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1

00:00:00.000 --> 00:00:06.559

<v Richard Rowberry> come and see it, it's a sweetheart deal for them. But it has nothing to do with using that space as a legitimate theater.

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00:00:06.559 --> 00:00:11.539

<v James Hoffman> I did write a show in Nelson about the streetcar, maybe you heard about the

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00:00:11.539 --> 00:00:18.679

streetcar show, musical? Yes. Put on in 87 before I left Nelson and took a job in

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00:00:18.679 --> 00:00:22.239

the Cranbrook at the college there. But I got a Canada

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00:00:22.239 --> 00:00:25.920

Council grant and wrote a musical show about getting, Nelson's getting a street car called,

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00:00:25.920 --> 00:00:27.920

I've always wanted to write a street car.

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00:00:27.920 --> 00:00:32.920

And we did pretty well and made a few thousand bucks

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00:00:32.920 --> 00:00:36.560

pure profit and I gave it all to the Capitol Theatre

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00:00:36.560 --> 00:00:37.719

Restoration Fund.

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00:00:38.679 --> 00:00:41.439

And that was the idea of doing the show.

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00:00:41.439 --> 00:00:50.140

So just to let you know.

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00:00:50.140 --> 00:01:08.379

<v Richard Rowberry> I made a movie about or produced a movie about streetcars in in Toronto. Oh yeah yeah. Back in back in early 70s. Yeah okay Yeah.

<v James Hoffman> Okay. Um, now the radio show 1984, the radio show

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00:01:08.379 --> 00:01:10.519

that, which is finally canceled, the Cabaret

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00:01:10.519 --> 00:01:14.760

radio satire on I R K the, the independent

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00:01:14.799 --> 00:01:16.000

Republic of the Kootenays.

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00:01:16.519 --> 00:01:18.519

<v James Hoffman> Um, due to lack of funding, due to lack of

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00:01:18.519 --> 00:01:20.659

funding, although I think some of the students

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00:01:20.659 --> 00:01:23.420

or young people that wrote it, carried it on

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00:01:23.420 --> 00:01:27.959

and put it on in restaurants or something.

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00:01:27.959 --> 00:01:31.180

<v James Hoffman> And I think you made the comment that originally

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00:01:31.180 --> 00:01:34.480

the radio show had it played as a theater energy

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00:01:34.480 --> 00:01:37.299

show and did well.

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00:01:37.299 --> 00:01:39.599

Some of the benefits the profit would go to support

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00:01:39.599 --> 00:01:44.799

detox, which was in danger of shutting down.

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00:01:44.799 --> 00:01:47.420

So who were the writers for that, Richard?

26
00:01:49.079 --> 00:01:50.319
Who were the people that wrote that?

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00:01:50.319 --> 00:01:52.079
Because you were behind that too.

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00:01:52.079 --> 00:01:53.200
<v Richard Rowberry> I don't know.

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00:01:53.200 --> 00:01:56.079
I got involved with it at some point,

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00:01:56.079 --> 00:02:01.079
but probably I'm guessing, knowing my modus operandi,

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00:02:03.000 --> 00:02:06.000
if there was no money, I bowed out pretty quickly.

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00:02:06.000 --> 00:02:08.000
<v James Hoffman> Yeah, yeah, okay.

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00:02:08.000 --> 00:02:11.000
<v Richard Rowberry> At that time I was, uh...

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00:02:12.000 --> 00:02:14.000
<v Richard Rowberry> Yeah, I had two kids and...

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00:02:14.000 --> 00:02:15.000
<v James Hoffman> Yeah.

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00:02:15.000 --> 00:02:17.000
<v Richard Rowberry> No visible means of support.

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00:02:17.000 --> 00:02:22.000
<v James Hoffman> Yeah. Well, you're AD of theater energy still.

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00:02:22.000 --> 00:02:23.000
And now, uh...

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00:02:23.000 --> 00:02:24.000
<v Richard Rowberry> Not yet.

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00:02:24.000 --> 00:02:28.120
<v James Hoffman> Yeah, Judith, Lee Sims, Ruby Truly develop a

41
00:02:28.120 --> 00:02:32.219
play called Calling the Play, a board game about drug and alcohol issues for

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00:02:32.219 --> 00:02:36.400
kids in schools and that toured the school and did did reasonably well I

43
00:02:36.400 --> 00:02:43.479
think for theater energy. Is that correct?

<v Richard Rowberry> Yeah, Wayne Gott was also on board there.

44
00:02:43.479 --> 00:02:46.000
<v James Hoffman> Yes, business manager I think.

