

I'll be back, says yacht rigger Angela who is recovering from a broken back

WELL-KNOWN South African sailor and the only woman yacht rigger in the country, Angela Rennie, has vowed to be clambering over rigging again within a year despite breaking her back in a car accident.

She has been "overwhelmed" by all the support she has had after the accident in the Cape which nearly claimed her life.

Speaking from her family's home in Durban, where she is recuperating after spending several weeks in Cape Town's Louis Leipoldt Hospital, she said it was the many phone calls and well-wishers

Brian King

"that gave me the strength to go on."

"I've never had so many letters, flowers and phone calls," she told the Tribune this week. These had mainly come from Capetonians and Durbanites, she said.

The likeable yachting enthusiast, who has raced boats in Manhattan Bay, skippered in last year's premier Wilbur Ellis Da Gama race and cruised in the Caribbean, particularly cherishes a copy of the Point Yacht Club pub menu which

was "signed by everybody" and sent to her.

Soon after arriving in Durban, she received an "incredible welcome" from local PYC yachting buffs. "I never knew I had so many friends," she said gratefully.

Miss Rennie broke her back, foot and two ribs in a car accident in Durbanville in the Cape last month. It was the beginning of a long ordeal for this very active woman.

Driving along a back road to work in pouring rain on July 4, her car hit a pothole and her head — she's 1,83

metres tall — hit either the roof or coathook near the driver's door, knocking her unconscious. The car then continued for 200 metres before plunging down a steep culvert into a wall.

Miss Rennie regained consciousness lying in her wrecked car, pulled herself, in excruciating pain, through the driver's window and then crawled up the side of the culvert, eventually to be found by two "really kind" men who stopped to help her.

"I thought the car was going to explode," she recalls hazily. She passed out again at the side of the road.

Later, after being taken to the Durbanville clinic, she was able to walk with a broken back into the clinic. From there she was taken by ambulance to Louis Leipoldt Hospital.

"I'm very lucky I'm not paralysed. I'm in a huge brace almost from head to toe, but I'm recovering okay."

When the tough yachting enthusiast returns to Cape Town — she was recently transferred there from Durban — she aims to show her appreciation to good Samaritan Ralph Eatwell by taking him out to dinner.

Mr Eatwell drove her to the clinic,

ensured the safety of the valuables in her car, took her dry clothing, and together with his wife, visited her in hospital. "It was no big deal," a modest Mr Eatwell said.

It will be another month before Miss Rennie can return to work — but she definitely plans to stay on in yachting.

She now has an eye on competing in the prestige Cape to Rio race. In the meantime she will be "working in an advisory capacity on stepping yachts' masts — and 'tuning' them to bend in the right places — and will also be selling yacht fittings", she said.



Angela Rennie:
On the mend