

THE CHICAGO JEWISH NEWS

Ask Hedy! *On a regular basis, Hedy Ciocci, B.S.N., Administrator of the Selfhelp Home will answer some of the many questions we have around aging. Hedy specializes in dementia care, has extensive experience working with families and elderly patients, and is a registered nurse. She is a frequent lecturer on issues of aging.*

George Schatz is a leading expert on films and on the career of Ronald Colman. He has been a guest speaker on radio, and contributed to several books, articles and blogs on film. Mr. Schatz was a second Lieutenant and flew as a B-17 bombardier in World War II. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1945 and will be celebrating his 90th birthday later this year.



Hedy Ciocci

Q: Was there a film that made a real difference in your life and why?

A: Lost Horizon. I think, first of all, the book was compelling. I was 16 at the time I read it, and it had such an impact on me that I tried to read it slowly, so it would last longer. In 1937, the Frank Capra/Ronald Colman film came out. My mother and aunt took me to see the premier.

Q: Why do you think this was such a compelling message to you at 17?

A: The story was placed in Tibet, which at the time was very remote and protected from the threat of war. The people's philosophical viewpoint was very simple. The High Lama, the head of the Shangri-La area, explained why we should treat each other as individuals and to be kind. And I'm happy to say that in 2009, we seem to be more racially and religiously accommodating to each other.

Q: Can you find films that you can relate to today?

A: What happens to some people of my age is that we come upon films that we never saw, on the Internet and cable, that resonate with us.

Q: Do you think it's different to see film in a movie theater and why?

A: Absolutely. First of all, the images are bigger than life; I think that's why actors became movie stars. Everyone is edited to perfection; they are so big, larger than life. You feel, "Oh my God, if I could be like Douglas Fairbanks or Cary Grant!"

Q: Does seeing a film with other people make a difference?

A: There's a resonance between people that's very helpful, not only to your enjoyment but your interpretation. You get other points of view. Every individual point of view has value.

Q: Would you encourage senior citizens, people in their older years, in their 9th decade, to watch movies at home?

A: There's one aspect of the modern day that is so fantastic, I can hardly grasp it. If I want to hear or see Sinatra sing a song again, I can do this because I've got him on tape, or DVD. They're at my beck and call. I'm not beholden to them, they're beholden to me. Look at the years of film that are available to us now! We can get everything from Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton to the latest film.

Q: How would you, if you were a senior, access and find all these films?

A: My local library, to me, is Shangri-La. They must have four or five hundred films on DVD, including DVDs of symphonies and operas. If they don't have the film, they can get it on the intra-state loan from any library in the state. If you saw a movie in my day, at the theater, and you loved it, it usually lasted maybe two weeks and then it disappeared forever, as far as you were concerned. So, we have such a broad spectrum of availability now. If you liked Ingrid Bergman and want to see her again, she is there for you. She can't go away.

Q: What are some really great movies, that you think people your age would enjoy getting their hands on?

A: Because I was in the 8th Air Force, I think Best Years of Our Lives is a monumental film. I just re-watched My Fair Lady and Gigi; these are marvelous, timeless stories. I think An American in Paris is one of the best films ever made. And then you have Bridge on the River Kwai and Lawrence of Arabia. These are films for all times.

Q: As a senior, what do you think people get out of watching films like this?

A: There's such a range of experiences that film opens for us that we would never personally realize. I think every human attribute of time and place is available that you wouldn't be able to experience yourself...and perhaps may not even want to. Even in the future, things like Star Wars or 2001, a masterpiece, or Doctor Strangelove. The range of films available to us today encompasses almost a century of sights and sounds, situations and places that we'd never be able to experience individually.

Q: It sounds like you're enjoying the old things as much as you ever did.

A: Oh no, it's better, because now I have in my house...Ingrid Bergman, Cary Grant, and every movie that Ronald Colman made at my beck and call. Look at the choices I have! They weren't available when I was younger. It transforms whatever physical limitations you have of age by opening you to a larger world.

Q: If you can't get around the world, you can see the world.

A: That's right. It's in your hands. It's affordable, and if you go to the library to pick out movies, it costs you absolutely nothing.