

MARTIN SCORSESE

FUROR AS SHOCKING 'CHRIST' FILM OPENS

By M.D. DIETRICH and ESTHER PESSIN



New York Post: Dan Brinzac

NOT 'TEMPTED': Protester was one of 1000 who taunted moviegoers lining up for "Temptation of Christ."

Moviegoers flocking to the opening of "The Last Temptation of Christ" yesterday had to run a gauntlet of 1000 taunting protesters.

By midday, police had sealed off the block around the Ziegfeld Theater at W. 54th St. and Sixth Av.

"Just as Judas sold Christ out the first time, Hollywood is selling Him out the second time," shouted Carol Sergio, 49, of Queens.

"You are paying your pieces of silver to watch Jesus get crucified all over again," yelled John Dirienzo, a 31-year-old pastor.

Placard-waving Catholics — as well as protesters from other religions — simply cried: "Blasphemy!"

Nearly a dozen counter-demonstrators screamed back: "End religious bigotry."

One of them was arrested on misdemeanor charges.

Security was tight as the movie showing Jesus' dream of marrying Mary Magdalene opened in New York.

More than 100 cops surrounded the Ziegfeld, keeping protesters and moviegoers apart. Inside the theater, security guards searched handbags and packages.

Uniformed guards were posted each side of the

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CAROL SERGIO

screen. Plainclothes officers watched the four exits.

There were the inevitable threatening calls and film director Martin Scorsese was surrounded by security guards at his midtown office.

None of that stopped thousands of New Yorkers from waiting hours in the blistering heat to see the film, which opened in nine cities yesterday.

Moviegoers began lining up long before the theater opened at 1 p.m.

By evening the line had wrapped around the theater.

The theater sold out all of its 1100 seats for each of four performances.

The number of demonstrators dwindled by late evening and they limited themselves to mild debate with the moviegoers across police lines.

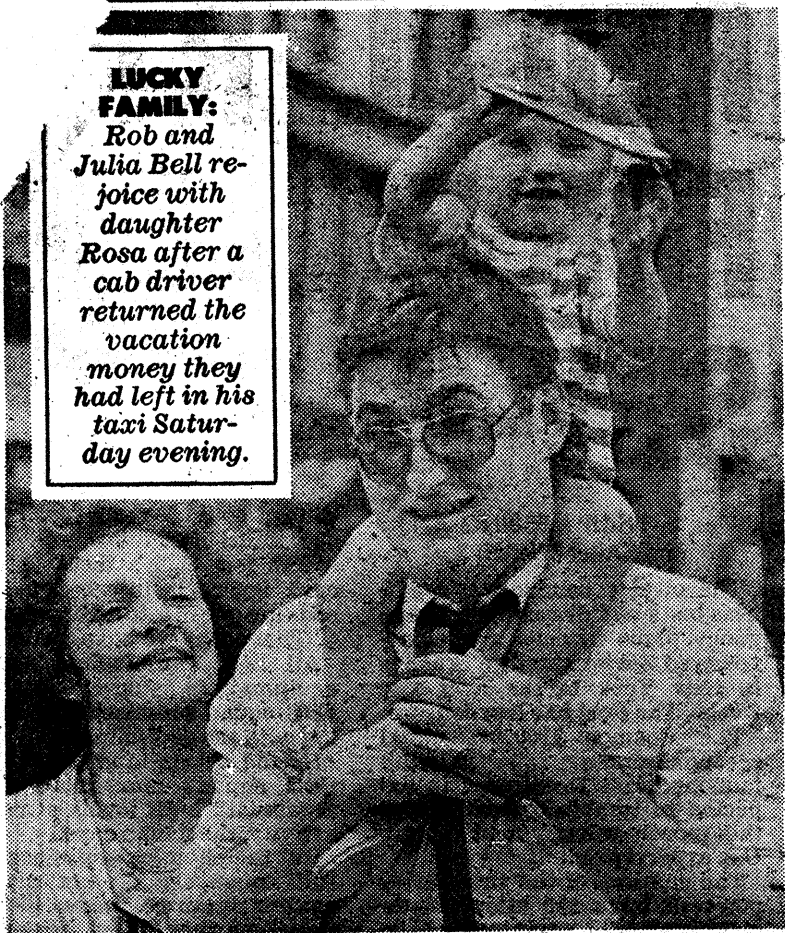
Many demonstrators admitted they had not read the book or seen the film.

Philip Moran, a member of the American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property, a Pleasantville, N.Y., group, said the film defamed Jesus.

Actress Nora Mackey, 27, admitted she came "basically because of the controversy."

John Cardinal O'Connor has said he won't lead a boycott of the movie, but has suggested "the laity" ought to.

LUCKY FAMILY:
 Rob and Julia Bell rejoice with daughter Rosa after a cab driver returned the vacation money they had left in his taxi Saturday evening.



New York Post: Robert Koffus

HONEST CABBIE GOES THAT EXTRA MILE

By M.D. DIETRICH

New York cab drivers get a bad rap — that's what a London couple said yesterday after an honest cabbie spent the night combing the streets to return their lost valuables.

