

## Museum board hires executive director

Leon Natker is an archaeologist/anthropologist and an artist who came on board officially as executive director in December.

Leon began his career as an actor/singer at the age of 12. He attended New York's famed Juilliard school before embarking on a career which took him across the United States and eventually to Europe to study and sing opera. In addition to opera he was a cantorial soloist for several congregations in Chicago and San Diego and served as cantor for Congregation Dor Hadash in San Diego for 12 years, teaching the B'nai Mitzvah classes as well leading services.

Leon eventually turned to directing which brought him to San Diego and the invitation to become the executive director of Lyric Opera San Diego. During his tenure in San Diego, he grew the organization from a community-based company to a \$2.5 million professional regional company. In 2000, the need for a new home for the company led Leon into the world of historic preservation. Putting together a public/private enterprise he led the \$8 million capital campaign to restore the historic 1928 North Park Theater.

In 2011 Leon decided to pursue a new life in the world of museums. He acquired degrees in archaeology from Eastern New Mexico University and museum studies from the University of New Mexico. He has



Leon Natker

participated in digs at the Yangganzhai site in central China, Chaco Canyon, and Gila Cliffs. He has worked on historic preservation projects at Montezuma Castle, Bandelier National Monument, and the Coronado Historic site in New Mexico.

Museum positions have included collections management and co-curation of exhibits at the Maxwell Museum, Blackwater Draw, and the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe. He is a published author and lecturer in archaeology of the southwest.

Before returning to Albuquerque, Leon was the executive director of the Mesa Historical Museum in Arizona.

### Celebrating Life

In loving memory  
of Werner & Frankie Gellert  
founders of  
the Holocaust & Intolerance  
Museum of New Mexico

**February 9, 2020**

**2 p.m.**

Congregation Albert  
3800 Louisiana Boulevard NE  
Albuquerque NM 87110

*Please join us.  
The museum will be closed*

*Indifference to the persecution of others always has tragic consequences.*

# Flag donor Roy Shaffer and family visit museum

A well-worn likeness of the United States Flag seasoned with significant history and momentous meaning hangs on the wall at our museum. Its presence is a critical reminder and its existence an everlasting symbol of strength, survival and hope for a better world.

Work camp prisoners created the flag during World War II at Flossenbürg Concentration Camp, Germany, where captives labored in a granite quarry. The flag's stars and stripes were most likely painted over a Nazi banner.

Once the war ended, the inmates (not knowing who would liberate them) created at least three flags: Russian, British, and American. It was the Americans who marched into the camp on April 23, 1945. Prisoners hung the U.S. flag on a barbed-wire fence as a gesture of appreciation.

The following month, a Medical Collecting Company of the Third Army entered the camp. Dr. Roy Shaffer, then a teenaged medic, was part of that group.

"Everything was in turmoil," recalled Shaffer. "We were trying to control a typhus epidemic and help get inmates back to their countries. There were people dying every day of starvation. They looked like skeletons with rubber stretched across them."

Shaffer noticed no one had claimed the flag and he was allowed to bring it to the United States. Unaware of its historical significance at the time, Shaffer stowed the flag in a footlocker for decades.

see Dr. Shaffer, page 6



Pictured, from left, Don Shaffer, son; Dr. Roy Shaffer; David Shaffer, son; Jessica Ballard, granddaughter; Olivia Ballard, great-granddaughter; Benjamin Ballard, great grandson; Tim Ballard, grandson-in-law.

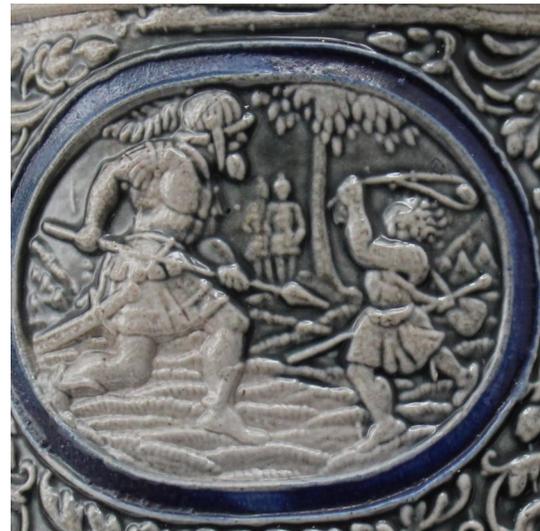
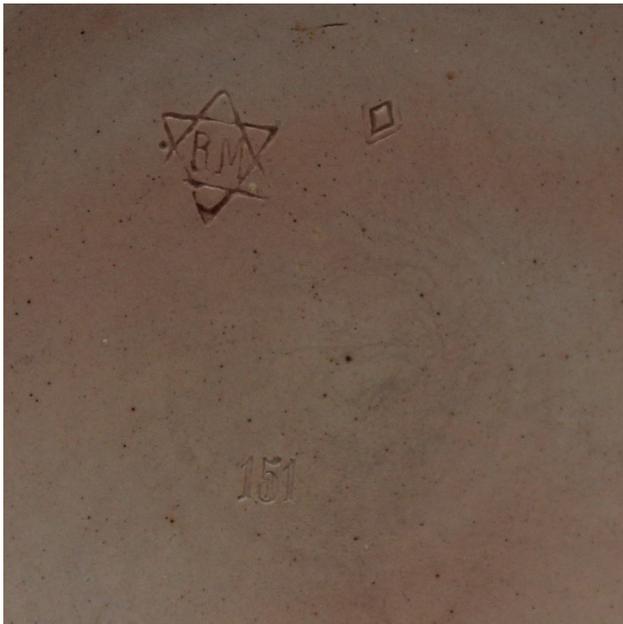
## Archives alive!

