



Ms Lim was unable to speak, walk, or write after being hit by lightning while windsurfing with friends on the East Coast. But none of it mattered to her then-boyfriend Mr Ng. The couple were married in July 2007. ST PHOTO: STEPHANIE YEOW

She made lemonade out of lemons

MS CAROLYN Lim, 30, is a former English teacher who was struck by lightning while windsurfing on Sept 10, 2006.

The accident left her bedridden with double vision, a crooked mouth and without the ability to speak clearly. She credits the love of her family and close friends for getting her through the last three years.

Her boyfriend, army regular William Ng, 28, proposed to her six months after the accident and

the couple got married in 2007.

She has written a book about her experience, entitled *Making Pink Lemonade*. It will be released in November.

Ms Lim has a bachelor's degree in European studies and geography from the National University of Singapore. In June, she completed her master's degree in education with the National Institute of Education.

Struck down by lightning

Carolyn Lim hopes to inspire others with the story of her recovery



BY CASSANDRA CHEW

FORMER teacher Carolyn Lim will never forget Sept 10, 2006.

She was out windsurfing with friends on the East Coast when it started to rain.

As her group headed back to shore in strong winds, lightning suddenly struck. Then someone spotted Ms Lim floating face down in the water.

She was hauled onto a boat, taken to shore and sent to Changi General Hospital, but she was unaware of it all.

The next thing she knew, she woke from a six-week coma, with a burn mark on her right shoulder and a tiny white bolt-shaped mark on her right calf, probably where she was struck.

Her long locks had been shaved off for neurosurgery, her right eye was skewed to the middle of her face, and she was experiencing double-vision.

Her face was covered in pimples from toxins released in her body after the shock, her right hand and left leg were limp and her speech was slurred.

"When my Dad first explained what had happened to me, I thought, 'so exciting, which TV drama did he get it from?'," recalls Ms Lim.

But the mirror did not lie. When she finally gathered the courage to look at her reflection, she was horrified.

"I thought, oh my gosh, I look like a toilet brush. No, the toilet brush looked better. My mouth was crooked. I considered my eyes to be my best feature, but my right eye was skewed and I had a feeding tube in my nose," says Ms Lim.

She fell into a deep funk. She pushed away her loved ones, and even told her boyfriend, Singapore Armed Forces regular William Ng, to find himself a new girlfriend.

But they all stood by her. Her father, a traditional Chinese medi-

cine practitioner, stopped working to care for his only child.

And six months after the incident, when she was bound to a wheelchair, Mr Ng proposed.

His willingness to marry her made her realise that she needed to start living again, for the future.

The couple had met through a mutual friend in 2004 and started dating a year later. Within weeks of getting together, he left for Brunei, where he was stationed for a year.

The lightning tragedy occurred three weeks after Mr Ng returned.

He remembers the impact it had on him: "When she was in a coma, I truly began to understand that my life wouldn't be the same without her. When she woke up, I knew she was The One."

He proposed to her at East Coast Park in March 2007.

"She really completes me," said Mr Ng, 28.

On their wedding day, on Ju-

'I LOOK LIKE A TOILET BRUSH'

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Ms Carolyn Lim, when she first saw herself in the mirror after the incident

ly 7 that year, Miss Lim did without her wheelchair, although she had to lean on Mr Ng frequently for support.

They live with Ms Lim's parents and grandfather in a Bukit Panjang apartment.

The past two years have seen her work at getting well again.

Doctors were unsure at first if the avid sportswoman would recover, given injuries that left her unable to speak, walk or write.

But she was determined to pull through. Although the right-hander lost all fine motor skills in her most-used hand, she has trained herself slowly but surely. First with a spoon, then a fork, then with chopsticks, and now she can type.

No longer bedridden, she also works out for up to an hour daily

on an elliptical trainer. She can now walk slowly without support, but tires easily, and still relies on her wheelchair when in public.

She had to learn to speak all over again, and began by reading books aloud, sometimes taking an entire month to complete one story.

Although her speech is now still slow and slightly slurred, she speaks fluently.

She hopes to start a family when she gets stronger.

Now 30, she even completed a master's degree in education at the National Institute of Education in June - only 34 months after her accident.

Looking back, she says she has learnt to "make lemonade from the lemons that life throws at you".

She decided to write a book about her experience in the hope of encouraging others. *Making Pink Lemonade* also describes her struggle against adversity.

Getting the book out proved to be an uphill task. Publishers she approached were not interested.

"I was really, really disheartened," she said.

By last December, she was ready to throw in the towel when she found a cheerleader in former colleague Christine Chee, 36.

The human resource consultant said: "I knew Carolyn as a sporty and active girl. It was so painful to see someone so outgoing cut off from all her pursuits."

Ms Chee decided to drum up support for the book project.

As word spread, groups and individuals began to rally behind Ms Lim. Students from her alma mater, Raffles Institution (Junior College), held a pink lemonade fund-raising sale on Sept 4, collecting more than \$1,500 for her book. Individual donors made out cheques totalling over \$10,000.

She also found a printer - Craft Print International - willing to do the book and publicity material at a subsidised rate.

The book will be out in November.

"What I want is for each reader to be moved and inspired by my story and to take away something meaningful to them, or something to help them weather the difficulties in their own lives," she said.

Making Pink Lemonade can be pre-ordered from Oct 1 at www.makingpinklemonade.com, and will be available from The Canteen at Shaw Centre from late November.

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