

Eugenia Louise Nitowski, Ph. D., In Memoriam

July 17, 1949-June 14, 2007

By

Paul C. Maloney

Giving,  
Always giving.  
Generous to a fault.  
Curious about life.  
A passion for the ancient.  
Always expanding her horizons!  
These are my memories of Jeannie.

It is about a year ago that Jeannie left us. She was found dead in her apartment on June 14, 2007. But I didn't know this. I called her earlier this year because I wanted to get some information from that mind that served as a robust repertoire, a treasury of contacts over the years. I knew she might have the answer to my question. Strange--the phone doesn't answer! She had told me she was going to move to the State of Washington where she would be able to expand her beloved Ariel Museum of Biblical Archaeology. But as I used my genealogical tools to find her I only drew a vast blank! But I found a clue and learned to my utter shock, Jeannie was gone! No longer with us!

She was born on July 17, 1949 to Carl and Laurena Mays Downs Nitowski in a San Diego naval hospital. Early in her life she was trained in various Seventh Day Adventist schools. Somewhere in her past, she became interested in flying and became a bush pilot in Africa. She also became interested in health science and care and ultimately entered Loma Linda University. But the "Call of the Past" was never very far from her so she left Loma Linda and moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan. There she got her Master's degree in Religion in 1973 from Andrews University. Straddling this period--from 1971 to 1980--she was the Assistant Curator of the Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum at Andrews University. Toward the end of this period she was already gravitating toward Notre Dame. In 1978 she got a second Master's degree, this one in history, and in 1979 finished work on her Ph.D in history, also at Notre Dame. While here she became a Catholic and realized there may be something "beyond" her current knowledge and developed a growing interest in the contemplative life. She joined the Carmelite Order and took the name Sister Damian of the Cross.

Over the years she and I continued to stay in contact. In one letter, particularly, she told me she was dying. She had been suffering terrible, excruciating headaches. But apparently she was able to get medical help and she pulled out of it. Despite these distractions she maintained an intense and growing interest in the archaeology of the Holy Land.

While she was living in Salt Lake City, Utah she met chemist, Joseph Kohlbeck. He had been studying sticky tapes taken by the STURP organization in 1978 from the Shroud of Turin (on loan to him from Ray Rogers). Their collaboration led to an article published in the *Biblical Archaeology Review* revealing their research on one possible explanation for the mysterious image on the Turin Shroud. It was she who developed this, the most elaborately planned and executed experiment to test her hypothesis. That was the expedition she led to Jerusalem in 1986 to stage an investigation into the role of the tomb environ--Jeannie, herself, was an expert in rolling stone tombs in the Holy Land--named "ESSJ"--The Environmental Study of the Shroud in Jerusalem. Her team was international in scope: among them, Rodger and Connie Apple from Albany, New York, fellow archaeologist Dr. James R. Strange from the University of South Florida, Dr. Donald Wimmer, Harold Nelson of Texas, Rex Morgan of Sydney, Australia and her father, Carl Nitowski of Salt Lake City. Here, in a tomb near the Damascus Gate in the Old City, they carefully monitored the nature of the tomb environment and its possible role in the formation of the image that is still, today, considered by many an unsolved mystery. And although she was never able to prove with proof positive evidence her proposed hypothesis, it must be said that the testing she and her team did shed some considerable light on the nature of the Shroud in a tomb environment and, for many others, ruled out the "mercerization" idea of the cause of the image. This heroic test should go down as looming large in her legacy in Shroud research. And one may find further details of this remarkable expedition in the writings of Rex Morgan, and Harold B. Nelson. (*Shroud News*, no. 27, Feb. 1985; no. 29, June, 1985, pp. 3-4; no. 31, Oct. 1985, p. 8; no. 35, June 1986, pp. 6-23; no. 45, Feb. 1988, pp. 13-23; no. 47, June 1988, p. 17).

While in Israel, she did some archaeological excavations on Mt. Carmel (Haifa, Israel) where the headquarters for the Carmelite Order is located. During that time she performed two of the kindest deeds for me that I shall forever remember. She went throughout Israel and took sticky tape samples of the residue and dust particles on the burial benches of various tombs in the land. Sadly, although I was able to make a good photographic record of extensive particulate material from this wonderful collection, I had to return the original tapes she had collected to the Israel Antiquities Authority. But Jeannie's second great kindness was her collection of floral material, also preserved on sticky tapes. She provided these mounted on microscope slides and are kept in two boxes in my collection of Israel floral controls which I have used constantly in comparing the data gleaned from my work with the Max Frei Collection of Sticky Tapes from the Shroud of Turin. Photographs from this collection often appear in my "index" of the Max Frei Sticky Tape Collection which is currently under development.

Later in life Jeannie became interested in DNA studies. It is not known if these studies contributed to her death. But it is my understanding that she was interested in the Ebola virus. Her curiosity about the past had led her into this field. She called it "Viral Paleontology".

Jeannie's legacy is also to be found in her writings and publications. I list some of them briefly as follows:

Nitowski, Eugenia L. **Reconstructing the Tomb of Christ from Archaeological and**

**Literary Sources.** Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1979.

Nitowski, Eugenia L. **The loss of the image: A conservator's report of the Shroud of Turin.** Ed., Environmental Study of the Shroud in Jerusalem, Salt Lake City, 1985. (This work is signed as "Sister Damian of the Cross").

Nitowski, Eugenia L. "Proyecto de Investigacion del Medio Ambiente de la Sabana Santa en Jerusalem" Trans. by Dr. Julio Lopez Morales, in *Sindone: Boletin del Centro Mexicano de Sindonlogia*. Vol. 3, no. 1, June 1985, pp. 9-14.

Nitowski, Eugenia L. **The Luchnaria: Inscribed Lamps of the Byzantine Period.** (Occasional Papers of the Horn Archaeological Museum, Andrews University), Andrews University Press, 1986, 63 pp.

Nitowski, Eugenia L. **The Field and Laboratory Report of the Environmental Study of the Shroud in Jerusalem.** Carmelite Monastery, Salt Lake City, 1986. (This work signed as "Sister Damian of the Cross.")

Nitowski, Eugenia L. Letter to the Editor: *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 12, no. 6, Nov.-Dec., 1986, pp. 71-73.

Nitowski, Eugenia L. Letter to the Editor: *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 13, no. 2, Mar.-Apr., 1987, pp. 66-67.

Nitowski, Eugenia L. "Reconciling the Evidence--the Shroud of Turin and Carbon Dating". *Shroud News*, no. 50, Dec. 1988, pp. 46-47.

Nitowski, Eugenia L. "The Body of Christ" *Shroud News*, no. 100, pp. 52-55.

Nitowshi, Eugenia L. **Through the Microscope.** Ariel Museum, Salt Lake City, 1998.

Co-authored with Joseph Kohlbeck:

Kohlbeck, Joseph A. and Eugenia L. Nitowski, "New Evidence May Explain Image on Shroud of Turin: chemical tests link Shroud to Jerusalem" *The Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. XII, no. 4, July-August, 1986, pp. 18-29.

Jeannie is survived by a step-brother, Larry Sabin as well as many Nitowski cousins throughout the United States. I am particularly indebted for some of the above information to Dr. Albert Nitowski, an analytical chemist at Chemtura Corporation in Connecticut. My thanks to him.

Jeannie's funeral mass was celebrated at the Carmel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Monastery in Holladay, Utah and she is buried in the Mt. Calvary Catholic Cemetery near there. She is gone from our midst, but may her memory be living and vibrant among us.

See below for photograph.

Photograph is through the kind courtesy of the Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

**Dr. Eugenia L. Nitowski**

