Washington State JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Anne Levinson

SUMMARY

Anne Levinson has made a significant impact on Seattle's public service sector through roles such as oversight auditor for police accountability, chair of the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, and social justice advocate. Her background, rooted in a reform Jewish community and shaped by mentors, influenced her lifelong commitment to equality, justice, and community service, culminating in notable efforts like saving the Seattle Storm, establishing mental health courts, and advocating for LGBTQ rights. She emphasizes coalition-building, her Jewish values, and work as a means to enact societal change, viewing her career as a reflection of her core principles and mission.

Jacqueline Estrin: Oh. I think I should have recorded for the web, not just my computer. Should I have? Oops. [laughs] Um, just forgive me for one moment. Okay. Hello, my name is Jacqueline Estrin. I am on the House committee Hear O' Washington, which is a division of the Washington State Jewish Historical Society. In addition, I am a board member. Um, I am here today, May 16th, 2023, and I'm going to chat with my guest Anne Levinson. Anne, hello. Good afternoon, how are you today?

Anne Levinson: I'm very well. Thanks for having me.

Jacqueline Estrin: Oh, it's my pleasure, our pleasure. Are you ready to engage in some interesting conversation about your personal work history?

Anne Levinson: Well, go for it.

Jacqueline Estrin: Okay, excellent. I'm just going to give a little background to those listening. Um, Anne Levinson, as I say, Judge Anne Levinson, retired, served as an independent oversight auditor for Seattle's police accountability system for about six years. She co-chaired a bipartisan commission to recommend reforms to the state's approach to child welfare and juvenile justice services, which resulted in the state's first agency focused on children, youth and families, and spearheaded regional system reform on firearms, domestic violence, and domestic violence, violence which resulted in the creation of the first of its kind Regional Firearms Enforcement Unit. She served as chair for both the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission and the Washington Public Disclosure Commission. Wow, that's a mouthful, that's rich. That's fantastic. Did that sound? Did I get it right?

Anne Levinson: Yeah. Before all that, back in the '90s, I served as chief of staff and deputy mayor to Norm Rice. So many in Seattle know and love Norm, and that is also a part of my professional life, of which I'm very proud.

Jacqueline Estrin: No doubt. My goodness, that- what else did I miss? Anything else?

Anne Levinson: Well, we'll talk civic and social justice advocacy later on.

Jacqueline Estrin: That sounds great. So maybe we'll just forge ahead for the HOW committee, if you're if you're ready to roll, I will start with simply by just if you can tell me a little bit about your parents, where they came from, your immediate nuclear family. Um, when did they arrive in Washington? Were they always in Washington?

Anne Levinson: Okay, so my parents were both from New York. Um, they, my father, when he was growing up, his, both of my parents, their parents came from Eastern Europe. And, uh, my father grew up very poor and wanted to be a teacher and in New York at that time, Jews were not welcome at teachers colleges. So he had a counselor who encouraged him to go to the teacher's college in Emporia, Kansas. So my parents moved to Kansas, and I was born in Topeka and raised there until I was about ten and, uh, we participated in a in a reform synagogue in Topeka. There was a Jewish community there that was affiliated largely with the Menninger Foundation, which was a renowned foundation in that era that had a lot of psychologists, psychiatrists and others who had come from the coasts. So there was a good Jewish population there in Topeka. Then we, um, moved to Massachusetts when I was in junior high school and I grew up there. So they were never in Washington State. I moved to Washington state after law school and so I'm the only family member here in Washington state.

Jacqueline Estrin: The only one. Okay, great. So you sort of dived into a little bit of my what my next question was, did you participate in any Jewish youth activities or in the community in general in your youth?

Anne Levinson: Yeah, it was it was, uh, I would say my family is very reform, and I wasn't particularly drawn to the religious practices, but I found myself very drawn to the love of learning and commitment to community and, uh, you know, each of us doing our part to repair the world. So, so more of the Jewish values and and traditions as I grew up.

Jacqueline Estrin: Tikkun Olam there.

Anne Levinson: They're exactly right. Yeah.

Jacqueline Estrin: Wow. So when you look back at yourself, when you reflect back, what was life like in your eyes as a child in your community?

