

HALAPID

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Buscando Mi Propia Verdad

(Seeking My Own Truth)

By Randy Baca Hensel

“Who are you?”

The nun’s habit was a course, black swirl of fabric with a unique scent all the old-time nuns shared, her face framed by the stiffest wimple imaginable. I took a nanosecond to wonder how her Mama starched it so stiff before dutifully answering, “I am a child of God.”

Six words made up the only acceptable answer to that question, should we be unlucky enough to have Father Whatever-His-Name-Was query us on what we’d learned in catechism classes. It was terrifying! One wrong answer--and you’d never get to wear that mini-bridal outfit, complete with veil (the really exciting part of the deal) and El Padre would probably see to it you were confined to Hell for all eternity for being such a dolt.

In the more than half-century since the series of classes where our totally timid, totally uncomprehending group of six-and-seven-year-olds prepared for that “big deal” to every Roman Catholic child, First Holy Communion, I’ve come to realize we’re all defined by words. Man, woman, young, old, tall, short, slim, pudgy, light, dark, father, mother, child, wife, husband, Caucasian, Oriental, brilliant, dimwitted, accountant, doctor, firefighter, Christian, Muslim, Jew: we use these--and other words--to describe ourselves and others, to define who and what we are.

Over the decades, I’ve internalized several words to describe me--to me. Curious. Perplexed, Different. Curious as to why my father and mother never went to church. Curious as to why HIS family were “Protestants” and HER family were “Catholics” but hardly anyone went to church except to baptize, marry or bury. No one made a big deal over my First Communion preparations--in fact a favorite uncle finally took me to a neighborhood store and purchased the while dress and veil that were mandated for the event. But the only person who actually attended was my beloved mama and after a few quick photos in the front yard, the rest of that Sunday was like any other.

Perplexed as to how my mom, Beatriz, and her younger sister both married Chavez men--when Mama and mi Tía Carolina, as maidens, were named Chavez, too. And my Dad and my Tio weren’t related--just had the same last name. How in the world did all these Chavez’ find each other in California--when they were all from New Mexico and

Arizona? And it certainly seemed strange that my father hated priests and nuns with such a passion! It was equally mystifying to me that no one had statues of saints with candles burning, or a crucifix in every room, as did most of my friends’ families. Dad would say, “The Bible (and that was the Old Testament to him) does not allow us to worship idols.” And he’d show me the passages that certainly seemed to reinforce his position.

Mama just quietly went about her work, cooking, cleaning, always sweeping the dirt from the corners toward the center of the room. Her only mention of religion of any sort was always “Dios es muy grande.”

I was perplexed that, while most Hispanic families were staunchly Roman Catholic, my mother’s was so nominally “R.C.” they didn’t even go to Mass. Ever! They didn’t believe in confessing sins to the priest. Nobody even owned a rosary--never mind used one for prayer. I’m not sure my mamacita could even recite the Hail Mary. And Dad’s family was so anti-Catholic, my paternal Grandmother thought any priest--and especially the Pope--was the devil incarnate. I was curious as to why so many of my relatives had Old



Dad would say, “The Bible (and that was the ‘Old Testament’ to him)

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Buscando Mi Propia Verdad

Testament names--Abel, Abram, Jacob, Sarah, Elias, Solomon, Rebecca, Ephriam, Philemon, Milka, Reuben, Elizabeth, Eloy, David. When the clan gathered it sounded like a convention of the Prophets and the Patriarchs.

Spiritually, I was definitely left to my own devices. Dad's Old Testament passages got to me until it was "goodbye, Catholic Church"--and I went searching through various Protestant Christian denominations, looking for a theology that made sense. I even looked outside Christianity--the Bahais sounded pretty good for about three months. I finally settled on the Episcopal Church--the "higher" the better. And there I stayed--and prayed--for most of my adult life. But Judaism was so fascinating! After all, Jesus was a Jew, albeit one who made a whole lot of waves, and so I learned everything I could about the very real Jewish underpinnings of Christianity in an attempt to really understand the life and times of this Jesus person.

As in any life, other words came to define my being: wife, mother, businesswoman, author, widow. Then, after remarrying (a totally non-observant Ashkenazi Jew), and having, along with my spouse, to tend to the appropriate burial of my mother-in-law (a Russian Jew who became very observant in her dotage), it became a bit of immediate family lore that the Christian "I" knew to bury my mother-in-law in a white shroud, say Kaddish (my dear husband of blessed memory didn't even know what Kaddish was, never mind how to say it!), and try not to offend her relatives and friends by serving inappropriate foods after the graveside services. My spouse didn't get it when I said we couldn't serve ham or shrimp. Kosher it wasn't--but it also didn't offend.

Some months later, one of my many New Mexico cousins and his wife were visiting Scottsdale and we met them for brunch. The subject of my mother-in-law's very Jewish commitment service being planned by a good Christian duo came up--as did my wisecrack that I'd always figured our family had hightailed it out of Spain just seconds before the Grand Inquisitor fried 'em for being mixed up with the Huguenots. "Well, you're sort of right," said my cousin. "They certainly were fleeing Spain and the Inquisition--but not because they were Protestants. They were on the lam because they were Jews!" Well, I'll be.....

Seems another cousin (there are lots of us) did an extensive genealogy after my dad's mother FINALLY told her the family secret just weeks before she died-- *Somos Judios*. (we are Jews.) Our family springs from some of the very earliest settlers (and re-settlers) of what is now Northern New Mexico, Southern Colorado and Northern Arizona. Garcia, Montoya, Peña, Chavez, Baca--some genuine Conversos, some Crypto-Jews (or *anusim*). From Spain into Portugal. Then to the Canary Islands. Next to Hispanola. Finally onto the North American Continent and north--always north--away from the Inquisition and into tiny, isolated villages like Ceboyeta, San Mateo, Lemitar, Los Chavez, Pajarito, Valle Redondo, where they intermarried so closely it's a wonder we're not all genetically damaged goods.

"Stay away from the priests!" "Never speak of family matters to others." "We are Spanish!" "We're *Manitos*," not *Chicanos*!" And across the years and the miles my grandmother's quiet "Somos Judios" is the loudest whisper

I've heard.

