

A Film for People Who Feel Like Small Change

"Little People." A documentary produced and directed by Thomas Ott and Jan Krawitz. Photographed by Ott. Sound and editing by Krawitz. Music by Randy Arneson. Running Time: 88 minutes. Friday only at International House, 3701 Chestnut St. (Screened at Alice Tully Hall, New York Film Festival)

By **JOE BALTAKE**
Daily News Movie Reviewer

I've no idea if it was intentional, but somewhere along the way, filmmakers Thomas Ott and Jan Krawitz extended the theme of their documentary, "Little People," coming up with a movie that speaks to anyone who has ever felt small and inconsequential. I'd say that includes just about everyone.

Ostensibly, "Little People" examines what it's like to be a dwarf. However, by bending over backwards in an effort *not* to be exploitative or even sanctimonious, Ott and Krawitz have parlayed a film about a physical handicap that afflicts a minority into one about negative self-image in general.

Their movie is centered on one of the annual conventions of the Little People of America (a group formed in 1957 by the veteran actor Billy Barty), and as its diminutive cast members talk about the plight of being "small," the viewer is able to project his or her own feelings and

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experiences into every sentence.

There are close-ups of seemingly normal people describing the problems that they face in falling in love and having families. They speak for all of us. Then, the camera pulls back to reveal the distorted bodies. These little people have problems that obviously are more severe than most of ours, and yet, in some strange way, they are exactly the same.

"Little People" elicits instant empathy. When its characters talk about feeling normal *until* they see someone else who is small, they hit upon a universal feeling. Haven't all of us been taken aback when reminded about personal idiosyncrasies that we've become accustomed to?

How often have you jumped when you've heard a tape-recording of your voice or seen an unexpected reflection of yourself in a pane of glass? How often have we not liked what we've seen or heard? ("I don't really look like that, do I?")

This extremely perceptive little movie is about learning to see ourselves as others possibly see us. The little people of its title convey the feelings of being left out, ostracized and alone. They speak with a combi-



Annual baseball game at Little People of America convention

nation of rage and pride, tempered with understanding and a sense of humor.

And because they speak so well —

for all of us — Ott and Krawitz admirably stepped back and avoided editorializing.

"Little People" is the best kind of propaganda — the kind from the heart.

Note in Passing: "Little People" will be screened Friday at 8 p.m. On Saturday, at 1 p.m., one of the film's makers, localite Jan Krawitz, will discuss the making of the film and her other documentaries.

For more information, call (215) 387-5125, ext. 222.

Parental Guide: Not rated, but perfect for family audiences.