

IN REVIEW
FEATURE

'Crow' fails to fly; adult films have much to offer

NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are capsule reviews of movies recently reviewed by the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting.

'The Crow'

(Miramax) Ultraviolent revenge fantasy in which a murdered man (Brandon Lee) returns to life with the intention of killing the thugs who raped and murdered his fiancée and flung him to his death. Director Alex Proyas wastes sleek, dark visuals on a dreary depiction of the sadistic ways in which this creature exterminates his prey. Excessive violence, rationalization of murder, brief nudity and drug use and much rough language. The USCC classification is O

— morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

'Maverick'

(Warner Bros.) Spirited western in which a high-stakes card game attracts a gun-toting gambler (Mel Gibson), the light-fingered lady (Jodie Foster) who lifted his wallet and a veteran lawman (James Garner) hired to keep the assorted disreputable players from cheating their way to claiming the half-million-dollar pot. Richard Donner directs an appealing cast of double-crossing critters in a featherweight but crowd-pleasing, near spoof of western conventions. Some stylized violence, a brief, discreet bedroom scene and a few coarse ex-

pressions. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

'La Scorta'

(First Look) Compelling Italian drama focusing on four government bodyguards (led by Enrico Lo Verso) assigned to protect a crusading judge (Carlo Cecchi) from Mafia hitmen's bullets while he investigates a case implicating officials in his own department. Director Ricky Tognazzi puts in human terms the price being paid by individuals in the effort to crush mob-related activities in Sicily. Subtitles. Brief violence, much menace and intermittent rough language. The USCC classification is A-III

— adults. Not rated by the MPAA.

'Widows' Peak'

(Fine Line) Whimsical period piece set in a 1926 Irish village where scandal erupts when the arrival of a glamorous widow (Natasha Richardson) upsets the delicate balance between an eccentric spinster (Mia Farrow) and the village's gossipy widows (led by Joan Plowright). Director John Irvin pours on the blarney in a fairly entertaining concoction that blends the hint of a murder mystery into a deftly acted comedy of manners. Some mild sexual references. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

Coach's wife provides insider's view of Notre Dame

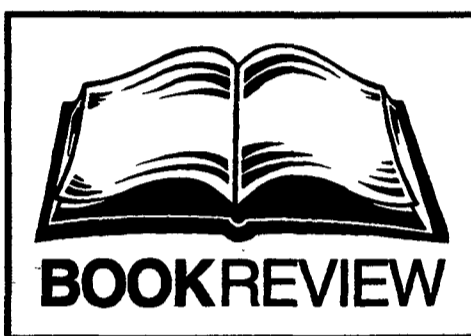
The Coach's Wife, by Teresa Godwin Phelps; W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. (New York, London, 1994); 255 pages; \$23.

Reviewed by Bishop Dennis W. Hickey

The Coach's Wife is a sleeper for anyone seeking the inside story on Richard "Digger" Phelps' reign as basketball coach at the University of Notre Dame. It is that and more. It is a fascinating study of several — sometimes conflicting — themes skillfully meshed by the author.

Theresa "Terry" Phelps, a convert to Catholicism, is Digger Phelps' wife. The highly successful and esteemed coach of Notre Dame's basketball team, Digger came by his nickname because his father was an undertaker in Beacon, N.Y. Terry's story centers around living with her husband on the Notre Dame campus, raising three children in the university community, earning three graduate degrees (the first female "triple Domer") and ending up on the law school's faculty teaching budding lawyers the art of writing in English.

This feat turned out to be as challenging as producing a winning basketball team at the college level.



The book details her loving support of her husband, whom she feels was treated shabbily by certain Notre Dame administrators. It is simultaneously the tale of her own journey as a Catholic mother and an academician.

Terry loves Notre Dame and everything about it. She reveres Holy Cross Father Theodore M. Hesburgh, Notre Dame's retired president, and grieves at the moral decay which she perceives has infiltrated the athletic department under his successors. Father Hesburgh insisted that athletes be students first and Digger followed that philosophy. All of his players were graduated. According to the coach's wife, this is no longer the norm.

The author carefully documents the changes that occurred under the current administration, highlighted by the

ungracious rejection of her husband as coach after 21 years of exemplary service. Coaches do not in fact even if they are successful in their field.

The book is charming when she describes the background from which she and Digger came. They became overwhelmed by the Notre Dame aura and remain enchanted to this day.