Through the most bizarre set of circumstances imaginable, I found myself on the telephone, speaking with Dr. Stanley Hordes. To some of his gentle questions, I could only respond, "Everything my family did was strange to me! I spent my earliest years in Los Angeles--not New Mexico". The family customs were, to me, unique at best when we finally returned. I don't know whether the candles lit on Friday evenings were for Shabbat or because the electric generator on the rancho wasn't working. There were no power lines in San Mateo and Ceboyeta when I first visited there. I'm not at all sure they knew why they were doing certain things certain ways. And like many--if not most--offspring of families living with five hundred-plus years of secrecy, there is more that has been forgotten than remembered. Except all the male offspring had to be circumcized within a few day after birth. Except the weird, ritualized manner in which animals were slaughtered. Except in some deep, almost cellular level of my being. Except for the research that more and more tends to indicate we were indeed *Anusim*--the shadowy remnants of the glory days of Sefarad; a sense-memory that will not go away. Except for my grandmother's secret, "Somos Judios."

And still, the conflict rages. Some in the family will not even discuss the matter. Others reach out tentatively, grasp a factoid and pull quickly back, as if the fires of the Inquisition are still burning hotly. During stressful times, I am more likely to pray "Sh'ma yisrael" than "Our Father." In my own nuclear family group, my son states proudly--but rudely, "Thank God, Jesus is my Savior!" while my daughter gives me a dreidel for Christmas. I love them both. I love my dreidel.

...my Dad's mother FINALLY told her the family secret just weeks before she died--"Somos Judios."

My search continues. I am no longer a Christian. I may never be a Jew. But the good nun in her starched white wimple so very long ago pretty much had it right: I am a child of God. Perhaps, in the end, that is what really matters. Perhaps that is who--and what-- I really am. Perhaps.....

President's Corner

By Gloria Trujillo

We have some great articles and news about the upcoming conference in this issue. Our Local Chair, Michael Atlas-Acuña has a few details to work out, but he is happy to report that most of the conference plans have been finalized in Pueblo. You will find a registration form included in the newsletter.

The site for this year's conference is the Holiday Inn in Pueblo, Colorado and we are looking forward to commemorating Temple Emmanuel's Centennial. Crypto-Judaism has long had a presence in Colorado, which, before the American occupation, was populated by persons of Spanish origin migrating from New Spain into the wild country, hopefully north of the Inquisition.

Pueblo does not have a major airport, and the nearest major airports are located in Colorado Springs and Denver. If you are driving north from Albuquerque, New Mexico, the drive takes about six hours on Interstate 25 and passes through some remarkable sites. You can still see wagon wheel ruts by the side of the road marking the Santa Fe Trail. It is not unusual to spot herds of antelope and deer. All this from an Interstate! The city has undergone major renovations that include the new convention center and Arkansas River Walk. The area also offers many outdoor activities.

Our cover article this month is by member Randy Baca, who is the chair of the By-laws committee. We are reprinting a short story, "Leaving Faro" by Bernadette Dyer, a Jamaican Canadian of Crypto-Jewish background, from her recently published book, *Villa Fair*. Bernadette writes about her family history in another article, while Dolly Sloan, an editor of *Halapid*, reviews the book. Art Benveniste, also *Halapid* editor, has translated the poetry of Leanor de Carvajal, the sister of Luis de Carvajal, *el mozo*.

Sunday evening will find us at the Holiday Inn for the conference opening and keynote speaker (to be announced), dinner and entertainment. On Monday we eat lunch at the hotel and meet for dinner at Temple Emmanuel as part of its centennial observation. Michael will give us a brief presentation on the history of the Jewish community in Pueblo. Tuesday is lunch on your own, and the conference ends in the early afternoon.

Michael, Paul Carpenter and Stan Hordes are working together to find and bring presenters to the conference this year who will speak on their research into the different areas of Crypto-Judaism.

Please see page seven for news on our exciting association with Sephardic House as major resource for its website for those exploring their background.

Thanks to those members who have already sent in their renewals.



TURKISH SABATTEAN BECOMES OFFICIALLY JEWISH

by Rachel Amado Bortnick

Ilgaz Zorlu, a Turkish citizen from a Sabbatean background, has won a lawsuit to have his religion registered as "Jewish" in official documents. In 1998 the publication of Zorlu's book *Evet Ben Selanikliyim (Yes, I Am a Salonican)* created intense attention and controversy, with his assertion that Sabbateans are not true Moslems. In the book, as well as in numerous previously published articles, Zorlu maintains that Sabbateans, historically called *Donmehs*, or apostates, in Turkish are in fact Jews posing as Moslems, and that many of them, including Zorlu himself, want their Jewishness officially recognized.

Sevi was the seventeenth-century self-proclaimed Jewish messiah who converted to Islam to save his life. Many of his followers also converted, but they and their descendants, who continued to secretly believe in him and his teachings, remained as a separate and secretive sect. Salonica had a large population of Sabbateans, many of whom were in the forefront of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.

With the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1924-27, all of the Sabbateans, considered Moslems by both countries, were transferred to Istanbul. It is generally believed that this transfer saved them from annihilation in the Holocaust of World War II, since Hitler would have considered them Jewish. Ninety-six percent of the Jewish population of Salonica were exterminated. In the Turkish Republic many Sabbateans became political and civic leaders.

Zorlu has long struggled to be recognized as a Jew. He spent several years engaged in Jewish studies in Israel and has long been practicing Judaism, but because he has not undergone a Halakhic conversion, the rabbis in Turkey and Israel have refused to consider him a Jew. With the successful result of his civil lawsuit in Turkey in October, 2000, Zorlu has become the first Sabbatean in history to officially choose Judaism, and the first Turk to instigate a lawsuit to change his official registration from "Moslem" to "Jewish."

SHAARÉ TIKVÁ SYNAGOGUE CELEBRATES ITS CENTENARY

The centenary of the Lisbon Synagogue **Shaaré Tikvá** (Gates of Hope) Synagogue will be celebrated in 2002.

The Shaaré Tikvá Synagogue was the first synagogue built in Portugal since the forced conversions and the official destruction of Portuguese Judaism in 1497. A flourishing and numerous Jewish community, which had contributed so much to the scientific, cultural and economic development of Portugal, was all but eliminated at that time when thousands of Jews were forced to follow their religion secretly.

