



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 85, Folder 11, "Nasty Habits" [film], 1977.

## THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

**date** April 5, 1977  
**to** Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum  
**from** Eugene Du Bow  
**subject** "NASTY HABITS"

Attached is a copy of a letter which I am sure Sr. Ann Gillen has already sent to you concerning the motion picture, NASTY HABITS.

Sr. Gillen's feelings about the picture are well pointed out in her letter. She is encouraging women from the National Coalition of American Nuns and other women's organizations to take a strong and militant stand against the picture.

After trying to explain to her some of the pitfalls of trying to suppress a motion picture, I put her in touch with Richard Levin and he in turn arranged for her to speak to a very prominent attorney in Chicago, Alex Polikoff, who handles a lot of "public" litigation here in Chicago.

I am sure that AJC would not be interested in attempting to join in the fight to suppress the picture. However, could we not lend Sr. Ann some assistance in trying to get the producers of the picture to alter the publicity which is really disgraceful?

At another level, I think that AJC should make some kind of response to the needs of religious women in the Catholic Church who are truly offended by this picture. If nothing else, we owe some sort of a debt to Sr. Ann.

Will you be good enough to think this matter through and perhaps speak to Bert Gold about it. I guess you should also consult with Sam Rabinove and Mort Yarmon. In any case, I look forward to hearing from you as to what if anything we can do.

Best regards.

cc: A. James Rudin  
Mort Yarmon  
Samuel Rabinove  
Bert Gold  
Harold Applebaum

Rm.221, 1307 S. Wabash  
Chicago, Ill. 60605  
312/922-1983

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The film Nasty Habits makes nuns and sisters in general the butt of ridicule in this Americanized version of Muriel Spark's satire, The Abbess of Crewe. Designed as a parody of the Watergate scandal, where the original characters were males, Nasty Habits targets religious women for its attack, which is abusive, not amusing, in its cumulative effect. As such, it calls for protest from all concerned groups and persons.

Both the title of the film and the ads which have flooded N.Y. newspapers and streets cater to the pornographic tastes in the manner of current theatre "attractions" which are offensive to the general theatre audience..

In particular, Rex Reed's review of the film, a syndicated feature carried by newspapers across the country (N.Y. Daily News, March 18) indicates the double effect which is already inflicting damage to the public image of religious women across the country. He writes:

The Catholic Church has gone up in smoke over Nasty Habits, bringing pressure against the New York Times to remove all ads showing nuns with concealed tape recorders under their habits. But in the light of the daily headlines, we all know nuns are doing all sorts of unsavory things in real life, so the protest seems a bit unjustified.

(underlining added for emphasis)

Rex Reed continues:

Condemning this movie doesn't solve a thing. Every effort is made to demonstrate that it is not the Catholic Church that is being ridiculed. The unorthodox convent in Nasty Habits is identified as a quasi-Benedictine order unsanctioned by mother church in Rome. Sister Felicity represents the Democratic Party with its liberal reform movement, and Sister Alexandra and her saintly crooks are meant to illustrate the hypocrisy of imperial conservatism.

(more)

Nasty Habits cont.

Reed concludes: "The whole point of the movie is that laughter is a great healer, and it's time to treat Watergate with humor." So, the nation is to be "healed" by this sickly humorous attack on religious women, whom he has indicted in print in his syndicated column as "doing all sorts of unsavory things in real life" as evidenced by "daily headlines." This sweeping accusation compounded by the negative effect of the title, the advertising and the film itself, will inflict incalculable damage to the image of credibility of religious women, a value which is the result of centuries of sacrifice and service.

I am convinced that the religious women in the U.S.A. should unite to file suit against Faberge's Brut Productions (producers of the film), Rex Reed himself for his accusation, advertising agencies which carried the ads, and the newspapers which published Reed's column.

How to determine "incalculable" damage? I suggest that the groups of religious women settle for \$100,000.00 or more per congregation, the total sum to be used to finance charitable works for women across the nation. Some examples might be homes for homeless women, "battered wives" centers, projects to bring relief to women in prison. After all, are not all women abused by the attacks on any one of them?

Such a law suit against Faberge would be apt, compelling this company to produce something closer to the famed "fragrance of sanctity"- if even indirectly - rather than this malodorous film. Rex Reed should be compelled to make a public retraction for his reckless statement as well as an apology. Finally, the ads for the film should be withdrawn from circulation along with the film itself.