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00:02:46.000 --> 00:02:48.000
<v Richard Rowberry> Business manager, yeah.

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00:02:48.000 --> 00:02:52.000
<v Richard Rowberry> The two of us kind of ran it then.

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00:02:52.000 --> 00:02:54.000
<v James Hoffman> Yeah.

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00:02:54.000 --> 00:03:02.000
I've got a note here that the 1985-86 season,

49
00:03:02.000 --> 00:03:05.639
<v James Hoffman> quote, this is from the theatre energy report to the Canada

50
00:03:05.639 --> 00:03:08.080
Council, quote, an extremely difficult

51
00:03:08.080 --> 00:03:11.719
<v James Hoffman> one for the mere struggle to survive,

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00:03:11.719 --> 00:03:13.520
seemed to overshadow all other

53
00:03:13.879 --> 00:03:15.560
activities and objectives.

54
00:03:16.120 --> 00:03:18.599
Theatre Energy suffers the loss of a

55
00:03:18.599 --> 00:03:20.960
\$25,000 operating grant from the Canada

56
00:03:20.960 --> 00:03:21.479
Council.

57
00:03:22.280 --> 00:03:26.879
They're forced to cancel the first two productions, the two of us,

58
00:03:26.879 --> 00:04:08.159
and Project Immigration. So, tough times.

<v Richard Rowberry> We did, the two of us, some funny thing that happened, the, uh, I can't remember now, but somebody did some faux pas on stage and the sound technician in the back threw up his hands in despair and

59
00:04:08.159 --> 00:04:25.000
<v Richard Rowberry> brought them down on a sound cue that flushed the toilet. That's all I remember from that shot.

60
00:04:27.480 --> 00:04:32.480
<v James Hoffman> And you left as AD in what, 86?

<v Richard Rowberry> Yep, in the summer of 86 I got a job as artistic director,

61
00:04:34.079 --> 00:04:38.620
<v Richard Rowberry> I mean, general manager of E-Damn.

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00:04:38.620 --> 00:04:39.920
<v James Hoffman> Can I just ask you quickly,

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00:04:39.920 --> 00:04:41.480
but I'm looking back a wee bit,

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00:04:41.480 --> 00:04:46.319

in 84, Theater Energy purchased a Ford van you

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00:04:46.319 --> 00:04:50.759

<v Richard Rowberry> you were named as you were named as the owner but it was to be free te theater

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00:04:50.759 --> 00:04:55.120

energy use only was that a good move for your theater and she is that the van

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00:04:55.120 --> 00:05:02.240

<v James Hoffman> that flipped over where you got hurt no oh okay no that must be no that was

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00:05:02.240 --> 00:05:05.899

<v Richard Rowberry> later no that was that was useful.

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00:05:07.480 --> 00:05:09.399

We didn't pay very much for it. The Ford van, the Ford van, yeah.

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00:05:09.399 --> 00:05:12.399

<v James Hoffman> But it was a good buy, good for the company.

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00:05:13.399 --> 00:05:18.399

<v Richard Rowberry> Yeah, yeah, I remember we had a bit of a tug of war over it

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00:05:19.439 --> 00:05:21.560

as I was leaving too.

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00:05:21.560 --> 00:05:22.720

Oh, yes.

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00:05:22.720 --> 00:05:24.240

It was in my name.

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00:05:24.240 --> 00:05:29.120

<v James Hoffman> Yeah. And I wanted to keep it because I hadn't

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00:05:29.120 --> 00:05:49.300

<v Richard Rowberry> been paid for quite a while. Oh I see. And Nicola Harwood and someone else wanted to take over the energy and she did. They did, they did,

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00:05:49.300 --> 00:05:55.800

<v James Hoffman> yeah. Nicola did for sure. Yeah and she became the AD. Eventually because I was

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00:05:55.800 --> 00:06:08.639

<v Richard Rowberry> leaving they eventually got the van. So they got the van. And they did a couple of shows after that too. Yeah, yeah.

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00:06:08.639 --> 00:06:16.360

<v James Hoffman> But you know as you can see it was sort of this constant struggle and a few

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00:06:16.360 --> 00:06:27.680

<v Richard Rowberry> little sparks of theater. There was one show called Theater Energy's Christmas Stocking.

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00:06:27.680 --> 00:06:28.680

<v James Hoffman> Oh yeah.

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00:06:28.680 --> 00:06:31.240

<v Richard Rowberry> Did you hear about that?

