

INDESTRUCTIBLE SOUL

How I decided not to die



Catherine Holland

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Cover picture by Gary Cunnington:
Crossing the Tatra Mountains from Slovakia
into Poland on my Ducati 916 and Gary's
Yamaha R1. Perfect touring bikes! We decided
to travel light as we were riding sports bikes.
This is all the luggage we took.
We rode from England to Poland in 2006.

Dedication

I dedicate this book to my children for their support in my recovery, and to my husband Gary whom I met a year later while convalescing; for his patient assistance in getting me back on a bike and taking my test. I will be forever grateful.

17th June 2015

Before you begin

Here are the areas that I feel contributed to my survival by maintaining high levels of available oxygen for my cells to repair:

- 1 Breathing fully
- 2 Drinking water
- 3 High raw food intake
- 4 Exercise
- 5 Supportive medicines
- 6 Careful choice of thoughts
- 7 Loving people
- 8 Sunshine and fresh air
- 9 Deep tissue injury treatment (to remove damaged cells and renew blood vessels)

These come from my free guide
Indestructible Health: How I survived a car crash and healed myself so I could walk, climb, dance and cycle again.

Day 1 ***Impact***

20th(?) June 2000 (I deliberately have not sought to clarify this date), 10.30pm.

From the top of the hill there was no break in the long line of cars on the road. Their red tail lights made a long snake in the dark. I noticed a car in Rowood Drive, the side turning, waiting to pull out. As I neared this car and slowed down to take the bend just after the turning, for a split second I could see the front of a car enter my vision on the left of my visor, as it crunched into my left leg. I, and my bike, flew into the air, and the pain hit me as I crashed to the ground and lay bleeding heavily.

I closed my eyes at that point, and didn't open them for more than a few seconds at a time, for the next five days.

They told me the driver's name was David Allen. He'd been to the pub with his wife. They were so drunk, that as I lay in the road bleeding profusely, she got out of the car pronounced 'Oh, you're alright' and turned to get back into the car. I opened my eyes with the energy produced by my rage and growled 'No, I'm not'. I noticed she had peroxidized blonde, bleached hair before I disappeared into semi consciousness.

I travelled down a dark tunnel where the pain ebbed away with my blood, and I became aware that I had a choice to carry on into the place with no pain, or to return and see my three children grow up. I chose to

return, knowing that that would bring back the full brunt of the pain. It was so great I could not tell where it was coming from. I lay there trying to guess, worried about whether my back was injured and I'd be paralysed. I connected my breath in and out, staying alive. My training for so long in breath work meant that this was an automatic response to an emergency, and I am certain, contributed to saving my life.

I am no stranger to the subconscious or unconscious worlds; part of my spiritual practice over the years has been to journey into the unconscious – practising conscious connected breathing sessions lasting from fifteen minutes to an hour, but occasionally up to two and a half hours long, with a strange hovering sensation where time stands still. Feelings of being turned to stone, and memories of being squeezed as

I was expelled at birth from my mother's body, are not uncommon. So the situation I found myself in immediately after the collision, was familiar in some ways, and therefore perhaps not as difficult to deal with for these reasons. My breath continued in and out without me needing to pay attention to it, although it must have stopped during the time I felt that I left my body. I didn't measure it, so I don't know how much it changed, but I do remember everything that happened to me, so I know that I didn't pass out. I remember seeing the car in my visor as it struck me, I remember flying through the air with my bike, and then hitting the road hard. I remember the blonde drunk woman; I could only see her, not the car or the driver, because I still had my full-faced helmet on.

I passed far enough away to feel no physical pain, but my perception was not changed in any way. My sense of self remained the same. My body was left behind in the road and I was some distance above it, forward and to the right. I had no sense of the Earth, the ground my body, or any weight. I was just the me that I am familiar with, the knowing part of me, I suppose you would call it the spirit of me. I hadn't gone very far—it felt like an arm's length or two—but I sensed that I was upright, while my body was actually lying down on the road. When I chose to come back, the feeling was that my body was down and behind me and that I went backwards to where I lay. I knew that my pain was there and I would begin to feel it again very suddenly. Leaving my body had been such a relief, because the pain was so all-encompassing.