To learn more about the history of the Jews in Portugal, see: <http://www.multimania.com/shaaretikva/#F>

LEAVING FARO

A short story from Villa Fair[®] by Bernadette Dyer

The moon is yellowing. I can see it caught above the arms of the ocean, even as the horizon looms in the west. Grey clouds scuttle to dance in the pink dawning sky, and the ship I am on, the Santa Anna, sails into its light,

The year is 1548, and I, Jacob Israel Gabay, an artist, am sixteen. I had known freedom most of my life but am now virtually a prisoner aboard this ship that heaves westward. My three brothers, Abraham, Solomon, and David, and many other young persons such as ourselves, share the same fate. We are unwilling immigrant passengers aboard this vessel and have been at sea for five weeks, having eaten nothing but dry soda bread for many days. And the water that passes our lips tastes brackish.

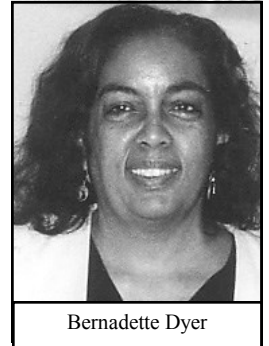
Crowded into dark, rat-infested rooms below deck are perhaps fifty of us. We have no way of telling exactly how many, since wooden barriers divide us. Prevented from communicating with one another by rough, vigilant seamen, we are careful not to let them hear our silent prayers. We are frightened and cold in dank quarters that reek of human sweat and excrement. We hear the wind blowing menacingly as it slaps giant waves and whistles through gaping cracks in the hold. We fear sea monsters, fierce storms, mutiny, and even savages. We also fear for family and friends left behind in our homeland, Portugal, where Sephardic Jews such as ourselves are being expelled. The country is rocked by violent upheavals; older people, well versed in the Jewish faith, are tormented, beaten, dragged, and burnt at the stake. Their worldly possessions are seized by those who carry out the law proclaimed to keep Portugal free of Jews.

Some of our people have been forcibly christened "New Christians" and are allowed to retain property rights if they forsake the Jewish faith; some do so to save their lives while practicing Judaism in secret, while others choose death instead.

My brothers and I have seen families torn asunder, seen deadly blows from stones, and were grateful to God to be alive even on this despicable ship. History repeats itself, playing out the same events that occurred years ago in Spain during the Inquisition when Spanish Jews were expelled, tortured, and murdered and personal properties seized. Many of the Spanish Jews fled to North Africa and Italy, while others crossed into Portugal and sought refuge there.

My mother, Rachel, a God-fearing green-eyed Jew of Spanish descent, was not spared the spreading Portuguese violence. Unfortunately my brothers and I saw with our own frightened eyes when she was viciously raped, beaten, and left gasping in bloody, filth-smeared rags, her spirit dangling somewhere between here and heaven while we, her sons, were forcibly restrained by her attackers.

Surely my father, Isaac, must turn in his ten-year-old grave at the thought of the atrocities suffered by my mother. He was a brilliant craftsman who knew all about precious stones and their ideal settings. His talent as a jeweler rewarded him, and he gave thanks to God and instructed us in holy worship.



Villa Fair – A Book Review

By Dolores J. Sloan

From the library in Toronto where she works to the neighborhood in which she lives, Bernadette Dyer sees much go by representing Toronto's multicultural panoply. This clearly inspires many of the tales in *Villa Fair*, her collection of short stories. Other tales in the book are the germinated seeds of her own multiracial, multiethnic Jamaican and Portuguese Jewish ancestry. The people in her stories mirror her own ancestors — émigrés from somewhere else, establishing roots in new lands, living through generational conflict fueled by the meeting of old with new, yet influencing the host country and/or culture which is richer for it, and will never be the same.

For example, there's Kamla, the twenty-three-year-old Indian-Canadian narrator of "Driving Through Red Lights," in love with a young Canadian man, while promised to an arranged marriage with someone from India. A surprise ending has Kamla's parents and aunt facing cultural change on two continents.

In "Segovia Nights," Carlos Fernandez captivates his listeners with legends, reinvented stories about a mythical family and past. The tall tales are indicative, however, of a far deeper problem. One senses that the author and the librar-

ian in the story are one. Jomo, from "An African Out in the Cold," is lost, then found again while visiting Toronto, as, unknown to him, his host has suffered a heart attack. His isolation and cultural shock are palpable.

Then there are tales coming from the richness of the author's Jamaican memories. The story "Man Man" dances back and forth from spirit world to "reality," as the ghost of a drowned seven-year-old boy moves comfortably among the local people of a plantation, until a new anglo mistress comes to stay. The author reports that the tale is among her favorites, and she enjoys reading it to groups.

Another from the Jamaican collection, "Ackee Night," shows how a much aggrieved woman, whose man has threatened idly to leave for years, calls on a Jamaican culinary secret to keep him permanently from other women — and herself. The ending takes the reader by surprise, which is why the author thinks it's so well liked by those she reads it to: "I suppose because it is so out there in left field."

The title story, *Villa Fair*, also catches one by surprise, yet this reader felt puzzled by its sharp, unredeeming ending. Is Thunder, the chief male character, destroyed as a punishment for straying from his promise? Does the exotic, the magical always win out over the more conventional path?

Loving relations within families pervade Dyer's tales.

The author's Jamaica and Canada are pulsing, vibrant settings where her characters don't want

My brothers and I had but two days to prepare for our final departure from Portugal. I fearfully managed to conceal a few precious pieces of paper, a brush, and some pigment, while my brothers took only their dreams as we traveled far away from sleepy villages, lush olive groves, white-walled synagogues, fragrant hills, grape arbors, and our own coastal district of Faro.

"I cannot leave our mother," I told my brothers before I boarded the ship. "I must bid you all farewell and God's speed, for I must secretly remain behind to wash and dress her wounds and anoint her with olive oil and vinegar. She is so close to death that I can almost hear it speaking seductively in her ears."

"I must not die in Portugal," my mother sighed as I bent to listen to her soft breathing. "I would suffer under cruel hands here. Bury me at sea so the peace of our God can be with me. I will praise him and repeat the words of the Kaddish so that in death I can turn my head to the ocean's wall and rest."