None of this will happen unless good persons unite to make it happen. Otherwise, silence can once again too readily be interpreted as giving assent. What say you? I, for one, cry "Foul".

*Sister Ann Gillev*

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Executive Board Member  
National Coalition of American Nuns



The ad: causes a stir.

### Catholics Hit Movie Ad

The Catholic Archdiocese of New York is "quite upset" over a movie ad which shows a nun lifting her habit to reveal her thighs and knees. The Rev. Kenneth Jardoff told The News yesterday that the ad, ballyhooing the arrival of "Nasty Habits," is a "rank misuse of a religious person in a situation we deplore." The Rev. Jardoff said the archdiocese had received "an unusually large number of complaints." The movie opens tomorrow at the Cinema II here. Surprisingly, the film's director, Michael Lindsay-Hogg (son of actress Geraldine Fitzgerald), also expressed reservations on the ad. He said that although the nun resembles Sandy Dennis (one of the film's stars), "it's really a model." He said there is no connection with the scene depicted in the ad and any scene in the movie and opined that there might be some reaction. You're right, Mike.

7 N.Y. DAILY NEWS, THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 1977

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 1977

## "NASTY HABITS"

"Heavenly Hash. It's the Watergate story, piously camped up in a Philadelphia nunnery.

Glenda Jackson is Nixon, Geraldine Page and Anne Jackson are Haldeman and Erlichman, Anne Meara is Gerald Ford, Sandy Dennis is John Dean and Melina Mercouri is Henry Kissinger. They smoke, swear, munch pizza."

—Rex Reed, Vogue Magazine

"Pure gold... Outrageous and amusing. The screen is set aglow. Glenda Jackson is superb. Sandy Dennis steals the show."

—Judith Crist, Saturday Review

Thee outrageous comedy!



DRUT PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS A GEORGE DARRIE—ROBERT ENDERS PRODUCTION

LENDA JACKSON MELINA MERCOURI GERALDINE PAGE SANDY DENI  
ANNE JACKSON ANNE MEARA SUSAN PENHALIGON "NASTY HABITS"

also starring EDITH EVANS as Hildegarde JERRY STILLER as P.R. Priest RIP TORN as Maximilian ELI WALLACH as Moraine  
Music by JOHN CAMERON Executive Producer GEORGE DARRIE adapted from "The Abbess of Crane" by MURIEL SPARK

Written and Produced by ROBERT ENDERS Directed by MICHAEL LINDSAY-HOGG Color by Technicolor®

PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED  
SOME MATERIAL MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR THE YOUNGER CHILDREN

CINEMA II

12:10, 1:50, 3:40, 5:30, 7:20, 9:10, 11

1st Ave. at 60th St. • Pl. 10774-A

Would you believe  
Anne Jackson has  
"NASTY  
HABITS"?

How about  
Anne Meara?

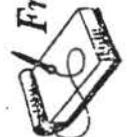
Thee outrageous comedy  
starts Friday.

PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED  
SOME MATERIAL MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR THE YOUNGER CHILDREN

EAUT

From the desk of

SISTER ANN GILLEN  
Rm. 221 1307 S. Wabash  
Chicago, Ill. 60605  
312/922-1983



Note: The NY Times printed ad #3 on March 16, modified the ad (#2) on March 19, then returned to the original more offensive ad on Mar. 20

Protest this ad wherever it appears, in magazines or newspapers. Send copies of your letters to me or to

## CORRECTION

Editors: In a photo captioned "Nun Honored" sent 4/5/77, CORRECT first sentence to read: Pending the approval of the Washington State House of Representatives, Mother Joseph Pariseau...(PICKUP remainder of caption) (5/13/77)

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5 - 4/13/77

## LAWMAKER CONDEMNS MOVIE 'NASTY HABITS' (420)

BOSTON (NC) — A resolution was introduced in the Massachusetts legislature condemning the movie "Nasty Habits" as a "blatant and outrageous assault on the Catholic Church and all Catholics in particular."

Rep. Raymond L. Flynn of South Boston, who presented the resolution, said he was "shocked and appalled that the movie industries would allow a showing of such a vulgarly and sacrilegious, demeaning piece of trash."

