



## Mr. Rakowski



Documentary: 77 minutes, Digibeta, 16:9  
Year of production: 2007  
Director: Jan Diederer  
Produced by: 'gestolen Tijd'  
Versions: English

There are many holocaust survivor stories which focus on the familiar pain, guilt and shame suffered by survivors. This is not one of them.

Polish-born Sam Rakowski (1916) had to face anti-Semitism starting at an early age. Pursued by the Nazis, he and his wife Celia eventually ended up in Auschwitz-Birkenau. After surviving the horrors of the camps, they immigrated to the United States and had a son named Richie (1952), now a successful businessman.

Since the death of his wife, Sam has occupied a small house on Richie's estate. Despite their awkward relationship, Richie provides his father with the best possible care. Both men are traumatized, Sam because of the war and his first son's death, Richie on account of a childhood marked by his detached and sometimes aggressive father.

Separate interviews reveal how serious the lack of communication between the two is, and how badly Richie wants to understand his father. As a result, he goes through an arduous process in an attempt to redefine his view of his father. The camera acts like a vigilant mediator, enabling a painful process of communication between them.

A fascinating and touching portrait of a father and a son, two traumatized persons, one by the Holocaust, the other by his father's not being able to show affection. The camera acts as a psychoanalytical medium in an unexpectedly optimistic film.

The film was selected by the following festivals:

IDFA 2007  
DOK FEST MUNICH 2008  
ZURICH FILM FESTIVAL 2008  
DOC FEST SHEFFIELD 2008  
NEW YORK JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL 2009  
LOS ANGELES JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL 2009

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