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Twenty Years Later, Little People Take Stock of Their Lives In New P.O.V. Film, “Big Enough,” Premiering June 28 on PBS

*Sequel to Emmy-Nominated Portrait of Dwarfs
Is Dramatic ‘Then and Now’ Story of Individual Struggle and Success*

Meet Mark and Anu Trombino, Karla and John Lizzo, Len and Lenette Sawisch, and Sharon and Ron Roskamp. They lead typical American lives: they have children, pursue successful middle-class careers, and live in the suburbs. If you did business with any of them over the phone, you would probably have no reason to suspect they are anything but typical. If you were to meet them, however, you’d be surprised to find that they are all dwarfs, with the exception of John Lizzo, the tall, rangy fellow who married Karla. And if you thought you recognized any of these “little people,” as they call themselves, you probably saw the 1982 Emmy-nominated PBS film **Little People**.

Now, some 20 years later, director/producer Jan Krawitz returns with **Big Enough**, her “then and now” sequel to the earlier documentary (which she made with Thomas Ott). In **Big Enough**, Krawitz sets out to find out what happened to spirited 11-year-old Mark, upbeat 16-year-old Karla, newlyweds Ron and Sharon, and one of the country’s only angry dwarf comedians, Len. How have the years treated their hopes, expectations, and fears? Just how typical, and how different, have their lives been? And how has their – and the country’s – view of dwarfism changed over the last two decades?

Jan Krawitz’s **Big Enough** has its national broadcast premiere on **Tuesday, June 28, 2005** at 10 p.m., as part of the 18th season of public television’s P.O.V. series. P.O.V. continues on Tuesdays at 10 p.m., through September 13 on PBS stations nationwide. (Check local listings.) American television’s longest-running independent documentary series, P.O.V. is public television’s premier showcase for point-of-view, nonfiction films.

Len lets us know he’s “retired from being a dwarf” (but not, evidently, from making jokes). In 1982, he was 32 years old and angry. Clips of his old nightclub act reveal his edgy humor. But if he was an apostle of “dwarf pride,” he also needed to find out what the term might mean. How to be proud of being a dwarf? In **Big Enough**, Len seems to have found his answer. Older and mellower, he’s more absorbed by family life and fishing than by the gospel of dwarf liberation. Being a little person, however, can never be entirely forgotten. He and his wife, Lenette, also a dwarf, have two children: a daughter, Joelle, who is little, and her average-sized older brother, Brandon. Now Len has to face the fact that, for all his hard-earned peace, he can’t spare Joelle the physical and social pains dwarfism inevitably brings. Nor can he be sure about the ultimate effects on Brandon of his unusual upbringing among little people.

Children are also on Karla's mind. Her doctors say she can bear children and she contemplates doing so. But she's plagued with doubts that temper the optimism of the 16-year old from 1982. In the intervening years, she has endured chronic pain and the resulting medical procedures, including spine-straightening surgery, which little people often endure. Although she has an average-sized spouse who happily provides critical daily help, Karla's confidence in her own ability to cope is tenuous. She wrestles with the child-bearing dilemma shared by little people, and already mentioned by Len. Karla knows that she has a 50% chance of giving birth to another little person. (Dwarf couples have a 75% chance.) Is she being selfish to bring another dwarf into the world? Or does she deserve the same choice that average-sized people have about whether to start a family?

With a certain irony, these questions have been thrown into high relief by the recent discovery of the gene that causes achondroplasia, the most common type of dwarfism. The possibility exists that early testing could, if dwarf couples choose to terminate a pregnancy, reduce the incidence of dwarfism. Just when the Little People of America (LPA, a national organization founded in 1957) and the community it represents have reached a peak of cohesion, vibrancy, and confidence. Just when Len's "dwarf pride," through the struggles and self-acceptance of little people themselves, has come to mean something, is dwarfism a condition to be wiped out? No one is more conflicted about the answer than the subjects of **Big Enough**.

