

# Seek out 'Shelter' for painful, moving reunion

By PAUL SHERMAN

Lorna Lowe Streeter goes out on a limb in "Shelter." First, she jeopardizes her relationship with her adoptive parents by expressing the desire to track down her birth mother. Then, she brings a movie camera along and bravely hopes her journey holds drama for audiences.

## Movie Review

Although the experience hardly leaves the Cambridge resident feeling any more in control of her emotional baggage, it does make for a heap of drama.

Streeter's hourlong movie combines interviews she conducts with relatives and reflections she delivers directly to the camera. Honest and sometimes painfully intimate, Streeter's personal documentary is an emotionally charged powder keg.

Streeter had found her birth

"Shelter."  
Not rated.  
At the Coolidge Corner Theatre.  
★★★ (out of four)

mother, Michelle, before filming "Shelter." But she hadn't heard the full story of her being given up for adoption until she drove to Michelle's home in Virginia, turned on the camera and asked her about it.

Michelle, from a proper Virginia family, was class president at Milton Academy in 1971 when she became pregnant. By the time Lorna was born, Michelle had been kicked out of the dorms and accepted to Yale. When her family and her boyfriend pressured her into giving up the baby, she did.

Listening to Michelle tell her story is heart-rending. But Streeter cringes at Michelle's consoling fantasy that the filmmaker had a picture-perfect childhood without her. As we hear in one of Streeter's talks to

the camera, her childhood included an incident of sexual abuse that she felt her adoptive parents handled too passively.

Streeter's adoptive mom, Fran, is here, too. She seems perfectly pleasant, but that's perhaps part of the problem for Streeter, who says she lived with her parents and brother (also adopted) "as polite strangers."

Streeter's views of her two mothers sometimes seem harsh, judging from what we see. Similarly, many of the issues with which Streeter wrestles — not feeling emotionally connected to her parents, not knowing how to move past the pains of childhood — are things that many people feel, adopted or not.

But the phrase "private hell" exists for a reason. "Shelter" is a subjective movie, but Streeter's quest for happiness is so universal that her movie undeniably works.

("Shelter" includes cursing, adult themes.)

#1 MOVIE IN



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