

Title of Session: Social Studies Forum - Fate Did Not Let Me Go

Moderator: Michael Hutchison

Guest Speaker: Stephen Ollendorff

Title of File: 20030423ssf

Date: April 23, 2003

Tappedin transcript for BJ, 2003.04.23 18:11:24

2003.04.23 16:36:58Login

Room: ASO

MichaelH: Welcome to tonight's Social Studies forum session

MichaelH: tonight's session is very compelling, interesting, and poignant

MichaelH: and one I think we all will benefit from...

MichaelH: Stephen Ollendorff is with us this evening to discuss "Fate Did Not Let Me Go"

MichaelH: before we start with Stephen tonight...

MichaelH: let's start like we always do... with introductions of everyone...

MichaelH: As we speak, Michael is becoming a former social studies teacher and getting a job as a Curriculum Technology Facilitator for a school district in southwestern Indiana

BJ . o O (a reminder that you may want to click on the Actions drop down menu and scroll down to DETACH to make your text window larger and easier to read)

MichaelH looks to see if anyone else would like to say hello and introduce themselves

SusanR: Congratulations, Michael

KathleenP: Hello Im Kathy Pastina from NYC. Im a substitute teacher and finishing my masters

JenniferFl: I'm an elementary teacher in the Washington, DC area

ChrisGuest7: I am science teacher in Fairfax County, in Northern Virginia

MichelleL: I am a fourth grade teacher in Fairfax County, VA(suburb of DC) and I am getting a masters in Instructional Technology

KathyBu: I'm an elementary teacher doing Prep in the School Library.

ChrisGuest7: Hello Michelle

MichelleL: hey Chris!

MichaelH looks to see if anyone else would like to say hello

SusanR: I am a K to 8 Occasional Teacher from Ottawa, Ontario and co-presenter here at TappedIN (K to 3 Resources)

KathyBu: I'm from Sacramento, CA

MichaelH: I think everyone is ok with introductions....

MichaelH: as I mentioned, Stephen is here tonight to discuss a wonderful film and related resource, "Fate Did Not Let Me Go"... I think we'll find it a great resource to use in our classrooms

MichaelH: Stephen, if you're ready, would you like to give us a little background about the letter, film and website?

StepheGuest4: Thank you. The letter was written by my grandmother a few months before she died in concentration camp. My father received it mysteriously forty five years later at the age of seventy nine.

StepheGuest4: We decided to publish the letter because it is a message of love and hope

MichelleL: wow

MichaelH: Everyone, the letter is to say the least, a real testament

StepheGuest4: All of the proceeds go to charity. Some very prominent people like Martin Sheen, Liv Ullman, Shimon Perez, President Havel became involved and we decided to make a documentary.

MichaelH has seen the film, and it is beautifully done

MichelleL: it's out now?

JenniferFl: Where can we get the film?

MichaelH looks to Stephen to answer those questions

StepheGuest4: The documentary deals with how my two grandmothers dealt with the tragedy of the Holocaust. Because of the historical nature of the documentary, we have prepared an educational guide for teachers to use in their classroom. It is available on our website "fatedidnotletmego.org."

PatriciaN joined the room.

BJ: welcome, Patricia

MichaelH: Stephen, maybe I can show everyone that website, and they can look at it for a couple of minutes, and then we can talk about how to find the film, etc.

PatriciaN: hello, i am looking for the social studies session

MichaelH: I'll type the web address, and all you all need to do is click on the address in the chat window, and it will load in a separate browser window

MichaelH: Patricia, you're in the right place.

StepheGuest4: The film can be obtained through our website or through Barnes & Nobles. There is a special educational discount.

MichaelH: here's the web site

<http://www.fatedidnotletmego.org>

MichaelH: just click on the blue link and you'll go to the webpage

StepheGuest4: Click on to the Ollendorff Center and there is a special subheading about the Educational Guide.

MichaelH: let me check really quickly and see if everyone can find the web page

StepheGuest4: The documentary is also being played around the country on local PBS channels

JenniferFl: This is so fascinating!

