

By Samantha Vos

“I don’t think of myself as great. What I have accomplished is very normal” is Carolyn Lim’s usual retort to those who hail her as a heroine and a source of inspiration.

The 32 year-old was once a spunky and sporty young woman who enjoyed activities such as windsurfing, belly dancing and exercising at the gym. Her life took a turn in September 2006 when she was struck by lightning while she was windsurfing at East Coast. The incident left the former English teacher in a six-week coma. When she regained consciousness, she realised that she could not write, walk or even speak.

“As I was lying in hospital, I was extremely upset because I couldn’t eat and I had a tube up my nose. My long hair had been shaved off for the brain surgery, my right eye was skewed and I could not see clearly. I was so upset, I wanted to die!”, said Carolyn.

"They visited me every day when I was at my lowest point in hospital and made me realise that I was an important person. That made me think—if they valued me and my life so much, then definitely I should too." Thankfully, the combination of therapies, support from her loved ones and her inner strength allowed this gutsy survivor to overcome the odds.

“I have been brought up to believe that if I put my mind to it, I can do it. That has been very important in helping me realise that I don’t have to take the matter lying down, and that I had much more to my life than just feeling sorry for myself.

“Growing up, my parents were not the kind to say ‘Oh, you can’t do it, nevermind; you’ve tried your best. They have always been the kind to say if you want something and you can’t do it, you can try something else, maybe a different method that you have not thought of. In that way, I was trained to problem solve and troubleshoot since young.”

However, she says that the most important reason why she never gave up on herself was because of the amazing support her parents and her boyfriend William whom she married in 2007 gave her then. “They visited me every day when I was at my lowest point in hospital and made me realise that I was an important person. That made me think—if they valued me and my life so much,

then definitely I should too.”

Over the years, her indomitable personality saw her make concerted efforts to take charge of her life.

Although she still walks and writes slowly, has double vision and zero depth perception— a flight of stairs with no marking on them looks like flat ground to her—and cannot speak clearly, she has managed to make lemonade out of the lemons that life has dealt her.

In 2008, she studied for a postgraduate programme at the National Institute of Education and obtained her Master of Education in July 2009. The following year, she published *Making Pink Lemonade*, a book detailing her struggle to get her life back to normal. And last year, she gave birth to her first child Isaac whose name means laughter.