

The Art of looking younger

by LIZ CAMPBELL

"My eyes always looked tired – sagging skin over the lids, bags and dark circles underneath," says Diana Stuart, age 53. "Even in my wedding photos, more than 30 years old, I look like a raccoon."

Stuart tried myriad over-the-counter cosmetic products, advertised to tighten skin and smooth wrinkle lines. Several of them produced a small improvement. But the bags and circles stubbornly refused to budge. To make things worse, she began to develop the typical middle-age wattle – loose skin creasing down from her jaw to eliminate a smooth neckline. It was the last straw.

About \$17,000 and five hours of cosmetic surgery later, Stuart looks at least 10 years younger. Her eyes are smooth and her lids are firm. Her neckline and forehead are wrinkle free and the unsightly wattle is gone.

Stuart is typical of many women who don't want to look older. They look at Hollywood stars like Goldie Hawn, Cher and even Sophia Loren, who have clearly undergone surgery to rejuvenate them, and ask why they too shouldn't also look the best they can.

Dr. Nowell Solish, cosmetic dermatologist at the University of Toronto, suggests it's about choices. He maintains a unique practice, in conjunction with plastic surgeon Dr. Sandy Pritchard, providing patients with both surgical and non-surgical options. And while most of his patients are women, Solish says about 20 per cent are men who are beginning to discover they, too, can look younger.

While Stuart chose surgery to correct her problems, for many this may not be a viable option, due to health reasons or cost. For them, there are non-surgical alternatives:

Injectables:

Botox is the drug of choice – it can relax muscles, correcting frown lines and crows feet.

Fillers: These include Artecoll and Restylane and are used to fill in the naso-labial folds, and smile lines below the mouth and lips. Artecoll, produced by the pharmaceutical company Canderem, is the only procedure of this type that is long-lasting, says product manager Robin Lalonde. Others generally last only a few months but Artecoll has been shown to last up to 10 years, making it the

treatment of choice for such problems as acne scars, she says. It is also used to fill in folds and wrinkles, primarily around the nose and mouth, augment lips, and correct irregularities of the nose. However, she adds, while it will correct the wrinkle, nothing will prevent another from forming as skin ages and loses elasticity. And, anyone not sure if they want a permanent change, might be advised to try a temporary product first to see if they like the look.

Laser: This can improve the texture, quality and tone of the skin; photo facials improve colour, can shrink and eliminate brown spots as well as redness or rosacea.

ThermaCool: This brand new procedure uses radio frequency to heat the bottom layers of the skin without affecting the top, tightening and lifting the forehead and neck.

"Some patients may not be candidates for surgery, or may not require surgery yet," says Solish. "The important thing is to understand that there are lots of alternatives."

In fact, he hosts two websites offering in-depth information on the cosmetic uses of both B o t o x (botoxclinic.ca) and Restylane (restylaneclinic.ca).

There are advantages to choosing non-surgical procedures.

