Washington State JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Paul Regelbrugge

SUMMARY

Director of Education for the Holocaust Center for Humanity in Seattle, Paul Regelbrugge discusses his organization's involvement in the Seatte Jewish Film Festival. Paul shares some family history as well as his connection to the film, "Carla the Rescuer".

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: My name is Ruth Kodish-Eskind. And it's March 30th, and we are at the Stroum Jewish Community Center. Would you state your name, please?

Paul Regelbrugge: Sure. My name is Paul Regelbrugge.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: And may I have your consent to record this interview?

Paul Regelbrugge: Yes.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: So we're at the film festival and the community center, and I'm curious if you have a relationship to either the film festival or the community center, and what that relationship is?

Paul Regelbrugge: Yes. Thanks. Uh, I'm the director of education for the Holocaust Center for Humanity. And so today I'm here representing the Holocaust Center for Humanity. And we at the center have sponsored been co-sponsors for the Seattle Jewish Film Festival for a number of years and, uh, periodically come to the community center as well, uh, in various organizational capacity to support, uh, in fact, I was here just I think it was for Yom Hashoah and just said some words as well, remembering survivors and, you know, talking about the importance of memory today.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Um, did you grow up in Seattle, or what's your connection to the region?

Paul Regelbrugge: Originally, I'm from the Midwest, but my wife and I have lived here in the Seattle area for about seven years now, and our sons went to school here, and I joined the Holocaust Center in 2019. So in this capacity, we've worked closely with many other Jewish organizations and trying to educate people relative to Jewish identity, contemporary anti-Semitism and history and lessons related to the Holocaust.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Um, can I ask you how you understand the role of the film festival in Jewish community or in Jewish life?

Paul Regelbrugge: Sure. My understanding of the role that the Seattle Jewish Film Festival plays in the community and in Jewish life, it would be very important, I think. Uh, typically, my understanding and experience is that Jewish identity and Jewish voice is not typically front of mind or front, you know, gaining the most attention. And it seems to preserve Jewish identity and cultural facets of it. It's important to bring people together to show various challenges and successes, both historically and today, and in different parts of the world, of different people of color and different demographics and things, so that people who might be in a kind of, uh, maybe silo ish, you know, or thinking that Seattle is the be all end all to have a more expansive view about what being Jewish is worldwide and very importantly, obviously more than ever, post ten seven.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Yeah. Um, do you want to talk a little bit about the community center also and the role of this site specifically

in Jewish life?

Paul Regelbrugge: Sure. My knowledge of the community center is it's amazing. In fact, the last time that I was here, just several weeks ago for Yom Hashoah, uh, I was, I saw a few people I knew who are also connected with our organization and people coming out from swimming or a workout and things. And, and there's little children, small children, you know, doing activities and just a lot of enthusiasm, excitement and vibrancy. And to me, the moment I saw it, actually, I went back to to the people that I work with at the Holocaust Center and was talking to them like we have what we call a student leadership board, which are teenagers from, not all of whom are Jewish, but maybe 50% are. And I just was thinking immediately, I think our student leadership board needs to come here to see this vibrancy of Jewish life because, again, it seems so often that it's sort of in many ways on the outskirts or in the silos. And I think to see, uh, the, the vibrancy and diversity and community of life today is, is a real important contribution because people on the outside looking in have their own conceptions and stereotypes about who Jews are and what they think they are or not. And I think seeing Jews as living people, as people who celebrate and enjoy regardless of their faith, uh, is uh, is really important to show.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Beautiful. Um, last question. Do you want to talk about your relationship to Carla the Rescuer? Why you're coming to this film?

Paul Regelbrugge: Sure. Uh, so, yeah, we have a long standing, uh, blessed relationship, really, with Carla Peperzak related to this film. Uh, back in, it must have been around 2014 or so. I was a teacher in Spokane, and I remember then contacting the Holocaust Center years before I came to work for the center and saying that I was looking to host a speaker for my students who were learning about the Holocaust. And I had become aware there was a local survivor in the community. Um, and so that's when they connected me with Carla. Carla came to our class and was able to make these connections. Uh, having grown up just a couple of blocks really away from where Anne Frank grew up, and my students knew who Anne Frank was, we had been learning and talking about her. And so we formed a relationship and friendship there. Uh, I was on a committee with her at Temple Beth Shalom in Spokane, and as well she has been a member of our Holocaust Center's speakers bureau. So since 2019, we've had cause to celebrate many events, both in Spokane and in Seattle that feature her prominently. And, uh, she is a remarkable person, and it's a joy to have any connection. When they asked me to say some words, uh, relative to the role of survivor testimony and memory within this film, it was the very least that I could do.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Amazing. Thank you so much.

Paul Regelbrugge: You're welcome. Thank you.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Yeah.