The film, based on Muriel Spark's "The Abbess of Crewe," is described as a satire on Watergate events.

Flynn's resolution urges "all right thinking people, Protestant, Jewish and Catholic to not only boycott the film, but to exercise every resource available to immediately terminate its Massachusetts engagement."

"Nasty Habits" satirizes convent life and includes a sequence about a young nun who has a Jesuit lover and seeks to convert her convent into a "love abby" for nuns and priests.

"This movie," Flynn said, "is the highest form of anti-Catholic bigotry in America today."

The representative's action followed publication in the Boston Herald American of Patrick J. Buchanan's syndicated column, "Why Do the Catholic Take It?"

The columnist commented on an article in the National Catholic Register on "The Mugging of the Roman Catholic Church," in which the writer, Bill Gavin, posed the question: "Why isn't outrage shown when Roman Catholic institutions and beliefs are mocked or criticized?"

Buchanan suggested that the answer to the question lies in two truths of our time.

"First, anti-Catholicism is the anti-Semitism of the intelligentsia. Second, movie land long ago shoved aside Chicago and Kansas City as hog capital of the world."

Observing that "Nasty Habits" received favorable reviews from some of the nation's leading critics, Buchanan cited a review by John Simon of New York magazine who condemned the film as the "most tasteless of movies."

He noted that a national organization of nuns has expressed anger about the advertisements connected with "Nasty Habits," but said that "there appears to have been little official Church outrage manifest thus far."

The columnist continued: "Where is the U.S. Catholic Conference — those altar boys of Eastern liberalism? If it is not too busy this week boycotting lettuce and grapes, perhaps it can help organize a one-year Catholic boycott of every theater that continues to show this vulgar anti-Catholic film."

The Office for Film and Broadcasting of the USCC Department of Communication has rated the film A-IV: "Morally unobjectionable for adults, with reservations."

In issuing the rating, the film review agency added; "This review does not take into account the distinct issue of the altogether objectional advertising campaign currently promoting the film."

In New York, a protest by the Catholic archdiocese led to revision of the film's advertisements in some publications, including the New York Times.

4 - 4/13/77

U.S. POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA RAPPED, BUT CHANGES SEEN (500)

VATICAN CITY (NC) — The Vatican weekly magazine has said that stern charges made recently against American policy in Latin America by an Ecuadorean bishop do not seem applicable to the foreign policy of the Carter Administration.

L'Osservatore della Domenica reprinted long extracts from an interview by the French Catholic daily, La Croix, with Bishop Leonidas Proano Villalba of Riobamba, Ecuador, in which the prelate rapped activities of the Peace Corps and the CIA in Latin America.

But in reprinting the bishop's charges, the Vatican weekly also commented that "very recent indications lead one to hope for radical change" in U.S. policy toward Latin America under President Jimmy Carter.

Bishop Proano made headlines last August when the Ecuadorean government arrested him and 17 other bishops, including four from the United States, at a conference he was hosting in Riobamba.

In the interview he was quoted as saying that "a subtle but serious Fascism" is in force in Latin America.

"The ideology of national security which is widespread in Latin America tolerates the violation of human rights in maintaining a strong nation tied to the United States," the bishop said in La Croix.

Bishop Proano said that "in the Peace Corps there have been CIA elements" who have "classified the positions of bishops and priests."

"The CIA aids financially bishops who pursue non-integral development so that the people will remain tranquil," the prelate was quoted as saying.

"For other bishops committed in favor of change there is persecution, expulsion, discreditation and even death."

The bishop also said that American policies in Latin America were "aiding an invasion of Protestant sects which spread a very spiritual Gospel, exalting a lack of commitment, and dividing the community."

L'Osservatore della Domenica said editorially that "these and other charges" of Bishop Proano are "mystery novel material" and "could easily fit, at least in part, in that sort of literature preferred by long-distance train travelers."

While admitting that an unbridled CIA could conceivably carry out what the bishop charged, L'Osservatore said that "it seems that the Carter Administration has launched a new policy even in Latin America."

The Vatican magazine cited the defense of human rights, aid outbacks to Latin American governments which violate human rights, and the Administration's condemnation of rights violations in Chile as examples of the new policy.

