

BOOKS

HEALING MYSELF, A HERO'S PRIMER FOR RECOVERY FROM TRAGEDY, by Gari Carter. Hampton Roads Publishing Co. \$10.95.

By MARILYN HOLASEK LLOYD

Imagine this: One minute you have a beautiful model's face and the next minute your face is gone, reduced to an "ugly, open, gory, hole." In 1982 this happened to Gari Carter as a result of a head-on collision in the wilderness, 15 miles from Fredricksburg.

She and her son were driving to Baltimore when it started to snow. Carter's inner voice told her to return home, but she drove on. Her Datsun was hit by a station wagon that went out of control on the ice, and in that moment her life was changed forever. "Healing Myself" is Carter's story of her courageous 11-year journey to recovery from those life-threatening injuries sustained over a decade ago.

Carter, who formerly operated a shop in Orange called Orangerie, now makes her home in Crystal Beach, Fla., according to the publisher.

As she describes the accident, it was a miracle she survived at all. Her 10-year-old son, local residents, a passing motorist, local rescue squads and the University of Virginia Hospital saved her life. Her son shook his mother to start her breathing,

After the crash: Triumph of spirit

a woman who lived in a nearby house called the rescue squad, and a passing motorist stopped the fire in the car. The rescue squad with "the jaws of life" extricated

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her from the car and took her to Charlottesville. At U.Va. they inserted a tracheotomy tube to control her breathing since she had no nose or mouth. She also had a severed leg, shattered kneecap and other broken bones.

All of the previous information is imparted in the first chapter, and the rest of the book is devoted to the healing pro-

cess, which involved many hospitalizations and surgeries. Each step of her recovery is written about in great detail, from coping with a tracheotomy to using a feeding tube. She had to relearn tasks we all take for granted, such as walking, dressing, bathing, speaking and eating with a rebuilt mouth.

Besides her physical recovery, she faced gigantic emotional and spiritual challenges.

The reader is transfixed with all of the aspects of Gari Carter's healing, and wants to read more to see how she is doing. It is a bit overwhelming. I often cringed at her descriptions, even though I have been a nurse. By the end of the book, I was touching my own nose, chin and teeth, and counting my blessings for having them.

Carter counted her blessings at every step of her healing. She especially credits the expertise of her craniofacial sur-

geon, Dr. Milton T. Edgerton, and his special team of physicians.

Another remarkable part of her recovery is due to her affiliation with the Monroe Institute. A friend told her about the institute, which helps people overcome pain and have faster recovery from surgeries. Robert Monroe makes tapes involving brain hemispheric synchronization in which "the listener is transported into specific expanded states of consciousness."

These tapes were critical to Carter's recovery, because they enabled her to cope with many of her surgeries without the panic and pain of her earlier ones. She said the tapes made it possible for her to endure some of her late plastic surgeries without pain medication and anesthesia.

Besides the expert medical care and the tapes, Carter's mother, family, and friends played a major role in her recovery.

Most of all, however, she shows in "Healing Myself" how one woman can rise above suffering, pain, disfigurement, dependency and despair to become a symbol of courage to anyone facing a life crisis. The rest of us cannot help but be uplifted and encouraged by the physical, emotional and spiritual triumphs experienced by Gari Carter.

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