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# Women's health & fitness

UAE

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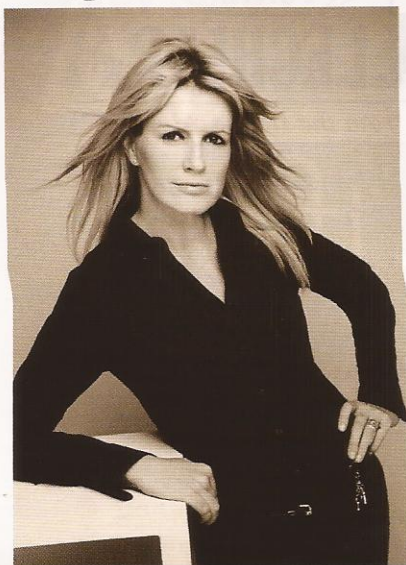
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HOW DOES A DUCHESS STAY FIT?

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**6** LOW FAT DIET TRICKS FOR FUSSY EATERS





**A**s I write this, it's a sticky, sweltering, almost suffocating 45 degrees outside. I've lived in the Middle East for over 15 years now and I still haven't gotten used to the debilitating heat and humidity that the summer brings. It's hard not to curse it and complain until you read or hear something that puts this complaint into perspective.

We at WH&F have been so privileged over the years to have met and interviewed some truly extraordinary women whose moving stories are quite simply awe-inspiring and a reminder of how much we tend to take for granted.

And Dianne Reed's story is no different. She was shot and almost killed by Al Qa'eda terrorists seven years ago. On page 74, she shares her extraordinary tale of terror, survival, courage and forgiveness. I don't honestly know how I would react or cope with the experiences that Dianne has overcome. I'd like to think I could or would be as strong, brave and forgiving as she has been, but I don't know. All I do know is that my woes and worries are minuscule in comparison, Insha' Allah.

Stories like Dianne's are the wake up call and reminder we need to appreciate all that we are blessed with and to live our lives to the fullest, whatever the weather.

Until next month,

Eileen Domiati  
Editor-in-chief



# Surviving Terror

American-born **Dianne Reed** would be forgiven for never wanting to visit, let alone live, in the Middle East again after she was shot in the legs by an AK47-wielding Al Qa'eda terrorist in Saudi seven years ago. But proving that peace and determination can triumph over violence and adversity, Dianne has made Abu Dhabi home and has even fulfilled a long-held goal of running a marathon

**T**he morning of May 29, 2004 had started for Dianne as most mornings do, in the gym. She was just about to hop into the shower before catching up with friends when the terrifying sound of gunshots rang out across the Oasis Compound in which she and her husband Owen had lived for eight years.

By the time she ran downstairs, Dianne's front door was ablaze and shots had been

fired through her dining room windows.

"I called my husband to tell him what had just happened and he told me to hide in the utility room or "do what your gut tells you to do," she told WH&F.

"I remember hearing someone trying to kick my door in and the calm, discerning voice within told me to get out of my house. I had made my decision and had to follow through. I remember quietly opening the tall garden gate and then seeing the terrorist move his gun in my direction and begin firing. I felt a lot like GI Jane, dodging bullets as I ran to the







Dianne with girlfriends Leah and Jen after the Dubai Marathon

security gate."

She had almost reached the point of safety when a bullet from the high velocity AK47 hit her left leg. But it was the next shot which hit her right leg that caused the most damage. The bullet entered her right ankle destroying her fibula and causing significant blood vessel, nerve, muscle and soft tissue damage as well as a compound fracture of the tibia.

AK47 bullets are designed to do more damage as they exit than on entry and Dianne's wound was so severe, akin to a shark bite, that she was within minutes of bleeding to death. The other bullet that hit her left thigh was what was termed 'through and through', not much more than a graze.

She spent six weeks in hospital where a steel plate was inserted to protect her tibia. She has undergone 10 reconstructive surgeries in the years since the terrorist attack.

"I was blessed to have an amazing South African doctor

who not only saved my life but he also saved my leg," she explained. "I was told by several doctors in the US that if I had been admitted to one of their hospitals with the injuries that I had sustained during the attack, that I would have had my leg amputated, no questions asked."

Dianne, who is the epitome of strength, courage and determination, is naturally still haunted by the horrific experience that unfolded that day in May seven years ago. But she counts herself lucky for having survived the attack, which claimed the lives of 22 others.

"While I am very grateful that the final outcome was much better than initially expected, it is difficult at times to come to grips with the reality of what happened that day. People will ask me how it feels to live with this type of injury. When I look at the scars on my leg, I feel very blessed. My doctor told me later that I basically had two minutes left before I bled to death. It's hard

to believe that my life would have been over in the time it takes to pop a bag of microwave popcorn. The scar is a reminder of how blessed I am to have been given a second chance for an amazing life. I want it to count. I think about the families I knew who lost loved ones and I don't want them to be forgotten."

Dianne and her husband had returned to America for less than six months after the attack before they moved to the UAE where they have lived since January 2005.

"I have always enjoyed living in the Middle East and experiencing the culture of the region and, I have made many friends. I didn't want this single event of terrorism to define who I was. I wanted to take control of my life back. I had been victimized but I wasn't a victim. I knew that one terribly bad day did not define my rich cultural experience in Saudi."

The next goal for Dianne was to overcome the mental and physical challenge of completing

a marathon, which she did complete this year in Dubai.

"I have to admit that the idea of participating in a marathon was rather daunting. My father was a marathon runner but I had never participated in one. It did make perfect sense, however, to honor the families that had lost loved ones in the attack and to mark this new beginning in my life. I had just completed over five years of reconstructive surgery. My good health and fitness had played a major role in my recovery and I feel it was really miraculous that I not only survived but thrived. I was truly blessed to have both legs and I wanted to give thanks to all of those who have been with me on that journey."

Today, Dianne keeps herself busy through her membership of the FAWCO (Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas), which aims to provide information to its members on how they can contribute to the global community with a specific focus on education, the natural and human environment, multicultural understanding and international good will.

She's also currently penning a book on her experience, which she hopes to have published by the end of the year. Understandably, this has been another mental challenge especially as it's forced her to relive and recall the events of the terrorist attack.

"I have to say that no one should be alone with their thoughts for as long as I have had to. I know what writers feel like when they have completed a project. It's exhausting and exhilarating at the same time. I am a very organic writer and the process of actually writing down my experiences has been cathartic and very emotional." \*