Student Spotlight: Jacie Rex

04/01/2017

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Utah State University presents history student Jacie Rex. Hailing from Evanston, Wyoming, Jacie originally started at USU as a soil science major, until she took a modern European history class. “When I took Dr. Rosenband’s class,” Jacie says, “I just loved it. I never realized that there were two sides to history, or that what you were taught in high school or middle school isn’t essentially true sometimes.” She quickly realized what she calls her "inner detective" and switched majors. Since then, Jacie has been gathering awards and accolades across the College of Humanities and Social Sciences as a peer advisor, ambassador, Undergraduate Teaching Fellow, and as CHASS senator in the Utah State University Student Association for the 2016-2017 school year. After she graduates this semester, Jacie will be joining the Teach for America program in South Carolina, in order to make education better in places where it is lacking, and "try to encourage people to reach their academic potential." Concerning the program, she passionately stated, "I don’t think that where a child lives should dictate the level of education they receive. I think education needs people to work on it, so I’m going to work on it." Alongside her academic and vocational work, Jacie is also passionate about politics and loves reading, fishing, camping, and drinking coffee.

Read the edited interview below.

Where are you from?

I grew up just outside of Evanston, Wyoming on a cattle ranch on the border of Utah and Wyoming. It was a great and interesting experience.

Why did you decide to study at Utah State University?

I had a scholarship here for soil sciences and range management. That’s why I came here originally. But I took a few classes and I realized I didn’t love it. I was also taking Len Rosenband’s modern Europe history class, and I loved it! It got me asking “why?” a lot, which furthered my interest in history, so then I switched over. I lost my scholarship, but I think it was worth it.

When and how did you first develop an interest in history, classics, or religious studies?

I loved Greek mythology as a kid, and I remember that a book-mobile would come close to my family’s house, and we would get to go to it, and I would always find the Greek mythology books. I've always wanted to go to Greece, and I got to do that last summer. It was a dream come true. I was so excited. I loved every second of it. Also, I think history opens up this questioning in people, and I’m like an inner detective. I feel like that’s what history really is—detective work. I’ve just loved asking those questions.

What is your favorite part of studying at Utah State University so far?

I think that we have some amazing faculty members who genuinely care. I have always felt welcome, and I think that they genuinely believe in their students. It kind of gets me emotional, but I just think that they really, really care about seeing their students succeed. I was able to get the Preston Nibley Scholarship last year, and that really helped me financially. Finally, I think they prepare us well—not just to be historians but to be successful in life.

What is your number one goal as a student at USU?

My number one goal as a student at USU was simply to learn. I didn’t know a lot about anything before coming
What skills do you think are the most valuable and that have learned over the course of your time here?

Writing. I remember going into Latin and not knowing sentence structure. I didn’t understand how nouns and verbs and everything worked. I had to learn that, but then I learned how to write how to read more quickly—and how to be a better communicator—because I understood the English language better. I think that has really helped me.

Is there a certain historical figure who inspires you the most?

I loved Annie Oakley growing up, and I just thought that it was cool that when she was fifteen years old and her mother was a widow and she had to feed her family, she went out and shot all these animals and sold them to restaurants and cleared the mortgage on her family’s house. She was really able to keep her family afloat. Then she leaves the west and performs in England for the queen. Also, she was kind of an early feminist in a sense because she would write letters to the president saying, “We need women in the military because I know I can teach them how to shoot.” So I think she is really cool, and she shows that no matter where you come from you can achieve greatness.

Is there an article, movie, blog or book that inspired you that you would recommend?

Yeah, Black Rain by Masuji Ibuse. It’s about the bombing during World War II, and it puts into perspective how dehumanizing it was for the Japanese and how they dealt with side effects of radiation for years. Reading this book was the first time I realized I might not have been told the whole truth about history.

What are you passionate about, other than history?

Education. I got accepted to Teach for America and I was placed in South Carolina. The program essentially puts people and educators in areas where good education is lacking. I don’t think that where a child lives should dictate the quality of education they receive. Also, I love politics. I’m one of the very few democrats from the area that I grew up in. I love coffee. I enjoy reading and fishing. I love to camp. Yellowstone is one of my favorite places. And I’m fascinated with Bison. I read all about them all the time.