in the Village West Shopping Center.

July 13, *Ladina – 500 Years Young*, documentary by Rina Papish about Yasmin Levy, an Israeli singer who immortalizes the musical legacy of her father.

August 10, *The Bubble*, film by Eytan Fox set in the fashionable Sheinkin Street district of Tel Aviv, vacillates between romantic comedy and political tragedy.

September 14, *So Long Are You Young*, documentary by Judith Schaefer about the astonishing power of words inspired by a little-known literary sensation.

Crypto-Jewish Settlement on the Spanish Caribbean Islands: Research Project Filled with Finds, Frustrations

by Stanley M. Hordes



When I embarked on a new research project to study the history of crypto-Judaism in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and pre-British Jamaica two years ago, little did I realize the impact of geo-politics – sixteenth-century and twenty-first century – would have on my work.

Having just completed my book on crypto-Jewish settlement in New Mexico,* I wanted to examine the same phenomenon in a different part of the Spanish Empire. New Mexico was isolated, both administratively and geographically. The Spanish Caribbean, like New Mexico, found itself distant from the headquarters of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Mexico, but, unlike New Mexico, was right square on the major shipping lanes between Spain and the mainland of the Spanish colonies of Mexico and South America.

The historical literature relating to the crypto-Jewish community of Mexico and the northern frontier of New Spain is well developed. Similarly, much is known about the Sephardic Jews who were able to practice their faith openly on the Caribbean islands administered by England, France, Holland, and Denmark. By contrast, very little has been published about their cousins who had to maintain their faith in secret on the islands under Spanish rule.

The recent emergence of people who are exploring a crypto-Jewish past in the Caribbean now offers a unique and unprecedented opportunity to trace the origins of these people back to the early Spanish colonial era. Through the genealogical information secured by means of interviews with informants and subsequent archival research, scholars can examine possible links between the living remnants of *converso* culture in the Greater Antilles and the flourishing crypto-Jewish communities in Mexico, South America,

Spain, and Portugal of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

New light will be shed on demographic, occupational and migration patterns of crypto-Jews over the course of the last three hundred years in the northern Caribbean region. Did crypto-Jews continue to play a significant role in commerce? To what extent did they serve as economic and cultural links among Mexico, the Caribbean Islands, and the Iberian Peninsula? What was the role of Cuban, Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Jamaican *conversos* in the slave trade?

Yet other questions remain to explore. Did Caribbean crypto-Jews continue to follow the pattern of marrying among themselves? To what extent did they interact with openly-practicing Jews living on the British, French, Dutch, and Danish Islands? What was the role of these individuals within the structure of the Catholic Church? Was there any discernable pattern of interaction between them and the Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews who arrived in the Caribbean in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?

I have started the archival phase of my research with an exhaustive and comprehensive analysis of the primary sources in the archives of Spain and the Caribbean to ascertain the identity of those crypto-Jews who migrated from the Iberian Peninsula to those islands. The most important of those records to be examined are the *procesos*, or trial records, maintained by the Holy Office of the Inquisition. These documents are replete with demographic, biographical and ethnographic information, and serve as a valuable source to help identify and analyze the practices of those *conversos* who ultimately settled in the Caribbean.

In addition to containing information pertaining to the individual arrested and
(continued on p. 7)

Crypto-Jewish Settlement (continued from p. 6)

charged with the crime of *judaizante*, the *procesos* also include lists of persons implicated by the defendant. These lists often contain the names of dozens of potential suspects. More often than not, those named in the testimony were able to escape the long arm of the Inquisition and succeeded in fleeing to more remote parts of the Americas. The extent to which the Caribbean's early colonists included these refugees among their ranks will be a critical area of investigation.

Most important among these records are the *procesos de fe* generated by the Mexican Inquisition, which had jurisdiction over the Greater Antilles until the 1610s, and the *procesos* and *relaciones de causas* produced by the Tribunal de Cartagena de Indias after the 1610s. In addition, correspondence between the Tribunales de México and Cartagena, and the Supreme Council of the Inquisition in Madrid yields important demographic information concerning crypto-Jewish activity in the region.

Little did I realize the impact that geopolitical conflicts, old and recent, were to have on my research. I knew that tropical climates are generally not conducive to the preservation of records, and I suspected that insects, leaky roofs, and humidity would have taken their toll on the documentation that I sought to access.

But it was attacks on the ports of Havana, San Juan, and Santo Domingo by the Dutch and French navies, as well as various incursions by pirates, that resulted in huge lacunae in the available documentary record. "Sorry, we have no documents prior to the mid-seventeenth century," I was told by archivists in San Juan. And a notation in the first book of sacramental records of the cathedral in Havana explained that all the baptismal and marriage records prior to the 1580s had been destroyed by enemy attacks.