Her heartfelt words caused my brothers and me to conspire to conceal her, in her fragility, inside the one old sea chest we were allowed to bring. It was riddled with knotholes ideal for breathing. She, as light as a featherless bird, miraculously made it aboard with us as our precious cargo, passing under the very noses of vigilantes who would sooner have seen her dead.

Four days into our journey our mother lingered between life and death: four days of concealment, four nights of keeping watch as the moon drifted overhead and the stars crouched closer. Then, with knees drawn up to her chest, she departed. And in that dark quarter of the hold we brothers risked our lives to whisper, "Mother, Mother," with the hope that God would hear and take pity on her as we, her sons, stealthily under fear of death, disposed of her remains in the angry ocean. The wind was fierce and cold, and our hearts were heavy with mourning.

My brothers and I took turns with our quick farewells. I clutched my mother's hand to my breast as I spoke. "Mother, I want you to have this red rose I painted. I will place it next to your heart, and while your eyes are closed, dream of us all. Though I can only stay with you these first few moments of your darkest night, I am the soft one who was reluctant to leave your side. Even now in this time of parting I am reluctant to water you with my tears and seal your lips with farewell kisses. You will not journey alone, dearest mother. Our father, Isaac, in his kindness will come to meet you where worlds collide in crossings. And, Mother, do not fret, for only the Kabbalah could have known of this, our far-flung futures.

"Take your rest, Mother. You have earned it. Here is another painted rose. This one is as white as the streaks in your hair, and the sails of this ship that will take your sons to foreign shores, where being Jews will once again set us apart, even as we set up altars, burn candles, and read from holy texts that will shape our lives forever. And, Mother, though we sail on and on, there is word that we are headed for the Indies. When we come in sight of land, it will be an island called Jamaica, and only God, our Father, knows what fate awaits us there."

Published by Porcep Books, Vancouver 2000

My Ancestors, the Gabays of Portugal

By Bernadette Dyer

A lot of fiction is based on fact. That is certainly true for the story "Leaving Faro" in my book of short stories, *Villa Fair*. My family, the Gabays, have always known that though we were Jamaican, our father's ancestors were Portuguese Jews. Ever since a young age, I have been seeking, and in some cases have been lucky enough, to find a history of the Jews who came to the Caribbean. What puzzled us, though, is that the three Gabay brothers who came to Jamaica in the fifteen hundreds never kept in touch with anyone back in Portugal. Then upon researching, I found that many Jews could not do so since there was no one left. Relatives and friends had been lost to persecution.

I also found that many children were taken away from their parents and families. For my story, I decided to create a fourth brother to speak for the others, since having died, they cannot speak for themselves. This fourth brother is an artist such as myself, as many Gabays have been.

I work in a library and have access to research materials. Much of the research was done by family members and on some occasions, friends, who were interested in what they thought of as our unusual name. Some research was also done by a genealogist. In addition, the internet helped me find much historical information, and as you know, the events

in the story are based on historical fact although the story itself is fiction. But I will always remember my long deceased father constantly reminding us while we were growing up about our Jewish heritage.

Edmund Austin Gabay, my father who passed away in 1963, told us that his father George Edmund Gabay, was of Portuguese Jewish ancestry. Grandfather married Emma Elizabeth Mudie in 1895. She was a dark skinned, fiery redhead of Scottish and Black ancestry. Grandfather was subsequently disowned and disinherited by his parents, who did not approve of a racially mixed marriage. Leaving his wealthy family, he became a baker and the father of seven children, one of whom was my father.

Years later, George Edmond was alleged to have been murdered by one of his disgruntled employees. The family was split up among various relatives. One sister, Remona, was taken to Panama as a very young child where she grew up and lived until her death as an old woman. It was not until after my father's death that she managed to make contact with the family, since as a child she was unable to do so, limited by speaking only Spanish. Fortunately, she kept the surname Gabay after marriage, facilitating roundabout contacts to be successfully made a short time before her death.

There are also records in the Jamaican Island's Records Office that speak of the early Gabays and their purchases of

My family, the Gabays, have always known that though we were Jamaican, our father's

Villa Fair from page 4

"Johns Lane" tells of Chinese women, marooned in Jamaica, who find survival in their love and caring for each other. The point of view in "Roberta on the Beach" changes several times, moving within a poor Montego Bay family from member to member, where the love among them and across the generations provides healing for human loss.

"Leaving Faro," the final tale, is a paean to Dyer's Portuguese Jewish ancestors, who fled to Jamaica to escape persecution. It is printed in its entirety on page five.

The mythical and the magical touch many of the stories. "Close the Blue Door" tells of mermen who lure their chosen loves to disaster, while in "Six Little Sparrows" the same number of Pakistani children and their mother shape shift into the title.

Dyer often reads her stories to audiences. "I myself like to read 'Close the Blue Door' and 'Roberta on the Beach,' and have had a lot of success with 'Blue Door.' A lot of women like 'Roberta,' and I'm wondering what men think of it. Women also adore 'Segovia Stories' and I suppose I do too." The last comment brings a smile.

She also enjoys reading to Jewish teenagers from a private high school in Toronto. "They are studying Black History for Black History Month, and are planning a tour of the Underground Railroad. There are also some black students in the school who are studying Jewish history and they are all going to be taken to the wailing wall. It is really remarkable."

The author's Jamaica and Canada are pulsing, vibrant settings where her characters don't want racial barriers to exist. Her families are strong and loving, evidencing the blurred lines of racial identity. Several of the stories, such as "Man Man" and "Roberta on the Beach," satisfy in their present form, yet would benefit also as longer fictional works, with some of the characters developed further. "An African Out in the Cold," seems a fragment, and one wishes for more.

Villa Fair is an entertaining collection of well-told tales. We await future works with interest.

Dolores J. Sloan is an editor of Halapid.

ON THE INTERNET

The SCJS: <http://sephardiconnect.com/halapid/halapid.htm>

Sephardic House: <http://www.sephardichouse.org/>

Sephardic Connection has some interesting discussion boards, including one on Crypto Jews. See it at:

<http://sephardiconnect.com/>

Sephardic and Sephardim Genealogy: <http://www.orthohelp.com/geneal/sefardim.htm>

Kulanu: <http://www.ubalt.edu/www/kulanu/>

Benveniste's Home Page: <http://home.earthlink.net/~benven/>

MARGIE BELTRAN

Those of us who knew Margie (Jona) Beltran will be saddened to learn of her passing. *Yehi zijra baruj.*

The Gabays of Portugal from p. 5

various pieces of property in 1676. There is also an extract from the will of Isaac Gabay dated 18th June 1730, where he requests to be buried in the Jamaican parish of St. Catherine. It also records his bequest of ten pounds to the Jewish synagogue in Spanish Town Jamaica, and of five pounds each to the synagogues of Port Royal and Kingston.

