

Love affair started in Tahoe reignited through the years

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Pat Brown's heart is getting a second chance.

Twice.

Brown, 76, suffered a cardiac arrest while having dinner at the Elephant Bar in Citrus Heights on Dec. 2.

"I was gone," he said. "When your lights get turned off, your lights get turned off."

A quick application of CPR turned them back on – the first of his second chances.

He returned to the Elephant Bar on Monday, ostensibly for the crême brûlée he didn't get to eat the last time.

Really, it was so the woman who revived him could say this:

"With all my heart, I love you," she said. "I would like to ask, would you marry me?"

That was his second second chance. The woman is his ex-wife Lucy Brown, a nurse he married 40 years ago and later divorced.

"In all honesty," Pat Brown answered, sitting in a booth in the back of the restaurant, "in my heart I never divorced you. You divorced me, remember?"

There's bittersweetness to this love story, because of one missing piece – a different second chance that will never come.

Their son Ryan, born in 1971, had an auto accident when he was

18 and was incapacitated – doctors said brain dead – for 17 years until he died in 2007.

The Browns' story goes back to a spring day in 1970 at Lake Tahoe, where Pat Brown worked as a general contractor.

Lucy Brown, now 68, was a cocktail waitress while waiting for her first nursing job to start at Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe.

Read the whole story