

# SHOCKING CRASH ROCKS PARK AVE.



Timothy White/Parade

**BILL CLINTON**  
"Near-death experience."

## Bill: I saw the light before my heart op

By LINDSAY POWERS

Right before going under the knife for heart surgery last year, former President Bill Clinton says he saw the faces of his wife and daughter — and the bright light famously recounted by those who've had near-death encounters.

"I'm not quite sure whether it was one of those 'near-death experience' or a life-affirming one — perhaps it was a bit of both," Clinton recalls in an interview in today's Parade magazine, found in The Post.

Clinton said that moments before his surgery, he remembers seeing "dark masks coming toward me, followed by circles of light containing the faces of Hillary, Chelsea and others . . . They smiled and flew away toward a brightness."

The ex-president said he knew his ticker was faltering as he stepped off his private jet while promoting "My Life," his 15-pound autobiography, on Labor Day 2004.

He described a feeling of "severe tightness," which eventually led doctors to perform bypass surgery.

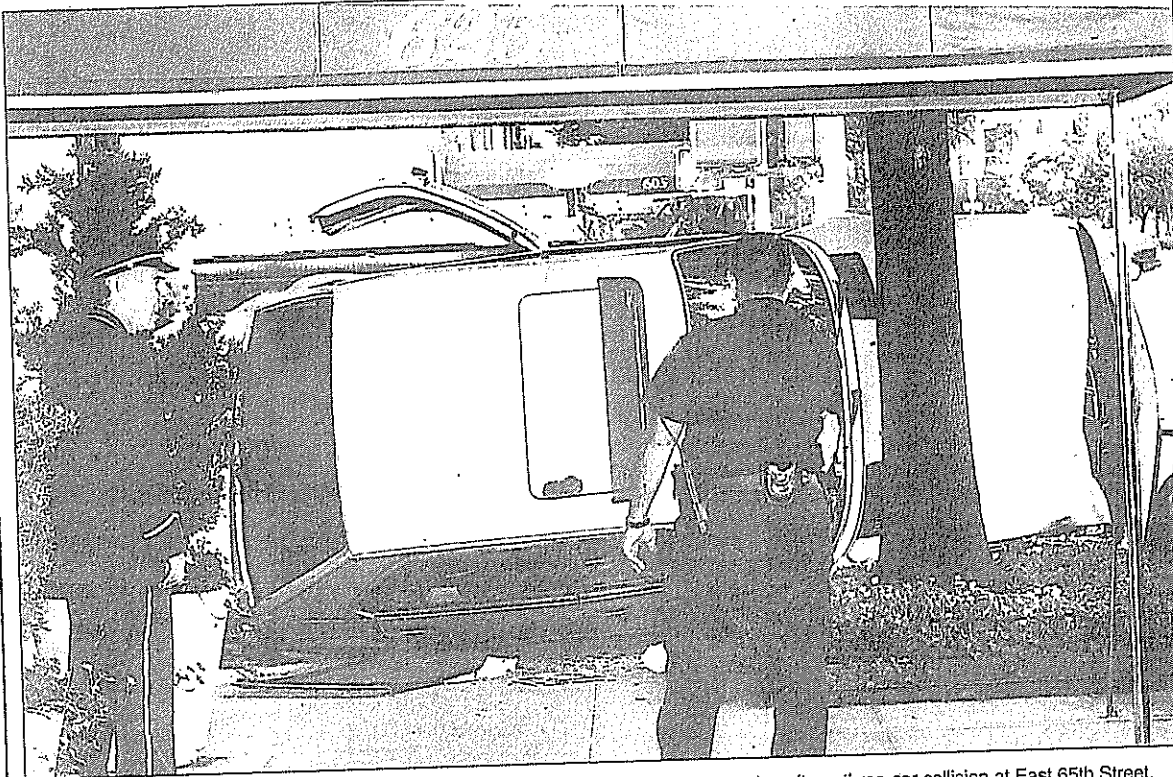
"I was a heart attack waiting to happen," he said. "The doctors would not even let me go home from the hospital . . . Hillary cut her visit to upstate New York to join me, as did Chelsea."

