

# That's show biz

## Job as film extra is fun for some, work for others

By BARBARA YOUNG

*Staff Writer*

FOR LARRY BRISKIN it was a dream come true. Ray and Nancy Scott fancied themselves as the "Hepburn and Tracey acting team of Skokie." But for Cyndy Groffman, it was just another job.

These Skokians landed bit parts in the recently-completed CBS made-for-TV movie docudrama, "Skokie," that retells the village's efforts to stop a neo-Nazi march in 1977-78. The film, scheduled to air next spring, will describe the experiences of a fictional family and Holocaust survivors living in Skokie during the incident,

Her experience was enough to convince her that the way to stardom is no easy street, but Nancy Scott said she's glad she got that "once-in-a-lifetime chance to participate in the make-believe world of show business."

"My husband and I working as couple was the biggest thrill," she said. "We're nuts for the arts and he's film crazy. So it was just a lot of fun doing something so meaningful together."

SCOTT, WHO IS confined to a wheelchair, said she decided to audition and to recommend her husband at the same time, after reading about the need for extras in a newspaper.

"What did I have to lose?" she asked. "Maybe they would pick us and maybe they wouldn't, but I wouldn't know if I didn't try."

So, she took time off from her market research business and waited in line with hundreds of other stardom hopefuls at Centreat. Although she is not certain why she was picked, she thinks it might not have hurt when she told the casting director, "a woman in a wheelchair might be good for the movie." Scott, who has a warm sense of humor, said she also thinks her "accurate" talent description required on the audition application helped. She explains:

"I looked at that empty space where you were supposed to describe your talent, and I had to laugh. But I felt like a nothing just leaving it blank. So I wrote that I take good directions. After all I couldn't say I was a dancer."

EVEN THOUGH SHE was encouraged about her chances for a shot at the temporary acting job, she was still surprised when she learned that she had actually been chosen. But she was even more surprised at how hard she had to work for the \$30 she was paid. It

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## Push comes to shove

LARRY BRISKIN AND a few other extras "Skokie" decided that a major scene needed a little more authenticity.

So Briskin and the other extras playing Jewish Defense League members added a little militancy to their roles.

The only trouble is they neglected to tell the movie's director and other cast members what they were planning. But as they say, "all's well that ends well." Briskin and his cohorts were lucky because what could have ended in a free-for-all brawl actually added some drama to the scene. And what's more, the director liked it.

Briskin explains what happened:

"When the police went after the head of the JDL as they were supposed to, we went after the police but we were not supposed to. The police (who were actual Skokie policemen) were surprised when we started pushing and shoving them. So they pushed and shoved us back. The ones carrying clubs held them up in warning.

"I'm sure they had no intention of hitting us but only wanted to hold us off, just to be on the safe side."

BRISKIN SAID THE reason those playing JDL members decided to take matters into their own hands is because they were told to "act the way they felt."

That and the fact that some of those playing JDL members were actually members who took part in the "siege" of 1977-78 was reason enough for the "rebellion."

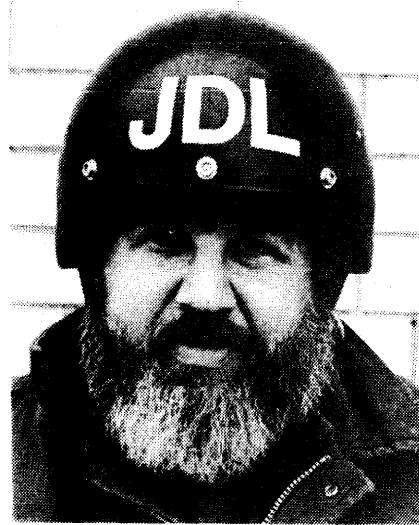
Briskin said he's too conservative to be a JDL member but it was easy for him to act like one.

"I got all wrapped up in the dramatization," he said. "It was quite moving. When the police tried to subdue one of our members, it just seemed natural to come to her defense."

# Extras in 'Skokie' movie view it as work and play



CYNDY GROFFMAN



LEONARD BRISKIN

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took eight hours to film one scene she was in and 13 to film the other. (They did stop to eat.)

In one scene she had to raise her arm and clench her fist over and over. "It was a real mental strain," she said. "You had to look at the director all the time so you wouldn't miss your cue. The next day I felt like my arm would fall off.

"But the most tiring part of all was the waiting and waiting between takes."

All that waiting for the same scene to be shot over and over didn't surprise Cyndy Groffman, however. She is a professional extra, who spent six years in California near Hollywood trying to break into the acting business. She wants to be a soap opera actress, so when she's not working odd jobs she's in front of a TV watching the likes of "All My Children," and "The Guiding Light."

GROFFMAN CAME BACK home to Skokie three months ago because the jobs just weren't coming fast enough in California. "I couldn't support myself acting out there," she said. "I decided my chances for a break in finding a job in the soaps would be better if I took some acting classes at the Goodman Theater in Chicago."

She didn't make that decision lightly. She spent a great deal of time researching soap opera stars and found that the majority of them got their starts at Goodman.

Although she is used to working with other professional acting extras, Groffman said she enjoyed working with the "Skokie" cast.

"They had such feeling," she said of the amateur extras. "You just couldn't help feeling something too, because their sincerity was so touching."

One thing that stands out in her mind, she said, is when one woman refused to carry a poster that had the name of a German prison camp misspelled. She said the woman brought the matter to the attention of "Skokie" star Danny Kaye and he had it corrected.

NOT ONLY WAS GROFFMAN unlike the other extras because she is a professional, there is something else different about her - Robert "Buzz" Berger, the movie's producer, is her cousin.

However, she said she didn't get the part through him. She auditioned just like everybody else.

"I didn't want to use him," she said. "This is my acting career and I want to make it on my own. Besides, that's the only way you can last in the business."

She knows that serious actresses must be willing to take any role, no matter how small, just to keep working. Her only disappointment in her experience in "Skokie," is over the pay. "The job could have paid more," she said. "In California I got \$50."

IN REAL LIFE Larry Briskin is a vice president in his family's manufacturing business. But as a Jewish Defense League member in "Skokie," he was somebody else, albeit briefly. "It was the fulfillment of a fantasy," he said. "I can hardly wait to see the movie on TV."

Briskin thinks he was picked for the movie because he looks like the character Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof."

AS IN ANY MOVIE, many scenes end up on the cutting room floor, after the editing is done. But the Skokie residents feel pretty sure the scenes they appeared in will survive the fatal slice.

"The scene in front of village hall where we wait for the Nazis to come and the synagogue scene are the two major action scenes in the movie," explained Scott.

While the scenes may survive, they all realize that their faces may get lost in the crowds and the scene may flash by their TV screens so fast they won't recognize themselves.

That won't happen to Scott, though, who says she and her husband have already planned to buy a Beta Max video recorder so they can tape the show when it comes on.



## ***Extra work, extra fun***

EXTRAS FOR THE FILM, "SKOKIE," wait between shooting of scenes at movie "demonstration" against neo-Nazis at Village Hall. One extra, playing the role of a reporter, interviews film policemen, who are real Skokie policemen.