Anne Levinson: Yeah, Topeka was, other than that little bubble in which we live that was associated with managers. Um, yeah. Topeka was in many ways very conservative, but also had a long history of civic engagement and reform work and fighting for the rights of others in ways I think people would be, would be, or might be surprised by. So, uh, only when I look back later did I realize that was really in my DNA from from a young age, but it was also a very non-diverse community there. I think it was probably the least diverse community in which I've lived in all of my life. So, so moving to the East Coast, moving to the Boston area really exposed me to a much, um, broader community. Yeah.

Jacqueline Estrin: No kidding. My goodness. So when did you know- [coughs] Pardon me, the career path that you wanted to take? Was it somewhat organic, given your background, what you just conveyed or what what what drew you to the field?

Anne Levinson: Well, there's actually a story to that. Uh, it was not a thoughtful career planning on my part. It was not- so when I was in high school, I wasn't engaged in civic or student government, and I wasn't particularly attentive to what was going on in the world. I was playing sports, and that's what I was primarily interested in and a field hockey coach from the University of Kansas had reached out to me. My father had, um, gotten his PhD there and so we had some relationship with the university and I was always drawn to go back and so she offered me she'd heard that I was, uh, I had some skills in field hockey, and she wanted to recruit me for the team and she promised me a scholarship, which in that era was pretty radical. You'll, you'll be probably amused by this. It turns out the scholarship was worth a total of $1,000 and it was for the whole team. Um, and I could have it when the junior who had it graduated, so. But nonetheless. So anyway, I went out to Kansas, um, was very excited to do this and we had a terrific team and great success. And at the end of my freshman year, the university announced they were going to cut all of women's sports, all of the women's teams except for basketball. Mhm. And in that era, very few women, you know, many colleges still didn't have women's sports. There was um, there were huge disparities in funding and, the like in the women's sports were funded through the general fund budget, which meant if they were funding a team, that money wasn't going to academic needs or to other students. So it had the effect of pitting students against each other anyway, they announced they were going to cut all the teams and, um, I went to the university student body and asked them to help us. Again, I didn't know anything, I'd never lobbied or participate in student government or held a press conference, or didn't know what a Board of Regents did and what a legislature.

Jacqueline Estrin: How was this, like in your junior or senior year of high school?

Anne Levinson: This was my sophomore year, so I was sophomore.

Jacqueline Estrin: Wow.

Anne Levinson: I was 19, I was all of 19. So the student body at that point, the student body officers were guys, and they didn't know a field hockey stick from a drumstick, so they weren't in it for the sports or for the sort of feminist ideals, but they were in it

because they were doing fight or, um, going to battle with the university administration over all sorts of things in that era and so we this presented another cause for them, right, so we banded together and so we were able to get the university to pay attention. Then I, uh, in that era, you will probably recall this, but we didn't have social media, and we didn't have Google. We didn't have all of that. So the way you organized in that era was bulletin boards and potlucks and, and the like and so I had to figure out how to get attention to this and, um, organized a relay race from the university campus to the state capitol, which was about 30 miles away for, uh, women from and coaches. So players and coaches from the different women's teams and we each wore our uniforms and we ran a mile with a petition and then we handed it to the next runner all the way to the state capital. Then we were met on the steps of the state capitol by the female legislators and others who were going to help champion our cause. And so that got in the media and the evening news and the front page of the major Kansas newspapers got a lot of attention and, and all of a sudden, I was in this battle that I knew nothing about and launched this effort and there was a wonderful feminist professor who was not really engaged in sports. Her, her area of emphasis was classics and arts, but she had read about this and she wanted to help. So she wrote me a letter and said, "You need to, if you need help, let me know and I'm happy to guide." And so I met with her and she suggested I file a title nine complaint and title nine had passed in 1972. Um, and it was largely directed toward helping remedy all the inequities in higher education in that era. Um, many colleges had quotas for the number of women they let in. They were not hiring women as professors or were not granting them tenure. Women were not allowed to, or only in certain numbers allowed to participate in certain classes, whether it was medical school or law school or shop or all this. So, um, title nine had been passed in 1972 to start to try to remedy those things and one of the things it also allowed for was to address inequities in athletics. And so, um, she said, as a good teacher does I should go research this and learn about it. So I went to the library again, we didn't have another ways to do research in that area and learned about it and filed a complaint and my complaint ended up being one of the first in the nation and at that time, the federal government had been dragging its feet about implementing the law and so there was a lot of pressure on them to get moving. So they, um, chose this. I think it was among the first seven or eight nationally because of the breadth of the complaint. I filed it regarding every aspect of athletics. So facilities and scholarships and medical care and all across the board.

