News Release

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Visionaries and risk takers: Glasnost & Goodwill highlights Washington’s grassroots Cold War activists

Tacoma, WA - By the 1980s, there were thousands of nuclear weapons aimed at the United States, and an equal number targeted at the Soviet Union. The arms race was running out of control and only a vague notion of “mutually assured destruction” stood between war and peace for the world’s superpowers.

And yet, citizens did not sit idly by. Quietly a movement formed, built by citizen diplomats who reached across the Pacific to engage their neighbors, one conversation at a time.

Washingtonians, in particular, saw an opportunity to bring peace with their neighbors through business partnerships, sister-city relationships, and cultural exchanges. Presented by the Washington State Historical Society, *Glasnost and Goodwill: Citizen Diplomacy in the Northwest* is an invigorating plunge into how citizen diplomacy in Washington and the greater Northwest contributed to the thawing of the Cold War.

*Glasnost & Goodwill* is brought to life through compelling photographs, rare videos, fascinating oral histories, and authentic artifacts that trace the rise of grassroots diplomacy in Northwest from the late 1930s through the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and beyond. Many of the citizen activists contributed to and were involved in creating the exhibition. Their stories reveal the levels of fear and hope that drove their unprecedented actions.

In 1987, Lynne Cox became the first person to swim the Bering Strait between the United States and the Soviet Union. “Deep down, I was scared to death of the Soviets. When I was a child, we’d be drilled by our teachers to duck under our desks and cover our heads. This, we were told, would protect us from nuclear missiles,” she said. “But more than anything, I wanted to believe that the Soviet Union wasn’t the evil empire. Soviet citizens were people like us. Why did they have to be enemies? Why did we have to fear them?”
Visitors will learn about people from Washington traveling behind the Iron Curtain with thousands of letters expressing wishes for peace; fishermen working together in an international business venture, an extraordinary idea at the time; the Mount Everest Earth Day 20 International Peace Climb; and more. These and other initiatives, taken together, shifted the needle from tension toward peace. These efforts culminated in the Goodwill Games, hosted throughout Washington State – a major undertaking that further cemented the special relationship between Washingtonians and the Soviet people.

“Generations born post-Soviet Union may not know a lot about the Cold War. Those of us who experienced the height of the tension between the Soviet Union and the United States may not be aware of the extent of the involvement of ordinary citizens in Washington,” said Gwen Whiting, Washington State History Museum’s Lead Curator. “Glasnost and Goodwill explores these individuals’ efforts to build friendship and diminish the crisis.”

On the evening of October 5, guests at the History Museum’s Preview Party will have the opportunity to tour the exhibition and meet special guests whose stories are part of the exhibition. Dr. Richard Scheuerman, Professor Emeritus at Seattle Pacific University, will speak about the 200 year history of friendship between the people of Russia and the United States. Tickets to the preview party are $15.00 and can be purchased through the History Museum’s website.

Other related events include “Glasnost and Goodwill: The Cold War, Washington State, and the Power of Citizen Diplomacy - A Master Teacher Workshop” at University of Washington on October 24, 4:30 pm; and a symposium at the History Museum in January, organized by the Historical Society and University of Washington’s Jackson School of International Studies. See www.WashingtonHistory.org for more details about the exhibition or related events.

Don’t miss the exclusive Evening Preview Party, Thursday, October 5, 5:30 -8:00 PM Be among the first to see this fascinating exhibition before it opens to the public! Hear from esteemed guest speaker, Dr. Richard Scheuerman, Professor Emeritus at Seattle Pacific University, about the remarkable 200 year history of friendship between the people of Russia and the United States. Enjoy sweet and savory treats from Seattle’s Piroshky Piroshky Bakery and try Elk Rider Vodka from Heritage Distilling in Gig Harbor. A cash bar will be available. The Preview Party is free for members. Nonmember admission is $15 per person. To RSVP or purchase tickets, email Julia.White@wshs.wa.gov, call 253-798-5894, or book your Preview Party tickets here.

Glasnost & Goodwill is made possible by Kay Bullitt, the Turner Foundation, Inc., Alaska Airlines Foundation, Wally Pereyra, Jay Platt, Bruce McCaw, Stowe Talbot, Mike Scallon, Ed Parks, and the University of Washington’s Jackson School of International Studies.

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NOTE TO PRESS: You’re invited to a press tour for both Glasnost & Goodwill: Citizen Diplomacy in the Northwest and Loyal Opposition: The Protest Photos of George P. Hickey, 11:00 AM, Wednesday, October 4, at the History Museum. RSVP to Julianna.Verboort@wshs.wa.gov for a parking pass.
The Mount Everest Earth Day 20 International Peace Climb, led by Jim Whittaker during Earth Week in 1990, was the first time in history that mountaineers from the United States, Soviet Union and China had roped together to climb a mountain.

Scenes of Soviet Life, c. 1980s. This photograph is part of an exhibition sent to the United States by the Soviet Union in the 1980s to show the lives of everyday citizens in that country. Anti-nuclear signs are clearly seen in the forefront of this crowd image. Courtesy Seattle-Tashkent Sister Cities Association.

Goodwill Games, 1990. Skater Kristi Yamaguchi won her first major international figure skating title at the 1990 Goodwill Games in Seattle. Photo courtesy Bill Chan.
**Instructional Pamphlet, 1955.** This illustrated booklet published by the Tacoma Civil Defense Committee in 1955 gives citizens advice on what to do before, during and after an atomic attack. Washington State Historical Society collections.

**Fireworks at the 1986 Goodwill Games.** The first Goodwill Games were held in Moscow, Russia in 1986. This image shows one of many spectacular performances put on by Soviet hosts. Courtesy Turner Broadcasting System.

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**About The Washington State Historical Society**
The Washington State Historical Society partners with our communities to explore how history connects us all.

**Address:** 1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402  
**Hours:** 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM Tuesday through Sunday. On the Third Thursday of each month, 10:00 AM – 8:00 PM.  
**Admission:** Free for members; Adults $14; seniors (age 65+), students (age 6-17) and military (with ID) $11; free for children 5 and under; family rate $40 (up to two adults and four children under age 18). Patrons with a Washington Quest card can attend for $1 per person or $2 per family. Admission is free 3:00 – 8:00 PM on the Third Thursday of each month.

Washington State Historical Society’s most visible activity, the Washington State History Museum (WSHM) is located in Tacoma’s downtown core along Pacific Avenue among a thriving cultural scene. The museum features interactive permanent exhibitions about Washington’s past in the Great Hall, unique rotating exhibitions highlighting the Society’s collections, and dynamic traveling exhibitions.

Don’t miss the 22nd Annual Model Train Festival, December 22, 2017 through January 1, 2018.