Ron and Sharon Roskamp weren't as hesitant about having kids. But now that their two dwarf children, Alisha and Andrew, are teenagers, they reflect with ambivalent feelings of misgiving and hope about their futures. For their part, the kids are happy to be here and don't blame their parents for anything. They recognize that as "second-generation" dwarfs who grew up with dwarf parents, they have had an easier time of it than their parents, who didn't meet similar individuals until they were young adults. But Ron and Sharon, like the other little people in the film – and it is one of the important updates in **Big Enough** – can't help but reflect that adulthood, more than childhood, tests the mettle of little people. For all of childhood's fabled cruelty, it is the onslaught of adult life's typical problems – dating, marriage, jobs – immeasurably complicated by dwarfism, that definitively divides little people from the world around them.

Like Ron and Sharon, Mark (the high-spirited 11-year-old from **Little People**) and Anu met at an annual convention of LPA. Mark and Anu, like so many other little people, can testify to the shock, importance, and ultimate salvation of meeting other dwarfs. Mark grew up in an average-sized family, looked after by two younger loving sisters, and generally well tolerated by his peers, who were won over by his outgoing nature. In childhood, dwarfs can initially keep up with their classmates and friends. It's about the time when dating arrives in a teen's life, and when a person begins to develop his or her adult features, that the truly daunting dimensions of living a full life emerge.

For Mark, the sudden loneliness of growing up was eased by the get-togethers of Little People of America. Anu was similarly raised by an average-sized family who moved to America when Anu was young because staying in India would have condemned her to a second-class education. At that time, physically and developmentally disabled children were not permitted to attend class with average students.

Ultimately trained as an electrical engineer, Anu was again fortunate that her father, unable to find a suitably educated match for her in India, abandoned his idea of an arranged marriage and allowed her to find her own way. Mark is probably the one subject most like himself from the 1982 film, and he and Anu are quite happy with the lives they lead. But **Big Enough** reveals how typical chores like shopping and making dinner require atypical amounts of determination, patience, and strategy.

Through a skillful weaving of "then and now" stories of its four families, **Big Enough** captures an extended and intimate view of the myriad physical and emotional challenges confronting little people.

The film discovers the humor, grace, frustration, confusion and anger with which one group of little people has, with inspiring success, faced these challenges. **Big Enough** also suggests that, while the physical problems of dwarfism have not changed, America today is more accommodating of difference.

"The fundamental questions in the film were, 'How has being a dwarf defined you?' and 'How has your life changed from what you imagined it would be?'" Krawitz says. "But I also wanted the average-sized viewer to intersect with these people in a personal way. Human needs and dilemmas like looking for love and choosing to start a family are challenges common to all of us, regardless of our individual characteristics. Such questions cut to the heart of how we define a life worth living. They are made more urgent by the specter of genetic testing, which may give us more choices in answering these questions than we ever imagined."

Big Enough has been funded in part by the Stanford University Research Incentive Fund, Fleishhacker Foundation, Peninsula Community Foundation, Yale University Shenkin Fellowship, and Silicon Valley Arts Council.

About the people in "Big Enough":

- Mark and Anu Trombino now have a one-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Priya, who has the same type of dwarfism they have.
- Len and Lenette Sawisch (daughter Joelle, son Brandon) are living and working in Lansing, Mich. Joelle is the president of the Disability Awareness and Education student group at Ferris State University. Because his daughter's "discovery" of the disability movement and his own participation in **Big Enough**, Len is "flirting with coming out of retirement for another decade or so of advocacy work."
- Ron and Sharon Roskamp (now Sharon Ostendorf) divorced shortly after filming was completed. They both continue to live and work in Grand Rapids, Mich. Their daughter, Alisha, is in high school and their son, Andrew, recently graduated from the University of Michigan.
- Karla and John Lizzo are living and working in southern New Jersey. They have decided not to have children.

