

Halo Sisters

FROM TWO TRAGEDIES COMES ONE FRIENDSHIP

By Michelle R. Nickens



Photography by Inga Finch

Bev DeMello and Angela Glenn

A tragedy happens and out from the rubble, tears and scars, something remarkable happens—revelation, growth and friendship. For two Tallahassee women, their remarkably parallel journeys brought them together, forming a bond of true friendship.

In 2000, Angela Glenn was in a car accident. The hit was severe. Paramedics arrived and transported her to the hospital, where she was admitted to the intensive care unit. Tests showed a break at the upper cervical C2. The doctor applied a halo brace to limit Angela's movements and to keep her stable. "I remember hearing the drill," she explained, "feeling pressure and smelling burned skin."

Having a halo applied is an emotional, physical, mental and painful process. Angela was in the hospital for about a week before she began physical therapy. Although she was in the halo for months, she did not allow it to debilitate her. "I still did the things I loved to do," she said.

Nine years later, in 2009, Bev DeMello was heading home on Centerville Road when she suddenly spotted a possum in her headlights. Bev swerved but her car began to skid and she slammed on the brakes. "That's the last thing I remember," she said, "until paramedics told me I had been in an accident."

Like Angela, tests confirmed that Bev also suffered a broken upper cervical C2, as well as a bruised spinal column and multiple fractures in the thoracic and lumbar regions. Doctors placed Bev in a halo. Her recovery process was lengthy. Bev was also in a thoracolumbar sacral orthosis brace, which she refers to as "the turtle shell." It totally limits movement. "Tasks that were easy before were difficult, like washing your hair," she said.

Even with therapy, Bev was determined to do more. In January 2010, she joined a gym, seeking a personal trainer. Bev could not have asked for a more perfect person—Angela.

Angela became interested in training while in physical therapy. "My therapist and the techniques she used were awesome. I wanted to learn them." She became a certified personal trainer and exercise instructor. She eventually was hired by a local gym, and just one week later, Bev walked in the door and into her life.

"It was comforting to know that Angela had been in the halo," Bev said. "She would know what to do with my neck, design exercises that would work the right muscles and understand what I was going through. Sometimes I get down on myself because I can't do everything I used to. Angela reminded me to think about where I had been and where I am today and focus on that. She is my cheerleader."

Angela stresses the positive with her clients. "You can't cry over what's happened in the past and dwell on thinking you can't do it. You have to heal from it in the stages you need to and be consistent, determined and goal-oriented. You can change your path." It would seem that Angela and Bev's paths were destined to cross. Both survived near death experiences, lived in halos, and were treated at the same clinic. They have courage, integrity, leadership and drive. They view fitness as a priority. Angela participated in fitness competitions and Bev played a variety of sports.

"For every action there is a reaction," Angela said. "You are on your life's course. The way you handle that will make you a better person. This unexpected event made me stronger. Life is more meaningful."

Bev explained, "Things that used to mean the most, are no longer important. Living in the moment is more important."

Angela and Bev, halo sisters, serve as a reminder to stay strong, focused and live life to the fullest. Life is precious. As Bev said, "Don't wait for a halo in this life to better understand what it might mean to wear one tomorrow." 