

Troop Beverly Hills' inflicts wounds on Long's talent

by Sarah Knight
Staff Reporter

Shelley Long's silly, zany presence usually manages to pull an audience through even the worst films.

movie REVIEW

This cannot be said of her newest flick, "Troop Beverly Hills." But, then again, what could be expected from director Jeff Kanew,

whose past credits include "Revenge of the Nerds" and "Tough Guys." In the film, Phyllis Nefler (Long), a ditzy, rich mother who, in the process of a divorce, takes on the job of Wilderness Girl troop leader. Phyllis feels she must prove herself to her husband Freddy (Craig T. Nelson) and their daughter Hannah (Jenny Lewis) by demonstrating that she can carry out a job from start to finish. After joining the group, she meets the Los Angeles Regional Director of

the Wilderness Girls, Velda Plendor (Betty Thomas). Valeda has her heart set on the troop and will stop at nothing to make the Redfeathers succeed. She forces her partner-in-crime Annie Herman (Mary Gross) to join Troop Beverly Hills as an assistant and to compile enough information against Phyllis to get her fired. The plan backfires, however, and Phyllis continues to train her girls to

survive in the "Beverly Hills jungle" by teaching them dancing, jewelry appreciation, make-up and other important matters. Despite its overblown, trite plot, "Troop Beverly Hills" manages to create some laughs. Long is humorous, no question, but she seems to get stuck in horrible pictures like her most recent, "Hello Again." This film proves no exception and traps her in an inescapable box of predictable, tired gags. Betty Thomas' outrageous portrayal of the demented Velda is a good supporting role. In one scene she pays homage to Robert Duvall's famous line from "Apocalypse Now" by saying, "I love the smell of cookies in the morning."

Several celebrities make cameo appearances, including Frankie Avalon, Annette Funicello, Cheech Marin and Robin Leach. The cornball script does carry a nice message, though: It's not whether you win or lose but how you play the game. With the divorce theme and the camping scenes, "Troop Beverly Hills" stirs memories of Disney's classic "The Parent Trap." But it's not that good. "Troop Beverly Hills" may pass as recreation for a viewer in an extremely silly state of mind, although it does not qualify as a must-see. "Troop Beverly Hills" is rated PG for just a touch of foul language and is showing at the Douglas Three Theaters.



Shelley Long as Phyllis Netter.

Courtesy of Weintraub Entertainment Group

Focus of lecture is Nebraska author

Sherrill Daniels will lecture on "Dorothy Thomas: The Woman and the Work," the final talk in the Celebrating Nebraska Women series. Thomas, a Nebraska writer, published short stories in American Mercury, Saturday Evening Post and Redbook from 1929 until the 1970s. Many of her stories come from her experiences living and teaching in Nebraska. Her novels include "Ma Jeter's Girls" and "The Home Place." Daniels, director of reference services at the Nebraska State Historical Society, will speak 7:30 p.m. Thursday in the Heritage Room at Bennett Martin Public Library, 14th and N streets.

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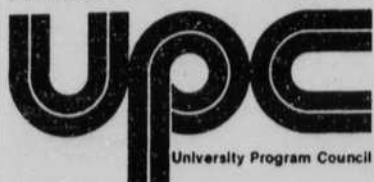


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