

Skokie stars in *News 10-30-80* CBS doco-drama

By HOPE SAIDEL

Skokie village officials were caught by surprise when Sun-Times columnist Gary Deeb announced Tuesday that filming of a CBS docu-drama, "Skokie," will begin Nov. 14, just two days before the dedication of the newly-renovated village hall.

The film will recount the confrontation between the village and the National Socialist Party, a neo-Nazi group that attempted to march through the village in 1977 and again in 1978.

The production company is Titus Productions, according to the Illinois Film Council, and shooting will begin in Skokie and Chicago next month. The producers of the film, Herbert Brodtkin and Robert Berger were responsible for the production of "Holocaust."

Deeb reported that Danny Kaye will play a concentration camp survivor who lives in Skokie, and is based on a combination of several people living in the village.

Skokie Mayor Albert Smith will be played by Ed Flanders, and Eli Wallach will play the part of Skokie Corporation Counsel Harvey Schwartz. Schwartz told the NEWS he was disappointed with the casting. "I really thought that Robert Redford or Burt Reynolds would be a better choice," Schwartz said.

Schwartz said that his and the village staff's primary concern is how the village will be portrayed in the movie, and if the production of the film will cause a public disturbance, especially since actors will appear dressed in Nazi garb.

"CBS has the right to make the movie," Schwartz said, again expressing his concern over the film's treatment of the village, and whether the village's cooperation in controlling crowds and traffic will be required.

Although Deeb reported that the "principal characters in the real-life melodrama" were provided with advance scripts, none of the village officials including Village Manager Robert Eppley, said they had seen one, although Mayor Smith was out-of-town and unavailable for comment.

According to the Deeb, the focus of the film will be on the constitutional issues that arose from the Nazi threat to march in the village. David Goldberger, the American Civil Liberties Union lawyer who defended the Nazis' right of free speech, will be played by John Rubinstein, a Tony-award winning actor.

Although the Nazis never appeared in the village, the planned date of the march brought members of the Jewish Defense League from New York, and demonstrations against the Nazis were held at the village hall. Outdoor scenes will include the hall, even though it has been renovated since the incident.

Apparently Berger felt that the issue was of interest nationally. Deeb reported Berger said that when he was promoting "Holocaust" in 1978, cocktail party conversation shifted to Skokie. "I heard intelligent people battling over whether the Nazis had a right to march," Berger told Deeb. "That told me it would make a wonderful drama."