

News Release

NORMAL FOR US: THE MILLER TWINS

OPB produces documentary on the ordinary life of an extraordinary family

May 20, 2002—NORMAL FOR US: THE MILLER TWINS takes place near Soldotna, in southern Alaska and is the story of Fritz and Cindy Miller and their five children, two of whom are quadriplegic twin girls. The family's triumphant spirit and their sometimes harrowing, often quiet experiences are revealed in this documentary airing August 20, 2002, at 9:00 p.m. on PBS. The documentary is a co-production of Oregon Public Broadcasting and Morgan Video Productions.

The Millers learned in 1989 that their infant twins, Mariya and Michelle, both had Type II Spinal Muscular Atrophy. This type of Muscular Dystrophy portends a lifetime of round-the-clock care and frequent sickness and, in most cases, profoundly limits one's ability to enjoy a "normal" lifestyle. Fritz and Cindy, however, are tough, ingenious people, fiercely devoted to their children. So, in Fritz's words, he and his wife rose to the occasion.

They rebuilt their home, literally from the ground up, to accommodate the twins' special needs. The parents re-designed the family's routines to include the girls in every activity. And, since no commercial power wheelchairs offered the kind of mobility the Millers wanted for their kids, Fritz Miller and friend Jim Van Sickle built their own.

These chairs are extraordinary, both in their dramatic presence and in the level of accessibility they provide the girls. In fact, belying the chairs' homespun looks, they are two of the most advanced power wheelchairs ever made. Yet until this film, their renown has been confined to the small towns of rural Alaska.

This documentary poses the inevitable question: If quadriplegic girls in Soldotna can be so thoroughly-integrated into their community – if two kids who can move little more

than their heads and hands have become typical, fun-loving teenagers, hiking, playing dodge-ball in the gym, hanging out at the mall – what are the possibilities for other disabled children?

NORMAL FOR US: THE MILLER TWINS recounts the unique achievements of the Miller family. Rich with old photos and home video, it is a pleasure to watch. And families everywhere, with or without disabilities, may glean some important lessons from this film. It is a story about limitless possibilities, the power of love, and a successful, normal American family.

NORMAL FOR US: THE MILLER TWINS is a co-production of Oregon Public Broadcasting and Morgan Video Productions.

Developed and Directed by: Eric Cain

Produced by: Wendy & Lyle Morgan

Executive in Charge of Production: John Lindsay

Executive Producer: David Davis

Funded by: Public Television Viewers and PBS

Video Information:

\$24.95 + \$4.95 shipping and handling

Oregon Public Broadcasting

P.O. Box 2284

South Burlington, VT 05407-2284

1-800-440-2651