

Film Censorship on Way?

As I See It

Andersonville Great Drama

By Pat Costa



A well-known cast sparked the 2½-hour production "The Andersonville Trial" on Channel 21. The director, George C. Scott, making his television debut in that particular capacity, also needed no introduction.

But just possibly lesser lights would have done as well. For in this case, the play, written 10 years ago by Saul Levitt and performed on Broadway, was the thing.

The crux of the play, which has obedience to military superiors pitted against a basic human morality, was as apt as today's newspaper.

"The Andersonville Trial", written about a real incident in American history, centers around the Andersonville prison commandant Henry Wirz charged with the deaths of 14,000 prisoners.

On the whole it was an engrossing play, capturing us with its immediacy, its relevance to Vietnam, with its finely fenced duel between conscience and authority.

A 2½-hour show on uninterrupted educational television seems about twice the length of a comparable event on commercial television.

The continuity helped sustain the mood and while at times the script seemed a little wordy, a viewer caught at the start by the drama of the undertaking would have complained little.

There were discrepancies. When William Shatner, the attorney for the prosecution

weeps at the story and the sad, demented sight of a 19-year-old survivor of Andersonville, it disrupts the credibility of the story. The young man called upon for such a powerful performance was not up to the tragic emoting.

When Buddy Ebsen, as a witness, tells of his horror at visiting the camp, it loses something, but not through any fault of Ebsen's acting. We viewers have grown too accustomed to him as a hillbilly to forget that role upon cue.

Acting honors go to Jack Cassidy as defense counsel who maintained a steady fire throughout.

The play was first in a series of four produced especially for public television. If the following productions can match "Andersonville" in excitement and luster, then NET, with the Forsyte Saga already under its belt, can surely lay claim to title of the Great Drama Network.

Museum to be Open On Summer Sundays

The Rochester Museum will be open to the public Sunday afternoons from 2-5 during the months of June, July and August.

Museum Director Charles F. Hayes III, announcing the expanded schedule said, "We are a major tourist attraction and we want to make our facilities more available to the people."

New York — (NC) — The American Catholic and Protestant film offices have jointly warned Hollywood that the public is in a mood for government censorship because the motion picture industry's own regulatory program is close to failure.

"As a guide to production, the Code and its standards are today a pure fiction," said the National Council of Churches' broadcasting and film commission (BFC) and the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures (NCOMP).

The two church groups issued on May 20, in a blunt seven-page report, their first joint appraisal of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) code and rating program, which began in November 1968.

The BFC and NCOMP called for immediate remedial action, saying:

"The two church film agencies sense a new public sympathy for censorship which can only result in a restriction of the responsible exchange of ideas in our society."

The MPAA rating system uses four symbols: "G" which means suggested for general audiences; "GP" which means "all ages admitted, parental guidance suggested"; "R" which means restricted, with persons under 17 not admitted unless accompanied by parent or adult guardian; and "X" which means persons under 17 not admitted even if accompanied.

"Public opinion," it said, "as expressed in complaints to the church offices, appears to believe that children are being admitted to restricted films, 'R' and 'X', in many situations. How widespread this abuse is in reality is impossible to ascertain accurately because neither industry nor the churches have conducted a scientifically reliable survey."

The two church agencies suggested as remedies:

- Education of the public by the industry as to the real meaning of the program, because many parents "still be-

lieve that the system rates films as to their overall quality, whereas it actually rates films only as to suitability for children."

- Enforcement that would oblige compliance with the MPAA code by every producer, distributor, theater owner and theater manager whether or not he belongs to MPAA or to NATO (the National Association of Theater Owners).

- All rating symbols in advertising copy should be clearly visible and of standard size, to end what it said was abusive use in often making an "R" rat-

ing almost illegible in ads while enlarging an "X" out of proportion in order to attract audiences.

- Rating of films according to overall treatment and theme, instead of only language and visuals (the presence or absence of four-letter words and nudity).

