

NEWS RELEASE

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USM English Professor Joy Raser
Shares Discoveries From
Unique Learning Experience in Jordan

7 p.m. Monday, Oct. 22, 2007

University of Saint Mary English Professor Dr. Joy Raser and her husband, Dr. Harold Raser, will discuss their recent learning experience in Jordan, where they went to study Islam and the Islamic culture with other American teachers and Muslim scholars, at a special presentation at 7 p.m. on Monday, October 22, at the main campus in Leavenworth, Kan. The presentation is free and open to the public and will take place in the Social Room of Saint Mary Hall, 4100 South 4th Street. The talk will be followed by a sampling of Middle Eastern desserts, which Dr. Raser will prepare herself.

The Rasers will provide insights into cross-cultural understanding. Contrary to the popular image of endless deserts and Bedouin camel caravans sheltering in scarce oases, Jordan is a land of great contrasts: pine-forested mountains, fertile valleys, and ancient villages existing beside modern cities. It is a land rich in history, much of it associated with the great religions of the world.

Dr. Joy Raser, assistant professor of English and Communications at the University of Saint Mary, spent her winter semester break this year in Jordan with her husband, Dr. Harold Raser, at a Council of Independent Colleges conference in Amman entitled "Teaching about Islam and Islamic Culture."

Along with other American professors from the Council of Independent Colleges, the Rasers met with Islamic scholars, Jordanian ministers, the American Ambassador to Jordan, and even Prince Hassan, a member of the Jordanian royal house. The program was richly varied, including discussions with Jordanian university students, visits to mosques and national parks, art museums and casbahs, where the visiting Americans were captivated by the exotic foods.

Touching the pulse of contemporary problems in the Middle East, the group visited a Palestinian refugee camp and spent much of their time in their trips around the country and at the conference seeking to see Islam from the Muslim point of view and understand more about Islamic culture.

...getting Joy and as much of the camel as possible (she's at the right)

Highlights of the trip were trips to Petra, a fabled ancient city literally carved out of red limestone rock in the desert; to the vicinity of Mount Nebo, from which Moses viewed the Promised Land; and to the Jordan River, site of the baptism of Jesus.

The Rasers presentation is sponsored by the Lawrence D. Starr Global Studies Institute at the University of Saint Mary. Parking will be available on the main campus circle and signs will direct guests to the lecture hall.

Call 913-758-6117 for more information.