

Review of *Orgasmic Birth*

By Jan Tritten, midwife and founder, editor and mother of *Midwifery Today*

This powerful film shows several lovely ecstatic births with happy and satisfied mothers, in both home and hospital situations. The great narration, by well-known midwives, doctors and activists, adds a tremendous amount of information to the film, which depicts the medicalization of childbirth in the hospital as well as the sweet intimacy between each of the couples. Each labor and birth included here looks different from each of the others, because it is a manifestation of that woman's own birth. This difference is often lacking in hospital births, where medical routines disturb the personality of birth. One woman in the film said, "Feel definitely God is in the room or something." Many of these women got to announce their baby's sex at birth, rather than being told by the practitioner!

I love the quote by Marsden Wagner, "We are really messing with nature, big-time."

It is painful to see women put their lives and their baby's lives in the hands of medical people doing all the wrong things. This film shows a few typical hospital births. It explains how 90% of mothers end up with an epidural, and discusses the dangers of this practice. As Dr. Christiane Northrup says, "If your pelvis is numb, it doesn't work right." And Marsden Wagner says, "If you take pain away, the whole system is gone." In birth centers, the use of water has been found to speed up labor while decreasing the pain. This creates a very different scenario.

Ina May Gaskin says that there is a body of knowledge that women have and that doctors don't. Bringing a woman to an optimal physical state for giving birth, with prenatal care, helps her to also be in an optimal place, emotionally, to give birth.

This film also deals with the difficult issue of sexual abuse. The woman portrayed in the film wanted to feel safe during her birth. She knew she would have flashbacks. Ideas of "let go" and "surrender" were horrible reminders for her. But she had an out-of-hospital birth, and felt transformed. The film subtly shows the dangers of hospital birth, without coming right out and saying so.

Elizabeth Davis mentions the need for privacy. The highest level of oxytocin (or "love hormone") is present just after a woman gives birth. Davis states, "It's an ecstatic place."

This film is a great way for a family to learn a lot about birth in a short period of time. Davis says, "We have to get the truth out about birth." This film does a great job of doing just that. All mothers-to-be should see this film before they give birth, and preferably before they choose their midwife or doctor.

This film has the potential to change the world of birth--thereby changing the world!