

## points of view

# Movie helps to rekindle an old spark

REMEMBER WHEN the "little guy" had everyone's support, and neighbors were friends in the trust sense?

Those were the times when everyone fought for the underdog. They got involved. People were vocal about corruption and other problems.

It was one of the first rules for those of us who trained to be journalists during the Watergate era. People were encouraged to foster a watchdog mentality, looking out for inconsistencies and righting wrongs.

That feeling of community, friendship, fighting for the underdog and old-fashioned neighborly help is cap-

tured in the "Milagro Beanfield War" — one of the latest first run, big screen productions.

A variety of personalities, age groups and a bird's eye view of the special culture in a New Mexico town are only a few of the movie's delights. Its true value is how it stimulates the mind.

The movie focuses on one man's decision to fight progress, and how friends and neighbors join in supporting his efforts to maintain the community's last beanfield. Joe's decision to fight came about almost by accident, as the movie leads the viewer into an eye-opening tale of a community's awakening.



Casey Hans

I found it to be an inspiration, reminding us that people and their ideas are what makes the world go 'round and create an aura for change.

IT'S MESSAGE: sometimes the little things can be the most meaningful.

"Milagro" rekindles an old spark for those of us who grew up during an age of the Chicago Eight, and civil rights and anti-war protests.

We can thank producer and director Robert Redford for a sensitive portrayal, and one that plays so much on feelings and the re-awakening of meaningful memories.

It seems we've lost something along the way, and watching a movie like "Milagro" points that out.

As a nation and as individuals, we've become more isolated, more self-absorbed. A lot of the same problems exist today that did 20 years ago, but we react differently.

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We care more about the faux pas of a White House spokesman, for instance, than about what is actually going on in the Oval Office.

This year, a national election year, will certainly be an indicator of where we stand as a nation and in

what direction we are moving. Activity or inactivity in politics is our country's traditional litmus test.

WE HAVE always been a cyclical nation — from the original Revolution that founded our country through a variety of movements from suffrage through civil rights.

Whether individuals or groups will band together to rally for another cause as we approach the turn of the century has yet to be seen.

And just what that cause might be remains a mystery.

The word "milagro" means "miracle." Perhaps it will take just that for us to return to neighborly, caring, community ways.

## Son helps mom teach Parents, not hotels

## at education seminar must look after teens

RABBI DANIEL B. Syme taught a lesson to some Oakland County educators recently. He also made his mother proud. But there's nothing new about that.

Sonia Syme was proud of her son even before the day 19 years ago that she started a program in Detroit to educate teachers about the Jewish students in their classrooms.

Nearly two decades later, the program has moved to the corner of Drake and Walnut Lake roads in West Bloomfield, the new home of Temple Israel where her husband, M. Robert Syme is rabbi.

Two weeks ago, the Institute on Judaism, the second at the new site, drew 147 teachers, counselors and principals from 12 Oakland County schools. They learned about Jewish tradition and culture and were urged to be sensitive to the beliefs of all children in their classes.

About half the educators were from Farmington, Bloomfield Hills or West Bloomfield schools.

AT LUNCH, they were treated to Sonia Syme's unabashedly wonderful introduction of her son, who is vice president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in New York. Then the younger Syme listed some principles that built the foundation



Rich Perleberg

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of his Jewish home. He suggested they were appropriate lessons for all to learn.

The teacher is always right, Rabbi Syme began, which did not get a whole lot of argument from his audience. He stressed that in his home it was "unthinkable" to be rude to a teacher.

It was also wrong to blame teachers for student failures. "It was my responsibility to become a literate

human being, not theirs," he said.

But teachers, once given that infallibility, are also saddled with great responsibilities. If a teacher is always right, then a second rule of the household — "you must never embarrass another human being in public" — becomes crucial.

How devastating it must be for a child to be humiliated by a teacher. For that, said Syme, there is no excuse. "Kindness is rubbing out another's mistake instead of rubbing it in," he said.

