

# Catholic student traces her Jewish history in concentration camps of Germany, Poland

BY TRISH LINNER

NOTRE DAME — Jackie Rothschild never thought much about her last name. "I knew my grandfather was Jewish, but that's about all I knew about him," she said. The Catholic girl with a Jewish name was raised in Fort Worth, Texas, and is now a student at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame.

During her classes as a religious studies major, she began to question her background as she learned more about the Jewish faith during a class with Assistant Professor Stacie Davis.

"She's such an amazing professor. She's why I chose to become a religious major," Jackie says. Her interest in religious studies led Jackie to the University of Notre Dame where she began to take peace studies classes as well.

It was during the Holocaust class with Father Kevin Spicer, that Jackie decided she needed to learn more about her Jewish grandfather, Julius Rothschild, who died before Jackie was born. Over Christmas break she talked to her father about her grandfather and about an upcoming class trip to visit Germany and Poland.

"My dad was very supportive," Jackie remembers. "He thought this was a great opportunity to learn about our family history."

The two of them spent most of Christmas break looking through old photos, and her dad recalled as much as he could about the stories his father had told him.

"It was really the first time I had heard about his life in Germany and what he went through to get out," said Jackie.

She learned that her grandfather had served his country as a soldier during World War I. His friends encouraged him to leave Germany as the Nazi's took over the country. Julius fled Germany with a small group of Jews on a ship that wasn't allowed to enter the United States. The group arrived in Cuba instead, then made their way to San Gregorio, Mexico.

They built a small community there, but never had a synagogue. Her grandfather was 40 years old, didn't speak any Spanish and had to start his life over again.

He married Jackie's grandmother and they raised their children Catholic. Her grandfather practiced his faith alone and never wanted to talk about his family that was left behind in Germany.

"My dad and I were able to



TRISH LINNER

**Jackie Rothschild, a student at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, visited Germany and Poland's concentration camps over spring break where she explored her family's Jewish roots.**

find birth certificates from my grandfather and all of his siblings," she says. "Since they were in German, I had my high school German teacher translate them for us. I wanted to have them with me when I went on the trip to help me find out what became of them."

Jackie was nervous and excited on the plane ride. "I really wondered what I would feel like when I was there," Jackie says.

Their first stop was in Warsaw, Poland. They toured the Warsaw ghetto where many Jewish people lived and were taken from by the Nazi's.

"There are many monuments to the survivors and the victims, they were beautiful and it was very moving," Jackie says. "Our guide told several stories of heroism and had parents who had survived the concentration camps."

Next they visited a Jewish synagogue, and it was there that Jackie felt truly overwhelmed by all the knowledge she had and was learning about her grandfather and his faith. "It seemed so strange as I sat in this beautiful synagogue that all I know about the Jewish faith I learned in a Catholic school. I felt a connection to my grandfather, but I didn't feel like I belonged there."

Over the next few days, the group toured several concentration camps in Poland and in Germany. Jackie was able to find evidence at the Berlin Holocaust Museum that two of her grandfather's brothers were killed at Auschwitz.

While Jackie thought the visit

was a trip of a lifetime, she found it frustrating that she didn't feel more of an emotional connection during the visits to the death camps. "The history is so awful," she says, "But I didn't shed one tear walking through the places. I couldn't feel a personal connection between the history I have learned and myself."

Jackie was able to bond with another student who also had a grandfather who fled the Nazis. "We held hands as we walked through Auschwitz," Jackie states.

Jackie's research into her family's past continues. Though her trip is over, she has more to learn.

She is still trying to find out what happened to her grandfather's two sisters. "We assume they died in the Holocaust, but haven't been able to confirm where and how."

She is also searching for a small girl who traveled with her grandfather's group to Mexico.

The trip to the concentration camp also encouraged Jackie's resolve to work for peace. "I want to encourage others to learn from this genocide and the other atrocities that are still taking place today. If the Holocaust can happen, it can happen again. I want to make a difference in the world by working for peace in honor of all the Jewish people who died so needlessly."

Jackie is currently writing a final paper for Father Spicer's class on what she learned during her visit.

# Experts say high food prices permanent; bishops urge help for poor

BY BARBARA J. FRASER

LIMA, Peru (CNS) — As protests over rising food costs spread around the globe, experts warn that high prices are here to stay, and Catholic bishops are calling for governments to take emergency measures to keep their poorest citizens from going hungry.

Already this year, demonstrations linked to spiraling food prices have struck more than a dozen countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Protests forced Haitian Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis out of office April 12, and demonstrators have been killed in Cameroon, Peru and Mozambique.

The price increases are fueled by a variety of factors that "are all coming together at once," said Lisa Kuennen, director of the public resource group at Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops' international relief and development agency.

Drought last year in Australia and Canada pushed wheat prices up, while flooding destroyed crops in various countries, she said. High oil prices have increased the price of petroleum-based fertilizers and increased transportation costs.

Another factor is the rising standard of living in China and India, which has led to increased demand for luxury foods such as meat and milk. Because it takes seven or eight pounds of grain to produce a pound of meat, increased meat consumption drives up demand for grain and, therefore, the price.

In China, per-capita milk consumption quadrupled between 1990 and 2000, while poultry consumption more than doubled and the consumption of fish nearly doubled. In India, the consumption of meat, milk and fish also has increased.

Price increases hit poor countries — and their poorest citizens — hardest.

In Guatemala, the price of tortillas, a staple food, has risen 30 percent in the past few months. Poor Mexicans, who eat nearly a pound of tortillas a day per person, have seen the price double in the past two years. Workers earning the minimum wage of about \$4 a

day now spend as much as one-third of their earnings on tortillas for the family.

"There has been an uncontrollable rise in the price of tortillas and other basic elements," Mexican Bishop Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel of San Cristobal de Las Casas said last year. "Society and the church have to support social development programs so that the poor can be self-sufficient and not have to depend eternally on government and private help."

Inflation last year in Ethiopia was 20 percent, and church workers report more people, especially women, children and the elderly, living on the streets and knocking on church doors for help, Kuennen told Catholic News Service.

In Burkina Faso, prices of staple foods rose between 14 percent and 67 percent, she said, and families now spend as much as 75 percent of their income on food. Unlike past years, this year these price increases are appearing at harvest time, when products are most abundant and prices should be low, Kuennen said.

High prices can be good news for farmers who have a crop surplus to sell, but for those who must purchase food to supplement a subsistence harvest — and for people in urban areas who do not grow their own food — higher food prices mean there is less money to spend on other essentials, such as health care or children's education.

The scope of the food crisis puts an extra strain on aid organizations, Kuennen said. In the past, food shortages were more local and foreseeable, making it easier for humanitarian groups to respond. The current crisis is striking all around the world, however, and high oil prices make it more expensive to ship food to those who need it most.

The U.N. World Food Program had budgeted \$2.9 billion to aid some 70 million people this year. In March, however, officials estimated that they needed another \$500 million to meet that target, and by April that figure had grown to \$755 million, partly because of increased shipping costs.

Great Britain has pledged an additional \$900 million in assistance to the World Food Program,

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