MichaelH: everyone will want to check their local PBS listings for time and date

MichaelH: you can check local listings, too, at the pbs web site... www.pbs.org

StepheGuest4: The letter has also been published in book form by Pelican Press

MichaelH: Stephen, let me give them the link for the Ollendorff center...

MichelleL: I read some excerpts from the letter- with tears in my eyes

MichaelH: Michelle, it definitely is a wonderful letter....

StepheGuest4: For those logged on the website, the music you hear is the Kol Nidre, a sacred Jewish melody

StepheGuest4: the Ollendorff center is a subheading under Fatedidnotletmego.org

MichaelH: that's ok... can everyone find the link on the main page for the Ollendorff Center

KathyBu: Yes.

MichelleL: yes

MichaelH: Stephen, is there any explanation why it took so long for your father to receive the letter?

MichelleL: How old was your father when his mother wrote this letter? How did he react to the letter?

StepheGuest4: That's the great mystery. Ironically, when my father received the letter, we never discussed that issue.

MichaelH: It is a wonderful letter... and I guess in a way, it's surprising that the letter survived...

KathleenP: Amazing story

MichaelH: Perhaps some of you would like to click on the link to read excerpts from the letter?

StepheGuest4: My father was 36 when she wrote the letter. His reaction was one of joy and closure.

JenniferFl: This is such a touching story to be sharing with everyone.

MichelleL: I am so intrigued. This is amazing.

StepheGuest4: Thank you. Our family was reluctant at first but by removing all commercial motivation, we thought it could be done with dignity

MichaelH: I think it is definitely a story that should be shared...

JenniferFl: What are your hopes for this documentary?

SusanR: You are courageous sharing this letter.

StepheGuest4: For as many people to see it as possible.

Yesterday, it was aired in L.A. and San Francisco. It will appear in over fifty cities this month. Hopefully over the next few months, the book and documentary will have affected some lives. All proceeds will be utilized for further charitable purposes.

MichelleL: I think that it's wonderful that you are giving the proceeds to charity. What charity will it be?

MichelleL: oops- I just read it. sorry

StepheGuest4: The Ollendorff Center for Religious and Human Understanding was created for this purpose. It is a public charity with tax exempt status.

MichaelH: Stephen, this may not be fair to ask a person who isn't an educator, but what grade level would you recommend the film for?

MichaelH . o O (we have people here tonight who are both elementary and secondary educators)

StepheGuest4: Middle school and above

StepheGuest4: It may be too graphic for elementary school kids

MichaelH: I think the lessons are also good for elementary level kids.... though, I liked the idea of having kids write their own "letters of hope"

SusanR: Do you have any parents who object to Holocaust studies? It is such a sensitive issue.

MichaelH: Susan are you directing that question to Stephen or to the rest of the group?

StepheGuest4: The book would definitely be suitable for people of all ages

SusanR: To Michael and any other participants.

JenniferFl: I think the story could be modified for elementary students as well.

MichaelH: Susan, what I do... I haven't used "Fate" in my classroom yet... but I have used other Holocaust related films.. I usually send some sort of note home... I'd be glad to give you a URL where you can see a similar type of letter

MichaelH: Stephen, this really isn't completely a Holocaust-study though, is it?

SusanR: Yes, I would like that!

MichaelH: I mean, it's actually more than that....

StepheGuest4: The documentary is more about the Holocaust. The book is a letter of hope with The Holocaust serving as a backdrop.

StepheGuest4: Most reviewers share Michael H's point of view.

MichaelH: I think it's good, too, that a woman shows her strength and courage in this film/letter/book, also

JenniferFl: I think there are many lessons on humanity within this story to discuss with children.

KathleenP: A story about how love and hope transcend time

MichaelH: Stephen, if I could, I'd like to go back to the "Share A Message of Hope" activity... is the plan for kids/teachers to submit letters to the website, and then to have the website post them online?