TEACHERS are also in a unique position to act on a third tenet of Syme's faith, which says that "saving a life takes precedence over virtually everything else."

This is particularly true, he said, in an era when teenage suicide is on the increase and when drug abuse, alcohol abuse and promiscuous sex can carry death sentences.

Teens who commit suicide almost always cry out for help ahead of time, he said, as do those who expose themselves to drug overdoses, drunk driving and AIDS.

The person who hears that cry often is a teacher and his or her response must be to help.

"We can save lives and therefore we must," said Syme.

IF YOU ARE one of those fortunate adults who looks younger than you are, think about bringing along your I.D. if you're planning to check in to one of the suburban hotels this graduation season.

The crusading Families in Action organization has persuaded dozens of hotels to reject room registration to graduating high school seniors seeking a place to party.

Unfortunately, the move is misguided, relatively ineffective and somewhat hypocritical to say nothing of its potential illegality if challenged in court.

Because of the high death toll among teens during graduation months, monitoring their activities is certainly a laudatory effort. How and why it is done is the rub.

It is tragic and disheartening to read every year about the number of graduating seniors who are killed. The deaths, we know, are the results of too much alcohol and drugs.

BUT PARENTAL NEGLECT is an even more critical factor. Families in Action has a tough time accepting that concept — that they, the parents are responsible for raising and monitoring their children, not some hotel clerk or party store owner or even the police.

Where, one has to ask, are the par-



Steve Barnaby

ents when their child is checking in to some hotel room? Why aren't these parents actively participating in guiding these youth along in the planning of graduation night celebrations?

Many parents do take on that responsibility. Too many others simply don't.

The hypocrisy of such a movement is rather blatant. Some hotels, in their ardent to please, have gone along with the Families in Action initiative. Plaudits should go to those who have opted out.

One hotel representative noted, "we have a lot of corporate guests, and I don't think it's fair to have all night parties going on."

Another similarly commented, "we don't allow parties in any guest rooms." Huh?

Give us a break, folks. Hundreds of thousands in this country go to hotels every year for just that very reason. You might recall a convention or two when you've been invited to what proper folks call, "hospitality suites."

Frankly, I've never been to a hotel where a party of some nature or another hasn't been taking place.

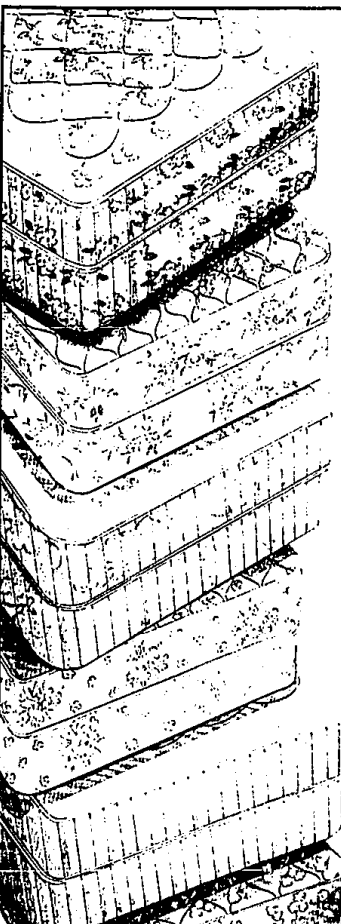
Really now, conventions are the lifeblood of the American hotel industry. And hospitality suites are an accepted part of that business.

Finally, and probably most importantly, many of the graduating seniors are adults. They are 18 years old, work, pay taxes, and can live on their own.

Few courts could justify denying room registration to an adult of any age.

By law they aren't allowed to consume alcohol. But, by law, people of any age are breaking the law when they take drugs such as marijuana, cocaine or heroin. And you certainly don't see hotels frisking every adult who registers to see if they are carrying illegal substances.

No, don't put the onus on the hotels, parents. You are the front line supervisors when it comes to guiding and guarding your children on graduation night.



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