

## Sean

Sixty-four-year-old Sean Harris\* didn't like what he saw when he looked in the mirror. "I had a turkey neck and long unattractive jowls," he says. "As you age, you no longer look the way you think you should. I decided I wanted to change that and went to Biff McCann for a face lift and later liposuction on my stomach and love handles."

Harris was a member of the medical establishment and wasn't afraid of surgery or shopping around for a doctor he felt he had a rapport with. "Biff was like a sculptor," he says. "He sat me up in the chair, made a few cuts, pulled the skin back, then stepped back, considered his work, and did some more. I told him, 'Don't be conservative.'" Harris was out of the house the day after the surgery — although that is not the norm. He says it was possible because McCann did not wrap his face which cut down on the bruising.

A short time later, Sean went overseas on a business trip but was stopped at immigration by agents who told him he did not look like the man in his passport photo. "They told me I better get a new picture if I wanted to travel internationally," he says. "I told Biff I didn't just want to look like I was rested or had spent a week in a spa. I want-

ed to look good and Biff understood what I meant." The liposuction, to Harris, was no less dramatic. "I could lean back in my airplane seat, stretch out my legs and I didn't have a belly." According to Anson, in reality liposuction may require as many as 10 days for recovery and a face lift can take two weeks.

The ideal male body has clearly changed over the years. It wasn't so long ago that fat was in and big men like Winston Churchill, Alfred Hitchcock, Ernest Hemingway and Babe Ruth were considered role models of masculinity. They were portly because they were prosperous — in direct opposition to the ubiquitous 90-pound weakling to whom all sorts of physique-enhancing products were sold.

Some say the move to gym-built bodies was the result of the gay movement and the objectification of pecs and flex. Body building went mainstream and even hulk men like Arnold Schwarzenegger slimmed down. There's no denying beef cake is big business these days. With Calvin Klein underwear ads, the reintroduction of a bulked-up Marlboro Man, and fitness magazines dedicated to "losing flab in ten days," it's no wonder men are going under the knife.

Even if there is something to the competitive edge theory, men are learning another truism embraced by women for years: Looking good is its own reward.

"My typical patient is your run-of-the-mill guy who's starting to get a little paunch and is noticing a little love handle," Anson says. "Even though he's working out in the gym, he still sees it. He wants to look the way he did 10 years ago when he didn't have to struggle with the way he looks. Lipo is a way to take care of that."

Anson states that typically the younger a patient is the more likely he is to come in for a body contouring procedure while older patients are looking for face rejuvenation.

In her practice, breast reductions tend to be related to a disorder so she sees them as reconstructive rather than cosmetic surgery.

But who do these men actually want to look like? What is the cultural ideal? Who has the perfect body? Anson says Ricky Martin. Alexander says there are two types: Mel Gibson and gym guy.

"I see two trends or two ideals of the perfect man," says Alexander. "One is the body builder person for whom Arnold Schwarzenegger would be the ideal aesthetic. However, there is a second almost bipolar or 180 degree opposed ideal man. I would say men like Mel Gibson who have physical attractiveness but in addition have attractiveness of personality. There are two separate cultures of ideal male physique and that is important for the plastic surgeon to understand — what the patient perceives as artistically ideal."

But beware of going too far in the direction of the Schwarzenegger model. Harvard psychiatrist Dr. Harrison Pope blames action dolls like G.I. Joe Extreme — in the same way many blame Barbie — for creating unrealistic physique expectations. Barbie's big breasts and tiny waist may have made many pre-teens feel "unpretty," but Pope says G. I. Joe's 26-inch biceps — converted from doll-size to man-size — would be 8 inches bigger than Barbie's waist.

"Before the 1960s people weren't using anabolic steroids, so men would lift weights and stay within their natural body size," Pope told the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. "But now the unnatural is possible." Anson says her patients lean toward a more natural look: "They want to look fit, like someone who goes to the gym. They've become open to all the things they have struggled with and are willing to face them and do something about them."

Alexander says part of the reason for the big rise in masculine procedures is increased awareness of advances in surgical techniques brought about by media attention.

Until the last decade, the technology relating to male procedures did not equal men's desire. All procedures favored female patients, not taking into consideration that men's skins were thicker and therefore heavier and looser than women's. Even the existence of side burns and beards posed obstacles not encountered with female patients.

Unfortunately, gravity is not kind to the heavier-skinned gender. As men age, their eyelids and brows droop low enough to block their vision. Fat can collect in heavy bags under their eyes and the weighty skin can sag around the chin. Also, the cartilage of the nose loosens, leaving it longer and sometimes bulbous. Even the lobes of the ears get longer with age.

## BEFORE



Patient before and after photos from George John Alexander, M.D., F.A.C.S.

"A lot of the stuff we're doing on the baby boomer men is facial rejuvenation — facelifts and eyelid surgery," McCann says. "It's a more difficult operation with men but they still get good results. The endoscopic forehead lift, where we can actually pull the forehead up where it belongs, traditionally required an incision that went across the top of the forehead from ear to ear. Now we can look in with a camera and see what we are doing through small holes which only require small incisions."

Doctors agree, another marked difference between male and female patients is that men are less likely to talk about undergoing a procedure. (It wasn't easy finding men who would be interviewed for this article.) Anson thinks it's because men don't want to be perceived as vain.

Alexander sees it differently. "I think they're more secretive because they have a higher level of confidentiality. Men tend to be more private and in general more private about their health," he says.

But plastic surgery is not for everyone. High prices still make it a luxury, and recovery time can vary depending on the procedure. There are risks involved, as well.

Anson says there's quite a price range in Las Vegas, but on average eyelid surgery will run between \$3,000 and \$5,000, a face lift might cost anywhere from \$7,000 to \$12,000 and liposuction, depending on how much fat and

where, will run from \$3,000 to \$7,000.

All three doctors suggested consulting with an ASPS board-certified surgeon for anyone thinking about undergoing an operation. "It's important for the public to understand what board-certification means," says ASPS past-president Dennis Lynch, M.D. "A physician doesn't have to be board certified in plastic surgery to perform plastic surgery. We encourage potential patients to choose surgeons certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgeons. This will ensure the doctor has met all the rigid requirements the public should expect of a physician who performs plastic surgery."

To verify if a surgeon is an ABPS certified surgeon, call (215) 587-9322 or visit the Web site at [www.plasticurgery.org](http://www.plasticurgery.org), which also contains the latest statistics and information on plastic surgery. The ASPS also maintains a National Clearinghouse of Plastic Surgery Statistics on the same Web site or by calling (847) 228-9900, ext. 347. *lvsm*

\*Names of patients have been changed to protect patients' privacy.

## AFTER

