

LEISURE

Author calls for integrity in public life

Integrity, by Stephen Carter. Basic Books (New York, 1996). 277 pp., \$24.

Reviewed by William Droel
Catholic News Service

Stephen Carter of Yale University Law School received wide attention with his 1993 book, *The Culture of Disbelief*. It was specifically praised by no less than Bill Clinton as an important antidote to a misreading of the First Amendment that relegates faith to a suspect private realm and chills religious discourse. His new book, *Integrity*, the first of a trilogy on the American character, also deserves careful consideration.

Integrity, Carter explains, is "a journey rather than a destination." Along the way it demands finding an oasis where a busy person can study and think about moral questions. It also requires that person to act on what she or he has discerned and, as appropriate, to say openly that her or his behavior is guided by moral principles.

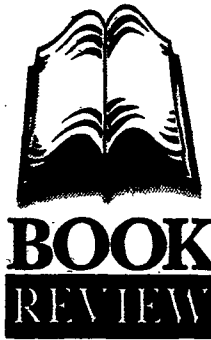
Throughout the book Carter makes many useful distinctions. For example, one chapter details how honesty "is a different virtue than integrity." There are plenty of people who expose their honest thoughts and feelings on talk shows and in other forums. But those people have not taken the time to learn right from wrong and are thus acting without integrity. Quoting the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Carter illustrates how willful ignorance can be a sin.

The book is peppered with examples from literature, history, the law, education, Carter's own experience and with hypothetical case studies. Separate chapters make application to sports, journalism, criminal law and civil disobedience. One whole chapter looks at letters of recommendation written by teachers and employers. Two full chapters are given to the "sacrament" of marriage.

"Divorce is sometimes unavoidable," Carter acknowledges. But a person of integrity does not seek a divorce the moment romance and love fade. Integrity means more than "being true to yourself." On this point Carter dares to challenge M. Scott Peck who "warns us that the marital relationship ... can (sometimes) interfere with the ability of individuals to make emotional and spiritual progress." That prevalent attitude, says Carter, "risks treating the marriage relationship itself ... as simply one more crude societal impediment to self-actualization rather than an institution with its own rules and expectations."

Not everyone will agree with all of Carter's conclusions. It is refreshing, nonetheless, for a mainstream publisher to give us a serious presentation of civic, moral and religious issues by someone who doesn't work for a church organization.

Droel is an instructor and campus minister at Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills, Ill.



Animals star amid flood of familiar fare

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

"Hellraiser: Bloodline" (Miramax)

Sadistic horror fantasy in which the descendants of a toymaker (Bruce Ramsay) continue a centuries-long battle against a pinheaded demon (Doug Bradley) loosed from hell by their ancestor. Directed by Alan Smithee (a pseudonym), the fourth in the series lumbers clumsily along from one bloody death to another in a meaningless jumble of noxious pulp waste. Excessive violence, sexual situations and rough language. The USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The MPA of America rating is R — restricted.

"Homeward Bound II: Lost in San Francisco" (Disney)

Frisky sequel to the popular 1993 family film has a scrappy bulldog (voice of Michael J. Fox), sassy Himalayan cat (voice of Sally Field) and trusty golden retriever (voice of Ralph Waite) separated from their human family at the San Francisco airport and forced to deal with an urban gang of stray dogs and other misadventures as they wend their way home. Director David R. Ellis' shaggy-dogs story incorporates a mushy puppy-love subplot to bolster the already familiar plot of talking pets persevering to reunite with their worried owners. The USCC classification is A-I — general patronage. The MPA of America rating is G — general audiences.



© The Walt Disney Company
(Left to right) Sassy, Shadow, and Chance find themselves on an exciting journey in "Homeward Bound II: Lost in San Francisco."

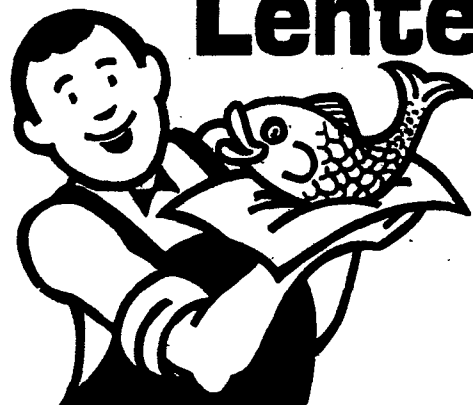
"The Birdcage" (MGM-UA)

Comic complications ensue when the son of a gay Miami nightclub owner (Robin Williams) invites his fiancée and her ultra-conservative parents (Gene Hackman and Dianne Wiest) home for dinner and the gay man's lover (Nathan Lane) shows up in drag, pretending to be the lad's mother. Producer-director Mike Nichols' faithful remake of 1979's "La Cage aux Folles" pokes fun at flamboyant homosexuals and those who shun them while stressing the vulnerable humanity of both groups. Sympathetic depiction of the gay lifestyle, many sexual references and intermittent rough language. The USCC classification is A-IV — adults, with reservations. The MPA of America rating is R — restricted.

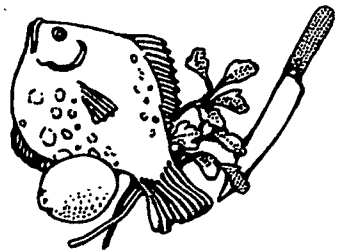
"Down Periscope" (20th Century Fox)

Thin comedy about a Navy officer (Kelsey Grammer) whose career is over unless he can turn an old diesel submarine and its motley crew into a winning team during war games against a superior force. Directed by David S. Ward, the all-too-predictable plot about misfits and underdogs provides a few good laughs but far more yawns. Sexual innuendo, bathroom humor, and instances of profanity and rough language make this film questionable fare for young viewers. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPA of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

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