

BUCKS COUNTY  
**Courier Times**

By CAROL ROBIDOUX, COURIER TIMES

February 6, 2000

# Saving face

Technology, affordability - and vanity - are what's enticing a growing number of people to defy the aging process by restoring their youthful appearance with surgical cosmetic "rejuvenation."

Margo Christensen never felt more creative, energetic or betrayed as she did when she looked in the mirror.

"I come from a family with great genes. But somewhere between age 48 and 51 I saw a remarkable difference in how my face looked. The face in the mirror wasn't me," says Christensen a 53-year-old wife, mother and full-time marketing manager who told everyone she knew about her decision to have a full facelift three months ago. In hindsight, she may have gone a little overboard.

"I wanted to tell everyone, even the guy at the supermarket, 'Hi, my name's Margo. I just had a facelift. Can I get a half-pound of roast beef?'" I was just so excited and proud," gushes Christensen, who lives in Morrisville with her husband, Paul, and their son.

True, not everyone was as comfortable talking about her facelift as she was. But Christensen's candor about having had cosmetic surgery is not unique.

In fact, it's a growing trend among baby boomers who, statistics show, not only share her interest in self-preservation, but have no shame over defying the ravages of time.

According to the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery, the trend toward "rejuvenation procedures," including facelift, liposuction, eyelid surgery, tummy tuck and breast augmentation, is fast becoming part of the boomer phenomenon.

Statistically, women are still more likely than men to undergo cosmetic procedures, but with recent improvements in hair transplantation and liposuction techniques, more men than ever before are taking the surgical plunge.

And the American Society of Plastic Surgeons reports that since baby boomers have

crossed the 50-year mark, cosmetic surgery for 51-64 year olds has nearly doubled.

Christensen's decision to undergo the elaborate procedure to smooth her wrinkles and redefine her features was more than a matter of vanity.

"My face no longer reflected the energy I feel at this age or the excitement about life I have," says Christensen.

Admittedly, she has no intention of growing old without a fight, even though she says she embraces the fertility and creativity that is God's gift to women in mid-life.

It was the crow's feet that were getting her down.

"When I was younger I used to think that if I ever lived to be 50, I'd develop this strong, natural attraction to sensible shoes and blue hair," she says, smiling broadly without evoking one wrinkle on her smooth, makeup free face.

Even under good light and close scrutiny, there's no physical evidence of the complete surgical overhaul Christensen's face underwent Nov. 2 at the hands of Middletown Township plastic surgeon Alan Brackup.

The results aren't dramatic. But when she places her before and after pictures side by side, it's obvious why Christensen felt the need to save her face.

"I have a friend who said, 'If you've had a face all your life, you begin to miss it more than someone who's never had a face.' And I think she's right. I'm not a beautiful woman. But those of us who have always been aware of ourselves, in terms of time and space, and who have the economic means, think about having (a facelift) when we arrive at, 'that certain age'," says Christensen.

Although Christensen says she didn't know she was exhibiting typical baby boomer behavior when she opted for the surgery, the trend definitely resonates with her.

"It makes sense. We are so different than our parents, so much younger at 50 than our parents were. We have so much productivity ahead, we're not limited by age or by money. The road is much wider for us than for my mother's generation."

Cosmetic surgery has improved its own image over the past several decades. Once the bastion of the rich and famous involving months of recovery and tremendous risks with variable results, the business of nip and tuck has become totally mainstream and user-friendly in the last decade.

"Boomers don't want to age. Philosophies have changed over the years. Today, people save for their cosmetic surgery as they would a car," says Christensen's surgeon, Alan Brackup, who started out as an ophthalmologic micro-surgeon at Stanford University in the mid-'80's.

But the creative, aesthetic nature of plastic surgery drew him toward the business of changing people's lives through altering their appearance.

"I found as I looked toward plastic surgery, seeing the aesthetic changes in a patient gave me a rush. It strikes a nerve in me when I see an improvement in someone. It's my work, and there's something very creative and rewarding about that. When my patient's thrilled, I



## BEFORE

This patient flew in from Wisconsin to have a facelift after she saw the results of Dr. Brackup's work on a Bucks County friend.



## AFTER

This transformation included a full facelift, upper and lower eyelid blepharoplasty, laser skin resurfacing, endoscopic brow-lift and a chin implant.

## COSMETIC SURGERY SPECIALISTS

300 Middletown Blvd  
Suite 103  
Langhorne, PA 19047  
(215) 750-9400



## BEFORE

Margo Christensen was unhappy with the way her skin was aging. "My face no longer reflected the energy I feel at this age or the excitement about life I have."

