

New Yorker Dr. Linda Jacobs Visits LERC
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Reported by Elie Nabhan

Dr. Linda Jacobs, an American lady hailing from New York who is of Lebanese descent, paid a visit to the Lebanese Emigration Research Center accompanied by LERC Associate Researcher Dr. Rudyard Kazan.

As a scholar, Dr. L. Jacobs holds a PhD in Near East Archaeology and has worked extensively on archaeological sites in Iran and Jordan. As business executive she is a member of the Board of Directors of the Near East Foundation and in the past has served as a nonprofit administrator on the boards of several non-profit organizations. This includes being a trustee at the Polytechnic University, alma mater of her late father, Dr. Joseph J. Jacobs.

Dr. L. Jacobs is currently writing about the Syrian-Lebanese in New York, tracing their history from the late 19th Century to the early 20th Century. She is also searching for her paternal and maternal family lineage in Lebanon, with Dr. Rudyard Kazan assisting in her research.

Dr. J. Jacobs, born the youngest child out of seven, to Lebanese immigrants in New York City, rose from humble beginnings to found an engineering and construction company renowned worldwide and to sit as its Chairman. Based in Pasadena, California, according to its website “this public company now designs, builds and operates plants in the oil, pharmaceutical, chemical and biotechnology industries.”

Throughout his life, Dr. J. Jacobs remained in touch with his Lebanese heritage, attributing to it his commercial acumen and self reliance, qualities that opened the way for his success in business. Dr. J. Jacobs earned three degrees and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science from the Polytechnic, where he served twice as Chairman of its Board of Trustees. Dr. Jacobs donated over thirty million dollars to the Polytechnic and was a life-time trustee. Several buildings and departments on campus were named in his honor and that of his wife, Violet. Author of several articles on chemical engineering and economics, Dr. J. Jacobs also held several patents in various fields of chemical engineering. In 1983, the Hoover Medal was bestowed on him by President Ronald Reagan, in recognition of his outstanding contributions in the fields of engineering and education and of his humanitarian activities. Dr. J. Jacobs passed away in 2004 leaving behind the Jacobs Family Foundation which has channeled millions of dollars into grants to nonprofit organizations over the years.

To return to Dr. L. Jacobs visit to LERC, discussions between Dr. L. Jacobs and LERC’s Director Ms. Guita Hourani centered on the activities and projects of LERC and avenues of potential on account of common ground.

After being shown around the LERC premises, Dr. L. Jacobs was taken on a tour of the Lebanon Migration Museum and then introduced to all the collections and materials that the Center preserves in its electronic archives.



Dr. L. Jacobs pictured with the replica of the Lebanese Migrant statue at the Lebanon Migration Museum (Jan 2011).

Miss Jacobs herself is an avid collector of old photographs and has turned into a keen historian of her of family's history.

In a departing statement, Dr. L. Jacobs commended LERC as an “a wonderful enterprise that is so needed.”