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Kristine Hoover

SUMMARY

Producer of "Carla the Rescuer", Kristine Hoover discusses the film, highlighting the ongoing relevance of Carla's actions, even as she continues to engage with the world at the age of 101. Kristine shares about her previous experience documenting stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things with the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: My name is Ruth Kodish-Eskind, it's March 30th, and we're at the Seattle Jewish Film Festival. Would you just state your name for me?

Kristine Hoover: Sure. My name is Kristine Hoover.

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

Kristine Hoover: Yes.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Thanks. Um, I got to go off script since you're the producer of this film. Do you want to talk to me a little bit about what it's like to show your film here today, and maybe say who you are and what your film is?

Kristine Hoover: Sure. So, um, I'm the producer of Cala the Rescuer. So Clement Lye is the director and it's his directorial debut. It's very exciting. But fundamentally, it is Carla Peperzak's story and her courage to keep telling her story that is such a gift in our life and a gift that we just feel so fortunate to help expand the number of people that get to learn about Carla's life, not only as an incredible truth teller to history. Right, it's a history movie. It's about what happened during World War II. But it's a story about agency, it's a story about people standing up. It's a story about people being clear of what's right and what's wrong. And the thing is that it's not just a story about what happened during World War II. It's a story about what Carla does today, even at 101 years old.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: 101, that's amazing. Um, can you tell me about, like, how you came to produce the film, like how you made that choice in that moment?

Kristine Hoover: So, uh, I have been the director for the Gonzaga Center for the Study of Hate. And because of that, I've had the opportunity to work with a lot of incredibly resilient individuals who stand up and say it, we have an obligation and a duty to see the dignity in each and every human being. And one of those people that I had the chance to work with is Mary Noble and she said, Carla tells her story of what happened when she was a teenager to schools all over the community. And there's more to Carla's story than just that chapter and how can we learn about Carla as a human being. Carla as a wife. Carla as a mom. Carla as a grandma. Carla is someone who pranks her kids and does all the silly and fun things that we do as human beings, so that we can relate to her and maybe see ourselves in some way as being even more inspired by her. Not as someone who we can't possibly emulate, but someone who opens a pathway for each of us. And so Mary said, would you just go and talk with her? Back in 2019, this is a long time ago, especially when you're dealing with someone who at that time was in their late 90s. And so I met with Carla one day in January, and I know the date clearer than anything because it happened to be my birthday. But it was a Wednesday, and I didn't think much about it. I was going to work, and I opened the door to Carla's home so we could start our conversation.

And the first thing she said to me was, happy birthday. And I thought, how does this woman know that it's my birthday? And she had been on Facebook before 8 a.m. in the morning and saw that it was my birthday that day, and just her commitment to knowing who you are and what your story is. When she's the star of the moment, she's the rock star. Just really speaks to who she is as a human being. And so I got to know her. And then of course, Covid hit. And so we stopped doing anything in person during that time period. But I also get to work with this incredible filmmaker named Clement Lye for the classes that I teach, and he helps to develop video for those classes. So I said, Clement, would you bring a camera by? Could you help record my conversations with Carla? And after we started recording in 2022, Clement bought more than just one camera. He brought mics and lights, and so Carla allowed us to follow her and her family around for about two years. And so it wasn't until January of 2025 that the film was actually finished.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: That's amazing. Um, have you done any kind of, like, recording other people's stories, or was this a new experience for you as a person or?

Kristine Hoover: So I've done a little bit of recording of the stories related to the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, which is in Idaho, and was the group that's responsible for the downfall of the Aryan Nations. And so I had been recording their stories and working specifically with Tony Stewart, trying to document how ordinary people can do extraordinary things. And this story was just a brand new chapter in someone who was a teenager, someone who was an athlete, someone who was thinking about going to school, maybe being in the medical profession. And she truly did extraordinary things. So it was just a natural place to say, gosh, yes, I'd love to learn more.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Okay, I want to ask you one more question. Um, I'm curious about where you live and if there is any kind of Jewish community center there, and if you have any relationship to it?

Kristine Hoover: So I live in Spokane, Washington, and I have been very graciously invited into Temple Beth Shalom, working with Rabbi Tamar on Gonzaga's campus. We actually have Rabbi Elizabeth Goldstein as one of our faculty members. Carla has received an honorary doctorate from Gonzaga, and we have the Jewish Bulldogs on the Gonzaga campus. So, um, Gonzaga's mascot is the bulldog. So we have the Jewish Bulldogs as part of our community. So really an important part of the Yom HaShoah celebrations, uh, we have the Never Again committee that at times, like several years, has displayed the students artwork and essays on campus. So it's a really important integrated valuing of this respect and understanding that there are many paths.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Great. Um, is there anything else you want to share about your experience? Spokane. This film festival?

Kristine Hoover: We're just elated and delighted to be a part of the Seattle Jewish Film Festival. And what an incredible, um, history and to be part of this 30 year celebration. I mean, Carla is so thrilled to have her story told here and we're just really, really grateful.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Thank you so much.

Kristine Hoover: Thank you. I hope that's useful.