I perceived that there was a space between the place where I left my body, and the tunnel where I was to continue my journey, if I did so. That way was forwards, the way I was facing. Upon reading about this topic, I have learned that this is a common place to evaluate if one really wishes to leave this lifetime and move on, a moment of reflection and pause, with a possibility of return to unfinished business. This was so in my case. My children were not fully grown and there was still work for me to do as a parent. It was a joyful role that I loved and they are very special to me. I couldn't imagine leaving them at that point, so this was a strong pull back for me. I do believe that had I not had children I would have continued on, away from the pain; there was no other reason that came to me to turn

back. It was a really hard physical choice to make, albeit an easy emotional one.

The travelling to other consciousness levels happens on the out breath. This has happened to me many times, and I have watched others while rebirthing them, too. This is interesting because when the spirit leaves the body for the last time upon death, it is of course on the out breath.

With my eyes closed, I asked someone to hold my hand. I have no idea who it was, I didn't want to die alone, lying on the tarmac in the road in the dark in terrible pain. I imagine it was one of the passers by. The traffic stopped and the other drivers refused to let the drunk drive off.

Somebody spoke to me. The police had ar-

rived. What was my name? Where did I live? What had I been drinking that evening? Actually I'd been climbing for two hours at the Climbing Centre with Martin and Chris and then dancing for an hour and a half with my friend Janet, at the Fiddle and Bone in central Birmingham, to the Band of Rack & Ruin, and they'd been playing the Star of the County Down, which I had danced to, as it is one of my favourites. I'd drunk a pint of water.

The ambulance crew arrived, and they applied a tourniquet to my leg. I remember thinking, I thought tourniquets weren't used any more. I found out later that they are only used when there is a danger of imminent death through blood loss, as they increase the chance of needing an amputation.

I was driven what felt like a long way by ambulance, to Heartlands Hospital. It took me a while to work out why I was going there instead of to Solihull Hospital which was nearer, but no longer has Emergency facilities at night. Heartlands also has an orthopaedic unit, so I would had to have been taken there anyway. The pain was huge, and it wasn't helped by being jolted, I remember thinking that ambulances should have better suspension!

They took off my clothes, cutting up my new underwear! My granny was wrong, it was a big mistake to wear new underwear if you get hit by a car. They chop it off. I was put on a drip and given a catheter.

They asked me if I had gone unconscious at any point, or did I remember everything

that had happened. I said I had stayed conscious, as I remembered everything. Apparently if I had gone unconscious, I would not have recovered. My body would not have had the energy to come back, because of the loss of four pints – that's half – of my blood.

My children arrived in the early hours. It had taken the police four hours to wake them up.

They had a knock on the door, 'Does your Mum ride a motorbike? she has a broken leg.' My younger daughter Rebecca said 'She'll need a hug then', and persuaded her boyfriend to give them a lift to the hospital and I think, to collect her sister from town on the way. Nobody realised how seriously injured I was.

I remember being asked what I was allergic to, and I said antibiotics. They gave them to me anyway and I was really annoyed, but I didn't have the strength or command of my tongue to argue. The last thing I needed was to fight drugs that disagreed with me.

I had a number of X-rays when I first arrived. They worked out which bits were broken. A little later, they were going to display them on a light box up on the wall. My older daughter Anna said 'You'll want to see this Mum, WHEN IT'S READY I'LL TELL YOU TO OPEN YOUR EYES FOR A SECOND TO SEE IT.' It was extraordinary how she stepped into this situation so quickly, so naturally, making the appropriate decisions. I suppose it helped that she knew me so well, but she had had no train-

ing for this. She followed her instincts, and it was just what I needed.

They 'parked' me right in front of the nurses' station on the Orthopaedic Ward. They were watching to see if I would recover, keeping me under observation in case I took a turn for the worse. Having lost so much blood, they were going to watch to see if I lost consciousness in the night. I guess they didn't know that I had already made the decision to live, while bleeding in the road a couple of hours before.

Day 2

Surgery

Mr Goswami, the Orthopaedic Surgeon, came to my bedside the next day, to explain that I was to be taken to theatre and that he would operate. He explained what he was planning to do. 'I'll save your leg if I can, I may have to cut it off below the knee.' I remember my reply: 'You can't do that, I'm a climber and a dancer and a cyclist', and then I burst into tears.

I vaguely remember being given a pre-theatre medication, I remember being a bit nervous, but I was far too preoccupied to be able to be nervous properly. Very strange now, thinking back to that.