

ever discovered what it is that makes Canadians laugh.

Natalie Edwards

The Man Who Skied Down Everest

Screenplay: 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 Japanese Everest Skiing Expedition, 1970. **Producer:** F.R. Crawley. **Produced in 1975 by** Crawley Films Limited in collaboration with Ishihara International Productions (Tokyo). **Colour:** 35mm. **Running time:** 88 minutes. **Distribution in Canada:** Crawley Films.

Crawley Films is following the success of its documentary feature **Janis** with **The Man Who Skied Down Everest**. 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 raunchy blues singer, it will be interesting 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 climax that does not serve to justify the whole enterprise and which leaves one skeptical.

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 before and will certainly remain untouched 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 adventure, 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 musings and self-revelations.

The expedition snakes toward Everest. The going is slow and treacherous, 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 possible. "I wonder what will be the future of these tribesmen who have

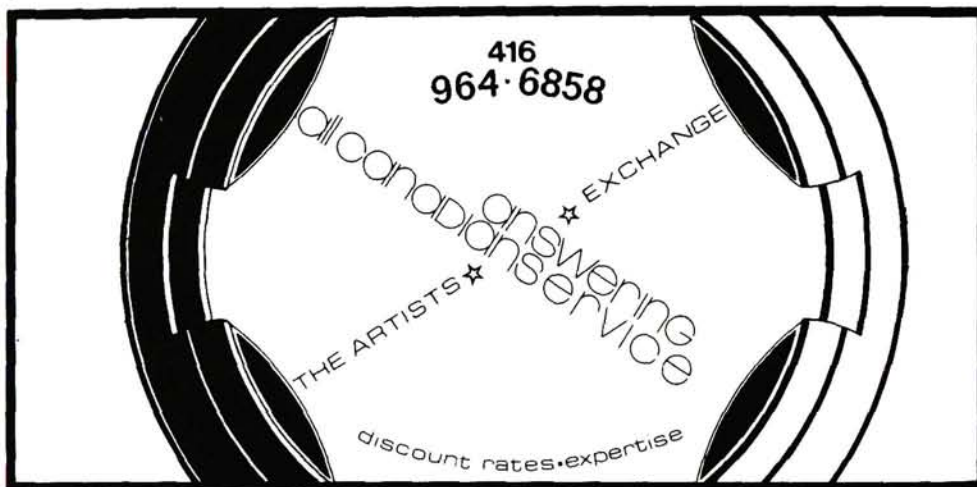
lived here for centuries," he says, "almost independent of the rest of the world. I hope their land will remain unspoiled by the ways of life we call progress." The Japanese show the Sherpas videotapes of Bonanza.

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."

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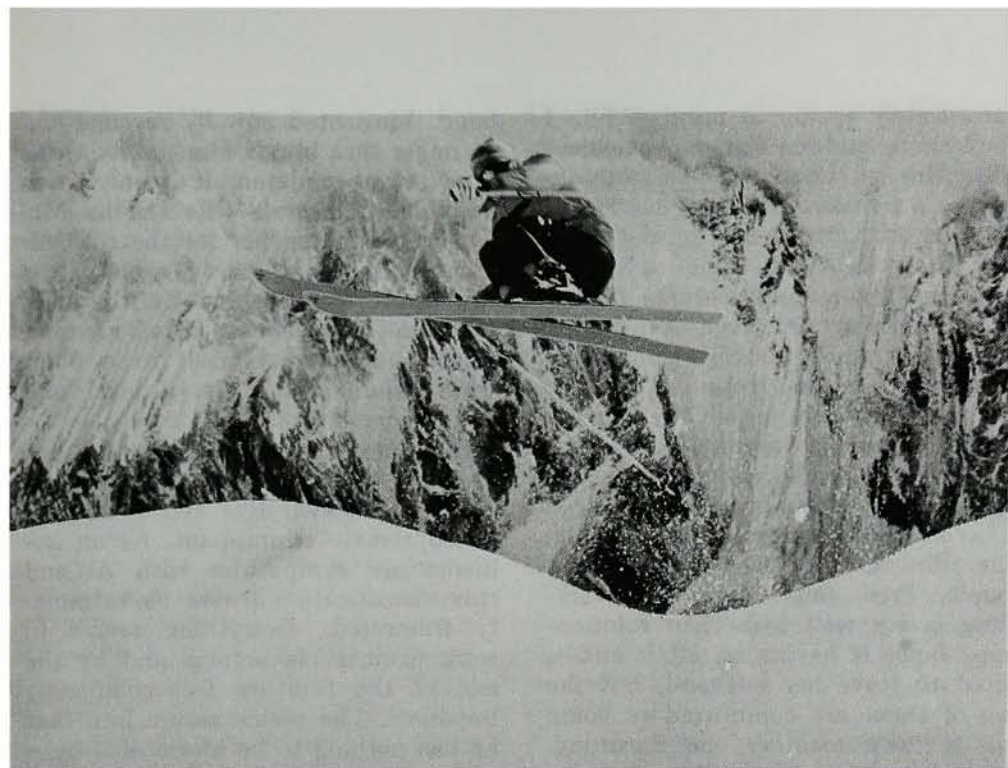
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The Man Who Skied Down Everest

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 kamakaze 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

A film by: Jan Kadar. **Screenplay:** Ted Allan. **Cinematography:** Paul van der Linden. **Music:** Sol Kaplan. **Sound:** Henri Blondeau. **Editing:** Edward Beyer and Richard Marks. **Performers:** Yossi Yadin, Len Birman, Marilyn Lightstone, Jeffrey Lynas. **Producers:** Anthony Bedrich and Harry Gulkin. **Produced in 1972-1975 by** Pentimento and Pentacle VIII Productions. **Colour:** 35 mm. **Running time:** 104 minutes. **Distribution in Canada:** Astral Films.

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, and it's once again the streets and lanes of the old Jewish neighborhood which make the film work. It's the right time for nostalgia.

It's difficult to write about the film without being aware of the years, the money, and the patience, which have gone into making it. The producers have ordered retakes years after the original shoot and have been on the verge of releasing it only to withdraw it and start reworking again. The beginning and the end, the role of the father, the entire musical score have all been rewritten in an effort to make

Lies My Father Told Me the best possible film. That the final version will not be acclaimed as Canada's best motion picture is no reflection on the energies and devotion of the people involved in its production.

Ted Allan's screenplay is simple. Little David accompanies his grandfather on his rounds every Sunday, and the two of them with horse and wagon collect rags, clothes and bottles, ending up with lunch on Mount Royal. Grandfather talks about himself and life, and David learns to love and to trust. Going out with Grandfather is the pivot of David's week, and caring for Ferdela, 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 director 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-