Twenty-first-century conflicts between nations, I came to realize, also had the potential to complicate my research

endeavors. Travel to Cuba necessitated permission from both the U.S. and Cuban governments. The former required sending a letter to the U.S. Treasury Department, proving that I was a bona-fide scholar, with a legitimate research project, and promising that I would be working full-time on that project while I was in Cuba. It also required me to obtain the proper kind of visa from the Cuban government.

On my first preliminary reconnaissance visit, I had no problem traveling on a tourist visa. But when I returned a year later, accompanied by two research associates, we found that our tourist visas did not entitle us to gain access to the documentary collections essential to complete our work. We had to cut our trip short. On the way home, one of my research associates was detained in Miami by the U.S. Immigration Service. We didn't know what to do until, fortunately, he was released almost an hour later. He had the audacity to carry a common Spanish surname, one which probably matched dozens of persons on the government's watch list.

But we plow on, undaunted by the bureaucratic challenges. The information derived from this project is funded by a generous grant by Dr. Richard E. Greenleaf to the Latin American and Iberian Institute of the University of New Mexico. The grant will provide a unique window into the past and will greatly enhance the community's understanding about an intriguing, yet poorly understood aspect of Latin American and Jewish history.

*Hordes, Stanley M., *To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews in New Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

Dr. Stan Hordes is an adjunct research professor at the University of New Mexico's Latin American and Iberian Institute, who is known for his extensive research into crypto-Jews of New Mexico. He is one of the founding members of NMJHS and has served several times as Society president. ☆

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A German-Jewish Refugee *(continued from p. 1)*

tions, especially for my father, but that is another story.

After a few weeks in New York City we took the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe railroad west. The entire Ilfeld family welcomed us at the train station in Las Vegas. Uncle Ludwig helped my parents find a place to live. First order of business for my father was to learn English so he could obtain the credentials necessary to practice dentistry in the United States. He enrolled in an English course at Highlands University in Las Vegas.

After a year's study, my father felt he knew sufficient English. He applied to several dental schools and was accepted at St. Louis University, one of the few schools that accepted German refugee dentists. German dentists had to take the last two years of a four-year course in dentistry to get their American license. We remained in Las Vegas while my father went to St. Louis to study.

I had gone through the German school system and did not need any more schooling, even though I was barely sixteen. However, I knew nothing about the United States's social system. I chose to go for another year of high school as a senior and took typing, American history, and social studies. I loved school and being with people my own age. I graduated in 1937 at the age of seventeen.

We were the only German immigrants in Las Vegas at that time; people were kind and curious about us. Uncle Ludwig invited Bill and me to perform on the button accordions that we had brought with us. I wore a dirndl dress and Bill wore lederhosen when we played for the Elks Club and the Rotary and the Masons. Uncle Ludwig belonged to all of them!

After graduation I had three part-time jobs. Uncle Ludwig helped me find a half-day job at the local five-and-ten-cent store. I also worked for *The Las Vegas Optic*, the local newspaper, trying to collect old debts. My third job was as a gym

teacher two days a week after school. In private homes I taught gymnastics and acrobatics, which I had learned in Germany from the age of six. One class was for young women and two for children. All three jobs brought in about \$75 per month, an unheard of sum in those years,



A new plate glass window for an old store in Mora.

when the U.S. was still in the depths of the Great Depression.

In the fall of 1936, my parents met Milton and Frances Taichert. The Taicherts were thrilled to have my parents, and my aunt and uncle, in their home for a B'nai Brith meeting. They were a prominent, charitable couple in Las Vegas. Mrs. Taichert taught my mother many American ways. Most homes in New Mexico were adobe-style, but their large home was colonial. They had wooden floors and Persian rugs. Mrs. Taichert collected antiques as well. Their son, Marvin, followed their lead some years later by making a bequest for the upkeep of the Montefiore Cemetery.

At the B'nai Brith meeting my parents met the Waxmans of Mora, which is a small town in the mountains 30 miles north of Las Vegas. Their son Arnold was also there as well as his cousin, Reva Steinfeld. Reva was an accomplished pianist and played for the guests that night. She and Arnold were raised together, being of the same age. The Steinfelds, Minnie and Phillip, lived in an adobe house next to the Waxmans and were partners with the Waxmans in a trading post called Morris Back & Co.

