

YOU SEE ME  
A film by Linda J. Brown

Filmmaker's Statement

I set out to make a portrait of my father. However a much bigger story emerged. *You See Me* is about my family dealing with trauma, loss and grief, as well as my own journey to rehabilitate the memory of my father and connect with my mother in a new and unexpected way.

As a child I spent a lot of time with my dad. We were buddies, always doing things together and yet I can't say I ever really understood him. I had the feeling he truly wanted to be more connected and engaged but his mood swings, anger and erratic behavior seemed to consume him. I attempted in an earlier documentary *Your Favorite* to figure out the reason, the cause for this disconnect. But as a young, fledgling filmmaker I lacked the maturity and experience needed to ask the difficult questions that would help me delve into his complex and troubled past. The film was the beginning of a lifelong quest. But one I put on hold.

Twenty years later, at age seventy-nine, and in failing health my father, Stanley suffered a debilitating stroke. I knew if I was ever to make sense of his life and our relationship, now was the time. My plan was to return to those difficult questions about his past while I documented his recovery. But the next few years were a whirlwind of dramatic life-changing events: the rapid mental and physical deterioration of my father, the heartbreaking circumstances of his death, the uncovering of long hidden family secrets, the discovery of a treasure trove of redeeming video tapes and the unexpected bond that developed between me and my mother

During this journey I began to see my parents differently, separate from me, with their own stories, virtues and flaws. They were more than the roles and labels I had ascribed to them. They were products of their own histories and parents, wrestling with their own demons, just like me.

They were the same parent's I had known before I began shooting, but seemed different. Now when I asked my mom in the film why she put up with the abuse, I heard a thoughtful, reasoned answer, not a weak excuse. When I felt angry with my dad for endlessly trying to get his mother's love, I realized I had been doing the same thing with him. Once I saw my parents as equals, allies I was able to empathize with them, because I saw myself in them.

My hope with *You See Me* is that audiences see their own family stories and relationships in it and they see the power of love and forgiveness to turn trauma and loss into a potent catalyst for change. Even though the film deals with illness and death, it's really about beginnings, hope, and how opportune things can happen when least expected.