

Fitness Is An Everyday Celebration For Janice

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outside a movie theatre with her husband, Beverly Hills Atty. Tim

Tierney, that Darling was struck by a car, which sent her hurtling through a

plate glass window. The driver was under the in-
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"Celebrate being alive" is the chant that reverberates throughout the "Sweat Shop" where men and women of all colors, shapes and sizes come to participate in the "killer exercises" offered.

Celebrating the gift of life through fitness is the philosophy, motivation and theme Janice Darling, owner and fitness director of the Sweat Shop, located in Culver City, has given her program. Darling, 35, a former instructor at "Jane Fonda's Workout," is 132 pounds of "pure muscle." Observing this beautiful 5 foot 8 dynamo, it is hard to believe that less than three years ago she was told she'd never be able to work out again after experiencing a nearly fatal accident.

It was on a spring evening while waiting in line



JANICE DARLING — Fitness is a celebration for this lady.

For Darling . . .

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fluence of quaaludes. Consequently, she was rushed to UCLA Hospital, where doctors discovered that flying glass had severed the optic nerve in her left eye. The eye was removed immediately.

Darling suffered other injuries, among them, a fractured pelvis and serious knee and leg damage. The doctors' answer to Darling's bodily damage was surgery, and even then there was a chance that she would walk with a limp the rest of her life. But Darling refused. Firmly believing that proper nutrition coupled with strenuous exercise could heal, she convinced her doctors to let her work with a therapist. To the doctors' surprise, she actually did get stronger as the weeks went by.

Darling spoke earnestly of the days before she was released from the hospital.

"I couldn't see very well. I could not move, and there was no sensation in my left leg. The urgency to be physical and healthy again was just unreal," she said.

Refusing to accept this state of convalescence, Darling allowed, "This was not the way I was going to live my life. I had a mental image of myself running and jumping."

And it was that mental image that made her persevere. Within three months, Darling was instructing classes again at "Jane Fonda's Workout."

It was during this time that Darling made the decision to break away from Jane Fonda's and open her own studio. Exploding with vigor, Darling recalls returning to the "Workout".

"I had energy in my classes like God had struck me!"

Her classes became so popular, people began signing up as early as 6 a.m. in order to assure a

place in her evening class. Following an amicable departure from Jane Fonda's, Darling moved into the "Sweat Shop." With the assistance of her group of instructors, Darling offers eight one hour-and-20-minute classes a day.

"This is the toughest fitness program in town," claims Darling.

She explains that it's the whole phenomenon of surviving a tragic situation and using it to benefit herself and others as well. "Because of what I went through, I gave myself the highest possible exercises — the toughest you could do." She incorporated that into her fitness program and calls it "tuff-stuff."

Darling also offers a stretch class, "tuff-enuff," and a "technique" class designed to prepare the student for the peaking "tuff-stuff." Darling explained that a student is never expected to master the "tuff-stuff" class.

"It's controlled adversity," she said. "It's tuff for the sake of teaching people to get over hurdles. We never master life. There's always a change, a challenge or something we need to deal with."

Darling is optimistic about the future of the "Sweat Shop," which presently averages 80 clients a day. But is the fitness game a lucrative business venture?

"Only if one continues to innovate," said Darling, who believes that the aerobics trend is on its way out. "I had to start thinking 'what can I create that's unique,'" she said.

Realizing that she would not have been able to support her business solely with the high energy "tuff-stuff" program, Darling admits that this was part of the reason she added other ways of improving fitness.

Darling advises: "In

the fitness business, you have to keep creating, otherwise, you'll phase out."

However, for Darling, fitness doesn't begin and end at the "Seat Shop." Dubbing herself a "missionary of health," she will be promoting fitness around the Los Angeles area through personal appearances on television and in magazine interviews.

In August she will make the rounds at various May Co. stores giving inspirational speeches and demonstrations. And there is a soon-to-be-released audio tape of Darling's fitness instructions that will be available in stores across the nation.

The man driving the car that struck Darling has already been released from jail after serving a short felony drunken driving sentence. Although she feels that this is unfair, she is not bitter.

"I realize I've been spared for a reason. My accident brought everything into perspective," she said.

Overcoming semi-blindness and learning to walk all over again really awakened her to a sense of mission.

"When you have the gift of life, you better celebrate it! That's the message I have to convey each time I conduct a fitness class," she said.

And according to a muscular, 24-year-old musician who works out at the "Sweat Shop" no less than four times a week, Darling's efforts have not been in vain.

"I really believe in the celebration of life, as Californian as that may sound," the musician said. "It's the only workout in town where the attitude is so positive and the teacher's instruction is so personal. Janice is wonderful — she's marvelous!"

At the "Sweat Shop," fitness is definitely a celebration.