The first time I met Arnold was on a Sunday afternoon when my mother, brother, and I were all dressed up to go for a walk and window shop around The Square in Las Vegas. He was driving a nice car with his parents and called to my mother to ask if we wanted a ride. We accepted. Perhaps because of his mustache, I thought Arnold was much older. But only seven years separated us. From then on, my family had an open invitation to go to Mora and visit with the Waxman family.

One Sunday, our group of friends went on a picnic to the Gallinas Canyon, which is on the opposite side of Mora from Las Vegas. Arnold and I dated, but never alone. There was only one car, one nice restaurant, and one movie theater, which offered only one show time. The only time we were ever alone was when Arnold rented horses in Las Vegas and taught me how to ride.

Another time our families drove to Madrid, New Mexico, which was well known for its Christmas displays. Thousands of luminarias lit up displays that depicted the Stations of the Cross. Madrid is a village surrounded by mountains, and the displays were located on the mountainsides. It was a beautiful sight. As Arnold and I walked ahead of the crowd, the snow crunched under our feet. I very naturally put my arm in his. Later, I was scolded because my parents thought this was very improper. I am wondering now how I was ever able to get married after having such a strict German upbringing!

In the fall of 1938, I went with my parents to live in St. Louis where my father was finishing his dental studies. Arnold and I wrote to each other almost every day. Finally in early December 1938, the "important letter" arrived. We became engaged by mail. After I told my parents about Arnold's intentions my father said, "All I know about Arnold is that he is a good son to his mother, and he will make you a good husband."

(continued on p. 9)

A German-Jewish Refugee *(continued from p. 8)*

I married Arnold Waxman in 1939 during the worst winter we ever had in northern New Mexico. At that time we had a small synagogue but no rabbi. In earlier years, when there were more Jewish families in Las Vegas, Uncle Ludwig acted as a lay rabbi for the High Holidays and bar mitzvahs. In fact, he performed my brother's bar mitzvah. The synagogue was cleaned up and prepared for the wedding as it had been closed for many years.

My mother and Mrs. Taichert planned the wedding. I had nothing to do with it except pick out my dress. Luckily I chose a wedding dress in St. Louis that could easily be altered into an evening gown. My mother and I stayed at the Taicherts. My father and brother came from St. Louis just before the wedding and also stayed there.

Temple Montefiore in Las Vegas was constructed in 1885 and was the first in the New Mexico Territory. At that time, there were about seventy Jewish families living in Las Vegas. By 1939 the Jewish population of Las Vegas had dwindled to about twenty families.

We "imported" a rabbi from Albuquerque for the wedding. He arrived at the synagogue just in time for the ceremony; in fact, he was late because of a horrible snowstorm. Before that moment, he had never laid eyes on either one of us.

I walked down the aisle holding my father's arm, and there was Arnold standing at the bima waiting for me to come to him. The rabbi read my name directly from my birth certificate. He started out with "Gerda Liselotte . . ." and so on. No one in temple knew who "Gerda" was, because everyone knew me as Lilo. The guests were a little confused. They didn't know that Lilo is the diminutive in German for Liselotte.

My mother and my mother-in-law, Rosie Waxman, went to the basement of Uncle Ludwig's house where the wooden crates of our German household goods were stored and opened every crate. My mother

gave me half of everything she owned to furnish our new home.

That is how Arnold and I had a complete household, including my grandmother's silver service. We moved into the adobe house that was previously owned by Arnold's Aunt Minnie. A horse corral separated our house from the Waxmans', Arnold's parents. After the honeymoon, Arnold continued to work for his parents in Mora in the general merchandise store.

We stayed in Mora for three years. It was a good time for me. Looking back now I wish Arnold had encouraged me to help in the store and learn to speak Spanish. I did not do much as a new bride except try to be a homemaker, and Arnold's mother Rosie was most helpful.

I had a Mexican maid who cleaned every day and took our laundry home to her mother. It was necessary to clean often because of the way adobe houses were built. The frames of the doors and windows were set into the adobe walls leaving small gaps. Frequent sandstorms would blow sand through the gaps into every room.

When I wanted to go horseback riding, the corral man would go out to the pastures owned by the trading post in his Model T Ford. He would bring back a horse for me to ride. That's when I learned to saddle, bridle, and groom a horse. I spent much of my time riding. While living in Mora, I had the freedom to explore the beautiful surrounding mountains by horseback. Arnold always joined me on weekends and when he was not busy in the store.

In wintertime we traveled ten miles north of Mora past Holman Hill to what is now the Sipapu ski resort. A one-rope tow powered by a Studebaker engine pulled you up the mountain. I used my wooden skis that we had brought from Germany.

