

# Cannibal parents delight in 'mystery-meat' barbecues

By **JOE BOB BRIGGS**  
Syndicated Columnist

Before I tell you about "Parents," one of the finest cannibal flicks of the '80s, I thought I would give you a little background on my qualifications to review the movie.

I had parents. Several of them. I even knew a few of 'em by name. They were hard-working pioneer stock. In fact, the women resembled stock. At night they would sit by the fireplace with their spinning wheels and sing old Hungarian folk ballads. None of 'em ever learned how to use a spinning wheel, though, and none of 'em were Hungarian, so people made fun of us all the time. They said, "Those Briggs people! Ha ha ha! Aren't they irrelevant?"

It used to make me so mad I would want to fight with the Swedish boys, or make fun of their shoes, but my father was a peaceable man and he wouldn't have it. I'll never forget what he told me. He said "We're not fighting people, son. And do you know why we're not fighting people?"

"No, sir."

"Because I'm 5'3" and weigh 115 pounds."

"But, Daddy, the Swedes called us irrelevant."

"We are irrelevant."

"Oh."

It's tough for a kid growing up, knowing he's irrelevant, and knowing he's descended from a long line of irrelevance. I used to ask my mama, "Why did God make us irrelevant?"

And she would say "Hush, dear. It's beside the point."

I wanted to study the history of irrelevant people, try to figure out where we came from and what we had to be proud of, but when I went to the library they told me, "That's a waste of time. Here, read this book on Swedish people."

So one day I was determined to have it out with my parents — to know, once and for all, just where we came from and what we were good for. And so I waited

until after dinner, when Mama was clearing the last of the kidney-dumpling Jello off the table, and I said, "Where did the Briggses come from? I want to know. Right now."

And my daddy wiped the last of the Ritz-cracker casserole off his lip, looked me square in the eye, and said, "All right, you little rascal. You wanted to know? You're gonna know. You wanna know where you came from, Mr. Smart-Alec? Mr. Smarty Pants! Maybe this house is not good enough for you! Maybe you don't think your parents are taking good enough care of you to satisfy Mr. High-and-Mighty here! Maybe you don't realize that when I walk out that door every day and go down into the dirt mines, I'm trying to bring home enough money to put food on this table so that some day you can go to school and be an insurance adjuster! Maybe you don't realize that! But you have to know where you came from! You have to know who the Briggses are! Is that what you want? Is that what you wanna know?"

And I said, "Nope."

And that's why I never did find out.

Speaking of families that need professional help, "Parents" is the story of a typical middle-class Ozzie-and-Harriet cannibal family in the fifties. Randy Quaid is an expert on "defoliants as a growth industry" at the local Toxico plant. Mary Beth Hurt walks around their Jetsons house in stiletto heels and conehead support bras, cooking meat loaf. Sandy Dennis is the beef-critter school psychologist with a face like Silly Putty. And all of them are trying to tell little Michael that he shouldn't be having these terrible dreams about drowning in blood, and that it's probably untrue that his parents are flesh-eating blood-sucking freaks. Unfortunately, nobody believed little 10-year-old boys in the '50s, so I'm afraid we have to sit through several "mystery



In "Parents," Randy Quaid answers the question "What's eating the American middle class?"

meat" barbecues.

Seven dead bodies, bloody refrigerator. Leg rolls. Blood ocean drowning. Bloody aardvarking. Sausage strangling. Barbecued Sandy Dennis. Gratuitous Dean Martin background music. Red meat Fu. Golf club Fu. Barbecue Fu. Steak knife Fu. Wine rack Fu. Midnight-snack Fu. Drive-In Academy Award nominations for Randy Quaid, as the cannibal father, for saying "We can't make friends by telling lies, Michael," and "See, Michael, we have to fit in" and "Is he fresh? He looks fresh. Puree the liver tissue. And might as well get some lymph tissue while we're in there" and "He has too many thoughts for a boy his

age" and "I'm sure you'll acquire a taste for it, Michael" and "Eat your meat," Bryan Madorsky, as the kid, for telling his grade-school class how to boil a cat, for telling the counselor "You're not a real grown-up," for jumping into the deep freeze with his girlfriend, and for saying "You eat people," Mary Beth Hurt, as the cannibal mom, for telling the counselor "Well, he's not much of an eater," Graham

Jarvis, as the chemical plant manager, for saying "You led trump, Gladys?"; Bob Balaban, the director, for getting it right his first time out; and Christopher Hawthorne, the writer, for the exchange:

"What are we eating?"

"Leftovers."

"Leftovers from what?"

"Eat your dinner, honey."

Four stars. Joe Bob says check it out.

## Steeplechase offers more than horses

By **PAUL STEWART**  
Staff Writer

It has been described by one writer as "the masses running shoulders with the classes." Organizers estimate the crowd will be between 35,000 and 40,000 this Saturday. Welcome to the 42nd running of the Stoneybrook Steeplechase.

Steeplechase, as defined by the Oxford American Dictionary, is a "horse race on a course with hedges and ditches to jump." According to legend, the steeplechase acquired its name from two Irishmen who had an argument on whose steed was quicker. They then raced their horses to the church steeple.

But the Stoneybrook Steeplechase, held on the Stoneybrook Farm in Southern Pines, is more

than just a horse race. It is an event in the Sandhills that has become a tradition; it is known to locals as the "kickoff to spring."

Started in 1947 by Stoneybrook Farm owner Michael Walsh, the first steeplechase there attracted only 2,500 people, most of them horsemen. By 1986, however, the crowd was estimated at 25,000, with a very small percentage of the people being actual horsemen. The diversity of people is one of the aspects of Stoneybrook that has made it not only unique, but truly an enjoyable event.

"You can be sitting in a \$70 space and next to you is a guy in a Rolls-Royce with a candelabrum and linen," said assistant director Ernie Robertson. "And on down from him is a pickup truck full of good old boys with a box of chicken

they picked up on the way there."

Though the races do not start until the afternoon, the gate opens at 10 a.m. with people setting up grills and setting out coolers, waiting for the festivities to begin. However, for many the main festivity is the social atmosphere that such an event creates. One such person is Stoneybrook veteran Steve Clark.

"We didn't even see the horses half the time because we got so drunk," said Clark.

The party atmosphere is downplayed by the organizers though, with the maintenance of a family setting a priority, Robertson said. Though the atmosphere exists nonetheless, they have had little trouble over the years, he said.

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In the time you'd spend going to local courses and waiting for a starting time, you could be at Southwick on no. 2, putting for birdie.

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