

Holocaust Survivor Visits Campus

Will Robinson, Nov 8 2010

Ruth Hartz was a four year old, hidden child during the Holocaust in southern France in 1941. She changed her name from Ruth to Renee to disguise her Jewish identity and was taken in by a French farm family as well as a small Catholic convent to avoid capture by Vichy French Police and the Gestapo. Through unusual good fortune Ruth and her parents survived the war and returned to Paris where Ruth eventually graduated from the Sorbonne with a degree in Biochemistry.

Ms. Hartz told her story to students during a day-long visit to campus arranged by the Chair of the Modern Languages department, Madame Diahann Johnson. Ms. Hartz visited several Religious Studies, History and Language classes giving students the opportunity to ask questions and engage in valuable discussions that allowed them to better understand some of the darkest days in world history.

Ms. Hartz also led a special Friday lunch and chapel discussion spoken entirely in her native French where a room full of students from French I through V were able to hear her story through the cultural lens of her French heritage. In those discussions Ms. Hartz shared the lifelong connections she and her family has made with her rescuers in France highlighting the tremendous humanity that emerged through the terribly inhumane acts of Nazi Germany. Afterwards, students noted her incredible grace and expressed appreciation for her visit.

Ms. Hartz is a member of the Pennsylvania Holocaust Education Council, the American Association of Teacher of French and the Alliance Francaise. She is the subject of the book: *Your Name is Renée*: by Stacy Cretzmeyer, the author of *A Legacy of Goodness*: the story of her French Rescuers during World War II.