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00:06:31.240 --> 00:06:32.240

<v James Hoffman> Yes I have.

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00:06:32.240 --> 00:06:35.240

<v Richard Rowberry> That was Story Theater.

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00:06:35.240 --> 00:06:36.240

<v James Hoffman> Yep.

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00:06:36.240 --> 00:06:38.439

<v Richard Rowberry> Of fairy tales for a Christmas show.

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00:06:38.439 --> 00:06:39.920

<v James Hoffman> Yeah, yeah.

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00:06:39.920 --> 00:06:42.720

<v Richard Rowberry> We put it on at the Civic.

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00:06:42.720 --> 00:06:43.720

<v James Hoffman> Yep.

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00:06:43.720 --> 00:06:46.540

<v Richard Rowberry> And it was Friday Saturday Sunday it was a

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00:06:46.540 --> 00:06:55.180

nice little show Friday it snowed so much that nobody could move in town Wow

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00:06:55.180 --> 00:07:01.079

<v James Hoffman> Saturday it snowed so much that nobody could move in town Sunday it dawned

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00:07:01.079 --> 00:07:06.319

<v Richard Rowberry> bright and clear and people were able to finally get out to the

94

00:07:07.420 --> 00:07:14.180

Into town again and get out to the theater and the power went out 15 minutes before the show was supposed to start

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00:07:15.379 --> 00:07:17.379

<v James Hoffman> Oh my god

96

00:07:18.060 --> 00:07:23.680

<v Richard Rowberry> So yeah, it didn't come back on for an hour. You had a hand in writing that I think putting it together, didn't you?

97

00:07:25.279 --> 00:07:36.319

Yeah yeah yeah I basically wrote the, I just took the fairy tales and some of them were in

98

00:07:36.879 --> 00:07:46.300

<v James Hoffman> in a storytelling, a story theater script and some I just made up myself. That was the first thing I did.

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00:07:46.300 --> 00:07:47.600

<v Richard Rowberry> Yeah.

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00:07:47.600 --> 00:07:50.360

<v James Hoffman> You know, I'm pretty well near the end of my little

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00:07:50.360 --> 00:07:52.319

series of questions here, you know, Richard.

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00:07:52.319 --> 00:07:55.439

I appreciate all your comments.

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00:07:55.439 --> 00:07:56.399

<v Richard Rowberry> And Phil, Phil, Phil.

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00:07:56.399 --> 00:07:57.879

Just to let you know.

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00:07:57.879 --> 00:07:58.720

Yeah.

106

00:07:58.720 --> 00:08:02.319

Just to let you know, subsequently to all this,

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00:08:02.319 --> 00:08:07.639

after I came back to Nelson, which I did in via

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00:08:07.639 --> 00:08:25.360

Caslow in the early 90s, at the end of the 90s I started a theater company and nonprofit called Nelson History Theatre Society and

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00:08:28.560 --> 00:08:32.759

And it started in 01 and it's still going and

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00:08:34.879 --> 00:08:36.879

I've made I

111

00:08:38.440 --> 00:08:40.539

Won't say I had some living off it

112

00:08:42.399 --> 00:08:50.559

I've made up an impoverished living off it ever since with with a BC

113

00:08:50.559 --> 00:08:59.440

<v James Hoffman> gaming and Canada summer jobs funding and local funding for the Osprey and

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00:08:59.440 --> 00:09:06.480

<v Richard Rowberry> doing school shows and all that. Who's running it now?

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00:09:06.480 --> 00:09:12.000

<v James Hoffman> And in my opinion have done many, many much better shows than

116

00:09:12.000 --> 00:09:15.759

<v Richard Rowberry> Theater Energy did after their golden age.

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00:09:15.759 --> 00:09:21.440

<v James Hoffman> Wow, who's running it now? Who's the AD?

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00:09:21.440 --> 00:09:23.759

Me!

119

00:09:23.759 --> 00:09:27.799

Oh I see, even though you're in Seashell, it still works.

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00:09:27.799 --> 00:09:34.139

<v Richard Rowberry> Well, I'm the... yeah, because I can... now that I've moved to Seashell,

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00:09:34.139 --> 00:09:39.899

mostly I just collaborate with people who are doing things there.

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00:09:39.899 --> 00:09:55.000

<v James Hoffman> Okay. But I have a summer program in which I work with young people who are building a local regional history based website, so I pay them to do that.

