

# A Soldier's Story a gripping movie

by TERRY DUPUIS

Producer-director Norman Jewison has fashioned one of this season's most powerful dramatic films in his new movie, *A Soldier's Story*. Jewison is a Toronto-born film maker who has been working in Hollywood for more than 20 years. He started out as a maker of light comedies at Uniwersal Pictures, movies which starred such performers as Rock Hudson, Doris Day and James Garner. He moved into the big time with *The Cincinnati Kid*, and he has remained a major film maker ever since. Norman Jewison's credits contain the occasional bomb, but overall his track record is pretty impressive. He has directed *The Russians Are Coming*, *In The Heat of the Night* and *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Jewison's most recent films, like *And Justice For All* and the Burt Reynolds-Goldie Hawn comedy *Best Friends*, have been disappointing. But the 58-year-old director returns to the head of the class for his most recent movie. *A Soldier's Story* would have to rank among Jewison's top accomplishments.

The tense drama deals with the murder of a staff sergeant named Vernon Waters at an all-black military unit stationed at Fort Neal, Louisiana in 1944. A young black military attorney named Davenport is sent to investigate the murder, which happens to be the latest in a series of unsolved killings believed to be racially motivated.

Davenport finds that his arrival is most unwelcomed by the white military establishment at the base. They feel that a man of his race should not be conducting the investigation. Nor does Davenport receive any

enthusiastic cooperation from the men in the murdered sergeant's own platoon.

Comparisons with the director's own 1967 film *In The Heat of The Night* come to mind. Both movies are gripping murder mysteries in which racial tensions form an important element of the story's background. In the earlier film Sidney Poitier was a city detective investigating a murder in a small Southern town where he ran into much opposition from the citizens, particularly the bigoted sheriff portrayed by Rod Steiger. *A Soldier's Story* has much of the same flavour to it.

Howard E. Rollins is outstanding as Captain Davenport, the investigating military attorney. Rollins is the actor who won an Academy Award nomination for his complex characterization of a black activist named Coalhouse Walker several years ago in the movie *Ragtime*. At that time some critics compared Rollins to a young Sidney Poitier.

Another strong performance is given in this move by Adolph Caesar in the role of Sergeant Waters. This character is a tough oily officer who is hated by most of the men who are under his command. Before becoming a movie, *A Soldier's Story* was a Broadway play, and Caesar played the role of Waters on the stage.

He won several awards for his riveting stage performance, which he recreates just as vividly for the movie version.

Charles Fuller wrote the Pulitzer Prize-winning play, and Jewison has wisely retained him to adapt his own screenplay. The result is a faithful rendering of the play into a strong and gripping movie.

# Queen's Park

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Family violence has been hidden from public scrutiny for too long. Currently, it is estimated one in 10 women who is married or living with a man is battered by her husband or partner. These figures are horrifying.

An Ontario Government public awareness campaign to "Break the Silence" on family violence was recently launched by Robert Welch, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. The aim of the campaign is to confront the crime by initially bringing it out in the open.

In the coming weeks, you will be hearing three radio commercials each expressing the personal experience of victims of wife battering. Over the next few months, advertisements will appear in major Canadian magazines and posters with the heading "Keep Her in Line" will be circulated across the province.

All components of the "Break the Silence" campaign will emphasize the fact that wife battering is a crime. Offenders are subject to the same

penalties as any other assault offender.

Recent statistics show that victims have been assaulted on average 35 times before they contact the police. Furthermore, it is estimated that only 10 percent of abused women seek help from any agency.

It is extremely difficult for abused women to carry on without some form of assistance. Most battered women are involved in a repetitive cycle of violence that may encompass physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

Protection from further violence, information to obtain her legal rights, financial support, housing, child care and help finding a job are often needed by the victim of family violence. The Ontario Government has initiated a number of programs to meet the complex needs of these individuals.

These involve my Ministry of the Solicitor General as well as 12 other provincial ministries. Research is being done to respond effectively to the special needs of battered native women, battered immigrant women and battered rural women. In addition, this year we

have provided \$8 million in new funding to assist in the expansion of shelter services and emergency assistance for battered women and their children.

These are only a few of the initiatives we have undertaken. We face a tremendous challenge - not just police officers, social workers or legislators, but each and every individual in this province.

Recently, Premier William Davis announced his decision to retire as leader of the province. This announcement came as a surprise and disappointment to many.

In my years in office, I have had the honour and pleasure of working closely with this great man. At this time, I would like to share a few of my thoughts with you.

Over the course of his 25 years of public service, Bill Davis has played a key role in the political decision-making of not only Ontario but of Canada as a whole. For his part in the constitutional talks of 1981, he can truly be seen as a nation-builder. His efforts ensured the co-operation between the provinces that led to our constitutional accord.

In many other in-



stances, Mr. Davis has stood for approaches and policies that have served the province and the country well. As Minister of Education, he worked to remodel our education system. As a result, we now have our first-class network of community colleges.

As Premier, he resisted pressure from the western provinces for higher oil prices. He helped to curb inflation through the establishment of rent controls in 1975 and again through public service restraint in 1982. Furthermore, all of these policies were offered in a spirit of respect and an attitude of healthy debate.

While Premier of Ontario, Bill Davis built a solid foundation for those of us who remain in public office and I feel that I have been privileged to have served with him. He truly represents the highest ideals of public service and conduct.

I am sure he will go on to face new challenges and new opportunities.

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