

professionally as well as emotionally. She's been very supportive. Sometimes I felt that somebody up there was taking care of me. I couldn't have asked for anything better. And the firm was behind her, and she was behind me, and she just carried me along. I put my whole life in her hands, and here we are.

*OITM:* You've said a couple of times now that you feel like a mom, now that this is finally settled. Did you not feel like one before, when all this was hanging in the balance?

*SB:* The hard part is that Susan gave birth to Collin. I was the secondary person. I had to go through my own bonding period with him that I really didn't have in the beginning because of the time factor, because Sue was home with Collin all the time. So I guess that's what I really mean — becoming primary caretaker, primary person in his life.

The accident was very tragic. My last memory of Susan is lying on the ground next to her, giving her CPR. That was the last time I saw her before they took her away in the ambulance. Collin looks just like Susan. He looks exactly like her. And for the most part in the beginning it was really hard because I was at such a loss losing her. I didn't want to allow myself to get that close to him because I was afraid that someone was going to take him away from me, and then I wouldn't have him. And Susan was gone. As time went on and I saw that things were getting better, I allowed myself to really let down and just bring him into my life. I believed that nobody was going to take him away from me. That period of time was really hard. I never had a chance to say goodbye to her. I wasn't at the service when they buried her. So my last memories are the ones of the scene of the accident, which are real hard because they were horrible.

*OITM:* Now you can live your life again.

*SB:* Yes, for the most part. I guess the rest is up to me. I've learned my lesson, what I call my lesson in life. And I feel that, by the same token, I stood by Susan, which was really important. And now I feel like I've done what I wanted to do, what she wanted me to do, and we got through it and we won. I always had this feeling that she was sitting on my shoulder all the time, whispering in my ear. The day before we left on our weekend before the accident, she gave me a card. And the last statement she made in the card was, "Re-

member, you can do whatever you want." And that always rang in my ear. That's where I gathered a lot of my strength from. She believed in me, and I couldn't let her down.

*OITM:* What did you mean by, you "learned your lesson?"

*SB:* That I needed to slow down. I really needed to slow down and look at my life. I was a very quiet person, quiet, but moving continuously. I didn't talk a lot. I kept a lot inside. Usually, that's how I dealt with things. I created a lot of unnecessary stress for myself. Now I know how to ask for things. If I need something, I ask for it. I've worked very hard at being able to verbalize and communicate with people. That's made things a lot easier for me, as well as being a strong point in my new relationship. Not to run away from problems, but to deal with them immediately, when they're at hand. You just never know when the person that you love is going to be gone. So just deal daily. Deal. Get out there and fight. Be committed. Commitment's so important to me right now. The commitment is to be within the relationship, to be committed to it, to love and trust through it and not have any self-doubt or to be dishonest, because our lives are so short. And the people that we love are the most important thing in our lives.

For the longest time I couldn't feel the sun, couldn't feel the wind, because I was so numb. And I'll never forget the first day — I was walking to the hospital. It was springtime and it was like my senses returned to me. They were gone for the longest period of time. I smelled the lilacs. The lilacs were in bloom. I stood there and cried because I felt like I was coming alive again. I felt

I was so dead for the longest time. I mean, I lost half of me. I was healing.

Regaining those senses was very important. I never took my first vacation until last February. It had been two years. I threw myself into my work, and I worked harder than I ever had in my life. I didn't know what I was doing. I just worked. Every day I could possibly go to the hospital, I went. Because then I didn't have to deal with or think about anything. And when I took my vacation back in February, by the time I left, I was edgy, angered. I was like a bear. I went away and I allowed myself to just let it out, just to let it go. I went back to places where Susan and I walked on the beach, where we walked for hours planning Collin, and when I looked down, this little boy was running next to me. Of course, without Susan. And I allowed myself to cry. And I felt it. And I held him, and we walked and we talked. And I shared the experience with him. And I just kept doing this for two weeks. So that by the time I came back, I felt very cleansed. That I had that catharsis. I was able at that point just to let it go. It was gone. It was another sense of saying goodbye to Susan.

It's come full circle. It really has. And each peg of the wheel, with time in between, has given me time to deal with each individual factor. Of letting go, of continuing to let go. But as I let go of the material parts of our lives, as well as the emotional investment, I still sit with this little boy on my lap, and I still share her and him together, because she's so very much a part of him. And I think that that's what's most important. That I shouldn't think about Susan really being gone, because I still can hold a part of her. ▼

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