

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: We're now joined, Shannon Parker and I, by Dr. Robert Schwarcz, visiting associate assistant professor at UCLA's Jules Stein Eye Institute, the Department of Orbital and Facial Plastic Surgery. He operated on Shannon in the immediate aftermath of the mountain lion attack and is scheduled for another operation with her on Friday. Also, the youngest looking doctor ever to appear on LARRY KING LIVE. Shannon is 27, you're 32.

ROBERT SCHWARCZ, UCLA'S JULES STEIN EYE INSTITUTE: That's right.

KING: What, did you just get out of medical school? First day on the job, you get this?

SCHWARCZ: Exactly. Well, I got a couple of gray hairs, so I'm catching up.

KING: What was happening that day? You were on duty meaning?

SCHWARCZ: Right, I was on call. Well, I was sleeping at the time. It was 2 a.m. And I got a phone call saying that a young lady was bit by a mountain lion and was being flown in.

KING: So you rushed to the hospital?

SCHWARCZ: No. They told me they'd update me in a couple of hours. But being from New York City, I asked them what a mountain lion was first, and then figured out that I probably needed to come in.

KING: What was the first thing you had to do when you assess something like this?

SCHWARCZ: By the time I saw her, she was in the operating room already. So it was just assessing her wounds.

KING: What did you have to do?

SCHWARCZ: I cleaned her wounds out and sewed up all the wounds. Her eye was already addressed at the time. They repaired her ruptured globes, so they sewed up the eyeball that was open. And then her right upper eyelid was split open with some fat coming out. Her left lower eyelid was detached from her corner of her eye. Her nasal aqueduct (ph) system was severed. Her right upper lip was split open. And shifted out to the side, and her nose was -- the nostril was coiled out.

KING: Is your expertise in the area of the eye?

SCHWARCZ: It's eye and face.

KING: So you're going to be a plastic surgeon?

SCHWARCZ: Yes.

KING: Private practice plastic surgeon?

SCHWARCZ: Probably, yeah.

KING: Are injuries more difficult than prosthetics -- I don't mean prosthetics, I mean when they come in for a nose job?

SCHWARCZ: Right.

KING: Is the injury more difficult?

SCHWARCZ: No. It's not more difficult. It's different.

KING: Just different.

SCHWARCZ: Yeah.

KING: OK. Had you ever seen anything like this?

SCHWARCZ: I've seen a lot of pitbull attacks and dog attacks, but not a mountain lion, no.

KING: Why was she not in pain?

SCHWARCZ: Probably her endorphins were high, her adrenaline was high, and she was still in shock.

KING: Was she ever in danger of losing her life?

SCHWARCZ: Not when I saw her, but I'm sure she was when the mountain lion was with her.

KING: There was no hope of saving the eyesight in the right eye?

SCHWARCZ: I think she had three or four retina surgeries afterwards to reattach her retina.

PARKER: Yeah.

SCHWARCZ: And...

PARKER: No go.

KING: Didn't work?

SCHWARCZ: Weren't successful, no.

KING: What surgery are you doing Friday?

SCHWARCZ: Going to remove the eye, put a prosthetic eye in, and readdress her left lower eyelid, to bring it in closer to the anatomical position.

KING: So it won't be -- where now her eye looks half-closed, it is going to be more in keeping with the left eye?

SCHWARCZ: Correct. Well, for the right eye?

KING: Yeah, in other words, you are going to put in, what, a glass eye, do they call it?

SCHWARCZ: It's a prosthetic eye, yeah.

PARKER: A prosthesis. I prefer to call it a prosthesis.

KING: Prosthesis, yeah. Same color, of course.

SCHWARCZ: Well, there's an implant that's put in the back that will fill the volume up so it won't look sunken in. Then the white of the eye, which will look pink at that point, will be sown closed. And then a month later, she will be sent to an ophthalmologist who out of acrylic will make a shield that will look like the other side.

KING: How important is the patient's attitude?

SCHWARCZ: It's the most important thing. Her recovery in seven months has been remarkable. I don't think that I could have ever seen that.

KING: How do you explain this, Shannon, to yourself?

PARKER: You know, I definitely think a positive attitude. You know, this was the biggest tragedy I've ever been through. I've never even been through a tragedy, but maintaining a positive attitude, having great doctors around, great family, great friends, you know, people to just bring you up when you're feeling down.

KING: Do you have strong religious beliefs?

PARKER: I don't.

KING: Don't?

PARKER: I believe in God, yes.

KING: But you're not a church-goer?

PARKER: No. KING: Did you pray?