A number of young soldiers from Mora and elsewhere in New Mexico were stationed in Pearl Harbor before the United States entered World War II. Many were

killed or maimed on that fateful day. Arnold was drafted in 1942. After he left for the Army, his mother and I closed up our house, and I moved into his parents' house. Arnold was sent to basic training in Cheyenne, Wyoming. When he was transferred to San Francisco, I followed him. We never returned to live in Mora. Following his discharge, he went to dental school in St. Louis, which became our permanent home.

I still think of Mora from those days, a two-block village with a dirt and gravel road from one end to the other, adobe houses, store fronts with wooden platforms, horses, and horse-drawn wagons. It was just like the Wild West towns I had read about in Karl Mai's novels. In the middle of the street I saw my future husband in cowboy boots and hat and behind him the snow-capped mountains rising up at the very end of the street, towering over the Mora Valley. It was a breathtaking experience.

Lilo Waxman leads an active life in St. Louis in the summer and Naples, Florida, in the winter. Her husband Arnold passed away four years ago. This article is excerpted from her memoirs, which she wrote for her grandchildren.

Previous articles about the Waxmans and their cousins the Ifelds have appeared in this newsletter. One is by Arnold Waxman, "Jewish Settlers of Mora, New Mexico, Circa 1850," in the June 2006 issue, page 5; another is by Florence Ifeld Beier, "Ludwig Ifeld, Las Vegas Legend," in the September 2006 issue, page 6; a third is by Lilo Waxman, "New Mexico – Déjà Vu," in the December 2006 issue, page 9, which tells about her visit to Mora earlier that summer. You can view past issues at www.nmjewishhistory.org, then click on Publications. ☆

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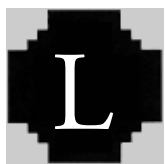
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IN MEMORIAM

Robert M. Ilfeld

by Steve Kesselman



long-time member of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, Robert M. Ilfeld passed away on April 26, 2008. Son of Max and Bertha Rosenau Ilfeld, Bob was born on January 25, 1926, and grew up in Taos in one of New Mexico's most illustrious Jewish pioneer families. A precocious student, he received a degree in nuclear physics in 1944 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was quickly drafted into the Army where he was sent to Los Alamos to work on top secret projects.

After World War II Bob earned a Master's degree in nuclear physics from the Cali-

fornia Institute of Technology. He subsequently returned to MIT as a Sloan Fellow to receive an MSM from the Sloan School of Business. He started his professional career working on several projects for General Electric in New York. His business career flourished in several industries and many locations.

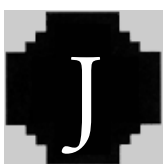
At age 53 Bob retired to New Mexico to be closer to his aging parents. However, retirement only lasted three months before he went back to work as a financial consultant for Dean Witter Reynolds Company (now Morgan Stanley). He retired in 2007 as senior vice-president with twenty-eight years of experience.

In 1999, Bob married Pearl Thompson, who shared his love of travel. Bob enjoyed meeting people. He was an avid bridge player who earned Life Master status and played golf for the sport and the ensuing friendships.

A few years ago I was privileged to interview Bob for the New Mexico Jewish Pioneer Video Archive Project, sponsored by NMJHS; the tape and transcript may be found in the NMJHS collection at the New Mexico State Archives. Bob's input was essential for the preparation of "The Ilfeld-Nordhaus Family" booklet published by the Society. ☆

Judy Frankel

by Isabel Sandoval



Judy Frankel, Sephardic singer, died in San Francisco on March 20 after a long illness at the age of 65. Of Ashkenazi origin, Judy sang and collected Sephardic

music of the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492. Her passion and rendition of Ladino music captivated her listeners. Judy collected Ladino songs by learning the words and

lyrics of elderly Jews in San Francisco. She performed in Europe and Israel and sang for Portuguese President Mario Soares.

Judy produced four CDs and is credited with preserving Sephardic melodies. Ladino, the language



Judy Frankel

of Sephardic Jews, echoes the nuances of colonial Spanish in New Mexico. Judy loved New Mexico and the *anusim*. In turn, she was loved and respected by New Mexicans. A memorial service was held for her in San Francisco on June 1st at the Fort Mason Conference Center. ☆

Harold J. Gans

by Anthony A. Amsden



Harold J. Gans, a long-time and colorful Santa Fe resident, passed away this April in Norman, Oklahoma. Gans was a friend of artist Will Shuster, who created

the first Zozobra for the 1924 Fiesta de Santa Fe. Since then the 49-foot marionette has been burned each year before a crowd of thousands to rid people of their gloom.

