

My boob job saved my life

Lydia Carranza should have died when a gunman stormed her workplace, but her D-cup implants acted like a bulletproof vest

It was 10.30am on 1 July 2009, and Lydia Carranza was behind the reception desk at the dentist's where she worked, when her perfectly ordinary morning was shattered by a stranger with an assault rifle. Storming into Family Dental Care in Simi Valley, California, Jaime Paredes, the estranged husband of her colleague, Mariela, opened fire on staff, killing his wife and wounding three others.

Lydia, 41, was shot twice at close range – once in the arm and once in the chest – and knows that by rights, she should be dead, too. But, in what doctors described as a 'miracle', salvation came in the shape of the D-cup breast implants she'd had inserted five years earlier. The bullet fragments were

millimetres from her heart and vital organs," says her plastic surgeon, Dr Ashkan Ghavami. "Had she not had the implant, she might not be alive today."

Lydia, a mum-of-three and grandmother-of-two, was 35 when she first had surgery to boost her confidence: "I couldn't wear any dress that didn't make my breasts

the best buy of her life. The morning of the shooting spree, while Paredes stalked from room to room in search of his wife, who had left him two months earlier and recently asked for a divorce, Lydia fled for cover. Huddling in a supply cupboard



Lydia was alive but left with lopsided boobs

'I played dead but he came back and shot me again'

look saggy,' she says. "I wanted to feel womanly again."

Upping her B-cups to D-cups, she loved the admiring glances her new boobs brought her – but she'd never have guessed they'd turn out to be

with two other members of staff, she called the police as Mariela's 18-year-old brother Christopher, who also worked at the surgery, tried to reason with the gunman. She could only watch in horror as he was shot in the stomach and Mariela, 24, was hit by four bullets from just a few feet away. Marching to their hiding place,

Paredes then turned the gun on the rest of the staff.

Shot in the right arm, Lydia collapsed and tried to play dead, but Paredes returned and shot her again, this time aiming the rifle point-blank at her heart.

"As he fired he said: 'I'm sorry she made me do this'," Lydia recalls. "Then I just felt wet in the chest area and thought I was going to die. There was blood everywhere."

Paredes barricaded himself inside the surgery for an hour until police negotiators persuaded him to give himself up. He is now awaiting trial for the murder of his wife and the injury of four others.

Coming round in hospital after seven hours of surgery, Lydia was stunned not only to be alive, but to learn that she owed her life to her boob job.

"The bullet hit my implant, which basically exploded and stopped it hitting any of my organs,"



She still has bullet fragments in her chest

she says. "Luckily, surgeons managed to remove it before infection set in, but I still have bullet fragments in my upper chest and abdominal wall."

She also has no feeling in the fingers of her right hand after the first bullet severed a nerve in her arm.

Lydia says: "At first, I was just grateful to be alive, and didn't mind not having that implant. But as time went on, I began to feel depressed about my body."

"My boobs were completely uneven. My chest was flat on the right side but I still had the D-cup breast on the left side. I didn't feel like a woman and I didn't even feel like myself."

Embarrassingly, the silicone pad she used to stuff her bra fell out at work, and she often found

herself fighting back tears as she changed at the gym, self-consciously clutching a towel to her lopsided chest.

Now, eight months after the shooting, with her wounds finally healed, Beverly Hills surgeon, Dr Ghavami, has come to her rescue, offering to perform reconstructive surgery for free.

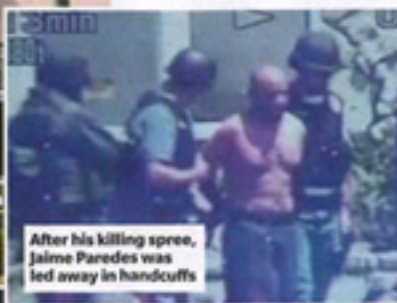
An excited Lydia is currently preparing to go under the knife again. Silicone will be removed from her left breast and inserted into her right, to leave her with symmetrical C-cup boobs.

Dr Ghavami says: "When I heard Lydia's story, I was blown away and offered to do the surgery for nothing. After all she's been through, she deserves to look and feel great again."

Words Nicola Pittam, Rachel Cocker



Mariela was at her desk when the gunman burst in



After his killing spree, Jaime Paredes was led away in handcuffs



Dr Ghavami has offered to reconstruct her breasts for free