Clinton also recalls an "enterprising" Post photographer who snapped him "with a long lens from a perch near the West Side Highway."

"I was just glad I wasn't wearing one of those open-backed hospital gowns!" he said.

Clinton now works with the American Heart Association to reinstate gym classes and put whole grains, fruits and vegetables into fast-food eateries and school cafeterias.

"The older I get, especially following my own brush with mortality, the more determined I am to try to prevent anyone younger than me from dying," Clinton said.



N.Y. Post: G. N. Miller

**UNWELCOME GUEST:** The remains of a BMW that flipped on the sidewalk yesterday after a three-car collision at East 65th Street.

By SAM GUSTIN  
and STACEY SZEWCZYK

A three-car smash-up on Park Avenue punctured the early morning calm of the Upper East Side, waking up residents, scattering debris and flipping a BMW onto the sidewalk in front of one of the boulevard's poshest addresses.

"I've never seen anything like it before," said neighborhood resident John Daum.

The accident occurred at about 7:45 a.m. outside exclusive 625 Park Ave.

Witnesses said a white Lexus SUV ran a red light on East 65th Street and rammed a silver BMW.

The collision happened around the corner from the Palestinian Mission to the United Nations, where Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was believed to have been in meetings at the time of the crash.

Witnesses said two drivers emerged from their cars on their own before being taken away in ambulances. Their injuries were not believed to be serious.

"The impact caused the BMW to flip over and get pinned against the building. Anyone who would have gotten trapped between the car and the building would have died," Daum said.

"Someone had to have been speeding," said Ken Hamilton, a doorman at a building across the street. "It was horrible. I thought it was a bomb. I'm still shaken up from it."

It is home to several prominent New Yorkers, including money manager Martin Zweig as well as

Arie Kopelman, vice chairman of Chanel, and his wife, Coco.

The late Shah of Iran's twin sister, Princess Ashraf, once owned a 26-room apartment

Buyout king Henry Kravis bought an apartment in the building in 1994 for \$15 million — at the time a record price for Park Avenue.

Other former residents include Ira Rennart, the reclusive millionaire who wanted to build a 100,000 square foot compound in Sagaponack; Hermann

Merkin, after whom Merkin Hall on the West Side is named; and beauty mogul Helena Rubenstein, who owned a penthouse there.

Coco Kopelman heard the crash happen and rushed to her third floor window to survey the scene.

"I heard a huge crash and glass breaking," she said. "I looked out the window and I saw a man help himself out of the driver's seat of his car grabbing his head."

"It's a miracle no one was killed," said Daum.

## Israeli choppers kill 5 Gaza terror suspects

**JERUSALEM** — In Israel's deadliest anti-terror attack since it pulled out of the Gaza Strip two weeks ago, airstrikes left five suspected Hamas militants dead yesterday in retaliation for a volley of Palestinian rocket attacks on southern Israel.

The escalating use of force followed a blast of unknown origin that killed 15

people at a Hamas rally Friday and stoked the political struggle between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Netanyahu, a hard-liner mounting a leadership challenge in the Likud Party, called yesterday for Israel to take "very serious military steps" against the Pal-

estinians and reiterated his prediction that the Gaza withdrawal would prove to be a mistake.

At an extraordinary defense Cabinet meeting in Tel Aviv last night, ministers decided to resume targeted assassination attempts of Palestinian terrorists, according to a source at the meeting.

The Likud is expected to vote tomorrow on whether to hold early primaries — which, if approved, could see Sharon leave the party and form a centrist alliance.

In the incident yesterday, Israeli helicopters targeted two cars reportedly identified by intelligence as carrying terrorists, killing five

and wounding nine.

Three buildings in the Gaza Strip were destroyed.

In turn, Hamas' military wing vowed to "strike with all our might" in retaliation for the car bombing — and the Palestinian interior ministry criticized both Israel, for its aggression, and its own people, for their militancy.

Uri Dan