Gans started helping to build Zozobra in 1938, including crafting its head, and became the main voice of Zozobra in 1951, moaning and howling through a microphone. Gans missed a year in 1982 after suffering a heart attack, and finally turned the

microphone over to a new moaner in the early 1990s. Gans and his wife Sonia Seabrook Gans, moved to Norman from Santa Fe two years ago to be near his daughter, but he never got Santa Fe out of his mind.

The son of Jewish immigrants, Harold Gans was born in 1922 in New York City and adopted by Julius and Elsie Gans, who lived in Santa Fe. The Gans family owned Santa Fe Arts and Crafts on San Francisco Street for many years. Harold took over the store after his parents died, and eventually sold the Gans Building to Walter Kahn.

Gans attended Santa Fe public schools, the New Mexico Military Institute, and the

University of Southern California before serving in the U. S. Army in World War II. As a photographer, he served in the European, African, Middle Eastern, and Asia-Pacific theaters. Returning after the war, he continued his interest in photography, enjoyed sailing and flying his own plane, was a volunteer firefighter, and served on the ski patrol.

Gans was also a 33rd degree Mason and a lifelong member of the Kiwanis Club. He was a member of a coffee klatch at La Fonda that included a number of older Santa Feans, most of whom have since passed away. The group included Sam Ballen, Walter Kahn, Gus Denninger, and Tom Moore. ☆

October Conference in El Paso – An Event Not to be Missed

by Noel Pugach



Get ready to sign up for the joint conference of the New Mexico and Texas Historical Societies on October 24 - 26, 2008, in El Paso. This is an event you won't want to miss. As soon as plans are finalized, NMJHS members will receive the conference program and a registration form in the mail along with lodging details. Conference information will also be posted on the NMJHS web site, www.nmjewishhistory.org.

"Jews Along the Camino Real," will take place at the lovely and historic Camino Real Hotel in downtown El Paso. A few sessions will be held in other locations that are a short walk from the hotel. Please make plans to join us for an exciting and delightful educational and social gathering. We encourage our New Mexico Society members to turn out in large numbers.

Plan to arrive in time for Friday services at Temple Mount Sinai, followed by dinner. Sessions on Saturday will cover a number of topics of mutual interest to Texas and New Mexico. A panel called

"Merchants Along the Camino Real" will start off Saturday morning, followed by "Immigrants to Texas and New Mexico." Informal talks of immigrant experiences will take place during lunch.

Saturday afternoon will have two sessions: one on "Saving Jews from the Holocaust," the other as yet to be announced. Following the evening banquet two speakers, Rabbi Leon of El Paso and Dr. Stan Hordes, will discuss crypto-Jews.

The two historical societies will hold separate board meetings on Sunday morning and then tour two beautiful cemeteries.

We invite our members to propose presentations for the sessions. There is room for several additional speakers. In particular, we invite immigrants to New Mexico to give their stories at the Saturday luncheon. Contact Dr. Noel Pugach with your proposals and suggestions, at npugach@unm.edu or 505-323-2067.

Noel Pugach is serving as co-chair of the joint conference. ☆

2008 Montefiore Cemetery Cleanup



Jessica Wohl of Santa Fe listens to stories about a Las Vegas doctor and his mother following the annual cleanup of the Montefiore Cemetery in Las Vegas on Sunday, April 27. The two grave markers she is kneeling next to are for Dr. Isaac Terr and his mother Pearl Terr. Dr. Terr's wife Mildred Terr still lives in Las Vegas. Their five children live in New Mexico and are active in the Jewish community. [Photo by Jim Terr, one of Dr. Terr's children.]

Blustery weather did not deter the small but dedicated group who came for the annual cemetery cleaning. People remarked that they came for many reasons, some because they could not tend the graves of their own parents in other areas and some to honor friends and family buried in the Montefiore Cemetery. Ted Herberger, the caretaker who also has family buried in the cemetery, says that much work has been done this year including surveying and rebuilding the outer wall and improving the property.

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

Check online calendar of Upcoming Events for more details at www.nmjewishhistory.org. See film schedule on page 7 of this issue.

August 3 - 5, Eighteenth Annual Conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, Phoenix, Arizona. For more information, go to www.cryptojews.com.

August 30 - 31, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Seventh Annual Book & Etc. Sale, Wild Oats Conference Room, Santa Fe.

Sunday afternoon, October 19, genealogy class in Santa Fe. Time and place to be determined.

October 24 - 26, "Jews Along the Camino Real," NMJHS joint conference with Texas Jewish Historical Society, El Paso Texas.

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