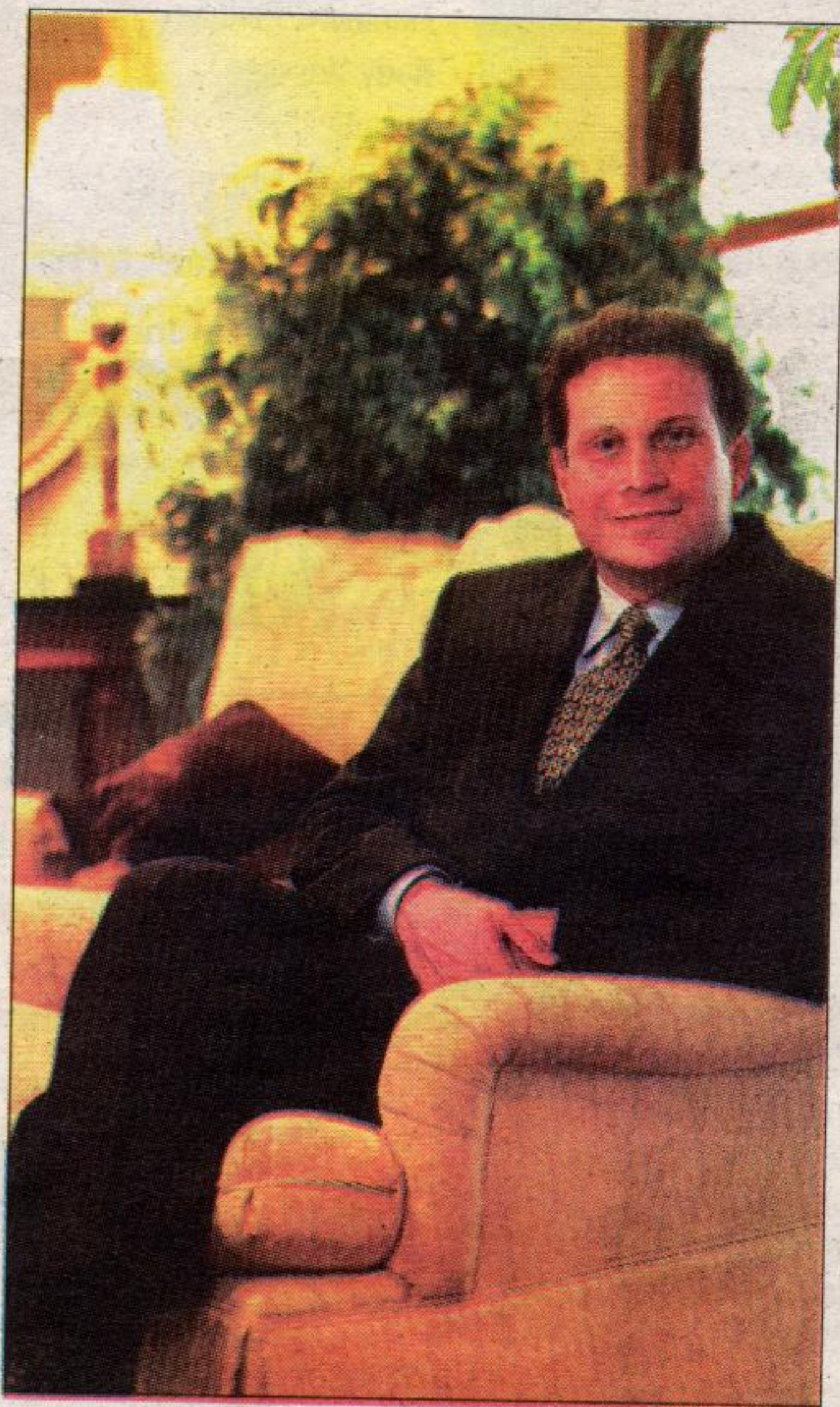
In general, the recovery time is much quicker, the changes less drastic so not as obvious. And while some procedures like Botox and Restylane injection need to be repeated every four to six months, this also means the result isn't permanent if the patient is unhappy with it.

While it's certainly true that many patients are in the 50-plus category,

Solish suggests that non-surgical procedures like Botox injections can help younger women to remain younger looking.

"I compare it to lengthening a pair of pants," he laughs. "If the crease has been there a long time, it doesn't matter how often you iron it, you can't iron it out completely."

He advises those considering these measures to start by consulting both a cosmetic dermatologist and a plastic surgeon to determine which of the choices may be appropriate for the circumstances.



Dr. Nowell Solish, a Toronto dermatologist, who offers a wide variety of cosmetic procedures to his clients stresses there are many options available.



Before and after shots of Diana Stuart's eyes and chin/neckline support her claim that, despite the discomfort, the laser surgery was worthwhile.

Cut to the chase

THE REAL STORY

by DIANA STUART

As Hamilton plastic surgeon Dr. Rob Patterson marked my face with tiny brown lines, he uttered the prosaic words: "It's like dress-making, measure twice, cut once."

About five hours later, I would no longer have baggy eyes or a wattle under my chin. I had both for so many years, I wondered what it would be like to look in a mirror and not appear tired, and to have a real chin?

But I did have last minute qualms. Would I look like Joan Rivers, or worse Michael Jackson? My first look in the mirror after the surgery revealed neither of those; but Rocky after a bad fight had nothing on me.

By the evening of day two, everything was very swollen, despite applications of ice. Nausea had prevented me from taking pain medication for 24 hours. One effect of this medication is anti-inflammatory so, without it, I puffed up like a balloon.

Nothing actually hurt. The effect was more general soreness, tightness and discomfort. Sleeping was difficult. I became a Vitamin C junkie (recommended to help the healing). And applying Polysporin as instructed became a full-time occupation. I went through three large tubes before I was done!

By the third day, the swelling had moved

downwards and my neck sported a blue line, as if I'd been strangled. My eyes looked worst. Sunglasses helped. And, I learned to ignore the giant mirrors in my bathroom.

My main joy each day was washing the Polysporin out of my hair. But this process was complicated by the fact that my head sported several staples and two screws. My children provided the light side to these. My son: "Can you pick up Tokyo with those?" My daughter: "We always thought you had a couple of screws loose in your head, mom!"

It's been four months now. I've had my hair cut and coloured so that people who haven't seen me for a while would have something on which to focus. There's definitely a change though not as great as one might imagine. Most people remark, "You look great! What have you been doing?"

This was exactly the reaction I sought. The bags under my eyes are gone. My neck is a smooth line. And because he had to pull them up, my cheeks and brow are smooth also.

Was it all as easy as the surgeons would have you believe? No. But then few things in life arrive without some pain, or at least discomfort.

Would I do it all again? In a heartbeat.

Was it all as easy as the surgeons would have you believe? No. But then few things in life arrive without some pain, or at least discomfort.