

## Photographic Exhibit: "A Priest Vows Never to Forget"

by Dea Antonelli Carcieri '78

*Yom Hashoah 2000* also featured a photographic exhibit in the Phillips Memorial Library entitled "A Priest Vows Never to Forget," featuring The Edward P. Doyle, O.P. Collection of Liberation Photographs of Nordhausen Concentration Camp (April 12, 1945)."

The display combined Father Doyle's stark pictures, his reflections on the horrific sights he saw that day, descriptions of his infantry division and chaplaincy, and information about World War II. It was researched and prepared by Jane M. Jackson, director of the college's archives; Dr. Deborah Johnson, associate professor of art history; Jane Lunin Perel, professor of English; and four of Johnson and Perel's students.

According to the exhibit, Father Doyle began teaching philosophy at Providence College in 1941. Two years later, he enlisted as an Army chaplain and served between 1943-46, often in frontline combat, as part of the 104th Timberwolf Infantry Division. He earned a Bronze Star Medal for his courage and dedication.

Father Doyle returned to PC in 1976 and resided at the St. Thomas Aquinas Priory. He presented a speech, "I Was There. . .," at the International Liberators' Conference in 1981, which Elie Wiesel attended. He later received the "Never Again Award" from the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island for striving to "reduce anti-Semitism, racism, and prejudiced attitudes."

### A very special presentation

In 1996, Father Doyle gave his photographs and papers to Perel, to be housed later by the college's archives. "It was a mystery to me," said Perel of his request that she keep the many items from his experience as a liberator of the concentration camp.

"You have to understand that he came strolling into my office wearing his bowler hat and carrying his umbrella," she recalled about his unexpected visit. "He was so changed by age I didn't realize I had met him many years ago. I knew he was a liberator of Nordhausen and that he was an Army chaplain. He was quite definite that he wanted me to take his papers. At that time, I had no idea what was in them, but I told him I would be happy to look through them."

A few days later, she said, Father Doyle returned, carrying a bag "with all kinds of certificates that had been sent to him, as well as a book about his division, the Timberwolves. And then, an incredible thing happened," she said. "He handed me a gold and black Ambassador candy box that contained his original photos of the carnage at Nordhausen. They had literally sat in that box since the time they were taken—what was that—50 years ago.

"It was so beyond belief," she exclaimed. "I realized I was sitting beside an eyewitness who'd had the strength and wisdom to take these photos. I encouraged him to give them to the Holocaust Memorial Museum of the United States, or to the Holocaust Museum of Rhode Island. He said no, he wanted them on permanent display at PC so the people here at the college would know that this had really happened."

College archivist Jackson received the materials from Perel upon Father Doyle's death in 1997. They have been displayed annually to coincide with the global Yom Hashoah commemoration, and are available for use by college faculty and students studying the Holocaust. Perel, Johnson, and their students plan to create a catalogue of Father Doyle's materials.

### Display elicits another's memories

News accounts about the display moved another man to tell Perel his story. "His name is Zygfryd Baginski, and he had been a political prisoner at Nordhausen," she said. "He had come forward because he's 86, and he wanted to give me materials that would tell his story. I referred him to the Holocaust Museum of the United States, which is interested in them."



Rev. Edward P. Doyle, O.P.