

Filmmaker takes fresh look at bereavement



Joseph D. Peters in studio working on “Eskimo Ice Cream Shoes”.

Filmmaker Joseph D. Peters didn't like what he saw of films about coping with bereavement, so he went out and made his own.

The result is “Eskimo Ice Cream Shoes,” an offbeat uplifting short drama about dealing with grief. The 15-minute film is a fully developed drama that explores one woman's journey beyond grief.

The story focuses on Theresa, who, after a year, is still grieving the sudden death of her husband. She goes through a typical pattern of grief behavior – suppressing pain in denial which leads to loss of appetite, sleeplessness and, in Theresa's case, abuse of alcohol. A friend suggest that she takes a trip. When she does, Theresa meets a stranger who sells “Eskimo Ice Cream Shoes,” and he shows her how to redirect her grief into a healthy direction. She acts on a childhood dream, becoming a clown who wears the Eskimo Ice Cream Shoes and entertains at an orphanage.

The film is a gentle fable that doesn't hit the viewer over the head with instruction and the story is enhanced with the camera work, including an eerie dream sequence.

“It's a universal theme that we all have to go through, yet we're not educated in school in terms of how to deal with not only when your grandparents die, but when a classmate dies. It affects all of us at every age level,” Peters said.

He began extensive research on the subject. He went through several drafts of his script before he started filming. He financed it himself, budgeting it at \$15,000 and bringing it in just under \$15,000. He took a three-week vacation from his job as a technical support person at Xerox to complete the project. It took only two days to film the story (with Peters himself taking the role of the vendor).

“He said that he was the perfect actor – “I worked for free, I was on time and I didn't complain” – but he did admit that he prefers to stay behind the camera.

He had the project done in two weeks. “I still had a few days left of my vacation, so I just laid in bed for two days.” Peters remembered with a laugh.

Within 48 hours of sending the final version out to distributors, Carle Media in Urbana, Illinois called to offer to distribute the film. The film is being distributed nationwide as well as to every English speaking country around the world.