

# Valor on the field: Boredom on the screen

**Uncommon Valour**  
Capital Square, West Mall 5

review by Gilbert Bouchard

*Uncommon Valour* centers around one man, Colonel Jason Rhodes (Gene Hackman) and his ten year battle to rescue his son, believed to have been held in a

POW camp somewhere in Laos since the early 1970's.

Rhodes attains financial backing from Texas oil tycoon Hugh MacGregor (Robert Stack) and then seeks out five of his son's buddies whom he trains, and whips back into shape. And then, despite government interference, they fight their way in Laos to

rescue Rhodes and MacGregor's sons.

But where *Uncommon Valour* differs from your typical war movie is that it has interesting psychological ramifications. *Valour* reflects the frustration and resentment of the American military and many American people have involving the Vietnam conflict.

Gene Hackman put it bluntly in the movie, something to the effect that war is a profit oriented activity, Vietnam cost too much, and that it put America in the red. Vietnam, its vets and their memories are an embarrassment to the US.

And what makes this loss doubly crippling was that Vietnam might be America's last great war, or at least the last one where yoyos like me will be left hanging around to comment on.

So, like a punch boxer who's fought his last fight and knows it, all that's left to America's name is a headfull of memories and an earfull of "How it could have been if only..."

That's what *Uncommon Valour* is all about, the redeeming dream, the half-drunken daydreams of the "only if."

*Uncommon Valour* is a dream of superiority, as a handful of "real Americans" and a few friendlies (tossed in as if to redeem their people, to prove that they aren't all atheistic commies) march off to snatch victory from the maw of a Vietnamese nightmare.

After all, the movie argues, why can't six, clean-living, true-blue-american-sons wipe out a couple hundred Godcursed commies.

The logic behind *Uncommon Valour* and in fact most of the military establish-

ment is that if we could have cleared out all the pot-smoking long-haired-pinko-faggots out of the army in the first place we would have beaten the commies. *Valour* is just that, a handful of "pure soldiers" out to correct the mistakes of the impure regular army.

Anti-government feeling also runs rank in *Valour* as the nasty government does its dandiest to stop these brave GI's from going to Laos to "correct" the government's mistakes. After all, everybody knows that a weak wishy-washy liberal government sold out America to the commies and lost the war, a "real government", a "strong government" would have fought harder and won the war.

So these brave "real sodiers" totally disregard warnings from assorted senators, governmental and army officials, CIA agents, and blunder into Laos. After all, these "real Americans" know in the pure little hearts what's best for America.

*Uncommon Valour* reflects the shift to the hawkish right as more and more Americans demand strength over negotiation, action over diplomacy. People want to see bodies fly.

But above all, *Uncommon Valour* is the daydream of old warjocks replaced by ICBM's editing old losses into the best of all possible wars.

Still, this movie is not bad. The acting is as good as you can expect, production values are high, and the scriptwriters at least seemed to have honestly believed what they were writing (the flick's sincere.)

If you know what you're getting into and can take a couple of hours of rightwing preaching you might enjoy *Uncommon Valour*, warts and all.

## Holocaust film series opens

Throughout 1983, headlines and news accounts in Alberta chronicled the accusations that the Holocaust was a myth, a creative hoax. As an educational response to those stories, the University of Alberta Chaplains' Association is coordinating the sponsorship of "OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND: A HOLOCAUST FILM SERIES." By means of films and discussions, the Holocaust Film Series will seek to explore the terrifying domain of the Holocaust.

A selection of Canadian and foreign films will present documented history, court evidence and the witness of survivors. University of Alberta faculty members and community representatives will share in facilitating the discussion following the films.

In *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust*, Annette Insdorf writes: "Film-makers and film critics confronting the Holocaust face a basic task — finding an appropriate language for that which is mute or defies visualization." The Holocaust Film Series will seek to provide a forum for such questions, to remember our past and to link it with a present threatened by a "nuclear omnicide."

The topics and films that will be featured include:

1. *Nazism, Totalitarianism and Genocide* on January 24, featuring the film, "Genocide."
2. *Life and Death in the Concentration Camps* on January 31, featuring the films, "Night and Fog" and "From the Ashes."

3. *Jewish Resistance to Nazi Terror* on February 7, with the film, "The Warsaw Ghetto."

4. *Resistance Under Nazi Occupation* on February 14, with the film, "Soldier of Orange."

5. *Christian Silence, Compliance and Resistance* on February 28, featuring the film, "The Avenue of the Just."

6. *War Crimes, Universal Law and the Principles of Nuremberg* on March 6, featuring the film, "Guilty Men."

The films will be shown each of those Tuesday nights at 8:00 p.m. (N.B. please note the absence of a film the week of February 21) in the Tory Lecture Theatre TL-B1, adjacent to the Tory Building on Saskatchewan Drive and 112 Street on the University of Alberta campus. There is free admission to the films.

OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND: A HOLOCAUST FILM SERIES is being co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, the University of Alberta Religious Studies Department, the Roman Catholic Ecumenical Commission of the Diocese of Edmonton, the Sisters of Zion, the University of Alberta Students' Union as well as the University of Alberta Chaplains' Association. A slightly expanded version of the same film series is being coordinated by the University of Calgary Chaplain's Association in Calgary.

For additional information please contact Rev. Stephen Larson in the University Chaplains' Office (SUB - 158C, telephone 432-4513).

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