

# Outback tale told in a personal tone

## PASS THE POPCORN



LIANNE ROGERS

Grimacing as she is being trussed up in her corset, a young woman is warned by her friends that once she marries and moves to rural Australia in the early years of the century, she must maintain all the social proprieties and never be friend to her husband. That's what the other men are for.

In the 1982 film "We of the Never Never," Jeannie Gunn, played by Angela Punch McGreggor, has more sense than to listen to her friends as she begins her new married life at a cattle station in the Australian outback.

Gunn's new husband, who had been working as a librarian, has accepted a position managing a remote cattle station. After a month's overland travel from Melbourne, the couple face another couple of days' journey from the nearest settlement to their new home.

While the woman's friends are concerned about keeping up the rules of society and the possibility of health problems, the white men working at the station are upset that the new manager is bringing his wife.

Women will mess things up. The Aborigines like the idea, figuring if there are white women around the white men will leave the native women alone.

The thin and rather solemn-faced McGreggor is a nice change from the usual spunky heroine who overcomes all kinds of difficulties to whip the wilderness into some civilized shape. She knows what she is getting into when she moves to the cattle station with her husband, who had lived there when he was younger. It's her husband, sympathetically played by Arthur Hignom, who is most concerned about the ramshackle building they find instead of the promised house. She says that if she wanted a cottage like the ones in Melbourne she would have stayed in Melbourne.

The biggest frustrations for Jeannie Gunn are trying to deal with men who have no experience with women and are terrified of showing any emotion in front of her. One man, ill with fever, refuses to come into the station until he is promised she won't take care of him. Even her husband says he would be like those men if he hadn't met her.

"We of the Never, Never" is available on cassette tape at your local video store. If you have a question of comment for Lianne Rogers, call her at 951-2103.

# 'River Runs': Not as deep as it looks

## TICKETS PLEASE



JOHN MONAGHAN

They cast their lines like slow-motion bullwhips, four swipes back and forth before the fly lands in the desired spot on the water. When the fish grabs the lure, the foxy fisherman jerks it out of the water, reels it in carefully, then reverently cradles the catch in his hands.

"A River Runs Through It" goes well beyond my limited view of trout fishing as beefy guys with orange baseball caps and camouflage vests drowning worms between Budweisers. Here, it's an art, a religion, a discipline. It's also the thing that binds Norman MacLean's family through tough personal times in the 1920s.

Robert Redford's popular movie, which opened wide last weekend after an exclusive run at the Maple, remains extremely faithful to MacLean's autobiographical novel about life on the shores of Montana's Big Blackfoot River. "The often moving little picture,

full of deep thoughts and metaphors a plenty, may seem more profound than it actually is.

Paul and Norman are sons of a minister who, even when he's preaching, tries to bring the sermon around to fishing. The message is not lost on his flock. In this part of Montana, according to the brothers, there's three things you're never late for — church, work and fishing.

Norman heads east for college then returns home to decide what to do with his literature degree. Paul stays in Montana and lands a job on a newspaper, where he's a local celebrity known as much for his lures as his leads.

Paul also earns a reputation as a gambler, a drinker and a womanizer, a fact that doesn't sit well with his pious parents and brother. Paul is sometimes able to see Norman, who has the nickname "preacher," into an occasional walk on the wild side.

One night they drop in on a *Lolo*, a gambling den that looks like the great grandpappy of "Twin Peaks." One-Eyed Jack's, Scurry denizens glance over their shoulders from a dimly-lit bar, while

bored-looking prostitutes lurk in the corners. A poker game is always visible through a crack in the door.

You can see the respect that director Redford has for MacLean in virtually every shot. He selects the most poetic passages from the book for his thoughtful voice-over narration while packing the movie full of picture-postcard views of Montana rivers and mountains.

Redford and scriptwriter Richard Friedenberg wallow in the story's many symbols, especially the way the river, sometimes gentle and other times turbulent, runs through each of the characters' lives.

Paul states a main theme — that loved ones in trouble want the offer of help even when they don't take it — and the movie stops dead in the water so that we can note its importance.

Strangely enough, the real problem with the movie lies in the casting. Tom Skerritt figures that since he's playing a minister and a Scotsman he must remain as stiff as a stuffed trout over the fireplace. Craig Sheffer, as brother Norman through whose point of view the story is told, is only

slightly more animated.

As Paul, moody Brad Pitt ("Cool World") is still trying to claim his much-publicized title as the new James Dean. He's fairly believable as the wild young drinker who urges Norman to shoot some fierce rapids with him in a tiny wooden rowboat. It's another thing to convince us that he holds a job at a newspaper and has interviewed President Coolidge.

Still, he's the most lively thing in the movie, aside from those hooked trout, which jump out of the water in a choreographed water dance. If it's possible for a movie to be shot almost too beautifully, this is it.

And I'm not saying this is all bad. Even the most casual of anglers will want to grab a pole and head west after seeing this movie. If it sometimes runs dry as narrative, "A River Runs Through It" makes a dramatic travogue.

If you have a question or comment for John Monaghan, call him at 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone and than dial mail box number 1866.

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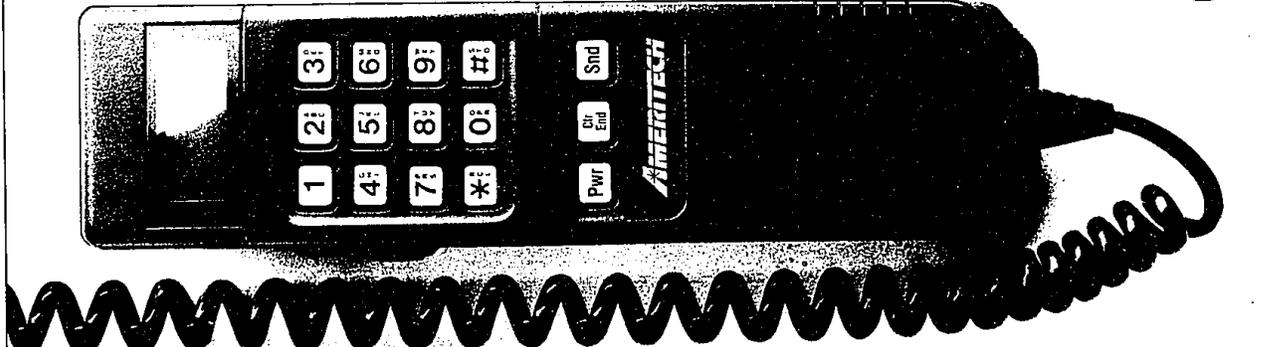
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