

Unforgettable

By Suzy Hopkins

Finally the independent movie "The Grass Harp" came to a theatre near Sacramento. On a late November Saturday in 2011 my friend Kay and I, dressed in our city best, went to Nevada City, a small trendy former gold rush town in the Sierra foothills about an hour from my Sacramento home. We had reservations at the classiest restaurant in town. By the time we had reached the highway exit it was snowing heavily. We drove around the steep streets without any luck finding a parking space. A few streets away from the restaurant we landed one. Slipping and sliding in our city slicker shoes we hung on to each other aiming for the restaurant. About 10 feet from the front door the town lost its power. In the total darkness we stopped dead in our tracks. The front door of the restaurant flew open. The man said, "We have a gas stove. Come in, come in." So we did.

The tables had shabby looking candles pulled from some dusty cupboard but they did job. I ordered swordfish, my favorite. It was cooked perfectly. Uncertain as to what else to do in the town with no power we took our time enjoying the delicious food. As we were leaving the dark restaurant I stopped in the kitchen to congratulate the cook, "You are amazing. Swordfish is easy to overcook but you cooked it just perfectly IN THE DARK."

As we scrambled back to my car the power came back on. "Yeah, we can go to the movie!" We slid to the theatre (no snow tires) and arrived a few minutes before show time. We were greeted by a middle aged man at a counter like in a dry cleaning shop. He took our money (no tickets appeared) and offered for sale a homemade brownie from a plate on the aforementioned counter. He asked about where we had come from and was generally being friendly. I said, "We better take our seats or we'll miss the picture." He said, "I'm the projectionist so no rush." He ushered us into the theatre where there was a large pile of couch pillows and various colored sections of ancient seats from several different theatres, facing the screen. He said, "Take a pillow and sit anywhere." There were six other brave movie goers. He stood at the front and said, "People have been known to drive for 60 minutes to see this film." Everyone said hello. He introduced the movie and went in the back to start the projector. Halfway through the movie it stopped. While he rewound the movie and prepared the second half we visited with the other patrons.

After the movie we skidded to my car. The snow had frozen to the windshield. Kay and I used credit cards to scrape a place for me to look through the snow. It N-E-V-E-R snows in Sacramento. On the way home we laughed in our soaked shoes about this adventure that was to definitely become an unforgettable memory.