

real life

# You can bounce back from anything

## A hard lesson

Cheryl calls her accident a wake-up call to better health



Cheryl with Darlene Vogel (above) on the set of *Back to the Future II*, just before she fell 20 feet onto a concrete slab. Her face was so swollen (left) that surgeons had to wait nine days before operating. After five reconstructive surgeries, Cheryl finally

returned to stunt work, doubling for Kathleen Turner (below).



Cheryl Wheeler is living proof that, despite the odds, we should never give up on feeling great

Stuntwoman Cheryl M. Wheeler had a sinking feeling that something wasn't quite right. There she was, on the set of *Back to the Future II*, suspended 20 feet in the air above a concrete slab... hanging from a cable. "I remember thinking, 'This is too far, too high up,'" she recalls. "I'm going to die." Suddenly—the cable snapped.

"I remember falling," she says, "but it happened so fast. I don't remember anything else. When I woke up I thought, 'God, I'm alive!'"

Cheryl's arm was shattered, she had a severe concussion, and the whole left side of her face was crushed. "When I landed," she explains, "I just took everything on my face and right arm."

It looked like the end of a promising career. A career that began when Cheryl was crowned World Kickboxing Champion at 26. That title—plus the fact

that she held a Black Belt in karate, was a certified scuba diver and an accomplished equestrian, surfer, kayaker and snow-boarder—helped open the door to the Hollywood stunt industry.

It also didn't hurt that she's beautiful.

**'It's hard to put things in perspective when you're stressed'**

Soon Cheryl was one of the most sought-after stunt women and trainers in town, doubling for Bridget Fonda in *Point of No Return*, René Russo in *Lethal Weapon*, and Goldie Hawn in *Bird on a Wire*, just to name a few. On-screen fights, fire stunts and high falls—not to mention hobnobbing with Mel Gibson—were all in a day's work.

But now, after the fall, Cheryl's