Speaking of the general upsurge of attacks on the church and Church personnel by Latin American governments, the magazine declared that such acts of violence "mirror the condition in which the Church finds herself when, having come out of enslavement to secular powers, she commits herself to act according to the Gospel mandate, the light of the Second Vatican Council and the Church's supreme magisterium teaching authority."

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Cardinal Casariego said at a Mass in his cathedral that "those who sow hatred are against Christ, even if they try to sell their actions under the label of social justice and struggle on behalf of the poor."

"We are witnessing the sad rebellion of priests and Religious...against Church authority, for novelty's sake," the cardinal said. "They use poverty as an excuse for social agitation, but it is the poverty of others, not their own," the cardinal said.

He praised those "who have kept the faith, who announce the Good News and bring souls closer to prayer, the sacraments, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin."

Father Grande was machinegunned in an ambush in mid-March, along with 72-year-old Manuel Solorzano, lay helper, and a 14-year-old altar boy, Nelson Lemus, as he drove toward his native village of Paisnal to say evening Mass. He and other priests reported receiving death threats from landowners and local military commandments.

The Salvadorean bishops ordered church bells tolled in all parishes of the country, suspended religious services the Sunday following the assassination, and later held funeral services in SAn Salvador attended by an estimated 30,000 people, spilling from the cathedral into adjacent streets and parks. The bishops said that those responsible for masterminding and carrying out the murders had been excommunicated.

In San Salvador the government announced early in April the arrest of Benito Estrada, a villager, on charges of killing Father Grande and his two companions.

12 - 4/20/77

#### PROTESTERS AGAINST 'NASTY HABITS' WITHIN THEIR RIGHTS, CARDINAL SAYS (320)

BOSTON (NC) — Cardinal Humberto Medeiros of Boston said protestors who find the film "Nasty Habits" offensive are "completely within their rights and obligations to protest it."

The film, based on Muriel Spark's "Abbess of Crewe," is the fictional account of a Philadelphia convent in which Watergate-like power struggles occur, along with scenes involving sexual relations between nuns and priests. Some advertisements for the movie, depicting a nun with a tape recorder strapped to her leg, were revised after protest by a New York archdiocesan official.

A resolution introduced in the Massachusetts legislature by Rep. Raymond Flynn, who called for a boycott of the film, was criticized by columnists in the Boston press and touched off an avalanche of letters to the editors.

Cardinal Medeiros said:

"I sympathize totally with those who find offense in the ridiculing of Religious men and women, and I regret whole-heartedly that one of our major mediums of entertainment has seen fit to exploit so sensitive and sacred a milieu as a religious house. Even the most skillfull satirist would be challenged by such a setting and its characters, hence it is all the more unfortunate that this film, according to reports in the religious and general press, has failed to meet that challenge with more than a minimum of expertise."

(MORE)

"Freedom, one of the most precious of our national rights, permits such questionable and heavy-handed material to be dispensed publically," he said. "But freedom also permits the offended to choose not to support such fare by attending theaters in which such fare is screened. Those who find this particular film offensive are completely within their rights and obligations to protest it. For all concerned, it may be pertinent to know that the U.S. Catholic Conference, through its film and broadcasting office, recently found the film to contain 'altogether unfunny slapstick' 'long, talky stretches,' 'plotting and unimaginative' sequences, and 'frequent lapses in taste.' The agency judged the film 'questionable fare for any but mature viewers'."

13 - 4/20/77

TIMELY EDITORIAL (320)

The following editorial, entitled "One Who Serves," appeared in the April 22 issue of the Catholic Telegraph, newspaper of the Cincinnati archdiocese.

One of life's pleasures is the observance of milestones, marking the passage of time in relation to human achievement. More of these occasions occur in a week, however, than we could hope to comment on. The number of 50th wedding anniversaries, for example, is indicated in the long list published in this issue of the Catholic Telegraph.

But in choosing to note the silver jubilee of our archbishop — April 26 is the 25th anniversary of Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin's ordination to the priesthood — we celebrate the Church and in a sense gather up all of the joyful occasions and high enterprises in which all of us who are the Church are involved.

Thus it seems appropriate to call attention to this milestone in the life of the Ordinary of the diocese. As Vatican II declared, he is required to "stand in the midst of his people as one who serves," he is a "good shepherd" and a "true father," and he is challenged to be "ready for every good work" and to "manifest his concern for all."