# Origin of artifact donation sought for vessel from Germany

The stein seen here was produced by the Reinhold Merkelbach potters of the \*Westerwald region in Germany between 1883-1933, although the mold was most likely produced before 1900.

Reinhold Merkelbach manufactured household products as well as artistic and decorative stoneware ceramics throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This stein depicts scenes from the story of David and Goliath. Such historical and religious themes were typical of art pottery during this period. The stein bears a hexagonal brewer's mark, or "Brauerstern" surrounding the Reinhold Merkelbach initials and the mold number #151. The Reinhold Merkelbach manufacturers continued to produce ceramics in various iterations until 2007 .

Do you have a relationship to this artifact or know how it came to be in our collection? Please get in touch: [info@nmholocaustmuseum.org](mailto:info@nmholocaustmuseum.org)



\*The Westerwald is a low mountain range on the right bank of the river Rhine in the German federal states of Rhineland-Palatinate, Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia.

# Hate in America continues

by Marcia Rosenstein

At our museum we have an exhibit about hate which includes a powerful video addressing how hate affects us. We ask several questions and provide sticky notes for visitors to respond:

At what point would you risk your reputation to fight injustice?

How do you define tolerance?

How do you define an upstander?

How can we combat hate and intolerance in our everyday lives?

When have you witnessed intolerance and what did you do?

In this time of intensifying hate crimes, the statistics are rising. It has become more urgent that we as a museum, community, state, and country speak out against acts of hate and violence that occur.

Following is a small sample of the messages written on hundreds of sticky notes:

*There is no need to be hateful. Spread love, acceptance, and positivity!*

*Not to get mad when someone does something you may not like; instead tell them that you don't like it and try not to dislike other. As Yoda said, "Hate leads to the dark side."*

*Listen to people whose opinions you disagree with in hopes of understanding why they feel the way they*

*do...Often times misunderstanding and false information are to blame for hateful views.*

*Don't respond negatively. Respond with peace and kindness.*

*Everyone is entitled to an opinion, you don't have to like or agree with it, you should acknowledge it. Difference is our common ground.*

*Tolerance is not only being understanding towards all people. It is also standing up for their rights and speaking out against injustice.*

*When times are dark you smile and hope will light you way. Stay beautiful.*

*Maybe tolerance is the wrong word. It's not enough. We need acceptance and understanding, respect and love for one another.*

*At the point of now, too long I stood silent, too long have I shield my eyes from hate I disrespect. The time is now, the message is love and respect. Unity is our community.*

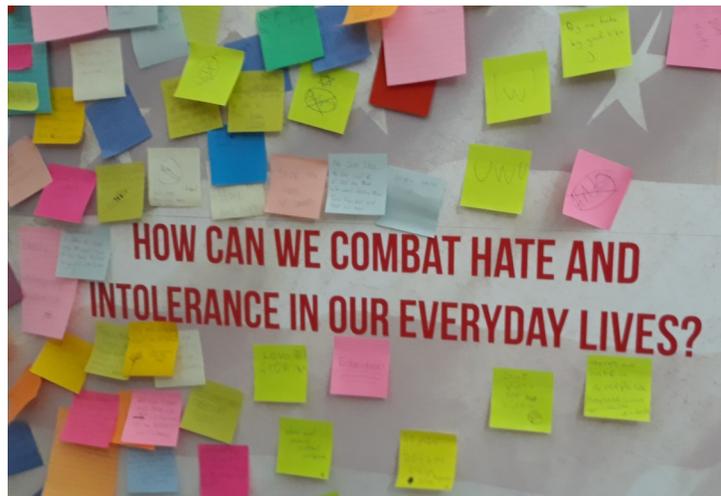
*See something wrong, hateful, or mess up, SAY SOMETHING!*

*Be open minded and smart. Love each other and be a good person. Being a bad person won't get you anywhere. Love yourself.*

*Tolerance is recognizing the inherent worth and dignity of all individuals.*

*Understanding, accepting, and embracing that human beings are varied as the flowers of the world.*

*The universe only pretends to be made of matter. Secretly it is made out of LOVE.*



*The Herald*

Published four times a year  
by staff and volunteers.

