

PARENTING

History shows 'You Gotta Believe!'

Tales follow seal, white horse, rats

NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are home videocassette reviews from the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting. Each videocassette is available on VHS format. Theatrical movies on video have a USCC classification and Motion Picture Association of America rating. All reviews indicate the appropriate age group for the video audience.



The Secret of Roan Inish

Wispy Irish tale in which a young girl (Jeni Courtney), whose baby brother had been carried off to sea from the island of the title, hears the legend of an ancestor who married a Selkie, a creature half-woman, half-seal, and becomes convinced her brother is still alive. Writer-director John Sayles capitalizes on a fine Irish cast, lyric locales and moody seascapes to create a compelling mythic fantasy about the bonds of family, the mysteries of nature and the power of the human imagination. A youngster in perilous circumstances and a wee bit of profanity. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

Into the West

When a magnificent white horse wanders into their Dublin slum, two motherless waifs (Ruaidhrí Conroy and Ciarán Fitzgerald) ride off, pretending to be Wild West cowboys with their sobered father (Gabriel Byrne) and the police in hot pursuit. A sensitive yet rousing tale of emotionally neglected children whose imaginations help them transcend an impoverished home. Fleeting violence, children in jeopardy and a few profanities. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

The Giant of Thunder Mountain

When a little girl (Noley Thornton) befriends a lonely, over-sized woodman (Richard Kiel) living on a nearby mountain, villagers determine to drive him away but have a change of heart when he saves them from a gang of cutthroats. The story is ultimately heartwarming and eye-filling in its turn-of-the-century Western setting but suffers from a humpy plot with too much violent action. Initial scenes of parents being killed by a grizzly bear, life-threatening situations involving children as well as adults and frightening scenes of vigilante justice. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

A Rat's Tale

Disappointing family fantasy in which a pair of enterprising rats save their community from a rodent poison by finding an antidote in a long-lost magical garden. The German production uses American actors and live-action settings with beautifully crafted German marionettes and audio backgrounds, but the thin story is too belabored. The USCC classification is A-I — general audience. The MPAA rating is G — general audiences.



family matters

By ELLEN MARX

No one even thought about changing Channel 9 while my grandfather sat in the Lazy-Boy chair on Sunday afternoons cheering on the Mets in the late spring of 1969. As a 10-year-old girl, I remember wondering how anyone could sit inside on a beautiful day watching a boring game that seemed to go on forever.

One Sunday, as I made my opinion known to my grandfather, I remember being instructed to sit down and learn about the game and the players. That particular game was an exciting one, and it was just as exciting for me to watch the colorful cast of players, coaches, managers, owners and announcers of the '69 Mets. After a few more games, I was hooked.

When the Mets entered the baseball world in 1962, their 40 wins and 120 losses brought them the unfortunate distinction of having the worst record in modern Major League Baseball. But in the summer of 1969, a change was in the air. The team that had been the laughingstock of baseball surprised its fans and opponents alike as it continued to win against all odds. It was a wonderful time to become a fan and to witness baseball history in the making.

That July, my sister, Nancy, went off to girl scout camp. We exchanged letters and in one she wrote, "What did you think of Neal Armstrong walking on the moon?" It was thrilling for me to see his giant leap for mankind — but I wanted to know if Nancy had heard that the Mets were in first place — a feat that to baseball fans seemed more unlikely than a man walking on the moon.

When the Mets clinched the pennant by defeating the Atlanta Braves that fall, they went on to play the Baltimore Orioles in the World Series. Our teacher, Sister Patricia Pompa, a diehard Orioles fan, realized there was no point in teaching social studies. Instead, our class huddled around an AM radio as we listened to the play-by-play that captured some amazing baseball moments including some unforgettable pitching by a player named Tom Seaver.

That season as the Mets captured the World Series title, they captured the hearts of baseball fans everywhere and were dubbed the "Miracle Mets." If there was hope for the New York Mets, there was hope for each one of us. Among my collection of Mets memorabilia, my favorite is a signed picture of pitcher Tug McGraw that includes the team mantra from the early 1970s: "You Gotta Believe!"

Thirty years later I am standing on a field of green surveying the newest members of the Mets team. They are pitching. They are catching. They are throwing grass in each other's faces. They are 6-year-old girls. Most of the girls, except for Anna and Meredith, are rookies. The question of the hour is what color team shirts will they be wearing. Any doubts I had about signing up to coach my daughter's T-ball team were dispelled at the baseball clinic two weeks earlier when I was handed my team roster, which said: Team #1 The Lawrenceville METS.

It was obvious during this first practice that we must start with the basics. We talked about what it means to be a team. We went over safety rules — twice. We talked about being a good sport. Then we began. We stretched. We ran the bases and shouted out the name of each base as we stepped on it. Each girl took a turn hitting the ball off the T. A few of the girls found out for the first time if they batted righty or lefty.

On opening day, in the top of the first inning, I was asked by three of my players if the game was almost over. In the second



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Daniel Morelli, 7, of Gates.

inning, I lost half of my infield as the girls left in search of a bathroom. The girls were oblivious to the balls being hit past them. Girls sat in the outfield and filled their gloves with grass. Everyone begged to play catcher although the inning was half over by the time they were in full gear. This truly is baseball at its best. It was a field of dreams, though most had nothing to do with baseball. They were daydreams of friendship, fantasy and new endeavors.

Somewhere in the middle of the season — just like our namesake of three decades earlier — there was a change in the air. The girls began hitting pitched balls. They were actually fielding balls and there wasn't the bewildered look of what base they should

throw the ball to. We were beginning to put it all together and learning to play as a team. The girls were no longer preoccupied with how much time was left or what snack was awaiting them at game's end. They wanted to know if I thought they showed "good hustle" on the field. They stood on the sidelines cheering and chanting for their teammates. "Let's Go Mets!"

On some level, the girls began to discover the beauty of the game of baseball. In a world where we are hurried and rushed at every turn, baseball invites its fans and players to slow down. The game can not be rushed and for those who are slaves to the clock, this can be very unsettling. It's the slow but steady pace of the game that enables fans to get to know the players — not only their statistics but also their stories of victory and defeat on and off the field.

Baseball can be a wonderful metaphor for the other areas in our lives — family, parish community and the workplace. We've all had our times when we're in a slump and we also know the feeling of being in the middle of a hitting streak. We have our days when we come close to pitching a perfect game and other days when the relief pitcher can't be sent it fast enough. We can identify with the player who is cheered by the home team fans when he hits a home run and booed the moment he makes an error.

Baseball is a game that celebrates the accomplishments and records of the individual while never losing sight that he is making a contribution to something larger than himself — his team. Baseball is a wonderful reminder for our world today that when you take a remarkably diverse group of people who share a common goal, miracles can still happen. You Gotta Believe.

Marx lives in Lawrenceville, N.J., with her husband and two children.

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