Jacqueline Estrin: And what year was this about?

Anne Levinson: So this was 1978. Okay. Um, and so this brought a huge amount of attention to

Jacqueline Estrin: No doubt.

Anne Levinson: Yes. Um, a lot of negative reaction in some corners. Um, there were editorials in the newspapers that this would be the end of men's sports because of what we were doing and, you know, a lot of sort of this stay in your lane. And there were among the women concerns that we were being too outspoken or getting the university too upset or the donors too upset. So it was a difficult period. But, um, the good news is in finally, in 1980, the federal government sent half a dozen investigators to the campus and conducted an investigation, told the university, took them a couple of years and in the end, they told the university that they were out of compliance and that they risked losing, uh, $27 million in federal funding unless they came into compliance. So the ultimate resolution was a a 13 point settlement agreement across the board to remedy all these disparities. Um, but by then, I had already graduated. So, to cut to the chase, the reason that I actually ended up going to law school and the law school I went to and then, as it turns out, the career path I took, um, and the civic path I took were because of that battle. I didn't have folks in my family who were lawyers or judges or that particular niche. So it was that experience that brought out in me, um, some things I didn't know I had and, and particular, you know, some righteous indignation about righting wrongs and standing up for others and, being tenacious and, um, trying to figure out how to, you know, open doors and give others voice. So that's, that's what really put me on that path.

Jacqueline Estrin: So, my next question was going to be, did you have a mentor? So was that particular professor that you mentioned, you didn't mention her name, though, but was was she, like, your first? Tell me.

Anne Levinson: Yeah, so it turns out there were a couple and I've had many mentors along the way and, she, her name was Betty Banks. She was a wonderful human being. I was actually invited back about a half a dozen years ago to the university to, uh, on a panel to present to the students. Um, and she was there along with the the person who was president of the student body at the time, who ended up being a court of appeals judge-

Jacqueline Estrin: Oh, my.

Anne Levinson: And the guy who was vice president of the student body, who ended up heading up the Board of Regents in his later years. And so it was a very seminal experience for a number of us. The other person that I ended up reconnecting with was the person who had represented the university on their side of the bargaining table and so I had thought of him in my youth as sort of the Darth Vader, because he was opposing everything, right? I had thought he was, you know, just not with us. And

anyway, when we reconnected in later years, it was he who reached out and said, um, I want to tell you how meaningful that experience was to me and how-

Jacqueline Estrin: Wow. Turned tables.

Anne Levinson: And also I would say, Jacqueline, it it taught me a wonderful lesson. Um, in that he was such a good he, he passed recently. But the fact that we had that opportunity to reconnect and then they came out here and did an event with me a few years later, and he participated in that and and it was, um, so he's such a he was such a good and decent and kind human being. Um, he was representing the university's position and all that and he told me about the number of ways he actually mediated their position, right, made it less worse than it would have otherwise been. That in my youth and in my zealous, um, advocacy. You know, I just assumed that he was his position. Right, I wasn't- and so it really that too carried through in all my work in the years that followed was to look for the goodness across the table, to understand their motivations, why they might be taking the position they are taking, and whether there's a common set of values and, um, an opportunity to get to a successful resolution rather than demonizing the- so.

Jacqueline Estrin: Wow, that's so interesting how things like that evolve and you just have a completely different perspective, right? All with experience in the passage of time.

Anne Levinson: Right,and it's only later when you look back, do you see, you know, how all those doors that opened or chapters were all interrelated.

Jacqueline Estrin: 100%. What was the first job in your field that you took?