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00:09:55.000 --> 00:10:10.480

<v Richard Rowberry> Okay. And working with a storyteller to do stories in schools and people who do, local people who do youth theater right now I'm working with and

124

00:10:10.480 --> 00:10:14.940

<v James Hoffman> that's all I've also written that's all the Nelson sorry what that's all the

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00:10:14.940 --> 00:10:20.120

<v Richard Rowberry> Nelson this yeah yeah wow yeah it's all happening in Nelson and I can you know

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00:10:20.120 --> 00:10:30.080

<v James Hoffman> as COVID has taught us you can do anything from any distance. Yes of course

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00:10:30.080 --> 00:10:35.360

<v Richard Rowberry> yeah yeah good for you. You know I'd heard vaguely about that company the

128

00:10:35.360 --> 00:10:40.120

<v James Hoffman> History Theater Society but didn't know much about us so I'm glad to hear

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00:10:40.120 --> 00:10:51.840

all this. This is kind of news to me how active it's been and how well it's done there but we did we did lots of productions at the Capitol Theatre there

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00:10:51.840 --> 00:10:57.899

<v Richard Rowberry> were extremely well received and we're actually from a professional you know

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00:10:57.899 --> 00:11:02.759

amateur point of view we're definitely the needle was definitely pointing

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00:11:02.759 --> 00:11:05.860

towards more towards professional than

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00:11:05.860 --> 00:11:11.440

not and you know people like Lucas Myers and Michael Graham and myself

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00:11:11.440 --> 00:11:19.080

<v James Hoffman> yeah and yeah people like that we've done Arms in the Man and Blithe Spirit

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00:11:19.080 --> 00:11:26.840

and Dracula and Rocky Horror of course the biggest show in the history of Nelson was my

136

00:11:26.840 --> 00:11:35.440

<v Richard Rowberry> production of Rocky Horror. It always attracts people.

137

00:11:35.440 --> 00:11:41.720

<v James Hoffman> The funny thing, the other thing that tells you what Nelson is like,

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00:11:41.720 --> 00:11:47.679

<v Richard Rowberry> when people went to that show they treated it like the movie.

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00:11:50.559 --> 00:11:56.240

You know how at the movie they boo and sing and throw things? Yeah you throw things, you

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00:11:56.240 --> 00:12:02.080

<v James Hoffman> light up, you throw things, you light flames. You light candles, you do all that stuff.

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00:12:02.080 --> 00:12:06.559

<v Richard Rowberry> At the movie screen? Yeah. Everybody in in Nelson they did it as the actors.

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00:12:07.919 --> 00:12:10.240

<v James Hoffman> Which when you think about it, much more sense.

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00:12:12.240 --> 00:12:20.240

<v Richard Rowberry> I played the narrator and by the end of the show, and you know they boring boring all through the

144
00:12:20.240 --> 00:12:26.539
narrator, I was reciting Hamlet and nobody could hear me so it

145
00:12:26.539 --> 00:12:30.080
didn't really matter I was just standing up there saying to be or not to be that

146
00:12:30.080 --> 00:12:37.059
<v James Hoffman> is the question. Oh God so if I could if I google a Nelson History Theatre Society

147
00:12:37.059 --> 00:13:00.000
<v Richard Rowberry> I can read more about this right? Well we don't really have much of an online presence other than we have the website KootenaiHistory.com, which is the various history pages, projects on there.

148
00:13:00.000 --> 00:13:08.000
<v James Hoffman> And there's some good ones there. I also I also ran for the mayor of Nelson as the

149
00:13:08.000 --> 00:13:15.879
<v Richard Rowberry> ghost of John Huston in 2011 and got 20% of the vote.

150
00:13:18.480 --> 00:13:31.519
<v James Hoffman> 481 votes. Not bad. Hey, not love it. Yeah. By the way, another final question here is in your

151
00:13:31.519 --> 00:13:37.600
<v Richard Rowberry> knowledge, and I think this is true, none of the Theater Energy plays were ever published, printed,

152
00:13:37.600 --> 00:13:46.039
<v James Hoffman> or were they? There was talk, there's talk occasionally in the files here of oh we plan to publish this place soon like the

153
00:13:46.039 --> 00:13:51.360
<v Richard Rowberry> yeah no nothing was ever published there are there there are extant copies or

154
00:13:51.360 --> 00:13:57.879
<v James Hoffman> there used to be at at the Capitol Theatre I know there's there's voices

155
00:13:57.879 --> 00:14:05.000
<v Richard Rowberry> what do you mean a like voices a script of Voices.

156
00:14:05.000 --> 00:14:07.679
<v James Hoffman> Yeah, but not a published copy, like by a publisher.

