



For Immediate Release

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P.O.V.'s "Following Sean" Rewinds to 1960s Counter-Culture, Fast-Forwards to the Present, Tuesday, July 31 on PBS

Ralph Arlyck's Provocative 1969 Portrait of Haight-Ashbury 4-year-old
Receives Surprising and Touching Sequel

*"A tender and levelheaded rumination on the legacy of the '60s and the mysteries
of everyday life... – Nathan Lee, The New York Times*

No doubt, when filmmaker Ralph Arlyck decided in the mid-1990s to revisit the subject of the student short he'd made almost three decades earlier in San Francisco, he hoped to find answers to the question that had followed him all those years. What had happened to the impish, barefooted little boy who had alternatively charmed and horrified audiences in 1969? Back then, Arlyck's candid camera and 4-year-old Sean Farrell's precocious thoughts on pot smoking, police presence and a freewheeling, unshod life in the Haight-Ashbury had sent the film "Sean" on an international round of screenings (including the White House) and press uproars rarely accorded a student film.

Depending on their reaction to a turbulent and still-notorious era of political and social upheaval, viewers saw in "Sean" their best hopes or worst fears. Would Sean grow up to exemplify a "hippie" vision of freedom? Or would he turn out to be a drug addict or stockbroker?

Any of those predictions, of course, would have provided a clear storyline and easy drama. But, as Arlyck is the first to admit in **Following Sean**, his feature-length sequel premiering on PBS' **P.O.V.** series, life hardly ever turns out clear and easy. But there's always drama. And any visit to the past will open up as many questions about hopes and realities, ideals and emotions, freedoms and obligations, youth and old age, as it ever settles — for the filmmaker as well as the film's subject.

Ralph Arlyck's **Following Sean** has its national broadcast premiere on **Tuesday, July 31, 2007** at 10 p.m. on PBS, as part of the 20th anniversary season of public television's groundbreaking **P.O.V.** series. (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.

Arlyck met Sean in the late 1960s when the filmmaker was a graduate student at San Francisco State College and living in the city's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. "The Haight" was counter-culture central for the Bay Area's extended "Summer of Love" even as the campus was a center of radical student activism that rivaled nearby UC Berkeley. Like others in those days, East Coast native Arlyck had been drawn to California's excitement and especially to the Bay Area's "history-in-the-making" ferment.

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But he remained a self-described fringe participant in a serio-comic circus by whose free-spirited values he felt charmed, ambivalent and confused.

Living one floor below a group of radical med students and two floors below a family led by charismatic Johnny Farrell — who had left behind a wealthy, conservative '50s background to create a family circle that embodied “Summer of Love” ideals of freedom and creativity with his wife, Susie — Arlyck found himself beguiled by talking to the Farrells' four-year old, Sean, who had free run of the building and of the neighborhood. When it came time for Arlyck to make a thesis film, he decided — with admirable documentary instincts — simply to follow Sean on a skateboard along teeming Haight Street and then sit the child down for an impromptu interview.

“Sean” hit a national nerve and marked the beginning, in ways he only begins to understand in his new film, of Arlyck's own “long, strange trip.” His career as a filmmaker had been launched when he filmed Sean. What had become of that little boy? But also, what had become of Arlyck's early aspirations, values, confusions and relationships, as he made his way from a place and time of impractical idealism to a quotidian world of economic pressure and social expectations? When Arlyck, who long ago had abandoned California dreaming for East Coast suburbia, emplaned for San Francisco, he felt that he was closing a cinematic reality loop — as only documentary film can — possibly for Sean, but most assuredly for himself.

Following Sean inevitably turns into the story of three generations of Sean's family, including himself and his half-brother; their hard-working if vagabond father; Sean's mother, who turned to a more settled spiritual path; and his grandparents on his mother's side, Archie and Hon Brown. Perhaps because they seem to offer a more grounded idealism than his beloved father, Sean is drawn to the grandparents who were important union organizers and Communist Party members in the 1950s.

