

Weekend's Best

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"Heavy Petting" is out on DVD Tuesday.

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FOUNDRY COMMUNICATIONS

In "Heavy Petting," people (famous or otherwise) recall their first sexual experiences.

Let's Talk About, Well, You Know . . .

By CURT FIELDS
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"The sex impulse is like a fiery horse. Uncontrolled, it may be destructive and dangerous," warned an "educational" film strip from the 1950s. The attempt to rein in those impulses is what "Heavy Petting" takes a lighthearted look at.

Producer-director Obie Benz and co-director Joshua Waletzky made the documentary in 1989, and it's similar in style to "The Atomic Cafe," the 1982 sendup of Cold War nuclear paranoia, which makes sense because Benz was a production consultant for that project. "Heavy Petting" is built around reminiscences from the likes of musician David Byrne, performance artist Spalding Gray, comedian Sandra Bernhard, activist Abbie Hoffman, poet Allen Ginsberg and writer William S. Burroughs as they recall their early experiences with sex or, more often, attempts at sex, and the DVD includes snippets from popular movies and television programs and various sex education films that all tended to be vague but ominous. There's a great soundtrack of tunes from the '50s and '60s providing a rocking background to it all.

The recollections tend to be wistful and innocent. Actor Josh Mostel talks about dancing with girls and letting his fingers creep up their backs: "Vertebrae, vertebrae, vertebrae, vertebrae." Ginsberg and Burroughs are sitting together while Ginsberg talks about once telling a girl that she had big breasts and getting smacked with her bag for his efforts at making conversation. Ginsberg's story is amusing, but even funnier are the expressions on Burroughs's face through-

out that tale and others from Ginsberg.

Not all the people dredging their memory banks are famous. The documentary features people from various walks of life, and their stories are similarly full of youthful confusion and wonderment about the world of sex.

There are a few flaws. The film is extremely white — surely there were some people of color who were just as befuddled by the opposite sex as the people interviewed here. Casting a wider net might have lessened the eventual feeling of repetition, which may make some viewers weary before the film's conclusion. And if you're looking for a serious discussion — or even an acknowledgment — of how all this repression affected society, you won't find it here. This is a strictly gossamery approach to the topic played for laughs and warm evocations of long-gone innocence.

In addition to the film, the two-disc set (\$29.95) being released Tuesday contains 10 sex-ed, anti-pornography and VD scare films of the 1930s, '40s and '50s. Among them are "Perversion for Profit," "Dance, Little Children," "As Boys Grow . . ." and "The Innocent Party." Their "scare the kids away from it" seriousness coupled with a scarcity of actual useful information make for hilarious kitschy viewing.

One anti-pornography film intones that America, "like classical Greece and imperial Rome, will crumble to ruins because of moral decay." Apparently, crumbling is a slow process, because 50 years later people are wringing their hands and saying the same thing.

This release of "Heavy Petting" definitely gets to second base with a surprisingly satisfying evening of laughs.