With so many caring people who have visited our museum and left their comments, I have hope for the future. We must all work together to make this world a better place.

# Farewell and happy trails, Tom Ruby

by Barbara Resnikoff

Recently, I had the pleasure of sitting down with Tom Ruby, an HIMNM board member and generous donor and supporter, who I enjoyed knowing and working with for the past few years. As I assumed the role of interviewer, as he has done for many years with his clients as a psychologist, he graciously answered the questions with his warm and gentle manner that we have come to admire.

After 17 years calling Albuquerque home, Tom and his lovely wife of 54 years, Lois, will begin a new chapter in their life journey when they relocate to Cincinnati in February to be near one of their sons and his family.

Tom retired in 2003 after 30 years in private practice as a psychologist as well as a staff psychologist in a local hospital in Wichita, Kansas. The Rubys visited the Land of Enchantment a few times and decided to put down roots in Albuquerque. Shortly after settling in,

Tom realized that he missed the close, personal interaction and connection he had with his clients and his ability to make a difference in their lives, so he came out of retirement, studied for and passed the New Mexico licensure exam, and worked in a clinical setting for 1.5 years.

Upon arriving here, he became involved in Congregation Albert and the Jewish Family Services board where he served for five years. In 2014, Tom retired again! Approximately four years ago, Tom was recruited by Jennie Negin, past president of HIMNM, to be a board member, because he was “level headed and an empathic listener who

understood people and tried to help them.”

When asked what qualities he thinks a prospective board member should have, Tom replied, “A board member should be a good listener who reflects on what all people are saying. The person should be committed to the museum and its mission, support it financially and emotionally, be a cheerleader, be involved, and be on the alert for potential recruits.”

All these qualities and more are embodied in Tom.



He said his experience as a board member was overall rewarding, and he liked the people he worked with, felt accepted, had an independent voice, listened and learned. He regrets that he's leaving at a time when the museum is on the threshold of moving forward in a positive direction on several levels, and he also regrets not having an opportunity to work with our new executive director, Leon Natker. Another regret he shared is that he had to miss several meetings in the past since he travelled with Lois promoting her books and giving book talks in

schools around the country while promoting literacy and the love of reading. Tom is Lois' chief supporter and schlepper.

No doubt we will miss Tom's input and presence on HIMNM's board and committees, and, of course, his warm bear hug welcomes, but wish the Rubys the best of everything as they embark on their new adventure and resettle into their new senior living community in Cincinnati where they will enjoy being surrounded by their family, especially two grandchildren, after so many years without them nearby.

Happy Trails to you, until we meet again!

# Dr. Shaffer and family visit museum

continued from page 2



The Flossenbürg Flag

## *Holocaust by Bullets* exhibit anticipated in New Mexico

Yahad-In Unum (YIU) is a French organization founded in 2004 to locate sites of mass graves of Jewish victims of Nazi mobile killing units, especially the Einsatzgruppen, in Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Moldova. Organized by leaders in the French Roman Catholic and Jewish communities, YIU is led by Father Patrick Desbois, a priest whose grandfather was a French soldier deported to the prison camp Rava-Ruska, located in a Ukrainian town that borders Poland. Since its founding, Yahad-In Unum has uncovered many mass graves and taken testimony of the people who lived in the area.

The Jewish Federation of New Mexico and our museum are bringing *Holocaust by Bullets* here in coordination with the American Friends of Yahad-In Unum, a U. S. fundraising arm of the French organization.

The exhibit will be displayed first in Santa Fe in March, in the Southside Branch of the Santa Fe Public Library. It will be shown in Albuquerque in the lobby of the Continuing Studies Building at UNM during the month of April. Father Desbois will be in Albuquerque Sunday, April 19th, for a Yom HaShoah commemoration that includes a presentation and a book signing event. Watch for more information as it becomes available.

"I was so young it was more curiosity than in the context of history," said Shaffer. "But over time I learned the enormity of the horribleness of it all."

