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Tying the Knot ★★★

(2004) 82 min. VHS: \$195. Outcast Films (dist. by Transit Media). PPR. Closed captioned.

Making a case for the legalization of same-sex marriage, Jim de Sève's technically modest *Tying the Knot*, while not entirely riveting, not only offers useful information but contains moments of genuine gravity and pathos. Clearly an activist effort—a legal brief, in effect—the presentation is for the most part sober and restrained (almost to a fault). But some stories pack real emotional power, including the tale of two Florida policewomen and the pension dispute that arose after one was killed in the line of duty. Another, even more wrenching, involves a soft-spoken Oklahoma farmer ejected from the property he and his longtime partner jointly worked because of legal technicalities; it's impossible not to sympathize with the man as he describes, with quiet dignity, the life the two enjoyed together. None of the rest of *Tying the Knot* has equal impact—indeed, some of the historical material is rather drably conveyed, and the treatment of the recent politicization of the subject seems rather perfunctory, though it is fairly up-to-date. Still, the important thing about the film is that it introduces viewers to real individuals who personalize the debate, and that more than makes up for the dull patches. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)