

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



Thursday, June 8, 1989 O&E

OJTC

Birmingham man turns best-seller into movie

By Kevin Teevens
special writer

IT'S LATE MORNING and the President has just addressed the nation. Nuclear war is imminent.

What would you do? An all-out nuclear war — WW III, or just a limited nuclear conflict — an atomic argument, would change life as we know it, forever. Could we initially survive and rebuild in the aftermath? This is the premise of "Jenny," a feature film being produced by Birmingham writer Charles Berk.

Based on the widely acclaimed British best seller, "Jenny — My Diary," a short, haunting novel about life in a fallout shelter and on the outside after nuclear war, "Jenny" is different from other nuclear apocalypse dramas.

"There is hope," said Berk, 42, in an interview at the Birmingham office of Omni Pictures, his production company. "The screenplay, which I co-wrote with the author, Yorick Blumenfeld, ultimately reveals there is hope. That you can survive if you're willing to start over. Research indicates this is possible, but obviously the theory hasn't been tested."

BERK DOESN'T OWN a bomb shelter and isn't a survivalist. He just knew a good story when he read "Jenny — My Diary" back in 1983. "It's a real story, certainly contemporary, concerning real issues about the world, people and relationships. It has universal appeal, which is important in today's global movie market. It's not about basketball in Indiana." Berk began screenwriting in 1980. His involvement in film has been primarily as a writer and associate producer. Currently, he's moving into producing with "Two Hot to Handle" — a screenplay he rewrote — starring Peter Fonda, Isabella Rossellini and Jimmy Buffet. Two other films, "Prodigy" and "Scorpion Lady" are in pre-production. And of course, "Jenny," which has become for Berk somewhat of a pet project.

"Jenny" is a story that reaches out and grabs you, makes you think. We want to preserve this quality in the film," Berk said. Berk had a difficult time reading



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Holding a copy of the novel "Jenny — My Diary," Charles Berk of Birmingham works on his screenplay with the book's British author, Yorick Blumenfeld.

the original novel again before he wrote the screenplay. "IT WAS TOUGH because I knew where it was going. It's difficult because of the subject matter. A lot of people couldn't read this. But the fact the book is a diary — hand-written, so short and to the point — makes it easier to read," he added.

Author Blumenfeld is very concerned about the nuclear question. Twenty years as an Eastern European correspondent for Newsweek made him intimately aware of the political workings, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, that could lead to a nuclear confrontation. Blumenfeld is a distant relative of Anne Frank, whose legacy also was in diary form.

Although originally the story takes place in England, in the screenplay the events occur in Arizona.

Berk said that filming in the United States is more of a marketing move than anything else. "People overseas don't want to see a U.S. version of a story about them, filmed in their country. But they have a great curiosity about the U.S. always do well abroad because people go to see these films to learn about life here."

Berk meets this week with the former head of Warner Bros. Acquisitions, to discuss distribution of "Jenny." The cameras will be rolling soon on a picture whose message shouldn't be ignored.



Grammy winner Chuck Mangione plays his flugel horn at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 21, at the opening of P'Jazz at the Hotel Pontchartrain in Detroit.

upcoming things to do

Deadline for the Upcoming calendar is one week ahead of publication. Items must be received by Thursday to be considered for publication the following Thursday. Send to: Ethel Simmons, Entertainment Editor, The Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150.

MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Meadow Brook Music Festival will open its 26th season at 8 p.m. Thursday, June 15, when pianist Adèle Watts performs Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Czech conductor Libor Pesek directing. The program will be repeated Sunday, June 18, at the outdoor festival on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester Hills. Tickets are \$23, \$19, and \$12. The Smothers Brothers, Jips Stafford and Pat Paulsen will appear Friday, June 16. Tickets, lawn only, are \$12.50. Soloists of the Royal Danish Ballet perform Saturday, June 17. Tickets are \$20, \$17 and \$12.50. All DSO classical concerts are designated the Orchard Concert Series. All concerts are held at 8 p.m. in the Baldwin Pavilion, with the festival grounds opening at 6 p.m. Ticket information and 1989 season brochures are available by calling the Meadow Brook box office at 377-2010.

SEASON CLOSURE

Meadow Brook Theatre's 23rd season closed Sunday, May 21, with a total paid attendance of 131,468. This is an increase from the previous season of 4,398 and the largest attendance figure since 1983. Artistic/general director Terence Kilburn said single and group ticket sales were quite strong, and that productions such as "The Road to Mecca" and "Quilters" brought in people who had never been to Meadow Brook Theatre. New and renewal orders for season tickets for 1989/90 are being taken at the MBT box office or by calling 377-3300.

SUMMER SERIES

Farmington Community Band, under the direction of Paul Barber, will open the Birmingham "In the Park" summer music series at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, June 8, in Shain Park. The band will feature musical highlights of the band's past season. The City of Birmingham and local community businesses sponsor the "In the Park" series, which is its 15th year of offering free musical entertainment. Fourteen shows will be presented Thursday nights through Sept. 7. In case of bad weather, call 644-1807 for information.

MOVIE PREVIEW

The Emmy-award-winning film "Weapons of the Spirit" by Pierre Sauvage will be previewed at 8 p.m. Sunday, June 11, at Temple Beth El in Birmingham. Pierre Sauvage will talk about the making of the movie, and the lessons has learned from it. Sauvage's new feature-length film grapples with the Holocaust and its legacy. It tells the story of Le Chambon, a small mountain community in Nazi-occupied France, where 5,000 Christians took in and saved 5,000 Jews during the Holocaust. This event is being funded by a grant from the Stein Family Fund.

OCC CHORALE

Selections from "Phantom of the Opera," "Fiddler on the Roof" and other top Broadway shows will be featured in a concert by the OCC Choral at 8 p.m. Tuesday, June 13, at Smith Theatre on the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills. The chorale is under the direction of Kevin Dewey. The Renaissance Voices also will perform. Admission is \$2.

FRISBEE DEMO

The pioneers of Pro Frisbee Demos. Please turn to Page 8

table talk

Dine at dusk

Tango's European Bistro in the Radisson Plaza Hotel at Town Center's Southfield Dining "Dinner at Dusk," 5-7 p.m. A choice of five

entrees, along with soup of the day and dessert, is priced at \$9.95 per person. Entrees for the dinner by candlelight vary from week to week, but a sampling includes Sautéed Filet of Sole, Lemon Butter Sauce;

Mesquite-Grilled Breast of Chicken, Fresh Morel Sauce; Lemon Dill Pasta Primavera, Tossed in Garlic Cream Sauce; Petite Filet Mignon, Herb Butter; and Broiled Lake Trout, Lime Buerre Blanc. Among

dessert selections are Michigan Cherry Cheesecake or assorted homemade ice cream and sorbets. For an additional charge, diners

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