About the filmmaker:

Jan Krawitz

Director/Producer/Editor

Jan Krawitz has been independently producing and directing documentary films since 1975. **Big Enough** is the follow-up to her 1982 Emmy-nominated PBS documentary, **Little People**. Krawitz's other credits include **Drive-In Blues**, about the demise of drive-in movie theatres, and **Mirror Mirror**, which tackles women's quest for the ideal body. **In Harm's Way** is a personal memoir in which the filmmaker re-examines her formative experiences through the prism of an adult encounter with random violence. **Little People** and **Drive-In Blues** have been broadcast nationally on PBS and the Discovery Channel. **Mirror Mirror** and **In Harm's Way** were broadcast on P.O.V. and "Independent Lens" on PBS, respectively. Earlier films include **Cotton Candy**, **Elephant Stuff** and the 10-minute impressionistic documentary **Styx**, which has received major awards internationally and is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Retrospectives of her work have screened at the Portland Art Museum, Rice University, the Austin Film Society, and the Ann Arbor Film Festival.

Krawitz received a B.A. in film and photography from Cornell University and a Master of Fine Arts in film from Temple University. She taught for eight years at The University of Texas at Austin and spent one year on a fellowship at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard. She is currently a Professor in the Department of Communication at Stanford University where she teaches in the graduate documentary film and video program.

Credits:

Producer: Jan Krawitz
Director: Jan Krawitz
Editor: Jan Krawitz
Cinematographer: Ferne Pearlstein
Original Music: Kris Falk

Running Time: 56:46

Awards & Festivals:

- First Prize, Documentary, Carolina Film and Video Festival, 2005
- First Prize, Documentary, East Lansing Film Festival, 2005
- Heart of the Festival Award, Vermont International Film Festival, 2004
- Director's Citation / Honorable Mention, Black Maria Film & Video Festival, 2005
- Third Prize, Big Muddy Film Festival, 2005
- Sedona International Film Festival, 2005
- Wine Country Film Festival, 2005
- Fairfax Film Festival, 2005
- Women in the Director's Chair, 2005
- Picture this..., 2005
- Riverrun International Film Festival, 2005
- Southern Circuit Tour, 2005
- Tiburon International Film Festival, 2005
- SILVERDOCS: AFI/Discovery Documentary Festival, 2004
- South by Southwest (SXSW), 2004
- Cinequest, 2004
- Rocky Mountain Women's Film Festival, 2004
- United Nations Association Film Festival, 2004
- Santa Fe Film Festival, 2004
- Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival, 2004



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and now in its 18th season on PBS, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running series on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through September, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought over 220 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and now has a Webby Award-winning online series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V. is available online at www.pbs.org/pov.

P.O.V. Interactive (www.pbs.org/pov)

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. It also produces a Web site for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through community-based and educational applications, focusing on involving viewers in activities, information and feedback on the issues. In addition, www.pbs.org/pov houses our unique *Talking Back* feature, filmmaker interviews and viewer resources, and information on the P.O.V. archives as well as myriad special sites for previous P.O.V. broadcasts.

P.O.V. Community Engagement and Education

P.O.V. provides Discussion Guides for all films as well as curriculum-based P.O.V. Lesson Plans for select films to promote the use of independent media among varied constituencies. Available free online, these originally produced materials ensure the ongoing use of P.O.V.'s documentaries with educators, community workers, opinion leaders and general audiences nationally. P.O.V. also works closely with local public television stations to partner with local museums, libraries, schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the issues in P.O.V.'s films. *Youth Views*, P.O.V.'s youth engagement initiative, expands these efforts by working directly with youth service organizations.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Educational Foundation of America, the Ford Foundation, PBS and public television viewers. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television station including KCET/Los Angeles, WGBH/Boston, and WNET/New York. Cara Mertes is executive director of P.O.V./American Documentary, Inc.



Support for P.O.V. is provided by Starbucks Coffee Company. Starbucks has a rich tradition of supporting the arts and independent film and celebrates the fact that numerous points of view can be discussed over a good cup of coffee. Starbucks is committed to offering the highest quality coffee in grocery stores nationwide.

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TAPE REQUESTS: ***Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.***