157
00:14:07.679 --> 00:14:09.820
<v Richard Rowberry> No, no, no.

158
00:14:09.820 --> 00:14:14.080
<v James Hoffman> Like at one point you talked about Solstice Books

159
00:14:14.080 --> 00:14:17.399
<v Richard Rowberry> and Winlaw publishing, The Girls Will Be Out in a Minute.

160
00:14:19.440 --> 00:14:24.240
<v James Hoffman> That would have been Brian, or not, Ron Woodward had a,

161
00:14:24.240 --> 00:14:28.240
<v Richard Rowberry> Yeah, yeah. Had a publishing, a little publishing enterprise there.

162
00:14:30.000 --> 00:14:34.320
<v James Hoffman> But I guess he never got around to doing that. No, no I don't think so. And I've talked to other

163
00:14:34.320 --> 00:14:40.559
<v Richard Rowberry> theatre and industry people and if you publish anything they know we had plans but nothing ever

164
00:14:41.679 --> 00:14:45.100
<v James Hoffman> happened. Okay Richard I think I've come to the end

165
00:14:45.100 --> 00:14:50.500
<v Richard Rowberry> here of my questions and I really appreciate the time you've taken. You

166
00:14:50.500 --> 00:14:56.940
<v James Hoffman> filled in quite a few gaps and I appreciate that so you still say I'm so

167
00:14:56.940 --> 00:15:03.860
<v Richard Rowberry> cynical about it all but well well yeah other people have said somewhat similar

168
00:15:03.860 --> 00:15:08.500
<v James Hoffman> things too I've interviewed most of the theater energy people living now.

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00:15:08.500 --> 00:15:10.500

<v Richard Rowberry> Many of them.

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00:15:10.500 --> 00:15:12.500

Have you spoken to Ruby?

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00:15:12.500 --> 00:15:21.000

<v James Hoffman> Yes, I went up to New Denver and I met her at the Japanese Internment Center there

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00:15:21.000 --> 00:15:23.500

where she gives talks in the summertime.

173

00:15:23.500 --> 00:15:29.000

She's a narrator, you know, a tour guide. And in fact I took the tour.

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00:15:29.000 --> 00:15:30.000

<v Richard Rowberry> Is she still doing that?

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00:15:30.000 --> 00:15:30.500

<v James Hoffman> Yeah.

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00:15:30.500 --> 00:15:31.000

Is she still doing that?

177

00:15:31.000 --> 00:15:39.000

Well last summer I took the tour. Yeah, I went up and saw her, took the tour. Then I interviewed her after, in the park there with my little trusty tape recorder.

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00:15:39.000 --> 00:15:44.000

<v Richard Rowberry> I'll have to go and look around. I haven't seen her in a long time.

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00:15:44.000 --> 00:15:45.320

<v James Hoffman> Yeah, she's great.

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00:15:45.320 --> 00:15:49.120

That's another, another Nelson history theater show we did, uh,

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00:15:51.039 --> 00:15:55.399

<v Richard Rowberry> um, together or she played, she played the, um,

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00:15:56.039 --> 00:16:00.600

the psychic in a live spirit. She was great. Oh yeah. Yeah.

183
00:16:01.039 --> 00:16:10.919
And we did another show Archer can't remember his first name three

184
00:16:10.919 --> 00:16:18.620
viewings it's called it just set in a set in a series of monologues set in a

185
00:16:18.620 --> 00:16:26.320
<v James Hoffman> funeral parlor oh okay but I changed the title I thought three viewings was such a dud of

186
00:16:26.320 --> 00:16:32.299
<v Richard Rowberry> a title for a play. Yeah yeah. So I changed it to at home with the dead.

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00:16:32.299 --> 00:16:39.059
<v James Hoffman> Much better title. Good. Okay I think I'll sign off Richard and again thank you so much.

188
00:16:39.059 --> 00:16:50.000
<v Richard Rowberry> No I am not finished yet. I'm gonna keep talking.

189
00:16:50.000 --> 00:16:56.679
<v James Hoffman> Well there's so much one could go on but I think I need to wind up here and move on.

<v Richard Rowberry> You run out of shape. That's what they used to say.

190
00:16:56.679 --> 00:17:05.440
<v James Hoffman> That's right yeah. Okay Richard. You can't say that anymore. Okay well thank you. Let me thank you again and good luck in your life in Sechelt and Nelson now.

191
00:17:08.160 --> 00:17:18.640
<v James Hoffman> Okay. Take care. Okay you too. Thank you, thanks again. Bye. Alrighty, bye-bye.