Anne Levinson: So I went to law school at Northeastern University in Boston because it's a social justice law school, had one of the most diverse faculties and student bodies. Um, and it it's niche. What was known for and is known for is its commitment to public service, social justice advocacy, and it, it requires that the curriculum there requires each student to serve what they call a co-ops, four co-ops. So those might be called externships elsewhere. So at the end of your first year of classes, you then went for three months to have a job experience and you could do that at a nonprofit or a private firm, you could do it government, any place in the world and then you would come back to class for a quarter and then you'd go back again. And so I did four of those, and I used that experience to see what it is I was interested in. So I did a quarter in Hawaii on, um, having to do with indigenous land rights and I did a quarter in Colorado clerking for Justice Dubofsky, who was the first and youngest, first woman and youngest person ever to serve on their Supreme Court and she had grown up in Kansas, and I had heard about her. She was very progressive judge and usually the one on 8 to 1 decisions in that court. So I reached out to her, clerked for her for a quarter and then my last internship, I came out to Seattle and worked for the city attorney's office here doing anti-discrimination cases and fell in love with Seattle. So came out here and took the bar and then my first job after the bar, I headed up a little nonprofit that was associated with the Washington Environmental Council and did political work and then, uh, in the 1984 presidential election, went to Iowa to work for Alan Cranston, who you may recall, was a very liberal senator from California who was running for president. So I had my first Iowa caucuses experience.

Jacqueline Estrin: Exciting.

Anne Levinson: It was very exciting. It was very cold also, right.

Jacqueline Estrin: What were you proudest of in your career? Or the best decisions and then in turn, regret or worse, decisions. If there were any.

Anne Levinson: Uh, yes. So, you know, a lot of things I would say, you know, when I worked for Norm Rice, I had the opportunity to work on a number of reforms and difficult issues and, you know, that was the era of the Aids crisis and, we did a lot a lot of people were suffering. That was when Reagan was president, and they were refusing to even acknowledge the word Aids, let alone have any compassion. So, um, getting engaged in a lot to help that community, which also then got me engaged in LGBTQ advocacy. I was out very early in the mid '80s helps organization called the Privacy Fund, which was an organization that advocated on behalf of LGBTQ rights in in the legislature and did a lot of work. I helped in that era, create the First Families and education levy. I helped, uh, defeat it, created a coalition to defeat an attempted rollback we had passed. We were the second city in the country to provide a funeral and sick leave benefits for domestic partners and there was a conservative former cop and others who, uh, tried to overturn that, so organized to defeat that. And that was in 1990. And then, um, at the same time, we had the first ever tent cities in what was then the tent city and what was then the kingdom and so I ended up having to negotiate. I spent probably three or four months meeting every morning, heading up a team to try to figure out how we were going to help address the folks in this tent city qnd it was a very

Jacqueline Estrin: When was that about?

Anne Levinson: This was would have been in '91.

Jacqueline Estrin: Wow, so that was like the first tent city that we-

Anne Levinson: Yeah and it was terrible. That was the Thanksgiving where we had awful winds and they closed down the 520 bridge. It was so bad. So really awful weather that folks were in and they were in these living in tents. So anyway, led an effort that turned out to create the first transitional housing. So it was self-managed, the first self-managed transitional housing. Um, it was the Aloha on Aurora that's still there and then the first transitional housing for women, which we stood up in, in Belltown, called the Noel House. Um, and that really was in its day, pretty impactful. Um, and then had the opportunity to work on a number of LGBTQ civil rights issues over the years. That was all of that was particularly meaningful to me because it was all done in coalition with others. So faith leaders, labor leaders, uh, those from the pro-choice movement, all of that coalition willing to stand together to protect the dignity and and equality. Uh, and we won each of those battles over the years. Uh, they kept coming at us and we kept fighting back. So that was all going on in in addition to what I was doing professionally and then, um, when I finished with Norm's office, Governor Locke appointed me to chair the Utilities and Transportation Commission and that was the era- you may not remember this, but there was a company out of Texas called Enron that was trying to deregulate energy, uh, all across the country. They started in California and had largely succeeded and this was going to really wreak havoc for a lot of folks, particularly those who couldn't afford higher prices and, and what Enron was doing and so in that time period when I was chairing the utilities commission, uh, that was the big fight to keep them from getting a foothold here and then to enact a number of consumer protection improvements in the telecommunications industry, which was going through a lot at that time. And then I served on the bench, I was appointed in Seattle to the bench and accepted that because I'd really wanted to work on creating something that was called a mental health court, which there weren't any municipal mental health courts in that day. This was the first the first one. And so founding that and then presiding over that, uh, to divert folks with mental illness and in behavioral crisis out of the criminal legal system and into access to housing and treatment and other support. Um, so all of those were, you know, I would say, consistent with, you know, the tradition of providing opportunity for others inspiring, hopefully to purposeful action, working in collaboration with others who, um, you know, were equally committed to addressing intolerance and to acting on our values. So all of those were were really, um, wonderful experiences. The, the other one for which people, I think probably talk to talk with me about the most is, uh, saving the storm, which was in 2007, 2008, time period.

