

# Peddle steps

One mother's arduous bicycle journey in memory of a daughter

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For Lois Harrison, her documentary *Too Much Hamlet for Me* has been a remarkable yet exhausting journey.

Originally shot in the early 1990s, the film is finally coming to fruition over what's been an arduous process both pre- and post-production. It's tough even to summarize just what actually happened since Harrison lost one of her daughters to a tragic death in 1989 and wrap it up in one little neat movie synopsis.

*Too Much Hamlet for Me* follows Harrison and her daughter and local resident Suzanne MacFadyen as they try to break a Guinness World Record for high altitude cycling in Chile. But then everything goes wrong, and I mean everything, from group infighting and financial problems to health concerns and team members literally abandoning the project midway.

The whole ordeal that took place in Chile in 1990-91 left Harrison with an unfinished film as she never reached her initial goal (almost dying in the process on a Chilean mountain) to commemorate the life of her other daughter who died tragically.

"Ten years after the film was shot in 1990 and 91 when the ini-

tial footage of the planned expedition was shot I went back to Chile and I went there with the idea of finishing the film," she said. "I spent six months in Santiago and the best part the second time around was that I found the driver who had taken me off the mountain. The guy who had saved my life, and interviewed him. And he tells the story in a stream of consciousness in precise detail and exactly as I had remembered it. And it blew my mind to hear him tell the story."

The film will screen at Movie Monday on Jan. 14, though still somewhat unfinished. When Harrison originally set out on her journey to Chile, being in the film herself was unplanned as was the inclusion of her daughter. But look-

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Lois Harrison

ing on the bright side, all the strife makes for good dramatics in the documentary.

"I never set out to make a film until after I lost my daughter, and the film wasn't supposed to be about me. I was supposed to be behind the camera but the more things fell apart, the more I was sort of sucked in front of the lens feeling I had to explain what was



Don Denton/News staff

Lois Harrison's documentary, *Too Much Hamlet for Me* follows Harrison as they try to break a Guinness World Record for high altitude cycling in Chile, in the name of Harrison's dead daughter.

going on. So it's a documentary that documents a series of misadventures, it was supposed to be one thing, the planned thing. And it was consumed by what was driving the film and I was driving the film, and I was in no state to be driving anything."

Harrison had completely given

print. Everything on the work print became useless because we now have the age of digitization. Even the method of transfer on DigiBeta is something like \$400,000, so it's not something that you have in your office. It's not even something that's on the Island, any work that I've been able to do on the film

cinematographer and completely inept sound person who happened to be the daughter of a major sponsor for the trip.

"I've had so much time to think about this that naturally I've deconstructed the whole process," said Harrison. "And examined my motives and experiences and gone over them carefully really to reinforce what happened on the mountain and that unexpected thing that we're not going to spoil for the audience."

And in 2006 after over 15 years of ordeal, Harrison got to watch the somewhat finished project. So what did she think of it?

"When I saw it I didn't know whether to laugh, cry or kill myself."

*Too Much Hamlet for Me* screens at Movie Monday on Monday, Jan. 14 at the Eric Martin Pavilion at 6:30. Admission is by donation.

since coming here five years ago I've had to go to Vancouver and do it."

Watching the film is like watching a plan that seems somewhat doomed from the start take on a mind of its own, reeking havoc with everyone involved. Also on the infamous biking team during the Chilean expedition was a triathlete, a former Navy officer, a

up on the film a few years ago, locking everything away related to the movie in a storage facility. And now, even in breaking it out again, Harrison said things have once again complicated themselves to an amazing degree.

"It's not a little film where I can sit on a computer and work on. I shot it on film, so there's a negative, a transfer, there was a work