In congratulating Archbishop Bernardin upon the completion of 25 years in the priesthood we are congratulating all priests, all faithful people, all of the People of God whose living faith and love and dedication are somehow mirrored in their archbishop.

Such an occasion also lends itself to reflection on the profound responsibilities of a bishop commissioned to teach, to govern and to sanctify, concerned with proclaiming the teaching of Jesus and facing problems related to human freedom, family life, war and peace, poverty and affluence, crime and punishment, education, civil society and the development of peoples.

Archbishop Bernardin has indicated that his preference is for a low key observance of his anniversary — no gifts, no collections. But anyone who reflects seriously upon the role of the bishop will not hesitate to offer the very precious gift of consistent prayer and supportive friendship — not only on April 26 (Happy anniversary!) but always.

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AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

MT

Applebaum

## Looking, Listening

# National Jewish Group Protests 'Nasty Habits'

National and state Jewish leaders have expressed outrage at the offensive treatment of Catholicism in the movie, "Nasty Habits."

Carol Lister, regional director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, Columbus, in a letter to the Catholic Telegraph last week said she was "completely appalled at the vulgar movie, 'Nasty Habits.'

"We are outraged at the offensive portrayal and defamation of Roman Catholic institutions and beliefs and are convinced that the film is as nasty as its title," she said.

Ms. Lister also called attention to a letter of protest written recently by Dore Schary, honorary chairman of the Anti-Defamation League, to Jack Valenti, president

of the Motion Picture Association of America.

Mr. Schary wrote that the film "defames and ridicules men and women of the Roman Catholic faith who have dedicated their

lives to their calling" and added that "they do not deserve the cavalier and quite obscene treatment they receive in the film and the gimmicks of its advertising." Himself a veteran film director, producer and writer, Mr. Schary told Mr. Valenti he fears that an excess of "obscenity, nudity, explicit sex and gory violence" may "provoke a strait-laced censorship."

"Because of my concern and my affection for an industry in which I worked for 25 years, I feel I have the duty to acquaint you with our

opinions on this subject," Schary continued.

"We know that the code once had was often silly and outrageous, but now it appears that we have no self-standard of judgmental process in our industry to in the four horsemen of violence, obscenity and bad taste."

"It seems to me that possible meeting of the leadership is called for to examine the rising tide of protest that I see even in college where I lecture and teach."

Our young people are beginning to feel that some barricades should be raised to stem the foul water.

(The U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting gave "Nasty Habits" an A-4 rating, calling it "questionable for any but mature viewers.") Motion Picture Association of America rated the film "recommending parental

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In particular, Rex Reed's review of the film, a syndicated feature carried by newspapers across the country (N.Y. Daily News, March 18) indicates the double effect which is already inflicting damage to the public image of religious women across the country. He writes:

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Rex Reed continues:

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(more)

Nasty Habits cont.

Reed concludes: "The whole point of the movie is that laughter is a great healer, and it's time to treat Watergate with humor." So, the nation is to be "healed" by this sickly humorous attack on religious women, whom he has indicted in print in his syndicated column as "doing all sorts of unsavory things in real life" as evidenced by "daily headlines." This sweeping accusation compounded by the negative effect of the title, the advertising and the film itself, will inflict incalculable damage to the image of credibility of religious women, a value which is the result of centuries of sacrifice and service.

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How to determine "incalculable" damage? I suggest that the groups of religious women settle for \$100,000.00 or more per congregation, the total sum to be used to finance charitable works for women across the nation. Some examples might be homes for homeless women, "battered wives" centers, projects to bring relief to women in prison. After all, are not all women abused by the attacks on any one of them?

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*Sister Ann Gillev*

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Executive Board Member  
National Coalition of American Nuns

Nasty Habits uses a wholly inappropriate vehicle to parody the Watergate Scandal. The choice of a Catholic women's religious order to satirize the deception and abuse of power committed by elected and appointed officials of the United States Government makes targets of the wrong *vocation and* people, the wrong sex ~~and the wrong religion~~. We believe that this film, heralded by a vulgar and distasteful advertising campaign, ~~should be~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~considered~~ offensive not only <sup>to</sup> by women and <sup>to</sup> Catholics but <sup>to fair-minded</sup> ~~by~~ religious people of all persuasions.

