

FACES IN THE CROWD

Trainer's own experience challenges others

■ Kerry Huston overcomes injury to defy prognosis

By FLORI MEEKS
CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT

WHEN personal trainer Kerry Huston asks clients to give him their best, it's hard to come up with excuses.

Huston, a 34-year-old Spring-area resident, battled his way to a full recovery after an accident at a gymnastics tournament left him paralyzed in 1994.

Since then, he's made a career out of helping others find their strength.

"I know what it's like to come back from ground zero," Huston said.

"I use that to help people with their fitness."

Huston, a Klein High School graduate, has been an athlete for most of his life, but gymnastics was the event that really clicked for him.

Huston was competing in a world championship event in Colorado Springs the day of his accident.

He was recovering from a hand injury and hadn't returned to full strength. But because the competition was a qualifying event for the 1996 Olympic Games, he felt he had to give it a try. He started with the parallel bars.

"I went to dismount, and my hand gave way. I did one and a half flips on the back of my head.

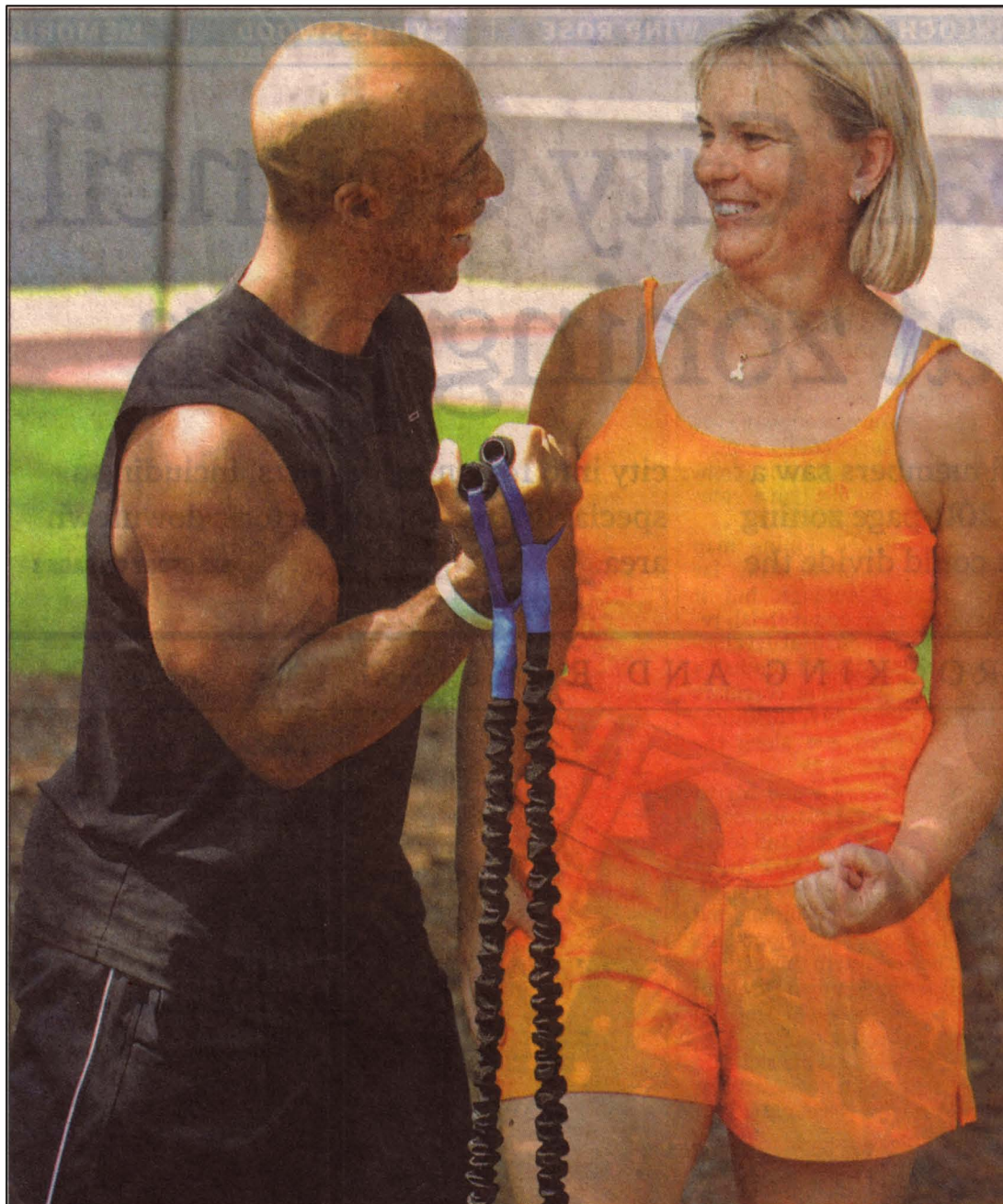
"At first, I was angry because I messed up. Then I realized I couldn't get up."

Huston learned he was unlikely to walk again. And if he did manage to walk, doctors told him, it would be only with assistance.

He decided to prove them wrong.

"I've always been a person who tried to take a positive aspect on everything, even during my darkest hour," he said.

Huston went on to have his



TONY BULLARD: FOR THE CHRONICLE

STAYING FIT: Personal trainer Kerry Huston, left, instructs one of his clients, Judy Harr, during her workout.

neck surgically reconstructed with three titanium plates, six screws and a titanium coil disc. And when he was ready, he went to work, treating physical therapy like athletic training.

He found himself regaining sensation in segments of his body, and then he worked on regaining his full range of motion there.

After three months, he walked out of the hospital. He wasn't back to full strength, but it was the victory he needed to continue fighting.

Then he started focusing his attention on a new life.

While earning a marketing degree at University of Houston, Huston worked at a private gym and earned his certification

as a personal trainer.

"I like working with people and helping them solve their problems. Doing this (fitness training), I'm helping them with wellness," he said.

In 1998, Huston made training his full-time focus by establishing BioniK Fitness. The name refers to Huston's rebuilt neck and his enduring strength

KERRY HUSTON

■ Age: 34

■ Occupation: Personal trainer for BioniK Fitness

■ Community connection: Spring area resident

■ Quick quote: "I've always been a person who tried to take a positive aspect on everything, even during my darkest hour." — Kerry Huston

and ends with a "K" for Kerry. Today, Huston leases space at the Memorial Northwest Community Center and also serves as the community's fitness director.

Last year he introduced boot camp programs for children and adults, along with basic training that serves as a boot camp follow-up.

Spring-area resident Tia Morgan has been training with Huston for about six years.

"I was never very athletic, but after training with Kerry, I am amazed at how strong I feel," Morgan said.

"I didn't notice it was happening until I signed up for one of his boot camps. For the first time in my life, I was not the slowest or the weakest."

Memorial Northwest resident Kimberlee Slaughter has attended every boot camp Huston has offered since he launched the program.

"He just makes you want to achieve," Slaughter said. "I'm not the Skinny Minnie I was in my younger years, but I'm probably more toned and fit than I've ever been in my entire life."

BioniK Fitness will offer more boot camp programs immediately before and after the December holiday season.

For more information, call Huston at 281-772-8727 or visit www.bionikfitness.com.

If you have a suggestion for a "Faces in the Crowd" profile, contact Gus Morgan at gus.morgan@chron.com or send a fax to 713-362-7552.