Jacqueline Estrin: The basketball team?

Anne Levinson: Yes.

Jacqueline Estrin: Those who weren't from aren't familiar.

Anne Levinson: Right, right. Yeah.

Jacqueline Estrin: Um. That's rich, that's heavy. That's- without being too terribly patronizing, you know, everything that, uh, when you reflect back, it's quite incredible and, was there a career setback that you faced that you realised later was an advantage?

Anne Levinson: That's a great question. So I, I am actually, you know, when I, I give talks to, to young folks and they ask questions about career and such, I say I've had many failures in each of those has taught me terrific lessons and, and been invaluable. And each experience where I realized, you know, this is not what I want to do for the next how many years. Um, the fact that I had that experience brought me skills and relationships, showed me what I was good at and not good at, and taught me lessons. For example, when I served, I mentioned I had served on the bench, by the time I finished my first term on the bench, I realized that I didn't, I very much missed the community advocacy, the social justice advocacy, the political advocacy and there were still skills- right, and as a judge, you're not permitted to engage in that. And so I really felt guilty. I felt a tug about not being there for my community. Um, and so I ended up leaving the bench. Um, and, you know, when I grew up, it was sort of, I think there was an assumption that you'd have a career path, you'd have a place you went to work, and then you would work there forever. Much different than today, right?

Jacqueline Estrin: You know, be there for decades and get the gold watch.

Anne Levinson: Yes. So each of those that I left and similarly, when I was at the UTC, uh, the utility and transportation, I realized after a few years that I or short period that I really missed, it was very, arm's length, and we held hearings and while we could make large and significant change on behalf of folks, it was also a little too detached for me from a number of the other things that I wanted to work on but it was that Utilities and Transportation Commission experience that taught me a lot about legislative

advocacy. Uh, it connected me to somebody who was a peer in Oklahoma on their commission, who later turned out to be instrumental in my ability to save the storm. Um, it connected- so each of those experiences were invaluable. I didn't recognize it at the time when I was in-

Jacqueline Estrin: Never in hindsight, 20/20.

Anne Levinson: Exactly. Yeah.

Jacqueline Estrin: In light of your years of experience and your keen sense of the cultural environment, what advice would you give the current generation, the Generation Z, the Generation Alpha, the newcomers, the novices in confronting this ever changing, ever evolving social norms that we are currently experiencing? You know, going into the work that you have done.

Anne Levinson: Well, first, I would say they can probably teach us a lot more than we can teach. When I think about, you know, what we've done to our planet where we are on gun violence, this wave of intolerance that's crossing our country toward young trans individuals, toward healthcare providers, toward election officials, toward the institutions of democracy, I have no illusion that we have fixed the problems of the world and are handing our next generation a fairer, more just society. As much progress as we made, it just reinforces the importance of staying engaged and, um, continuing to fight on all fronts, and, you know, I would say this generation in particular, they are they have much greater understanding of what's often called intersectionality that, um, all of these movements and all of these, uh, battles, we need to do in coalition, we need each of our fights is not ours alone and we need to be there for each other, and, they also have a keen sense of how to use their voice with the tools that we didn't used to have in our era-

Jacqueline Estrin: Yes, yes.