StepheGuest4: We are going to eliminate that subheading and replace it with the Educational Guide so that the latter becomes more visible

MichaelH: I was just thinking it would be wonderful for teachers to submit letters for students (or for students to do it with teacher supervision), and it could be a "living memorial" or "living testament" to the letter, and your family

MichelleL: Do you visit schools and talk about this at all?

StepheGuest4: That would be excellent. We have had people read the letter and then were able to recount stories they were never able to share before. But that may be beyond our purview

SusanR: I like the idea of a letter of hope!

MichaelH: Stephen, before I forget, there is a way for teachers to order the film (VHS or DVD) and get an educator discount... is that information on the web page, or do you want to let them know how to do that? (Or I can do it...)

SusanR: We have a number of Holocaust survivors here in Ottawa who talk to various groups.

StepheGuest4: At this stage, we are trying those channels which will reach the most people, such as T.V. Martin Sheen has committed to make T.V. appearances and we are contacting various stations. If however, a school was anxious for me to appear, I certainly would consider it. However, I believe the book and documentary speak for themselves. I am not really the author.

StepheGuest4: You can do it.

MichaelH: ok

MichaelH: if anyone would like to purchase a copy of the film (DVD or VHS) with a special teacher discount... here's how...

MichaelH: you can do that on the web page, or call the following toll free number....

MichaelH: 1-800-723-9479

MichaelH: Use the promotional code....

MichaelH: JT30FA

MichaelH: when you order

MichaelH: I found the video to be very compelling and wonderfully done...

StepheGuest4: Thank you

MichaelH: I'm not a mother, but I would have wanted to say similar words to my daughters as their father under those circumstances

MichelleL: I think it's amazing that it made it all the way back to your father

StepheGuest4: The beauty of the letter is its love and hope. The uniqueness of the letter is its journey.

MichaelH: Stephen, I know Sheen mentions that your grandmother's voice, "like Anne Frank's, will be heard for generations"... I think that's a fair assessment

StepheGuest4: As Martin Sheen says, this letter has survived all of the writings and speeches of Hitler

MichaelH: I should have also mentioned, when I gave the information above about the teacher discount, that the film is very affordable... it's only \$10.50 with the teacher discount.... which makes it indispensable for any classroom

MichelleL: that's very reasonable

StepheGuest4: You make a great spokesperson

MichaelH: it's a good investment, Stephen, I'm sure you are very proud of the legacy of the letter, and your family

MichaelH: We're close to the top of the hour... does anyone have any other questions or comments about the film, letter... anything else they'd like to ask Stephen?

KathleenP: No Just thank you for sharing your story. Its a wonderful story

MichaelH: before everyone goes....

MichaelH: a couple of housekeeping chores....

JenniferFl: Beautiful story. I'm excited to read the book and see the documentary. Thank you.

MichelleL: Thank you for talking to us- this is incredible.

StepheGuest4: As many adventures in life, the voyage was as interesting as the result. I learned a lot about my family and the courage of my two grandmothers

MichaelH applauds for Stephen... you did great tonight!

StepheGuest4: Thank you. I learned to type fast

SusanR: Thank You, Stephen for sharing your incredible story.

MichaelH: Susan, I also want to send you the url on the letter I send home

SusanR: Thank you, Michael.

MichaelH: Susan, it's on

<http://www.vcsc.k12.in.us/staff/mhutch/bob>

MichaelH: We did some projects on Band of Brothers, and that's where I store it.

MichaelH: There's one episode which deals with liberation of a work camp, that, and the language and violence in the series

MichaelH: Next installment of the forum will be May 14, 2003... 8 p.m. Eastern, 5 p.m. Pacific

StepheGuest4: Michael, thank you for this opportunity.

Believe it or not, I have to run to the city and drop off some books at a TV station

MichaelH: Stephen, glad to have you... please feel free to come back anytime

StepheGuest4: Thank you

MichaelH: I hope you're able to reach a lot of people with this wonderful message