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Top Fringe fare makes 'em laugh

BARRY SMITH'S BABY BOOK The laughter felt like it came from my toes. Monologist Barry Smith has built his newest show around the stages of accomplishment outlined in the baby book his mom received after he was born. As he did in earlier Fringe hits *American Squatter* and *Jesus in Montana*, Smith uses slides and videotape to illustrate his autobiographical story. The visuals work because, in a way, the images could be of anybody's life. We recognize the absurdity of the macramé plant hangers, the drunk-looking uncle, and the silver suit Smith wore to his high-school grad. And, beneath the self-deprecation, there's a fantastic celebration of eccentricity. The young Smith emerges as a weird, skinny kid who couldn't let a moment pass without documenting it, but even his compulsiveness is an expression of vitality. This is one of the strongest offerings in an excellent Fringe. At Venue 2, Waterfront Theatre, on September 12 (5:15 p.m.) and 13 (8:45 p.m.) > **CT**