There are also folios referring to properties owned by Gabays back in the sixteen hundreds. One such landholder was Solomon Faro Gabay, hence the idea for "Leaving Faro," which I was surprised and delighted to find, is an actual place in Portugal. There was also Abraham Jacob Gabay and David Gabay who bought property in partnership with a David Gomez.

My father told us that the Gabay brothers who originally came to Jamaica were separated from each other, and sent to different parts of the island, which, considering travel conditions back then, meant that they probably never saw each other for years. It is also said that they each became wealthy, and were treasurers of the temple.

I live in Toronto and work for the Toronto Public Library system. I work in a low income neighborhood. It takes an hour to get there from where I live, but it has its rewards since the people are very appreciative of whatever is done for them. I actually live in a middle class neighborhood that is made up of predominantly Poles and Ukrainians. People here keep to themselves, and you could live here for years without even knowing your neighbor! In a sense that's good, if one values privacy. And there are times that I value privacy. There are no real overt racial problems.

Yes, there is "another Canada" for this is truly a country of immigrants, and Toronto, the most multicultural city in the world. My children are a wonderful mix of races, and I hope they have inherited the best from each one. I also have a granddaughter whose father is a mix of Spanish and Chinese. She is an exotic with light coloured eyes and skin and very straight long dark hair. And in each of us, there runs the bloodline of those Portuguese Gabays who wanted to practice their religion so long ago.

INQUISITION INSTRUMENTS OF TORTURE ON EXHIBIT IN SAN DIEGO

The current exhibit, **Inquisition: Torture and Intolerance**, at the Museum of Man in San Diego has been extended through May 2001. The exhibit features instruments of torture accompanied by descriptive text.

Anonymous Judeo-Espanyol Novel: Istoria enteresante de la ermoza Rahel

An Interesting Story of the Beautiful Rahel

Isaac Jack Lévy has translated the novel and published it with transliteration, introduction and linguistic notes.

This novel, published anonymously in Izmir, Turkey, in the first decades of the twentieth century, tells of the suffering of a highly respected family who had converted to Catholicism, yet secretly maintained their Jewish traditions.

Everyone loves the beautiful Rahel, but she rejects all suitors to remain faithful to the religion of her fathers. The gallant and handsome Antonio rescues Rahel from an abduction plotted by the evil Count Levidos de Kenyon. Antonio and Rahel fall in love, but recognize the impossibility of their union. Tragedy befalls her and her family when they are betrayed by Count Levidos, and they suffer the imprisonment and torture of the Portuguese Inquisition. The denouement concerns their dramatic rescue.

One of the most popular novels of the early 1900s, *La ermoza Rahel* was originally published in rashi script (Judeo-Spanish written in Hebrew characters). Isaac Jack Lévy presents the original rashi, and gives a line-by-line transliteration in Latin characters on the facing page.

In addition to an introduction to the Judeo-Spanish novel Levy provides a section on the nature of the Judeo-Spanish language, with an alphabet key to the Hebrew and rashi characters. Included is a glossary of Judeo-Spanish words translated into Spanish. The entire work is in Spanish.

A delightful novel to read for pleasure, *La ermoza Rahel* is also appropriate as a text for teaching Judeo-Spanish language and literature, and as a literary interpretation of the Inquisition in Portugal in 1752.

For ordering information, contact Mr. Lévy at: P. O. Box 945, Davidson, North Carolina 28036, Tel: (704) 892-5668. Email: ilevy@juno.com

Troubled Souls: Conversos, Crypto-Jews-, and Confused Intellectuals from the Fourteenth through the Eighteenth Century.

Norman Simms and Charles Meyers announce publication of the above anthology with essays covering the following subject areas: New Christians Became New Jews in Seventeenth Century Amsterdam; Tolerance towards Jews in Medieval Galicia; Montaigne and the Jewish Religion; The Deunme: From Catholicism to Judaism to Islam; The Jewish Identity of Michel de Montaigne; The Madonna and the Judaizer: Immaculata worship and the Allegory of the Virgin Tora in the Poetry of Antonio Enriquez Gomez; Troubled Souls: and Dr. Hector Nunes, A Converso in Elizabethan England: Dedicated Patriot and Despised Alien; The Role of Converts in Cultural Exchanges in Europe in the 16th & 17th Century; and Auto-da-Fe: A Ceremony More Than Just Words.

For ordering information contact: Outrigger Publishers, P.O. Box 1198, Hamilton, New Zealand.



Scott Marks

SCJS TO COLLABORATE WITH SEPHARDIC HOUSE

Sephardic House, located in New York, was founded at the historic Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue, home of Congregation Shearith Israel, the very first Jewish congregation in North America, dating from 1654. The organization's goals are to research and promote Sephardic history and culture. Together with the SCJS, Sephardic House will be developing a resource archive for frequently asked questions on their website (<http://www.sephardichouse.org/>) from persons who think they might be Jewish.

According to Scott Alfassa Marks of Sephardic House, the archive will also contain the following:

- articles/papers on how mainstream Judaism views anusim
- articles/papers with research on the subject
- conference information and news updates in the anusim studies world
- consequences, privacy issues and emotional concerns facing anusim
- section with personal stories
- identification of contacts who could best represent Sephardic House as "experts" in crypto Judaism and the potential for a discussion group

"We have the highest respect for those who come 'out' to discuss this and we are sensitive to the significant privacy issues that come along with the subject," Marks says.

SCJS will be the major resource for Sephardic House in developing its archive, and will provide qualified volunteers to answer questions submitted to the website.

"We are proud and excited at this opportunity to collaborate with this vital institution to better serve those who desire to learn and explore more about the anusim and their background," says Gloria Trujillo, president of SCJS.

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EDITORIAL POLICY OF HALAPID

Halapid contributors come from all over the world. The editors respect different national writing styles and, where possible, have left each item in the author's style. We edit for grammar, spelling and typographical error.