- Realignment of how the rating is done and who does it, by either setting up an independent rating panel, or creating an autonomous "blue ribbon" citizens' committee, or removing anonymity from existing MPAA rating members.



'Love, Honor and ...'

For those of you wondering whatever became of Rosemary's Baby, cartoonist Joe Noonan supplies one possible answer in a collection of satirical cartoons about marriage, titled, "To Love, Honor and—Oh, Boy!", and published by Abbey Press in its Marriage Paperback Library series.

The above couple's problem may or may not be helped by the latest rules on mixed marriage that were issued by the Vatican. (CPF Photo)

What Ever Became Of Geordie MacKay?

Catholic Press Features

San Francisco — Remember child-actor Geordie MacKay?

You don't hear much about the young man who appeared with Bette Davis and Leslie Howard in "Of Human Bondage" and in "David Copperfield" and "Oliver Twist" during the 1930s — but that's because Geordie MacKay grew up to become a Jesuit priest who each week has more real-life adventures than any screenwriter would have the endurance to put down on paper.

Father George Twigg-Porter, S.J. ("Geordie MacKay" was his stage name; who would believe a child-actor's real name could be George Twigg-Porter?) is chaplain for five emergency hospitals in San Francisco, often arriving, with the help of a police radio, at the scenes of auto accidents, attempted suicides, murders, fires and other places where lives are in danger, before police or firemen get there.

But like many actors, Father Twigg-Porter, 48, plays a variety of supporting roles: West Coast director for "The Sacred Heart Hour" on TV and radio; archdiocesan director of the Apostleship of Prayer; member of the National Poetry Association; author of books (among them: "Caves, Conversations and Creatures," dealing with theological attitudes developed

by St. Patrick, St. Francis and St. Ignatius when each of them lived in a cave); board member of the Catholic Committee for the Aging; an expert in TV and radio repair, which he does frequently when he visits the elderly.

Also, he is a member of the board of directors of the Medic Alert Foundation, a national organization whose purpose is to get people to wear some identification of any problems that should be known in case of a medical emergency — such as "Allergic to Penicillin," "Wearing Contact Lenses," "Taking Anti-Coagulants," "Epilepsy," etc.

Father Twigg-Porter's involvement with Medic Alert, headquartered in Turlock, Calif., stems from his day-to-day experience with medical emergencies.

"Suppose you had a severe allergy to a certain antibiotic," he explained, "and that you were unconscious as a result of an accident and couldn't impart the information to the people treating you?"

Father Twigg-Porter, who frequently accompanies unconscious persons into operating rooms at the emergency hospitals, believes the answer is Medic Alert's issuance of metal emblems worn as a bracelet or necklace, containing the wear-



Child actor Geordie MacKay in a scene with Leslie Howard in "Of Human Bondage." In the present day, MacKay is Father George Twigg-Porter, who is a member of Medic Alert (see story). Here he is shown with pianist Peter Nero and the 300,000th member of the Medic Alert organization.

er's medical problem and widely recognized by doctors, ambulance drivers, police and other emergency workers. At Turlock, every member's record is kept on file and is immediately available by phone, since the Turlock center's number is also on the metal emblem.

The Jesuit notes that although 300,000 persons are now members of Medic Alert (membership fee is \$7), the American Medical Association estimates that 40 million Americans have medical problems that could

prove fatal if no one is alerted to them in an emergency.

Father Twigg-Porter's involvement with medicine, hospitals and physical problems may have been foreshadowed by his portrayal of a child cripple in a hospital ward in "Of Human Bondage."

He was born the son of titled British parents, Sir Henry and Lady Renee Twigg-Porter. His father, who died when George was only two, was British consul in Venezuela. Later, his mother brought George to Holly-

wood where she was for ten years a prominent character actress for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, having been introduced by her friend, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr.

"Geordie MacKay" also got into the movies, but the young boy, a Presbyterian, had his mind made up to become a minister — until some young Catholic friends interested him that faith. He became a convert at 15, and in 1940, at 19, entered the Jesuit order. Father Twigg-Porter was ordained in 1953.

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