

Makeshift 'Shelter' provides some comfort

By Janice Page
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

What is the minimum responsibility of a parent? Is it providing a home for your children? Shielding them from emotional and physical harm? Loving and supporting them, even when they venture outside the nest?

"Shelter" is really the perfect title for Boston filmmaker Lorna Lowe Streeter's frank exploration of her adoptive roots, because this is a documentary about shaky foundations. Whether a family is built biologically or by adoption, the child who feels disconnected becomes the adult who questions

Shelter
Directed by Lorna Lowe Streeter
Starring: Streeter and extended family
At: Coolidge Corner Theatre
Running time: 58 minutes
Unrated (language, mature themes)
**½

her place in the world.

In Streeter's case, the questioning began in earnest when she decided several years ago to track down her birth mother, a decision that did not go over well with her adoptive parents.

Turning over as many rocks as she could find, the filmmaker eventually discovered that the woman who conceived her was

Milton Academy's first black senior class president. In the early 1970s, that woman was headed for Yale when she found herself pregnant by an unheralded Roxbury teenager. Her formidable Virginia family demanded she give the baby up for adoption and she abided, not least because she was part of a generation of females sold on the importance of achieving their individual potential.

Streeter spends much of the film struggling to comprehend her mother's decision, and the less-than-idyllic childhood that resulted. In makeshift, poorly lighted scenes that find her seated awkwardly or standing in front of mirrors, the director films herself in seemingly unscripted riffs that have the feel of late-night self-help sessions. There are long pauses in dialogue, elements out of focus, the random clap of thunder. It's not so much filmmaking as an honest narrative that happens to be filmed.

"Shelter" picks up considerably

when Streeter interrupts her own static collection of contemporary interviews and family snapshots with vintage nuggets from less obvious sources. Footage of doll manufacturing in full swing, with unattached heads undergoing shaping and tiny plastic arms whizzing past on a conveyor belt, is as fascinating as its message is pointed.

But such footage is limited and Streeter's approach can seem single-minded and indulgent. Neither set of parents has lived up to expectations. Even 58 minutes is a long time to watch someone dissect that in literal form.

It probably doesn't matter. This is a work so intensely personal and individually cathartic that one gets the feeling its greatest value was realized long before the final print was struck.

Lorna Lowe Streeter will be at screenings of her film tonight and tomorrow night at 7:15, and Sunday at 5:45 p.m.

**"SIDE-SPLITTING, KNEE-SLAPPING,
BELLY-ACHING LAUGHS!"**

—*Movie News, HOLLYWOOD REPORTER*

"IN-YOUR-FACE FUNNY!" "OUTRAGEOUSLY FUNNY!"

Richard Roe, NORTHWEST GAZETTE

"EVERY WORD OUT OF EUGENE LEVY'S MOUTH WILL

CRACK YOU UP! YOU'LL HAVE
TO SEE IT TWICE BECAUSE YOU'LL BE
LAUGHING SO HARD

YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO HEAR ALL THE JOKES."

—*Movie News, HOLLYWOOD REPORTER*

I laughed 'til I cried!"

—*Gene Siskel, CBS-TV*

"A CROWD-PLEASING COMEDY!"

Not since **THERE'S SOMETHING
ABOUT MARY** has a film delivered
laughs as loud, long and hard."

**The Boston Globe
ADVANCE**