

The Lady and the Tramp

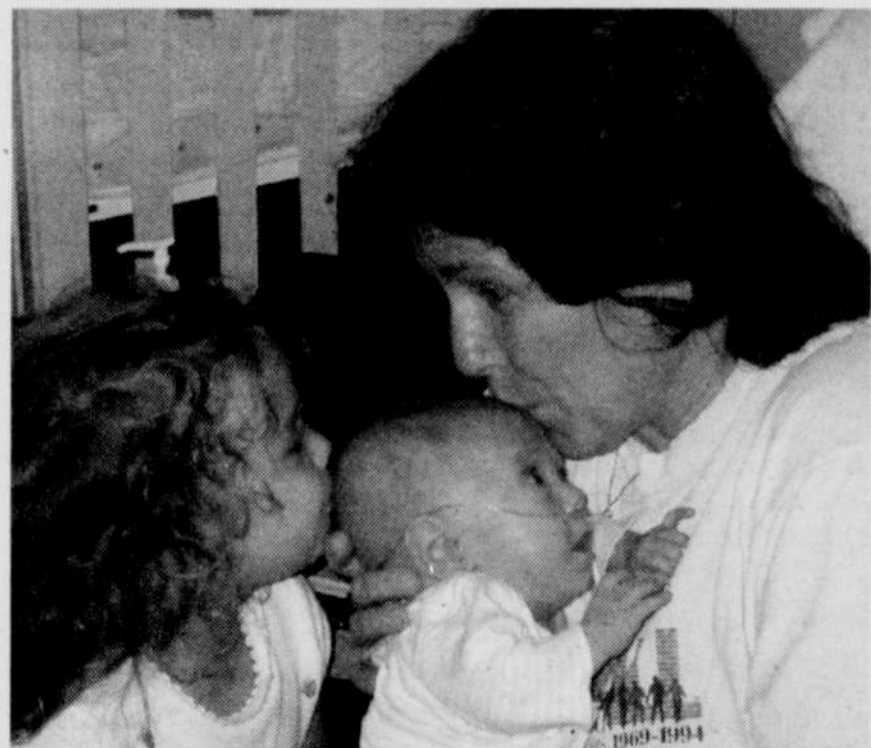
A former Portland resident and filmmaker, Conn achieved some status with 1992's *Claire of the Moon*. Shot at her beach home, this film about a woman's exploration into sexual identity was a local and lesbian favorite.

In 1996 she made *Cynara: Poetry in Motion*, another film about two women exploring the female form by a big body of water.

While Portland was supportive of Conn, she started to feel the pressure to leave for Los Angeles. "I wanted to do my film and writing career out of Portland, but my agents all said if you want to do this, you've got to come down to L.A.," she told *Just Out*.

She commuted between the two cities for three years. Then one special night the rugged-looking Conn met the sophisticated and economically independent Baba, and they were immediately hooked.

"I call them the lady and the tramp," their close friend Jeannie Karaffa says in the film.



Conn and her daughter, Gabrielle, give Nicholas a loving kiss.

Because of Conn's career choice, Baba's strong ties to Los Angeles politics and a desire to raise children in a multicultural community, Conn left Portland in the early 1990s after living there 15 years.

"I love everything about L.A. except the air quality and the traffic," says Conn, who now lives in the Los Feliz area of Los Angeles. "I love the ethnicity in Los Angeles. Portland is as white and vanilla as it gets. Although Portland has a great gay community, it's not a great place to raise your kids in terms of ethnicity. I think you want to be where other filmmakers are following that filmmaking dream. In Portland there are three of you. It's a great place to shoot [film] and I love Portland, but it's really hard to raise money, find good talent."

Baba and Conn wanted two children. They decided to do in vitro fertilization, having both of their eggs planted in Baba. After two years of difficulties, Baba was finally pregnant—with twins. In the second trimester they lost a son, whom they called Nicholas, but on May 22, 2000, their daughter, Gabrielle, was born.

Because Baba was already in her mid-40s when she gave birth to Gabrielle, it was not medically advisable that she carry again. Because Conn could not carry a child, they had to go the surrogate route.

A taxing endeavor of examination, ethics and economics, Conn found the idea of surrogacy fascinating and decided to make a documentary about it. She borrowed her friend's camera and started shooting.

"The whole concept of surrogacy just blew my brain circuits—using people's bodies to get what we want," says Conn. "We don't know the genetic identity of Gabrielle, which is a very trusting experience in and of itself."

Conn started shooting the film on surrogacy, but then her friend needed the camera back. Conn had no intention of buying a camera until after the baby was born, but fate had different plans.

"My brother needed a camera, so I went with him and wound up walking out with my Canon," says Conn. "The next day [the surro-



Conn holds newborn Nicholas, whose heart was the "size of a cashew."

gate] had the baby. We happened to have that camera in the car, and they said we could take the footage for legal reasons. There was an issue about why the baby was born so early."

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