# Saving face



## AFTER

The results of Margo's full facelift, upper eyelid blepharoplasty, and lower lid laser resurfacing, were subtle yet satisfying

can be thrilled," says Brackup.

Born on the cusp of the baby boom himself, Brackup, 41, practices what he preaches. If he looks particularly healthy or relaxed in the midst of a hectic day, it's no fluke.

For one thing, physical fitness is an integral part of Brackup's life, including a serious interest in the martial arts. As he tells his patients, cosmetic alterations, such as full body liposuction to eliminate excess fat, are no substitute for a healthy diet and regular exercise.

Brackup also undergoes regular Botox injections to eliminate facial wrinkles, usually along the forehead and where crow's feet develop.

"Botox is actually the same thing that causes Botulism, and it's one of the safest drugs out there. It works great for certain frown lines - anyplace lines are caused by contracting muscles," explains Brackup. Injections must be re-administered every three to six months to maintain a smooth appearance.

"Patients adore it and nobody's ever disappointed with the results."

Botox is one of the non-invasive procedures gaining popularity among the aging population, says Brackup. A person can stop by for a Botox injection on his or her way to work and their appearance will begin to improve immediately.

Another popular option is collagen injections to "fatten up" the lips or plump up cheek areas, restoring a more youthful look.

Combining these procedures and adding facial liposuction using a laser for the neck, jowls and jaw line - and in some cases, a chin implant as well - results in "the weekend alternative to the facelift." a patented technique developed by a California cosmetic surgeon.

Patients often have this less complicated procedure in their early to mid-40's to buy some time before making the commitment for a full facelift, explains Brackup.

"The weekend facelift has become popular with

those who need to get back to work and don't want a lot of down time. Chronologically, it buys them five to ten years. By then, they're usually ready for a full lift," says Brackup.

One thing unaffected by technology is how human skins ages. Genetics, sun damage and the chemicals from cigarette smoke do the most damage.

Historically, baby boomers were the first genera-



Dr. Alan Brackup (right) prepares to insert a camera under the skin of a cosmetic surgery patient. He is assisted by Michele McLean, a registered nurse. ART GENTILE/COURIER TIMES

tion to turn sunbathing into an art form and boost the tobacco industry into a multimillion dollar empire. So it follows that their skin is paying the price.

Brackup's other specialty is liposuction, a method of removing excess fat from underneath the skin while recontouring a patient's basic shape.

Last year, liposuction was the most popular procedure performed by cosmetic surgeons across the country, with more than 600,000 procedures done, according to the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery.

Lisa, a 30 something wife and mother (who asked that her last name not be used) was one of those 600,000 who opted for full body liposuction last

year. She says she's never felt better about herself or her body - and despite the \$6,400 price tag, she'd do it again in a heartbeat.

"I know I'm no Kate Moss, but I didn't want to be Kate Moss - just a better me," says Lisa, dressed in a form-fitting royal blue knit dress that accentuates the waistline formerly lost under several liters of fat.

Last September, Lisa went in for the six-hour procedure after having lost 70 pounds over a two year period. As she explains, she wasn't getting any younger and her desire for a better body was overwhelming.

"Somewhere during my 20s my metabolism changed and I found myself getting fatter and fatter. Then I had a baby and eventually my weight peaked at 220 pounds," says Lisa, who now weighs 150 pounds and stands 5 feet 2 inches tall.

"Some people associate liposuction with being lazy. But I spent two years dieting before I decided that liposuction could finally do what all my dieting and exercising couldn't," says Lisa.

Often women experience excess abdominal bulges following childbirth that is resistant to exercising, explains Brackup. Liposuction can make a difference. As long as a woman doesn't gain weight, the fat will not return.

"Believe me, having this done was a big decision. For one thing, it was a financial commitment. And secondly, a lot of people think it's frivolous. Well, I think differently. This was something I did for myself," explains Lisa.

Lisa says women have been culturally trained to feel guilty about spending money on themselves, even something as basic as a trip to the hair salon.

"This is the only life I'm gonna have, and there are no guarantees that go with it. My sister died three years ago of cancer at age 42. My son was diagnosed with leukemia eight months later. Six months after that, my father died."

"I've been dealing with a lot, and through it all, I've realized that if looking my best helps me feel my best - be a better wife and mother, and live life to its fullest- then why shouldn't I do this for myself?"