Based on information from the Flossenbürg memorial, the first political prisoners arrived at the camp in 1938, while Jewish prisoners started arriving in 1940. Daily life was dangerous and deadly as the inmates were forced to work the quarry. Living conditions deteriorated drastically, and the ability to work was the only thing offering a chance of survival. Prisoners were inadequately clothed and there were no safety precautions. Deadly accidents were routine. The work day lasted 12 hours and the prisoners carried bodies of the dead back to camp. In late 1943, overcrowding also became an issue. As the death rate went up, a crematorium was constructed.

By the time the U.S. Army reached Flossenbürg, approximately 14,000 inmates had been sent on a death march toward the south. The 1,500 left behind were critically ill. Just weeks before liberation, the SS executed Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, General Hans Oster, Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and other dissidents associated with German resistance groups or implicated in the July 1944 attempt to assassinate Hitler.

Dr. Shaffer donated the flag to the museum in 2001, where it hangs today for public viewing.

"I read about the museum and it just seems like a natural resting place for it," he explained.

Museum staff said the exhibit is an important history lesson for generations to come.

"We truly appreciate Dr. Shaffer's generous gift," said Jerry Small, museum volunteer "If we forget the inhumanity of the past, it will repeat itself. These kinds of pieces from the past, and the lessons we learn from them, help pave the way toward a better tomorrow."

Roy Shaffer returned to Chicago, used the GI bill to continue his education through medical school, then became a flying doctor in Africa where he and his wife, Betty, raised their children. They retired to Albuquerque where one of their sons lives.

## California writer features our museum in *San Diego Jewish World*

Oliver B. Pollak, professor emeritus of history at University of Nebraska Omaha, and a lawyer, is a correspondent for the *San Diego Jewish World*. After a visit last summer, he publicized our museum and interesting information about the locale. Excerpts from his article follow:

New Mexico's Jewish history is more complicated than the rest of American Jewish history because of the existence of Spanish crypto or hidden Jews who arrived with the Spaniards in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. Modern New Mexico, a state with a 2010 census population of 2,059,179 has about 24,000 Jews. Albuquerque, the largest city, has a population of 558,000 with about 1,500 affiliated Jews among a total estimated Jewish population of 7,000.

A critical mass of this size has the usual presence of ... congregations as well as a Jewish community center, a federation, and the Anti-Defamation League. Then in 2001 the Holocaust & Intolerance Museum of New Mexico was added to the cultural and educational attractions for local residents and tourists. It was founded by Holocaust survivor and successful banker the late Werner Gellert, who stated, "Indifference to the persecution of others always has tragic consequences."

I visited the museum twice during my Albuquerque sojourn...

The officers and the board represent the diverse Albuquerque community including Christians, Jews, Muslims, conversos, and members of the LGBTQ community. They publish a quarterly newsletter *The Herald*. There

*Holocaust Remembrance Day*

## Executive director on KRQE January 27

Watch *New Mexico Living* January 27 at 9 a.m. with Chad Brummett as he interviews Leon Natker, museum executive director, on the significance of International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Designated in 2005, the United Nations General Assembly

established the remembrance on January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The UN encourages countries to honor the victims of the Nazi era, 6 millions Jews as well as 5 million others, and to develop educational programs to help prevent future genocides.

is a part-time education outreach director and archivist, and several docents accommodate about just under 4,000 visitors a year.

The Jewish experience of discrimination and hate, the location of New Mexico on America's southern border, and the rich Hispanic past, place the museum in the position of curating Europe's and America's past, contemporary affairs, and

setting an agenda for the future. It's all about educating the public about human rights. This is a great challenge in a state that ranks next to last in the country for public education.

The museum exhibits are arranged on two sides of the bay. The left is dedicated to the Jewish experience: Holocaust, Kristallnacht, Eastern Europe, and the Shoah. The end of the displays includes remnants: a doll house depicting a German Jewish home from the 1800s; a Holocaust Torah from Czechoslovakia, one of 1,565 that survived the

Holocaust and were sent to Westminster Synagogue in London, and then distributed around the world on permanent loan; and a refugee's steamer trunk that traveled 13,500 miles from Czechoslovakia in 1938 to New Mexico in 1987. It was donated to the museum in 2011 and joined smaller iconic refugee suitcases.

On the right side are interpretive exhibits: *Hate in America* comprises three 7-foot-high panels ... with a colorful array of Post-It messages about bullying, cliques, shaming, humiliation, and other harmful interactions.

There are panels on genocide of Christian minorities, the Rwanda genocide, the African American experience... and the semantics of ... propaganda.

The basement is the place for past exhibits that have no space on the main floor, including *Children of the Holocaust* sculpture which had a prominent space in the first location, and may be resurrected in a new larger museum.

The museum has been successful in obtaining donations and grants to accomplish its mission.



Oliver B. Pollak

