

## Mini-Reviews

PAT THOMPSON



Mr. Siegel catches Arnie and gives him an earful.

### THE CROW AND THE CANARY

Family snapshots flash by showing the animator as a boy and the voice-over of his father talks about childhood, then: "Listen, I have a good story for you." So there's the animated Arnie, about seven or eight years of age, playing street hockey with his friends, making a lot of noise, and the irritated Mr. Siegel across the street who chases them away. To get back, the kids took turns ringing his doorbell and running away – it was a big joke. Arnie's turn was a disaster, his shoelaces came untied, he fell, and Mr. Siegel caught him. He complained bitterly to Arnie's father, and ended up saying he didn't know how to bring up children. Arnie's dad was upset and told Mr. Siegel the story of the crow and the canary. In animated nature, the pair sit on a tree branch – the crow making a terrible caw-cawing sound and the canary singing sweetly – the crow convinced he sang the best, the canary convinced that his breed were the sweetest songbirds. They agreed to let the first animal that came along be the judge. A pink porker snuffled up to the tree and, upon being asked for

an opinion, piggishly decreed that the crow sang the best. The canary wept and wept; the crow asked him why, and the canary replied, "I'm not crying because I lost, I'm crying because look who my judge is!" At the punchline, Mr. Siegel went white, turned on his heel and didn't bother the Lipsey family again. But Arnie got a scolding from his dad for not respecting an older person. "That's the end of the story. How do you like it?"

Not bad at all, the two Mr. Lipseys! Simple, bright animation peoples the story with recognizable kids and grownups, and is allied to a clear-cut story with an acceptably moral ending. It's neatly put together in a short span, and accompanied by some jolly romping music to set the toes tapping – and the "real person" story-telling works well. And, wonder of wonders, it's shot in 35mm, all ready for showing in commercial cinemas... one sincerely hopes.

*p. 11. 1mm. Arnie Lipsey. exec. p. Don Haig. story/narr. Sydney Lipsey. anim. Pierre Landry. orig. mus. Joan Besen/Ben Mink. sd. ed. Tim Griffin 7 mins. 35mm/tape. Assistance from Secretary of State, Multiculturalism Dept./Ontario Arts Council/The Canada Council.*

### PROMISES TO KEEP

Subtitled "Canadians in Palestine", this documentary succinctly recalls the adventures of the Volunteers from Canada who fought for Israel, who believed that the Jewish people should be allowed to have a homeland.

The British mandate over Palestine ended on November 29, 1947. There were restrictions on immigration to Israel, and thousands of Holocaust survivors waited in camps to leave Europe. The situation in Palestine became increasingly difficult for the Jews and they needed a modern fighting army – even though no one thought that Israel would survive.

Interviews with some of the Volunteers from Canada uncover fascinating information about these hectic days. They sit, plump and happy in comfortable homes, recalling (as if it was yesterday) their youthful ideals. The first group of about 30 had forged papers to get them into camps and from there, to legitimately enter Israel under the British quota system. Many were not Jews, but supported them because they had seen the horrors of the concentration camps

towards the end of the Second World War. Fighter ace George "Buzz" Beurling wanted to volunteer and said he would go to Malta and get aeroplanes from some of his buddies there, but the Jewish Agency would not agree. Beurling later died in a mysterious explosion aboard a 'plane he was ferrying.

The Volunteers gradually assembled in Israel, and the training (somewhat rudimentary at first) and organizing of a fighting force proceeded. Weapons were in short supply and mostly from Czechoslovakia, which offered help, and the U.S. also shipped through that country. The arrival of the first armoured car; the bombing of Cairo with an armoured car guiding the bombs out of the aircraft; and the siege of Jerusalem which proved a turning point, are among the incidents recalled the Volunteers who feel a sense of achievement in helping to turn the tide. Eventually, the Canada battalion was disbanded and distributed among other units.

The reminiscences of the Canadians are heightened by some excellent research in the form of newsreels of the period, footage of the battles in Israel and the immigrant ships, all augmented by newspaper headlines. This traditional documentary tries hard not to be one-sided and to give the facts straight, but there's no doubt that the emotional impact of the campaign remains solidly in the minds and hearts of the men interviewed, and comes across very clearly on screen.

*d. David Harel. anim. Francis Granger. writers: Barry Gray/Dan Campbell. sd. Ian Challis. orig. mus. Post Script Productions. narr. Linden McIntyre. 48 mins. 16mm/tape. Stormway Productions Inc., 615 Yonge St., Ste. 200, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 2T4 (416) 923-1104.*

### GLASS FROM THE ATTIC

Josef Markovic started life in Zagreb, Yugoslavia and, after living all over Europe, ended up in Canada in 1951. Business travel in Europe enabled him to visit glassworks and sculptors, and he now owns the largest collection of Bohemian glass sculptures in the world. For many years Markovic kept his treasures in one of the oldest buildings in Toronto, up many stairs on Wellington Street but, when it was torn down, no-one offered to house the collection which now languishes in a warehouse on the outskirts of the city.

A rare glimpse of an unsung collector and many of his splendid pieces of glass, all acquired with much care over a long period. As Markovic passes his hands over the surface of the sculptures, his pride in and love of the glass is palpable. The film gives a privileged view of an unknown collection, which is now in storage. It may never be seen by the public, as it requires 35,000 to 40,000 sq. ft. of display space. Aired on CBC/TV network during October/88, and also sold to TVOntario.

*d. Vladimir Kabelik. anim. Allan Pfl. sound/su. Annetta Mach/Vladimir Kabelik. sd. ed. Tom Gregor. narr. Nancy Beatty/Jon Granick. 26 mins. 16mm/tape. Availability: Cutaway Productions, 595 Bay St., Ste. 1050, Toronto M5G 2C2 (416) 598-5088.*