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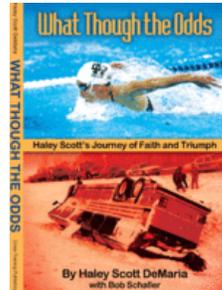


By Reid Cherner & Tom Weir

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Book em: "What Though The Odds: Haley Scott's Journey of Faith and Triumph

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On Jan. 24, 1992 the bus carrying the Notre Dame's swim team crashed. Two athletes were killed and Haley Scott was injured and thought to be paralyzed. Determined to not only walk, Scott vowed to swim again and honor the memories of the teammates who died. More than 15 years later, Scott, now Haley Scott DeMaria, has written along with Bob Schaller, *What Though The Odds: Haley Scott's Journey of Faith and Triumph*.

The author spoke to USA TODAY's Reid

Cherner about the book.

Everything is timing and place. Why did you write the book now?

I actually tried to start writing it twice. I had been approached by two different people before. One when I was still in college and another one was probably in the late 90s. I couldn't do it. It was still too hard and I was still too immersed in the healing process. When this opportunity came up I thought I was in a much better place now where I'm now happy and healthy in my life, I can look back on an unhappy and unhealthy time. And what I think really adds to the book is the perspective of time. And being to able to show 16 years later how tragedy really affects your life. This is what you can do with it and how it doesn't have to necessarily be a negative thing.

You had to relive the accident a second time. Was that easier or harder?

Definitely easier. I live it everyday so its not so much that I've done twice it is just something I've learned to live with. More emotional for me was reading the interviews from my teammates and reliving what they went through that night. I'm not sure I fully appreciated until now how traumatic it was for everyone else. I think I knew it at the time but I was so wrapped up in my own healing that really it took on a greater magnitude reliving it the second time.

Did you end up with the book you started to write?

The ending did (change). The journey took on its own life. The second part of the story was different than I thought it would be.

The book is a very honest one and you didn't always come out looking heroic. Did that surprise you?

My relationship with my mom was really tough at the time. I tried to be sensitive to what she was feeling and what she was living through. Being a mother, I can see it was really hard on her. I think if I was to portray myself of not having these very human feelings of anger I don't think people could relate to as well. I was angry and there were a lot of emotions that I had to

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work through. The more honest you can tell it the more helpful it is for people to say 'you know what I have those feelings and its okay.' That is part of the process.

Did you learn anything you didn't know?

I kept very detailed journals. Very grateful to have those written down. Much different perspective now. I learned a lot about myself, I learned a lot about my family, I learned a lot about healing and grieving. I actually enjoyed the process.

Did you find any humor in the situation?

Absolutely. Certain my brother plays a comic role. Even the sort of the sick humor, the urine bag all over the floor. My mom crawling under the roto bed to change the bed. You have to laugh. My sister coming into the room and my legs flopping around and her laughing. That was the best reaction she could have had. I always say you could laugh or you could cry and you have to be able to take a step back and respectfully laugh. Nice to be with people who understood because you could laugh. It was safe to laugh.

What do you want people to get out of the book?

I hope people will look at their own lives. Perspective of what your life is like. The sense of community, the sense of giving to people. I certainly did not do this alone and I like to think I can be that person for someone else. I would love to have the opportunity to talk to or meet with other people who are going through a tough time. If they did have a chance to read the book to almost use it as a guideline or a blueprint of how to take tragedy and work through it so its not a negative in your life. I know I would not have had the life I had today if I had not gone through that I've very blessed with my children, my health and my husband it makes it worth it.

How did being a swimmer help you in all of this?

For me swimming is such an independent sport and such an introspective sport that you spend so much time on your own and in your own mind and in your own head that you have to work through things on your own. So it's a very individual sport but also part of a team. You have both aspects. There is training and hard work. Swimming in that sense does holds you more accountable for your own training ethic. I had to have that inner drive when I was going through therapy?

Do you still swim?

Yes. For the emotional exercise and the physical exercise. Everything.

Will there be more books?

I don't know if there is another written story to tell. Certainly there are oral stories to tell. I've seen the impact when I've told the story first hand, face to face, person to person. I enjoy that. Love to be able to do that again.

What is not there that you wish you had put in the book?

I am very happy with the book. My mom says you do the best you can at the time and even in hindsight, if you think there was more that you could do, you know at the time you did the best you could. I know I felt that way about the book. Certainly other funny stories to tell. Spoken to any group always great ways to tailor the story to specific groups.

How has your family reacted?

They are thrilled. All of them were a part of the writing process. My husband has his own recollections of the story. My boys are 4 and 6 and have limited knowledge of the story. Their reaction was priceless. "It's mommy's book." I showed them their names in the back and they thought it was really cool. They'll be a time and a place. They are one of the reasons I wrote this book so they would know a major part of who their mom is.

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