

'White Fang' has bite; 'Innocence' lacking

'White Fang'

Man and beast endure hardships together during the 1898 Klondike gold rush in "White Fang" (Disney).

Young Jack Conroy (Ethan Hawke) arrives in Alaska to stake out his late father's gold claim but is immediately ripped off by the brutish Smith (James Remar) and his shady associates.

The teenager is more successful in persuading fellow prospector Alex (Klaus Maria Brandauer) to accompany him and reopen his father's mine in exchange for teaching Alex to read.

Meanwhile, White Fang, a half wolf, half dog reared by a local Indian, is acquired by Smith and turned into a vicious killer for Smith's illegal dogfights.

When White Fang meets his match in a bloody bout, Jack rescues him and nurses him back to health, patiently rebuilding the animal's spirit and trust. Eventually, White Fang's new-found loyalty allows him to repay his young master when Smith comes calling with murder on his mind.

Based on the Jack London novel, the movie directed by Randal Kleiser is a crisply photographed trip into the awesome Klondike at the turn of the century.

The mammoth beauty of the scenery at times threatens to dominate the story, but that's not such a drawback. This is not a rip-roaring adventure. As its stately pace clearly reveals, it's more a tale of man meeting nature and learning to respect its laws.

Brandauer and Hawke come across as



Richard Foreman-Buena Vista Pictures
Ethan Hawke stars as Jack Conroy, a city boy who — along with a half-wolf, half-dog named White Fang — faces the harsh Alaskan wilderness in search of his father's gold mine in "White Fang" (Disney).

genuine, hardy pioneer types unlike the bad guys who are only undeveloped stick figures throughout.

Especially good are the sequences of danger. At one point Jack ventures out on thin ice to retrieve a dead body and plunges through the Arctic ice. Later he faces almost certain death at the claws of a furious grizzly.

These scenes, and one of wolves attacking the two prospectors, make the otherwise wholesome family film a bit too scary for young children.

Because of much simulated violence to animals and menace to humans, the USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

'End of Innocence'

Dyan Cannon brings a semi-autobiographical film to the screen as writer, director and star of "The End of Innocence" (Skouras).

From infancy onward Stephanie (Cannon) has been trying to please everyone. In her eyes her parents (George Coe and Lola Mason) are relentless in their demands and her marriage ends in divorce even though to placate her husband she gave up any chance at a career.

Soon she is reduced to working for her father and popping pills to relieve anxiety — mostly about her younger lover Michael (Steve Meadows), who offers no commitment but expects her slavish devotion.

Upon accidentally discovering his in-

fidelity, Stephanie flips out and her parents check her into a rehab center. There, in spite of feeling trapped alongside "crazy" people, a caring counselor (John Heard) helps her come to terms with her life and the people in it.

Stephanie's voyage to self-discovery may be ultimately uplifting, but it's a long shrill trip.

Cannon has used several irritating techniques to intensify how put upon by others her character feels. There are the endless extreme close-ups of her parents and others mouthing opinions about her. If that doesn't get to you, the times all their voices are simultaneously merged on the soundtrack will.

All this adds to the feeling of being trapped in a group therapy session replete with primal screaming. Stephanie's insight that she must accept herself rather than look for approval from everyone else seems long-overdue.

One can't help but be reminded of Carrie Fisher's also semi-autobiographical "Postcards from the Edge," which covers much of the same subject matter. Unfortunately, "The End of Innocence" has none of the savage wit or zany comic relief that made "Postcards" an incisive and inventive treat.

Due to discreet sexual encounters, recreational drug use, minor violence and some rough language, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

Diocese

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self aware of what the Pastoral Center has to offer, and I ask for things."

Likewise, Father William B. Leone, pastor of the Northern Cayuga Cluster, observed, "It seems as though when there is assistance needed from the Pastoral Center, there has been a good response."

And Father McCaffrey, while acknowledging that he may have been one of the priests responding negatively to the question, said he also has received help when he's asked for it.

"There is no question in my mind that a lot of diocesan offices, when you schedule things and make plans, people make the trip and come down to help," Father McCaffrey said.

In his region, Father McCaffrey said, the truth of the matter is that people often are more aware of activities in the Syracuse diocese than they are affairs in Rochester.

"They never think of Rochester," Father McCaffrey said. "They would never think of going to Rochester (for social or personal reasons) unless they are connected with diocesan activities."

That lack of connection to the diocese *per se* can be found in Montour Falls as well, noted David Dougherty.

"A lot of people here have never been (to the Pastoral Center) and don't think about what goes on there," remarked Dougherty, a parishioner at St. Benedict's, Odessa.

Dougherty said diocesan personnel have come down on a number of occasions to help his parish. "I haven't heard any rumblings about the Pastoral Center," he reported.

The problem for the diocese is not intention I neglect by diocesan administration, but simply the size of the diocese and the distribution of Catholics in it, Father McCaffrey asserted.

Indeed, the Diocese of Rochester is handicapped by the very region it covers, noted Father Robert F. McNamara, diocese's archivist and author of *The Diocese of Rochester: 1968-1968*.