Many contributions are memoirs or retelling of family stories and legends. They may or may not be historically accurate, although they are indeed valid, sacred memories that have been passed along through time. We do not attempt to change individual perceptions as long as they are reported as such, but we do change obvious misstatements or historical error.

We reserve the right to edit any material. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily of SCJS or *Halapid*. Articles from *Halapid* may not be reprinted without permission.

THE POETRY OF LEONOR DE CARVAJAL AND THE CRYPTO-JEWISH TRADITION IN NEW SPAIN

This is based on two articles. The prime source was: "La poesía de Leonor de Carvajal y la tradición de los cryptojudíos en Nueva España" by Michelle M. Hamilton (University of California, Berkeley) which appeared in Sefarad, Año 60, Fasc. 1, Madrid 2000. Additional information was obtained from an article by Moshé Shaul in Aki Yerushalayim. Both Ms Hamilton and Mr. Shaul have given permission to quote from their works. Translation is by Arthur Benveniste with assistance from Dolores J. Sloan..

When the archives of the Inquisition in the countries of Latin America were opened to the public, we gained a better understanding of the history of crypto Jews judged and condemned by the Inquisition for their being faithful to the Jewish religion in Mexico, Peru and other countries of the continent.

One of the best known of the victims of the Latin American Inquisition was Luís de Carvajal who, rather than allow the Inquisition to intimidate him by confessing and asking for pity in order to avoid torture, proclaimed openly his faith in the Jewish religion and maintained this position with great courage and dignity through many years of trial until he was burned in an auto da fe.

Less well known is the case of his sister, Leonor de Carvajal, who also was tried and condemned to the flames.

Leonor was the seventh of nine children of Francisco Rodriguez de Matos and Francisca da Carvajal, who had gone to New Spain (today Mexico) at the end of the sixteenth century, seeking a better life than could be had in Spain. Between the years 1589 and 1590, most of the members of her family were condemned as "judaizers." They were imprisoned for one or two years, forced to pay a heavy penalty and finally, "reconciled" to the Catholic religion. But, despite this, in 1595 the family was again accused and its members arrested by the Inquisition for "judaizing."

After being interrogated several times, on Friday June 2, 1595 Leonor de Carvajal could no longer resist the torture and she began to testify against herself, her family and her friends. These confessions revealed that the family had been practicing Jewish rites for at least the three years preceding their trial.

The trials of Leonor and Luís de Carvajal resulted in their being condemned to death by fire. Leonor, her family and her Jewish friends were garroted and their corpses were burned on Saturday, December 8, 1596. Luís de Carvajal, as noted above, refused to confess his "sins" and stayed firm to the end in his Jewish faith. He was burned alive as a true martyr.

The testimony of Leonor Carvajal is more important than the others because it contains detailed description of the rites and ceremonies practiced by the crypto-Jews of New Spain. One of the most important aspects of these ceremonies was the use of songs and poems as prayers. Leonor recited dozens of these songs and poems and gave detailed descriptions of their meanings and of their importance in the religious system of the crypto-Jews.

This testimony also shows the importance of women in the transmission of Jewish religious traditions in the hearts of the Crypto-Jews. In the absence of a rabbi to function as spiritual head of the community, the duty of transmitting the religious beliefs, prayers and songs from one generation to another fell to the crypto-Jewish women. These women had memorized many poems that were

recited and sung in the families' religious ceremonies. Leonor was the first to describe and sing to the Inquisition the typical Shabbat songs of Jewish communities of Spain and Portugal of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In the protocols of the trial of Leonor de Carvajal there are fourteen religious poems. Some of them are complete and others consist of only one or two stanzas. Among them are songs of moaning and of supplications to God, a Dekalogue in the form of a verse and songs of praise to God.

The Following poem is found in the transcript of her trial:

The following poem is found in the trial of Leonor:

Cantemos con alegría
Alavanças al Señor
Le a faltado su favor.

Let us sing with joy
Of the glory of the Lord
Though His favor is lacking.

Cantemos como esparando
El sancto rey Josaphat
Por piedad aguardando
En tiempo de adversidad.
La divina Magistad
Mostro para su loor;
Que nadie que de el se fia
No le falta su favor.

Let us sing with hope
Of the holy king Josaphat
For granting mercy
In times of adversity
The divine majesty
He showed to his glory
May no one who believes in Him
Lack his favor.

Estaba un cuento de gentes
Y otras muchas millaradas,
Que cubrian tierra y mares
Contra este sancto obedients

There is a legend of people
And many billion others
Who carry this holy order
Over land and sea.

Mostro el Omnipotente
Verdadero defensor;
Que nadie que El se fia
No le falta su favor.

The true defender
Shows his omnipotence,
May no one who believes in Him
Lack his favor.

Enbiolo Dios un propheta
Que a los suyos animasse
Y que con voluntad recta
En el siempre confieasse,
Porque sin que peleasse
Le mostraría el Señor;
Que nadie que El confia
No le falta su favor

God sends a prophesy
To those whom he has given life
And willingly and righteously
On him we always rely
Because without a struggle
He showed us the Lord
May no one who relies on him
Lack his favor.

This fragment of a poem appears only in the trial of Leonor and does not figure in the trials of the rest of the family:

Yo dixé con gran dolor,	I say with great pain
¡Ay! Que en medio de mis días	Ay! That in the middle of my days
Volví as las puertas sombrías	I returned to the dark doors
De esta cárcel por mi horror	Of this cell because of my error
Y por las maldades mías, etc.	And because of my bad deeds.

This poem warns against lighting Sabbath candles lest one would forget the terrible consequences.

En todas vuestras moradas	In all of your homes
Fuego no encendáis	Do not light a flame
En el sábado que holgáis	On the Sabbath of rest
Porque serán condenadas	Because your soul will
Las almas si tal obráis	Be condemned for this act

Charles Faulhaber of the The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, writes "The Bancroft Library has the original trial records of three of the members of the Carvajal family, along with about 100 other Mexican Inquisition trial records. The complete listing may be found at: <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/>"

This is the home page for the Online Archive of California. Go to "Browse/Search Finding Aids" and search for "Inquisition" in the search box at the bottom of the page. Mr. Faulhaber's email address is: cfaulhab@library.berkeley.edu.