Anne Levinson: And, you know, as awful as social media can be for so many reasons, it can also be a very powerful tool to communicate and, and raise up issues and provide visibility. Um, and, you know, just yesterday I was at an event for the Alliance for Gun Responsibility, which is a state organization that works on gun violence prevention and the keynote speaker was a young woman who was a student at Michigan State when that awful shooting happened not long ago.

Jacqueline Estrin: Right.

Anne Levinson: And she spoke from the heart about the what we have done as a society, uh, in terms of every young person now is taught from kindergarten on, you know, how to run, hide, etc.

Jacqueline Estrin: And dive, yeah.

Anne Levinson: And, you know, so they, you know, I, I am of the I am of the view that we can't just leave it to them and say the next generation needs to take it on. Until our last breaths, we need to be there side by side. Um, and as as disappointing as it sometimes feels when we think we've been through this before, we've fought, you know, tenaciously for years. This we should not have to be revisiting this again. You know, when you look back at our history, you just see these same patterns over and over of intolerance and, um, those who have privilege and resources, wanting to keep that privilege and resources for themselves and so, you know, we just, we need to partner with this generation, not hand it off to them.

Jacqueline Estrin: Very enlightening. Did you have any sense of obligation to serve the Jewish community that you were in, in your line of work? And how did your Jewish identity affect your life's work if it did, um, have any significant role, how was it approached in your various aspects of your varied career?

Anne Levinson: Um, for sure. Well, definitely, while not religiously observant in the traditional sense, what I, I would say sort of the path I took and how I went about this work, both professionally and in sort of in civic world, I, I helped, um, for example, was a founding board member for this Seattle girls school and for the center for Children and Youth Justice and and all of those, you know, efforts and on boards of various other civic organizations. All of those efforts are again, about, you know, our tradition of teaching us that, you know, acts of goodness lead to other and that we need to, protect the inherent humanity and dignity of all people and reach back and make sure no one's left behind and act on our values. Um, so that all of the work about mobilization and, and building the world in which we seek to live, um, you know, fighting for universal equality and justice, Just, um, that's all guided my professional career, my civic engagement, social advocacy work. A lot of my friendships and, like, even the effort to save the storm, which was which was sports, right? Which people don't think about in that way, for me, had nothing to do with making money or business or any of that. It was about these young women not having opportunities, and it was about young girls and boys being able to have role models of women in this way and I was so- I'll just tell you, Jacqueline, like when we first did this and then the doors opened and they played and I looked at that audience and I saw young boys and girls looking up to these

women as professional athletes and then wanting to wear their jerseys and all that. It was, you know, to me, what was most important about that was that.

Jacqueline Estrin: I have goosebumps now thinking about it. [laughs]

Anne Levinson: Well, and that, you know, girls in today's society could see they could reach goals, right. That, that, that had been out of reach for previous generations and that right, this, that these players and also to help these players understand they stood on the shoulders of so many, right? That they were then going to open doors that hadn't been opened before. Um, and so even that which doesn't, you know, which seems like a dotted line from other things I worked on was, was really all focused about, um, providing those opportunities, opening doors, addressing inequity, having role models for, for young girls. Um, so yeah, it it I, I think there's a through line.

Jacqueline Estrin: Yes. So Judaism teaches us that we should love our jobs with immense joy and satisfaction and in the Mishnah, for those listening, the Mishnah, who are unaware mission is to study, to review, and the Mishnah was the first major written collection of Jewish oral traditions. So it encourages us. It actually God instills each person with a natural attraction to the trade or vocation he or she is destined to be in. Does this possibly resonate with you? You know, perhaps accentuate values of contentment, efficiency, creativity, ambition, right, It's an interesting fact. And we are the Jewish Historical Society, so.

Anne Levinson: You know, I would say maybe, maybe say it a little differently. I think for me, when I look back, I was drawn, I think probably because of that title nine experience initially drawn to seemingly intractable issues. Complex things that seem very hard to resolve or where the sides couldn't come together or had just, um, over the years. There had been a lack of success at getting them solved and um, taking that on- so it wasn't the it. So I didn't say, "I really need to work in this field or do this work." It was the nature of the work and, and the opportunity to work with others, um, really to, you know, to, to stand together to, to solve problems together, to bring different talents and skills and, um, relationships. So, it's maybe, Jac, maybe it's the, the not the it, but the how.

