ever discovered what it is that makes
Canadians laugh.

Natalie Edwards

The Man
Who Skied
Down Everest

Scriptplay: Judith Crawley based on the
diary of Yuichiro Miura. Cinematography:
Mitsuji Kanau. Music: Lawrence Crosley.
Director and editor of sound effects: Bruce
Nyznik. Editing: Bob Cooper and Millie
Moore. Performers: Members of the Japa­
nese Everest Skiing Expedition, 1970. Pro­
ducer: F.R. Crawley. Produced in 1975 by
Crawley Films Limited in collaboration
with Ishihara International Productions (To­
kyo). Colour: 35mm. Running time: 88 min­
utes. Distribution in Canada: Crawley-
Films.

Crawley Films is following the suc­
cess of its documentary feature Janis
with The Man Who Skied Down Ev­
erest. The new film, less than ninety
minutes long, was given a prestigious
Toronto opening in September at the
University, the largest cinema in the
country. Although this film probably
has a more limited appeal than the
previous Crawley movie on the raun­
chy blues singer, it will be interest­
ing to observe how this Japanese-
made, Canadian-produced film fares
in North America, for it’s an odd little
picture which builds slowly to a cli­
max that does not serve to justify the
whole enterprise and which leaves
oneskepical.

Yuichiro Miura is an ace Japanese
skier who has set world speed records
and the film is a record of his 1970
trek through the imposing Himalayas
to an icy wall 26,000 feet high, just
below the summit of Mt. Everest.
Needless to say, that slope is the
highest ski run in the world and Miura
has the distinction of taking on a patch
of ice that had never been skied be­
fore and will certainly remain un­
touched for a very long time to come.

Miura, the Japanese crew and four­
hundred natives, set off from the
Nepalese capital for Everest, winding
through the rocky mountain passes.
The narration in the film, written by
Judith Crawley and based upon the
lengthy diary Miura kept on his ad­
venture, chronicles his feelings and
thoughts and it is all beautifully but
improbably spoken by Douglas Rain.
The skier is described as a poet and
philosopher as well as an athlete and the
film is over-burdened with his
muscings and self-revelations.

The expedition snakes toward Ev­
erest. The going is slow and treach­
erous, there’s a huge, menacing ice
fall that must be traversed and it
takes the team 40 days to move three
miles. Miura reflects on the Sherpas,
whose labours make the venture pos­
sible. “I wonder what will be the
future of these tribesmen who have
lived here for centuries,” he says,
“almost independent of the rest of the
world. I hope their land will remain
unspoiled by the ways of life we call
progress.” The Japanese show the
Sherpas videotapes of Bonanza.

A sudden cave-in on the ice fall
claims the lives of six Sherpas. The
bodies are hauled down to camp and
the party stands around them. Some
want to turn back but the Japanese
insist on continuing. “Six lives lost,”
Miura says, “in order to achieve a
great thing.”
He skis the lower slopes, getting in tune, and the film has some exhilarating shots of him leaping over the steep inclines. Furiously he works out, the air is very thin and dulls the mind and body and Miura fights to keep his strength. The run is eight-thousand feet down, often at 45 degrees and at the bottom is a vast, unexplored crevasse called the bergschrund, and if Miura can't stop before reaching it he'll perish. On the brink of taking off he confesses to feeling like Icarus, flying into the sun, and now understands "the pride of the samurai, challenging something huge." Looming overhead is the wind-whipped summit of Everest. Miura begins his historic run, with a parachute flaring out behind him, and within seconds he's skiing at 100 miles per hour, like a dive-bombing kamikaze pilot. He skis for six-thousand feet then collapses and slides, the skis spinning in the air, the crevasse getting closer. A snow bank breaks his fall and Miura is rescued 200 feet above the bergschrund. The whole operation took less than two minutes.

While there is a degree of excitement in the film, it all builds to a finale that amounts to a resounding zero. The mission took months of preparation, $700,000, six lives, all to allow one man the thrill of skiing down an inaccessible slope for a couple of minutes. It remains to be seen whether this self-indulgent adventure film will find an audience as the skiing season nears.

David McCaughna

Jan Kadar's Lies My Father Told Me


St-Urbain St., Montreal, take two. This time, the story is about a young boy and his grandfather, a rag collector. It's the father who wants to make it rich, to get out of the ghetto, the horse, is what enables David to get from Sunday to Sunday. David's father, a "Duddy Kravitz" who can't make it, is increasingly jealous of his father-in-law's influence over the boy. Being a harsh and unloving man, he tries to win David by disrupting the boy's relationship with his grandfather. He talks to the boy but the boy can't understand; his father tells lies. David's mother is protective but ineffectual, and no one can console David once Grandfather is gone.

It's a bitter-sweet story and there are many comic touches, most of them provided by the secondary characters whose apartments surround the courtyard housing the stable. Especially well played are Edna (Carole Lazare), the neighborhood prostitute, Mr. Baumgarten (Ted Allan himself), and little Cleo (Cleo Paskal) who is all of four years old and who runs away with her two scenes.

The principal actors are competent and Marilyn Lightstone is refreshing and gay in her role as Mother. Missing is the psychological depth, the sort of gut feeling which hits home and tells an audience that what they are seeing is all true and not just play-acting. Academy Award winning Jan Kadar is too important a director to have been responsible for the film.

There is a curious disproportion. Lies does not seem as powerful as Jan Kadar's other films. It is still too long, too slow. The actors are too neat and clean, the colours too bright. And Grandfather is too big. Yossi Yadin who plays the role is tall and strong, a real hero of a man. I couldn't help thinking of that small, frail East European Jew who probably was Ted Allan's grandfather. A smaller man might have communicated the spirituality which was intended; Yadin's physical size seems a barrier to emotional depth. Like the film it-