CALL FOR PAPERS

**THE SOCIETY FOR CRYPTO-JUDAIC STUDIES
ELEVENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
PUEBLO COLORADO
19-21 AUGUST 2001**

The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies is soliciting papers for presentation to its Eleventh Annual Conference on a variety of topics dealing with crypto-Jewish history and culture. If you are actively engaged in research on such a topic and wish to exchange ideas with other members of the Society, we would very much welcome your participation. You need not be a published scholar to take part – the Society actively solicits presentations from members of the anusim community who have experiences that they would like to share with the group.

Please send a one-page abstract of your presentation by June 1 to:

Dr. Stanley Hordes, 1375 Santa Rosa Drive
Santa Fe, NM 87505
Or Smhordes@aol.com

The Judaic Roots of the Gaúcho

By Sérgio Mota

I am a Brazilian descendent of anusim. A retired journalist and my main occupation at the present time is research on New Christians in the Americas, mainly in Brazil, where I live. I have started two projects.

A book with revelations on the life of anusim in the Pampa region and their religious practices, called: *The Judaic Roots of the Gaúcho*. As you may know gaúcho is the inhabitant of the Pampas (prairies, in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay,) a kind of free man riding his horse, with special customs, costumes, and vocabulary. In Brazil today, inhabitants of the State of Rio Grande do Sul are called gaúchos. The word gaúcho is probably a reference to "a group of Jews" in a mixture of Spanish words.

There are many Jewish references about the origin of the inhabitants of Rio Grande do Sul as gaúchos or from the Azores or even from São Paulo at the time of the luso-Brazilian colonization of this southernmost Brazilian state. Many Jews from Colonia do Sacramento, the first Portuguese settlement on the Plate River, in 1680, had escaped to Rio Grande do Sul at the end of the eighteenth century. The book then gives a wide view of Jewish activities in South America, where "Portuguese" was a synonym for Jew.

My second project is a *Dictionary of Sephardic or Anusim Surnames of Iberian Origin*. Shalom! Todah Rabah!

I seek funds to complete and publish both the gaúchos work and the dictionary. I would appreciate any information to help with this. I can be reached at, tsurel@hotmail.com

JEWISH FOLKTALES AND URBAN LEGENDS

by Nadia Nagarajan

I am an author, have been interested in Jewish folklore for years and in 1999 I published a book *Jewish Tales from Eastern Europe*, Jason Aronson, Inc. (Details can be seen on the web: www.aronson.com).

I am now working on a new project which has to do with folklore, the oral and written tradition of the Latin American (Central American as well as the Southwest) Jewish population to be published by the University of New Mexico Press.

This book is a difficult task since there is very little preserved and recorded regarding Jewish culture in that part of the world. I am doing extensive research on Ashkenasi as well as Sephardic communities in the Americas and I am looking for tales and legends. I intend to retell the tales I will collect, and thus preserve at least some of the old cultural traditions before it is too late to do so.

I am looking mainly for previously unpublished material, people interested in telling me stories that they remember, either classic tales or life stories. I do, of course, always give credit to the source of the tale.

I would like to hear from anyone with information. Write me at: 5537 Glenoak Court, San Jose, CA 95129-3114, Tel: (408) 973-9211, e-mail: nadia@netgate.net.

STANLEY HORDES REPLIES TO HAARETZ ARTICLE

The April 6, 2001 issue of Haaretz called into question the work of the SCJS and of its vice president and founder Stanley Hordes. The following letter is Dr. Hordes' response.

The topic of crypto-Judaism is a complex one, and not easily given to superficial analysis. It is unfortunate that in the April 6 English-language edition of the Israeli daily newspaper, *Haaretz*, there appears a most disappointing article, "The Secret Faith of Santa Fe," written by Tom Segev. Like the unfortunate piece in *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 2000), *Haaretz* misses a golden opportunity to produce an objective and enlightening article on a fascinating aspect of the Jewish diaspora. Instead we are given a badly flawed piece, laden with inaccuracies, misinformation, insensitivity and innuendo. The result is a work that I find personally hurtful to me, as well as to several members of the community in which I live.

In late March Mr. Segev visited Santa Fe and interviewed me for just a little over an hour. I am amazed that in such a short period of time, he managed to get so much so wrong. The account of our conversation represented in the article reflects a profound misunderstanding of what I had conveyed to him. What are alleged to have been statements by me are mischaracterize, taken out of context, or invented entirely.

The roots of Jewish history penetrate deeply into the history of Spain and Portugal, as well as their overseas colonies in the Americas. It is a historical fact that crypto Jews, or secret Jews, fleeing from the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, fled across the Atlantic Ocean to Mexico. And once the Inquisition was established in Mexico City, further persecution forced migrations of crypto Jews to the far northern frontier, including New Mexico. As an historian, I am engaged in a research project to ascertain the extent to which people within the Hispanic community in New Mexico, who today assert a Jewish heritage, can be traced to these historical migrations. During the course of this process, I have conducted interviews with people who believe they may have Jewish roots. I use the information obtained from these conversations, **not** as a means of deriving conclusions as to their religion, but rather as a place to begin a historical search. These are serious research questions, and not to be trivialized or ridiculed. I deeply resent the implication that I tell people who they are, or invent a past that never existed.

One of the victims in the article is Gerald González. Mr. González is a very well respected attorney in Santa Fe, whom I introduced to Mr. Segev. I was present when Mr. González related to Mr. Segev how his elderly relatives, over the course of several years, had imparted to him their knowledge of the Jewish heritage within the family, how his aunt had told him of the stories passed down to her of the family having fled from Spain to Portugal, and then to the New World in order to escape from inquisitorial persecution. Does Mr. Segev include this in his article? No. Rather, the only story that he deems relevant surrounds some off-the-cuff musings by Mr. González of writing an allegorical science-fiction piece about the crypto-Jewish experience.

I use the information obtained from these conversations, **not** as a means of deriving conclusions as to their religion, but rather as a place to

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the article deals with Mr. Segev's criteria for "proving" the existence of crypto-Judaism. In order to convince him that I had not "made up the whole story," it seems he felt it was my obligation to provide him with a long list of names, addresses and phone numbers of people who were willing to talk to, not only a total stranger, but a reporter, about a very private aspects of their lives. Even under ordinary circumstances it would be difficult to find people willing to subject themselves to this kind of examination. But in view of the biased and sensationalistic nature of the articles that have appeared on the topic recently, it is small wonder that anyone would be willing to come forward. I doubt that Mr. Segev's piece will inspire a groundswell of volunteers for future stories.