For Digger coaching at Notre Dame was the equivalent of a beatific vision. As Terry puts it: "Dick's much publicized dream to coach at Notre Dame was *his* dream, not mine. I had been reared neither Catholic nor Irish and Notre Dame was not my mecca as it seemed for most American Catholics. Where I grew up, the Ivy League was considered the place to go to school ... For all I knew about the midwest, Indiana had only recently joined the Union ... But Dick was another story. He was raised by an Irish Catholic mother; Notre Dame was as much a part of his childhood as being an altar boy, attending CYO dances and standing in line each Saturday for Confession."

Terry soon embraced and was embraced by the university despite her early amusement in teaching her Digger Notre Dame's fight song while Digger was on the road recruiting.

Terry plays courageously the role of the *advocatus diaboli* (devil's advocate) in the canonization process for the university by revealing the athletic program's inconsistencies. If her animadversions are correct, this prestigious seat of learning would profit greatly by heeding her warnings.

The Coach's Wife is a delightful book and the reader will have difficulty in putting it down after the first page.

John Feinstra, a regular commentator on PBS's "Morning Edition," puts it succinctly: "To read *The Coach's Wife* is to enter the world of Notre Dame where sports, academics, and the Catholic Church are often uncomfortable bedfellows. Terry Phelps' story exposes the raw nerves and clashing values that plague our modern universities. And it is a terrific read."

I agree.

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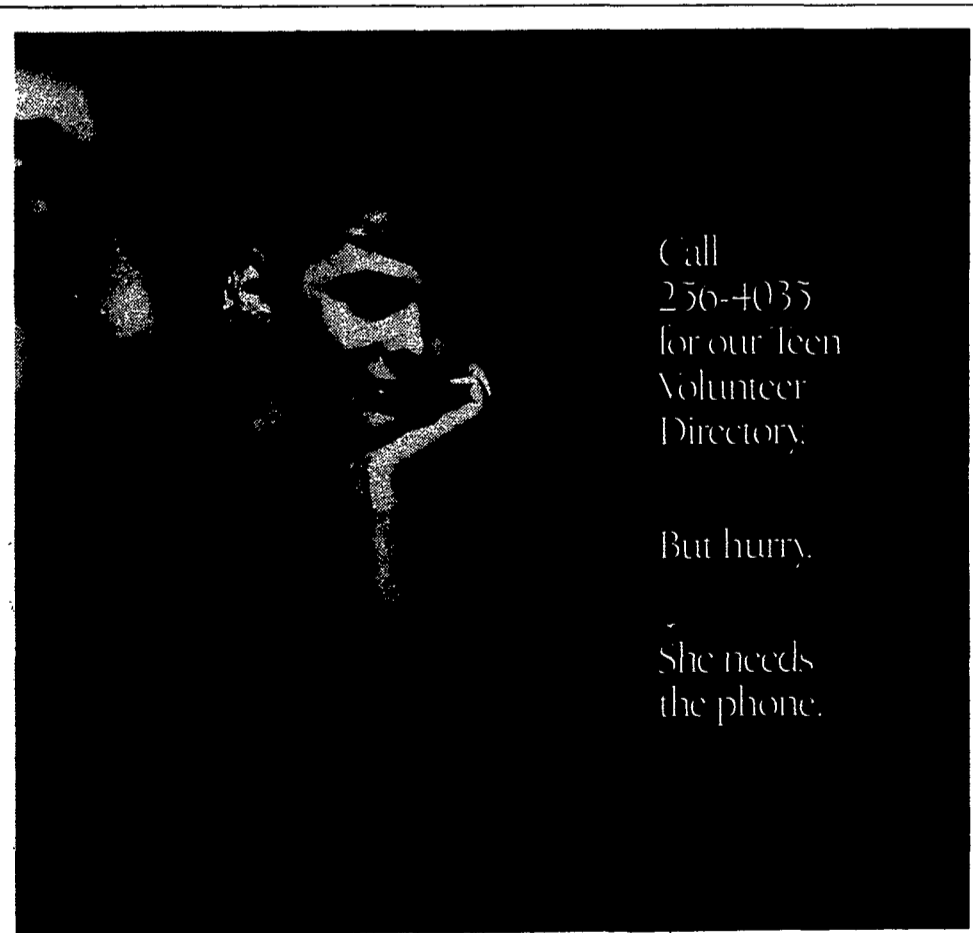
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