

TV FEATURE

Life in the real world

■ Documentaries take a more serious approach to reality

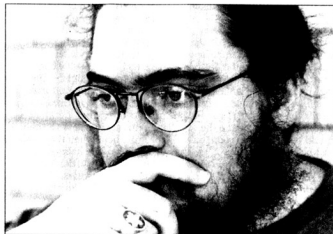
By JOANNE WEINTRAUB
MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Don't think of *Every Mother's Son*, *People Say I'm Crazy* and *Word Wars* as documentaries. Think of them as reality TV for people who are tired of bachelors, bachelorettes and the collected sayings of Nicole Richie.

Downbeat but not depressing, *Every Mother's Son*, part of public TV's P.O.V. series of independent nonfiction films, profiles three women who have turned a personal tragedy into a life of activism. Each mourns a grown son killed by New York City police; all have raised their voices in opposition to what they see as a pattern of excessive force in dealing with unarmed civilians.

The best-known of these mothers is Kadiatou Diallo, a West African who relocated to New York after her son was slain there in 1999. Amadou Diallo, a young immigrant from Guinea, was killed in a now-infamous barrage of 41 gunshots by police who testified that they mistook a wallet on his body for a gun.

The two other women have less familiar but sadly similar stories. Iris Baez's son Anthony was choked to death in 1994 by an officer after a football thrown by Anthony and his friends bounced off a squad car. Five years later Doris Busch Boskey lost her son, Gary Busch, to police gunfire after of-



CINEMAX

TROUBLED TIMES: John Cadigan's life as a schizophrenic is examined in *People Say I'm Crazy*.

ON TELEVISION

- **Every Mother's Son**, 10:30 tonight, PBS
- **People Say I'm Crazy**, 6 p.m. Wednesday, Cinemax
- **Word Wars**, 8 p.m. Thursday, repeated 11 p.m. Thursday and 7 a.m. and noon and 2 p.m. Friday, Discovery Times Channel

Boskey's a Hasidic Jew.

At the end of the hour, filmmakers Kelly Anderson and Tami Gold report that Giuliani's controversial Street Crime Unit, which had been accused of fostering police brutality, was disbanded in 2002 under new Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Ray Kelly.

Much more unconventional is *People Say I'm Crazy*, John Cadigan's unflinching record of his life as a schizophrenic.

Diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia in college, Cadigan, now in his mid-30s, tried endless combinations of antipsychotic and anti-depressant drugs before finding a measure of relief with Clozaril, a medication that helped stabilize his moods but also led to a weight gain of 100 pounds.

Witty and sociable on his good days, he is plagued on his

bad ones by a stubborn paranoia that alienates him from even the most devoted friends and relations.

People Say I'm Crazy ends on a hopeful note, but not an unrealistic one. It's a daring self-portrait of a man with uncommon problems and uncommon courage in facing them.

For dessert, viewers with access to the Discovery Times Channel on digital cable or satellite shouldn't miss *Word Wars*, Eric Chaikin and Julian Petrillo's report on four competitive — make that ultra-hyper-mega-competitive — Scrabble players.

"Eccentric" barely begins to describe "G.I. Joel" Sherman, whose nickname refers not to his military service but to his lengthy catalog of gastrointestinal complaints; or Marlon Hill, a brilliant, angry, funny ace who describes himself as a "pre-Mecca Malcolm X."

On the surface, defending champion Joe Edley and rising star Matt Graham seem more conventional. But like Sherman and Hill, they spend hours a day memorizing long, long lists of the arcane words — "ae," "kab," "waur" — that allow them to rack up scores hundreds of points higher than the average living-room player.

Inspired by *Word Freak*, Wall Street Journal reporter Stefan Fatsis' 2001 book on the subject, *Word Wars* makes clever use of Scrabble-style graphics not just for decoration but also to explain rules and define words without interrupting the action. Unless you already know the meanings of "deciare," "exergue" and "yirth," you'll find the graphics very helpful.



A. CURTIS / PBS

REAL LIFE: P.O.V. filmmakers Kelly Anderson, left, and Tami Gold.

TODAY ON TV

■ **Ancient Monster Hunters:**

Was the one-eyed, man-eating Cyclops real? What about the ferocious griffin? Paleontologists examine newly translated evidence (7 p.m., History Channel).

■ **In the Jury Room:** In State of Colorado v. Laura Trujillo, a wheelchair-confined 20-year-old faces 48 years in prison for beating her 2-year-old daughter to death (9 p.m., Channel 13).

■ **Nip/Tuck:** Conjoined twins (played by real-life conjoined twins Lori and Reba Schappell) must be separated; one has cancer and the other is not strong enough to undergo chemo (9 p.m., FX).

■ **P.O.V.: Every Mother's Son:** Tami Gold and Kelly Anderson's documentary profiles the mothers of three victims of police brutality in New York, including Amadou Diallo, shot 41 times though unarmed (10:30 p.m., Channel 8).