Jacqueline Estrin: Sure, sure, sure. It's just food for thought. It's kind of interesting the perspective and how you take it.

Anne Levinson: Well, and also that, uh, when I look back, I see that the experiences that I got the most joy out of were those when I was working with others, right? You know, that that spirit of mentorship and friendship and collaboration and, you know, when you're surrounded by people who are passionate about what you're doing and people. Oh, that's the other thing I would say I have learned in my ripe old age. Um, is that, you can act with tenacity and, you know, fight till the bitter end and be successful. But you do not need to do it in a way that is divisive and disrespectful and, you know, you can act with integrity and grace and decency and kindness and courage. And, you know, that is not a mutually exclusive set of characteristics with taking on tough battles. And I think a lot of that has gotten lost in recent years.

Jacqueline Estrin: Yes, me, me, me, me. Yes.

Anne Levinson: Well, and and that the other, that there are walls between us and that the other side is evil and that, right? Um, so instead of highlighting our decency and the importance of behaving in a principled and ethical way and acting with integrity, the battle takes over, right? And so I guess that's back to the how. Right?

Jacqueline Estrin: It's well, it's interesting that you say that because it sort of leads me into the final question of, of, of our afternoon together, where, um, so, Rabbi Eleazar Ben Azariah, I hope I have pronounced his name correctly, was a first century sage, and he praised work as a worker who takes pride in his profession, meaning one's job is meant to serve as a vessel for self-expression in the world and Judaism teaches one's job is not life's mission, but is meant to to serve as a means to express one's life's mission. So when done well, it's, you know, a healthy and natural expression of one's, um, inner being and, and, and core self. So that somewhat relates to what you were just saying or how does that relate to your work and would would you agree?

Anne Levinson: Yeah, I think for me and again, in eras past, one had a job and that was your path like that singular role and I think for me, probably it was more that, you know, it was looking for opportunities where I could make a difference, where my skills and talents could be the most helpful to others. Um, where each role at that period of time, um, there was a need. There were problems to be solved. There were people to help. Um, and, you know, I think about, for example, you were asking earlier about heroes and mentors, you know. Um, Pauli Murray was a great civil rights lawyer, a very unrecognized in her era. Um, but, uh, a great to me shero and actually queero in today's, um, chronology because everything she did was about fighting for the promise of equality and justice for her fellow human beings.

Jacqueline Estrin: And may I interject, what time period are we talking about here? That she was active in her work?

Anne Levinson: Yeah. So in the era of Thurgood Marshall and and those civil rights battles of the day. Okay. Um, she had an unwavering commitment to providing a voice for the voiceless and to protecting the inherent worth and dignity of others. So, so, I mean, there are so many like that, and I don't count what I have done professionally anywhere close to that, but just that the spirit with which I approach the work was very much the tikkun olam. Right? Was very much.

Jacqueline Estrin: Very much so. Yes.

Anne Levinson: Yeah. And so just looked for in whatever opportunity was presented to me and, and by the way, all of that work, you know, if the different governors or mayors or others hadn't said, would you do this, those opportunities wouldn't have been there for me. So I also don't, none of this has been a solo mission. Um, and I've, uh, very much appreciated every opportunity. And just wanted to make sure that I always put my hand back and, you know, pulled more people along to come after me and and keep doing the work.

Jacqueline Estrin: Most gracious and well, and on behalf of the HOW Committee and the Washington State Jewish Historical Society, thank you kindly for allocating your time this afternoon. I know this conversation will be enjoyed by many, many people in years and years to come. You're a great influencer, and we thank you so much for your time and dedication that you gave to our community.

Anne Levinson: You are very kind and thank you for doing this project and, um, you know, just, um, I appreciate the conversation.

Jacqueline Estrin: My pleasure. And all the best. Thank you kindly.

Anne Levinson: Thank you.