

## A tale of beauty, terror, and snow

I drove through my first snow storm. I was returning from singing Sunday service at St. Olaf's and while I was on my way home, I stopped at an Office Depot near Ridgeview Mall to pick up some office supplies.

By the time I came out, it had begun to snow, very light sparkly little flakes, and I thought to myself, "Hooray, finally!! Snow!" Cool.

I got back on 394 west and by the time I reached 12 west, it was 12 noon and I was driving in the middle of a blinding white blizzard.

"Hello God, are you up there? This is Maria, remember me? I was singing Your praises about an hour ago. What do I do now?"

All of a sudden, I could barely see the car in front of me or behind me, but I kept driving. The only thing I could see or follow was the two tracks left by the car ahead of me. I strived to stay on those tracks, never mind that they crossed double yellow lines on the road.

I could not drive more than 35 miles an hour. Cars were spun out into ditches on both sides of the road.

At every stop light or stop sign I came to I was terrified that I wouldn't be able to stop in time because of the sliding. Then I worried about not being able to gain enough traction to continue driving on the tire paths that were quickly moving away from me.

I thought maybe I should drive off

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Howard Lake

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to the side, stop and wait until it all blews over, but in another split second, I said to myself, "No, I better not. I should just keep going."

This was definitely "white knuckle time" folks. I thought of calling my husband on my cell phone, but that would require removing one hand from the wheel (absolutely illegal, stupid and ill-advised). It was impossible anyway, because my hands were crazy glued to the steering wheel. Nope, not a good idea.

Three inches of snow was piling up on the road and there were no snow tractors in sight, just me and the poor soul in front of me.

I made it home and while parking the car into the garage, my husband, clearly worried, but glad to see me, came out to greet me, he had to peel my fingers off the steering wheel.

It was the scariest day of my life, and I hope I never have to drive through a snow storm again, but there is something captivating about watching a storm like that from a very large bay window in the warmth of your home.

So now that we have this cold weather, I can wear the seal skin coat that I inherited from my grandmoth-

er. I never wore it in California, too warm. There were some cold nights in Santa Cruz, but one never dared to wear a real fur coat because some lunatic fringe element might douse you with red paint. They, of course, never allowing you the chance to explain that the coat was made in the 1920's and you had nothing to do with the seal's demise.

It is very efficient against sub-zero temperatures. I love wearing it, although sometimes it makes me feel like a Hollywood actress.

Speaking of which, I always thought Anna Nicole Smith was a ridiculous creature. I feel terrible and sad about her. It's sickening to watch the media's relentless feeding frenzy and the pack of hyenas devouring her corpse before it is even in the ground.

It makes me feel ashamed to be a member of the human race.

One final note about the snow. My backyard is huge, an expanse of land that attaches to an open field.

It is covered with a white carpet, which is elegant and pristine against the backdrop of a sunset with black hollow branches of trees painted in the sky.

That visual is now ruined by the dinner fork streaks clawed into the snow by snowmobiles. I'm glad that people are having fun with their snow toys, but did they have to tear up the carpet in my backyard?

Oh, well.