PARKER: I prayed a lot. I prayed a lot. You know, I just -- I remember saying, not screaming, but just saying, you know, God, please don't let me die, please, just don't let me die. I don't want that. I just don't want to die. I can't die. And I just with that repeating in my mind, I was able to continue to fight.

KING: There's going to be more surgery on the scars, or is she going to have that for life?

SCHWARCZ: Some of them will be readdressed, yes. We've been addressing them with some steroid injections and things like that, so they've gotten a lot better over the past couple of months.

KING: Have you socialized?

PARKER: Socialized, yes.

KING: Gone on dates?

PARKER: Well, I wouldn't -- I don't really want to comment on that. But I am definitely getting back into the flow of things.

KING: I mean, a woman worries about how she looks.

(CROSSTALK)

PARKER: Of course, and that was the biggest fear in the very beginning. You know? You don't even know how to prepare yourself to handle your entire face being disfigured in a way. And I remember -- I remember crying, and, you know, in the patient room, and Dr. Schwarcz walking in and him looking at me and saying, why are you crying? And I was just, like, I just look so horrible, and this is so bad. And he's like, you know what, there's not one thing on your face that I'm not going to be able to fix. And that right there, I mean, it just changed my attitude, it changed the hope that I had. It changed everything. And I -- then, I knew not only was I alive, but I was going to, you know, progress.

KING: Are you trained, Doctor, to look at things like this, so that it doesn't get to you, as it would say the layman would faint, let's say, at seeing some of the scenes you've seen? How do you train for that?

SCHWARCZ: I think you just become dull to everything and numb to things like that. And I just don't think about it. Maybe afterwards, a week later, I'll think about it. But as far as getting grossed out by things, you just build up a tolerance over a couple of years of training.

KING: So the first thing you see is what am I going to do? This is the problem, get to work on it?

SCHWARCZ: Right.

KING: Have you seen terrible pitbull attacks?

SCHWARCZ: Yeah. Absolutely.

KING: Their teeth are amazing too, right?

SCHWARCZ: Yeah. I actually found a small fragment of the tooth in Shannon's left nasal...

KING: From the mountain lion?

PARKER: I had just heard that this morning from your pre- interview. I never knew that.

KING: I didn't know it either.

PARKER: Yeah. It's amazing.

KING: Wait a minute, the tooth was where?

SCHWARCZ: It was right by the bridge of her nose.

PARKER: Probably right here, yeah.

SCHWARCZ: The whole bone was exposed and everything, so the tooth was embedded in the bone.

KING: So the lion was hungry. That's the...

PARKER: It was very hungry, yeah. My dad describes that -- I was a little porkchop walking down the trail. So -- can I say that on television?

KING: Yeah. Even with a Jewish host. There's the thought that mountain lions don't do this, right? Aren't they supposed to be generally people-friendly?

SCHWARCZ: I don't know about mountain lions. Remember, I'm from New York City.

KING: That's right. And you're not a veterinarian.

SCHWARCZ: No, I'm not.

KING: Aren't they supposed to be people-friendly? You're not an expert either.

PARKER: No way.

KING: In fact, as a chicken, which is what you're a self- admitted chicken, why did you go?

PARKER: Why did I go for the hike?

KING: Yeah.

PARKER: To have fun. KING: There's animals up there.

PARKER: I had no idea there was this type of animal up there. I guess you could just say I was naive to wild mountain lions preying on little girls walking down the trail. You know? I had no idea that that's what I was getting into. And, you know, some say it's my fault. Some say it's not.

KING: Are they putting up signs now?

PARKER: You know, when I was up there, there was no sign.

KING: When do you go into private practice, Doctor?

SCHWARCZ: July.

KING: July. You're still associated then with the hospital?

SCHWARCZ: Yeah, probably will be, yeah.

KING: You're on call tonight?

SCHWARCZ: Not for the next couple of hours. You can have my pager, though, if you want it.

KING: Thanks, Doctor.

SCHWARCZ: Thank you.

KING: Great work.

SCHWARCZ: Nice meeting you.

KING: Good luck to you, Shannon.

PARKER: Thank you.

KING: And so Friday, more surgery. Right. And that will be -- the prosthetic eye will go in.

SCHWARCZ: And the left lower eyelid.

KING: We thank you both very much. Shannon Parker, who survived that mauling attack by a mountain lion, and Dr. Robert Schwarcz, visiting assistant professor at UCLA from famed Jules Stein Eye Institute and the Department of Orbital and Facial Plastic Surgery.

And I'll be back in a couple of minutes to tell you about tomorrow night. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)