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it! She talks about her longest love affair, 35 years with butch Babe Franklin, and about setting up a secret "gay spot" in their home from 1941 to 1971 at which local queers gathered to dance, drink and date. Anything she thought she wanted to do, it seems, she simply did—running a printing business, learning self-defense, becoming a photographer. She's also amusingly risqué. Of one woman she says: "She had the loveliest breasts. I sure wish I had a picture of them!" Ellis unabashedly admits to having had sex most recently at 95 and advises the mesmerized younger lesbians who congregate around her, "So keep on!" (2 p.m. May 31.)

Next up is *Beyond Conception: Men Having Babies*. This is not about Bend resident Thomas Beatie, who recently made the mainstream news as a "pregnant man." Instead, it's part two in Johnny Symons' ongoing study of gay male parenting that began with 2002's sweet *Daddy and Papa*. This time it's a different couple, Paul and Bruce, who already have one baby but want another. They carefully proceed through the maze of steps involved in finding a proper egg donor and a surrogate. It's not a cheap decision: \$89,000 is the figure the film gives. Enter Jennifer and Jenna, two big-hearted dykes who are willing to help. Jennifer has been a surrogate before and loves the idea of helping out her gay brothers, but complicating matters is that Jenna also wants to become pregnant; if anything, she's more desperate for a baby than Paul and Bruce. *Beyond Conception* tracks the ups and downs of this four-way relationship that is, below the smiles and hugs and supportive

talk, ultimately a business transaction. The film is most alive when conflicts arise and when the guys, particularly Paul, reveal a slight creepiness in their dealings with the women. When Jennifer says she'd like her best friend to be in the delivery room, Paul nixes it. When she says she might need a "private moment" alone with Jenna during the process, Paul quickly reminds her that the contract says he and Bruce can be there. Numerous shots of Paul driving through San Francisco in designer glasses, or complaining to Jennifer about the cost of the first failed attempt ("it's like a new

car out the window—a nice car"), don't generate quite the sympathy for the couple and their search that the film is attempting. Jenna has the strongest moments of authentic emotion when she has a meltdown about her own inability to conceive. Still, anyone looking for the details of this increasingly popular way to conceive a child will be satisfied. (4 p.m. May 31. Symons will attend.)

We live by acronyms these days, but FtF was one I'd never heard of until *FtF: Female to Femme*. This film, directed by Kami Chisholm and Elizabeth Stark, would make a dandy com-

panion piece to 2004's *Drag Kings on Tour*—both explore lesbians engaging in a kind of theatrical gender play, this time embracing the "super-feminine" style of 1950s housewives and burlesque dancers. Some of the women are literally involved in theater, as revealed by footage of neo-burlesque shows by groups like Burlesque-esque. The focus here is on embracing what appears to be an intensely stereotypical "feminine" role—complete with high heels, push-up bras, lipstick, "femmy" ways of talking and moving. Commentator Toni Parks calls it a reaction to "a sea of plaid flannel

shirts" observed at one dyke gathering. It's not clear if this kind of ultra-feminine role-playing might ultimately bleed into Tammy Faye Bakker territory (not to diss Tammy Faye). Part of the thrust is that this is "ironic" role-playing, not simply a literal copying of an apparently submissive role devised by men. But is it really as ironic and playful as they say? If so, why do they need the support group featured prominently in the film? Some of those talking about what's at the heart of "transitioning" from butch dyke to femme dyke take it fatally far into gender theory, creating more confusion than enlightenment. Some viewers, too, might

be more puzzled than intrigued when one woman describes herself as "high femme" and another talks about feeling "the power of the earth energy" as she stands in high heels. Nonetheless, some of the women are smart and of-

ENCORE PRESENTATION

FESTIVAL CLOSES WITH FASCINATING 1984 OSCAR WINNER

BY CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN

A present-day viewing of Robert Epstein's Oscar-winning 1984 documentary *The Times of Harvey Milk* is an affecting yet disorienting experience. The film confirms that the milieu it documents—San Francisco during the post-Stonewall years of the 1970s as it evolved into a gay mecca, with City Supervisor Harvey Milk consistently at the center—was one of rapid evolution of queer liberation into a movement to be taken seriously. But it also reveals how fragile the momentum of our movement was and still is.

As described by colleagues interviewed for the film (and as shown in its bountiful, well-curated archive footage), Milk was a figure with just the right charm-to-aggression ratio to attain his unlikely level of political power and public endearment. Although he was ultimately martyred by the senseless assassination detailed in the film's final part, he could not have made the contribution he did by taking up the role of noble martyr (of which queendom had already had far too many). Instead, he used his cleverness, political savvy and ability to work a crowd—all tools necessary to make it in the world of politics—on behalf of a movement that was the underdog of the underdogs. Milk's inexhaustible passion and openness, as grandstanding and schmaltzy as it could be, is amazing when contrasted with what the film's interviews and archive footage also remind us of: Homosexuality was feared, despised and politically exploitable then to a degree that, while reminiscent of the recent political landscape, also puts it into some perspective.

Aesthetically and culturally, *The Times of Harvey Milk* is a fine example of documentary craft, offering a fascinating glimpse of the real "Mayor of Castro Street" shortly before Sean Penn gives us his rendition in Gus Van Sant's upcoming *Milk*. (One wonders whether Penn took advantage of the documentary's ample opportunities to study Milk's voice, body language and mannerisms when preparing for his role.) Historically and politically speaking, it's an effective tribute to pioneers like Milk, who stuck his neck out when homosexuality was considered incontestably unspeakable. As uphill as the struggle might still feel and as widespread as ignorance might still seem, it's encouraging to see an acknowledgment that there were those who worked unimaginably hard and took real risks—even to the point of paying with their lives—to bring queer issues into the public arena in the first place. (7:30 p.m. June 1. Epstein and Van Sant will attend the screening.)



Save the Date!

In June GAY SKATE moves to MONDAY, JUNE 9
for a special RAINBOW PRIDE
Gay Skate Extravaganza.

Let's turn Oaks Park Roller Rink into a festival of rainbow finery. Let's see hoas, and t-shirts, shorts and scarves. If it's got a rainbow on it, wear it baby. Special prizes will be awarded to the most outrageous!



Note: This special event replaces the regular Third Monday gay skate night in June. We return to our regular schedule on July 21