"As far as I'm concerned, New York cab drivers can do no wrong," said Rob Bell, 31, whose first trip to the U.S. was nearly ruined when he left his family's money in a cab after a ride from LaGuardia Airport.

Bell, his wife Julia, 30, and their 20-month-old daughter, Rosa, arrived at LaGuardia on a flight from Canada at 5:30 p.m. Saturday.

The family got into a taxi and headed to the corner of Bleecker and Thompson streets

in Greenwich Village, where they were to stay with friends.

There, Bell took his family's luggage from the cab and paid the driver — but left behind \$800 in traveler's checks, 200 English pounds, and the family's plane tickets and passports in a pouch on the back seat.

The cabbie, Elya Levin, saw the pouch a short time later and began a 12-hour odyssey to return it.

Unable to remember exactly where he had left the family, Levin began searching for them in shops, restaurants and apartment buildings.

"He was going into shops all night with our passports, asking people if they had seen us," Bell said.

During his trek up and down Bleecker Street, Levin turned down numerous fares and was even ticketed for illegal parking.

Levin's search ended at 7:30 a.m. when the family, still unaware of their loss, left their friends' apartment and found him quizzing passersby.

The Bells were teaching Rosa how to hail a cab when Levin ran to them, clutching their passports.

"We were just standing there dumbstruck," Bell said. "We were absolutely astonished that he had gone to all that trouble."

The grateful family gave Levin \$120 for his efforts and prepared for a week of sight-seeing.

"If I were a rich person," said Bell, a photographer, "I would have given him more."

"Now that we've got our money, we'll be able to do everything in New York."

SCOUT DROWNS SELF AFTER BEING SAVED

By M.D. DIETRICH
and JOHN HARNEY

A Cub Scout, upset that he was rescued from a Staten Island lake while his pal was pulled out unconscious, went back in the water and drowned, police said yesterday.

"I was supposed to be down there with him," a distraught Joel Nieves told a rescuer before disappearing Saturday afternoon. Police scuba divers yesterday found Joel's body at the bottom of Lake Ohrbach.

The tragedy began Saturday when Joel and Luis Ruiz, two 9-year-olds from Brooklyn's Williamsburg section, took a dip in the lake with several other boys taking part in the weekend camping trip. Joel got into difficulties but was pulled from the water almost immediately. He was on shore when his buddy, who was submerged for as long as 15 minutes, was dragged to the shore.

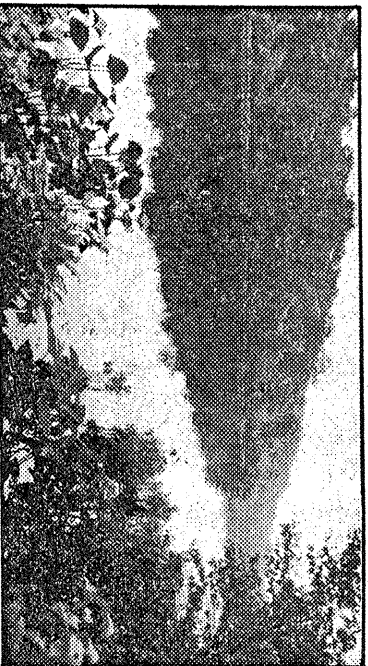
Luis, who is on a respirator, was in critical condition at Staten Island Hospital, where spokesman Arleen Ryback said the prognosis "does not look good." "I told [Joel] to be cool, that it wasn't his fault,"



LUIS RUIZ

On a respirator.

'Guilty' of surviving, he went back in



LETHAL TEMPTATION: Lake Ohrbach was a beautiful and deadly temptation to the boys.

said Raymond Goffin, 17, who rescued Luis.

"He told me to shut up and said, 'I was supposed to be down there with him.'"

About two hours after Luis was brought out, counselors realized Joel was missing.

At first, it was thought he had become frightened by his experience and ran off into the woods.

A search party of 125 cops and 75 volunteers combed the 130-acre Boy Scout Camp Pouch in the Dongen section Saturday night and early yesterday.

Police Deputy Inspector William Wallace said police divers found Joel's body about 9:40 a.m. yesterday, some 20 feet from shore in about eight feet of water.

Bob Williams, a scout spokesman, said the scouts and their scoutmasters

had been warned that swimming was not allowed in the lake.

But an unidentified scout leader reportedly took some kids — all from Joel's Cub Pack 74 in Williamsburg — wading at a secluded corner of the lake.

"From what we could gather, one or two of the kids disappeared," Williams said.

Goffin said he heard screams from shore and reached the area with several other scouts "in about three seconds."

Joel was on the bank. After several dives, Goffin found Luis lying face down, a hand and a foot stuck in the mud.

The scouts performed cardio-pulmonary resuscitation on Luis for several minutes until an ambulance arrived.



JOEL NIEVES

"Why him, not me?"



FACES OF TRAGEDY: Grief and anguish are etched on the faces of two young relatives as the grim search goes on through the night.

New York Post: Kevin Cohen