Following Sean includes a striking piece of uncovered archival footage: Archie Brown leading a raucous protest at the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings in San Francisco and being arrested and forcibly removed by those he loudly labels “goons.”

When, in the course of filming, Sean marries a Russian immigrant, Zhanna, Arlyck recalls the start of the Haight-Ashbury's most enduring legacy to his life — his relationship to his beautiful French-born wife, Elisabeth Cardonne. As both marriages begin to suffer cross-cultural stresses in the course of **Following Sean**, Arlyck and his film are drawn into deeper waters of cross-generational truth and consequences.

Call it chance or historical synchronicity or the inevitable self-reflexivity of cinema. **Following Sean** becomes a soulful rumination on an extraordinary passage in the nation's political and cultural history, and even more a meditation on the passing of generations and the legacies handed down by individual choices taken in the whirlwinds of historical necessity. A delightful aspect of **Following Sean** is the film's unfolding realization that to understand the story of a life is to understand the stories of families, clans, generations and societies in motion.

“Most of us are constantly trying to figure out what we can claim for ourselves versus what we owe our families — the ones we live with, the ones that created us and the ones that will continue after us,” says Arlyck. “That was what was so wonderful about going back and finding Sean and the people around him, to see how an atypical American family — don't forget we're talking about hippies, commies and other ‘fringe elements’ — can still represent major currents of what was happening in America then, and still happens today.”

Following Sean is a production of Timed Exposures in association with Chelsea Pictures, with major funding provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation and UK Channel Four.

About the filmmaker:

Ralph Arlyck Director/Producer

Ralph Arlyck's film work includes "Current Events," which was selected Best Documentary at the Atlanta Film Festival and aired on PBS and the BBC; "An Acquired Taste," regarded as a classic of the personal-essay genre; and the much-acclaimed "Godzilla Meets Mona Lisa," a whimsical tour of Paris' Pompidou Center. He has won awards at Sundance, the New York and London Film Festivals, the Prix Italia and other gatherings. Arlyck has been a prominent advocate for American independent producers, twice testifying before Congress and once before the Carnegie Commission on the importance of independent filmmakers to public television's mission. He writes on production issues for several media journals. A former member of the Board of INPUT, the international television seminar, Arlyck is a member of the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF), and a long-standing participant in the distribution cooperative New Day Films.

Arlyck received a bachelor's degree in English from Colgate University and a master of science from the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. He lives in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., with his wife, Elisabeth, who teaches at Vassar College. He has taught film production at Vassar, the State University of New York (SUNY) Buffalo and SUNY Purchase.

Credits:

Director/Producer:	Ralph Arlyck
Producer/Editor:	Malcolm Pullinger
Cinematography:	Ralph Arlyck, Tomas Tucker
Sound Recording:	Dan Gleich
Sound Production:	Marshall Grupp, Keith Renaud
Original Music:	Eric Neveux

Running Time: 86:46

Festivals:

- Official Selection, San Francisco International Film Festival, 2006
- Official Selection, Rotterdam Film Festival, 2006
- Official Selection, Hamptons International Film Festival, 2006



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 20th season on PBS in 2007, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running showcase 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 nearly 250 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 special features for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through filmmaker interviews, story updates, podcasts, streaming video, and community-based and educational content that involves viewers in activities and feedback. P.O.V. Interactive produces our Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. In addition, www.pbs.org/pov houses *Talking Back*, where viewers can comment on P.O.V. programs, engage in dialogue and link to further resources. The P.O.V. Web site and P.O.V. archives, including special sites from previous broadcasts, form a unique and extensive online resource for documentary storytelling.

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 original materials ensure the ongoing use of P.O.V.'s documentaries with educators, community workers, opinion leaders and general audiences. P.O.V. works closely with local PBS stations to partner with museums, libraries, schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the issues in P.O.V.'s films. P.O.V.'s *Youth Views* expands these efforts by working with youth-service organizations.

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American Documentary, Inc. (www.americandocumentary.org)

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation. Simon Kilmurry is executive director of American Documentary | P.O.V.

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.