It might be valuable to examine a few of Mr. Segev's misrepresentations of my statements:

1. Mr. Segev writes that I told him of a "family, which shuns bread for a whole week every spring." I never related such a story to him. Nor did I ever believe, as Mr. Segev indicates, that visitors to my office, "came as 'informants,' as though they believed that he was a reincarnated inquisitor." These were Mr. Segev's assumptions, not mine.
2. The article claims that I put "some stock in the hypothesis that **many** of the crypto Jews suffer from a skin disorder that is especially prevalent among Jews." I never indicated to Mr. Segev that "many of the Crypto-Jews" suffered from this disease. Pemphigus Vulgaris is a rare dermatological disease that strikes Jews in greater numbers than the general population. Physicians found an unusually high number of New Mexico Hispanic patients with this malady, relative to the total number of Hispanos in the state. Further, they found that certain of these patients demonstrated the identical genome and protein sequencing as Jewish patients with this disease. I pointed this latter fact out to Mr. Segev, both in our interview, and subsequently by correspondence. He chose not to include it in his story.
3. Mr. Segev points out the existence of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies (SCJS), which holds an annual conference. True enough. Unfortunately, he goes on to misinform his readers that the registration fee for such a conference is "\$2,000 per participant," a statement that is wildly untrue. The meetings of the SCJS are generally about two days in duration, and cost about \$100 or so, including meals. Mr. Segev apparently confuses the SCJS conference with a one-week tour sponsored by the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) back in 1994, which toured sites related to Ashkenazi history in Arizona and New Mexico, a tour for which I was unfairly accused in the *Atlantic Monthly* article, of luring unsuspecting tourists to meet crypto-Jews.



Stanley Hordes addresses the 2000 SCJS conference

4. And speaking of *The Atlantic Monthly* piece, Mr. Segev correctly points out that I was "quite disturbed," by the article. But as to any notion that I fear that "the public controversy poses a threat to [my] academic career," this, I must again point out, is Mr. Segev's fantasy. My reputation as an historian, fortunately, does not rise or fall depending on the attitude of irresponsible articles written by journalists. My historical research, when it is published, will speak for itself, and will be judged accordingly by my colleagues.

5. "... Stanley Hordes concurred that a crypto Jew who reveals his or her origins can, to some extent, be compared to a gay people who come out of the closet." I have no idea as to the origin of that statement. It certainly did not come from me.

6. During the course of our interview, Mr. Segev repeatedly asked me to give him an estimate on the number of crypto Jews living in New Mexico today. I responded that there was no basis for providing any kind of accurate number. After all, who does one count? If

someone had one converso ancestor, do we count this person? What about the woman who has a vague notion that she comes from a crypto Jewish background? Do we count her? Moreover, there may be many people who, indeed, know about their Jewish heritage, but will never reveal their story to me, Mr. Segev, or any other outsider. How many

do we count there? So it is in the context of this refusal by Mr. Segev to accept my protestations about coming up with a number, that "Grudgingly, as though under duress, Hordes disclosed" that maybe some 200 people had approached me with a range of stories about a possible converso background.

Mr. Segev's unfamiliarity with New Mexico, its culture and geography is evident from the very outset of his article. Beginning with his introductory paragraph, Mr. Segev sets the tone of inaccuracy, to say nothing about insensitivity, in his description of the community of Santa Fe, New Mexico, the subject of his piece. He misnames the river that runs through the town, the Santa Fe River, confusing it with the Rio Grande, which is located some distance to the west. He asserts, again mistakenly, that the residents "dwell in adobe homes" (houses constructed of adobe are priced far beyond the reach of but a small fraction of Santa Feans). As far as his characterization of our community as possessing an "atmosphere of ailing desolation," most residents, and even more visitors, would probably take strong exception to that bleak picture.

In an attempt to justify his depiction of Santa Fe as "covered by a halo of secrecy and fantasy," he seizes on the old and worn stereotype of Los Alamos as the "clandestine" site where the atomic bomb was designed almost 60 years ago (the town has been open since the 1950s), or he reaches all the way to Roswell, located over 300 miles away, and alludes to some pop-culture legend about aliens. What does any of this have to do with the topic of crypto Judaism? The rational response would be -- nothing at all. However, in his attempt to discredit the legitimacy of those New Mexico Hispanos who are exploring a possible Jewish past, Mr. Segev apparently tries to fabricate a cultural context of unreality and fantasy in Santa Fe.

For reasons unknown, the author chose not to interview other experts in the field of anthropology and sociology,

whose names I provided to him, including anthropologist Seth D. Kunin, of the University of Aberdeen (Scotland), who has conducted fieldwork in New Mexico for the past six summers. These scholars could have enlightened him on the contemporary aspects of crypto Judaism far better than I. Our collaborative research efforts will continue to ascertain the nature and extent of this phenomenon over the course of the past 400 years. While this work is underway, perhaps the question of crypto Judaism in New Mexico would best benefit from more light, and less heat.

Stanley M. Hordes holds a Ph.D. in History from Tulane University. He served as New Mexico State Historian from 1981 to 1985, and is currently Adjunct Research Professor at the Latin American and Iberian Institute, University of New Mexico. He is currently director of "The Sephardic Legacy in New Mexico: A History of the Crypto-Jews," sponsored by the LAL, and funded by a grant from the Estate of Eva Feld. Those who wish to

read more about this issue, and about crypto-Judaism in general, may wish to visit the website of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies: www.sephardiconnect.com/halapid."

For reasons unknown, the author chose not to interview other experts in the field of anthropology and sociology, whose names I provided to

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The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies

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19-21 August 2001

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Room rates guaranteed through August 1, 2001 (or until room block is sold out). Be sure to mention *The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies* in order to receive the preferred rate. If possible, please use the preferred rate rather than another discount plan such as the Auto Club or AARP, and please let the hotel know you are attending the conference. The Holiday Inn requires a minimum two-night stay and "Kids Eat Free" is not included with the preferred rate.

We look forward to seeing you at the conference!