From just a cursory glance at a map, Father McNamara observed, the 12 counties constituting the diocese form a

relatively neat rectangle, stretching from Lake Ontario to the Pennsylvania border.

But the church authorities who formed this diocese failed to consider the nature of the regions they were yoking together. Father McNamara acknowledged.

What the map did not reveal was that the territory they eventually united under the Diocese of Rochester comprised two culturally distinct and physically separated regions, Father McNamara observed.

For the first 28 years following its establishment in 1868, the Diocese of Rochester had encompassed only eight counties. Then, in 1896, Steuben, Schuyler, Chemung and Tioga counties were taken out of the Buffalo diocese and added to the See of Rochester.

These Southern Tier counties, Father McNamara observed, are primarily agricultural and sparsely populated. And because of the east-west pattern of most railroads, the region's people allied themselves more closely with New York City or Buffalo than with Rochester.

The Northern Tier, the region skirting the Southern edge of Lake Ontario, was settled along the main railroad lines (and the Erie Canal) that ran through Rochester — a 19th-century boom town.

Even today, Rochester and Monroe County dominate the diocese in sheer bulk of population. According to 1980 U.S. Census data, Monroe County encompasses more Catholics than the other 11 counties in the diocese combined — approximately 60 percent of the total Catholic population.

Meanwhile, between the northern and southern tiers lies the Finger Lakes region — an area of lakes and hilly terrain that makes north-south travel difficult. Because of this terrain, "Parishes which are two miles apart as the crow flies can be 20, 30 or 40 miles by road," Father Mulligan observed.

In the past, these logistics caused difficulty in traveling between the northern and southern regions of the diocese, and led to discussion of spinning off some counties from the Rochester diocese. As recently as 1970, talk circulated of ceding Cayuga County to the Syracuse diocese, and of forming one or even two dioceses in the Southern Tier.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, then bishop of Rochester, dismissed those plans, noting

that the rural economy and relatively small Catholic population of the Southern Tier could not sustain a diocese.

Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, retired auxiliary bishop of the diocese, remarked, "There had been talk of (cutting off part of the Rochester diocese) since I became a priest, but nothing ever surfaced of an official nature, as far as I remember."

Further discussion of splitting "unserved" areas from their dioceses occurs throughout the country, Bishop Hickey said.

"I hear that from classmates and fellow bishops," Bishop Hickey said. "It's (common) in Syracuse and Buffalo."

"From time to time, depending on the issues, I sometimes hear anecdotal references to that idea," acknowledged Father David Barry, co-chancellor of the Syracuse diocese. "But such a move has never been considered seriously, he noted.

The Syracuse diocese shares some of the geographic problems Rochester faces, Father Barry observed. But unlike Rochester, Syracuse comprises several relatively large cities, and conveniently splits into four regions centering on Syracuse, Oswego, Utica/Rome and Binghamton.

Because of these distinct regional divisions, Father Barry noted, the diocese has decentralized its services into the four regions; created regional pastoral councils in addition to the diocesan pastoral council; and has an episcopal vicar in each region.

The Diocese of Rochester had a situation akin to that in Syracuse when the late auxiliary Bishop John E. McAfferty lived in Elmira to meet the needs of people in the Southern Tier, Father McNamara observed.

In addition, during the early 1980s, the diocese did decentralize some of its services. Separate offices of social ministry were set up in Geneva and Elmira, and religious-education offices were located in those cities as well.

Further decentralization is not possible at this time due to lack of money, Father Mulligan noted. But the diocese has undertaken efforts to make Pastoral Center services available and to improve communications, he added.

The Pastoral Center phone system now includes "voice boxes" — answering machines that enable callers to leave

messages when staff members are out of their offices. Father Mulligan explained. The diocese also installed a 1-800 phone line to help parishes in outlying areas save on phone bills.

The diocese has undertaken additional initiatives to improve communications and this month adopted a new mission statement. The task of developing this statement was one of the recommendations contained in the Winters Groups' report.

The statement, issued Feb. 19 by Bishop Clark, sets four primary goals for the diocese in the coming two years: holding a diocesan synod; creating faith-development programs; providing human services and advocating for social reform; and providing qualified ministers to serve parish and diocesan needs.

"These are not intended to be, nor should they be, new initiatives," Bishop Clark observed. "We are citing some of the most substantial streams that we are about at this time."

Although a document cannot serve to promote unity in the diocese, the mission statement "can be a very effective vehicle for reflection and discussion," Bishop Clark observed. "One of my hopes for the mission statement is it will give all of our people something very concrete and in common language to judge their actions with."

Thus the mission statement is one of several initiatives that may help to promote a sense of shared purpose in the diocese, Bishop Clark acknowledged.

In the meantime, however, the diocesan administration must still cope with the frequent perception that it too distant, Father Leone observed.

"I think sometimes a gap between an administrative body — whether it is a church or government — and the people it's intended to serve is almost unavoidable," Father Leone said. "It exists in the system itself."

"It takes a long time for perceptions to catch up with reality," Brown observed. "And while you improve, it raises people's expectations."

As for continuing complaints, Father Kraus speculated, "I just wonder if it's an old harp, and people need to look at the facts and see that people are available to help."