

PHOTOGRAPHED BY KYLE NELLOYD

# DIARY OF A BREAST AUGMENTATION

*One woman shares  
a candid look at her  
surgical transformation.  
Reporter Jenni Laidman  
follows her into and out  
of the operating room.*



At left, Jacob Tankersley kisses his fiancée, Shay Perna, as she waits for her surgery.

Dr. Thomas Haas outlines his plan in black marker before he begins Shay's breast augmentation.

---

## 7:20 A.M. FRIDAY, APRIL 2 IMAGE MEDICAL SPA

Shay Perna hadn't slept much last night. Instead, her mind raced. For weeks she'd wondered what if, just moments after the anesthetic took hold, she changed her mind but was too doped-up to say anything?

But now, walking into the surgery center on New LaGrange Road, groggy and nervous, the 29-year-old Brandenburg, Ky., woman has no doubts. Her heart races, but she is ready. She has thought about this since she was about 20. A petite 5-foot-2 and 103 pounds, Shay has a doll's proportions — just not a Barbie doll's. Her flat stomach and trim waist and hips aren't accompanied by Barbie's voluptuousness.

That's about to change.

Her 32A bras are history. In fewer than three hours, she will graduate from an A to a C, or more precisely — since doctors won't guarantee cup size — she'll have a round sack holding 325 cubic centimeters of squishy

silicone beneath the pectoris muscle under each breast. That's 10.98 ounces; almost 1¼ cups of silicone per breast.

It's not big. But for Shay, it's huge. "I've never been self-conscious. It isn't like a 'need' thing. I don't feel inadequate or anything," she says.

"It is just that I want to, and now I can."

---

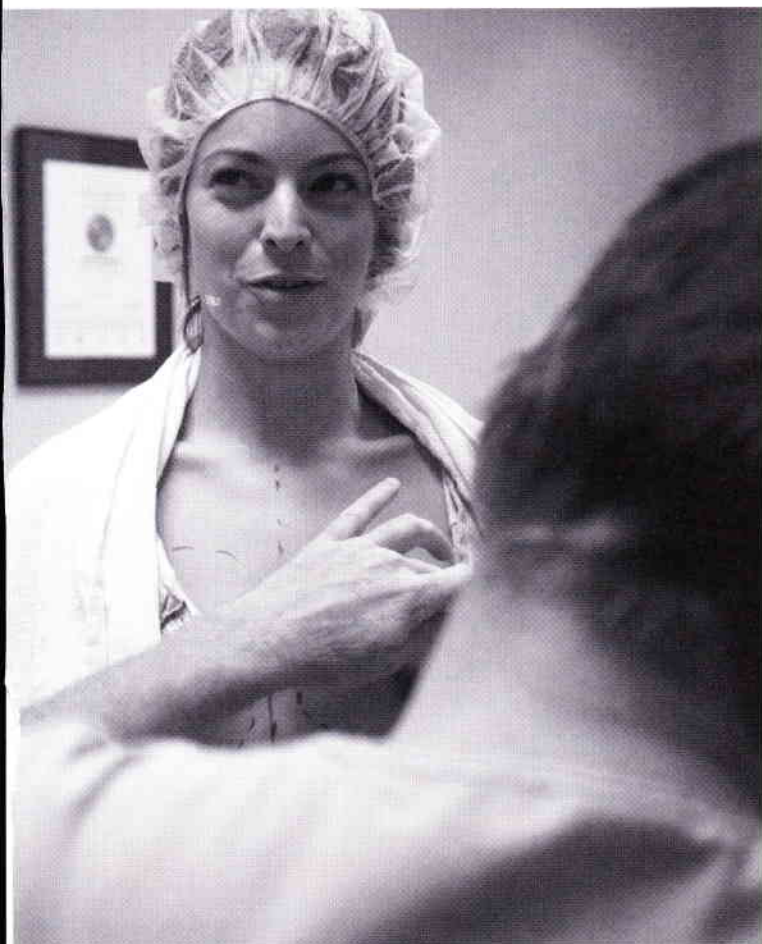
## 7:50 A.M.

Dr. Thomas Haas is tall and loose-jointed, with swept-back, gelled hair and a light, teasing manner.

"I'm so excited to finally learn to do this surgery," he tells Shay as he greets her. He sits in front of her and, with a black marker, sketches his surgery blueprint on her body.

Finished with his preparation, the doctor instructs Shay's fiancé, Jacob Tankersley, "Give her a kiss," and they wheel Shay into the operating room next door.

An intravenous drip delivers Versed, to induce



sedation, then fentanyl, an analgesic. Shay finally calms down.

"Thank you for relaxing me," Shay calls out.

Kyle Goldsmith, a certified nurse anesthetist, starts a drip of the hypnotic propofol.

"How are you feeling?" he asks.

No response. She's out.

---

8 A.M.

The sharp odor of Betadine rises as Haas begins to sponge Shay's skin with the amber disinfectant.

"The big disaster in this is infection," Haas says. If implants carry skin bacteria into the body, the procedure must be reversed, the implant removed.

Haas jabs a long needle filled with the local anesthetic along the arc of the underside of Shay's right breast to numb the skin. Then he makes a hole with a scalpel and inserts a long cannula — a tube about half the width of a pencil — and vigorously injects a mixture of anesthetic and antibiotic deep within the breast tissue.

He pulls on a second layer of surgical gloves as the local anesthetic diffuses.

---

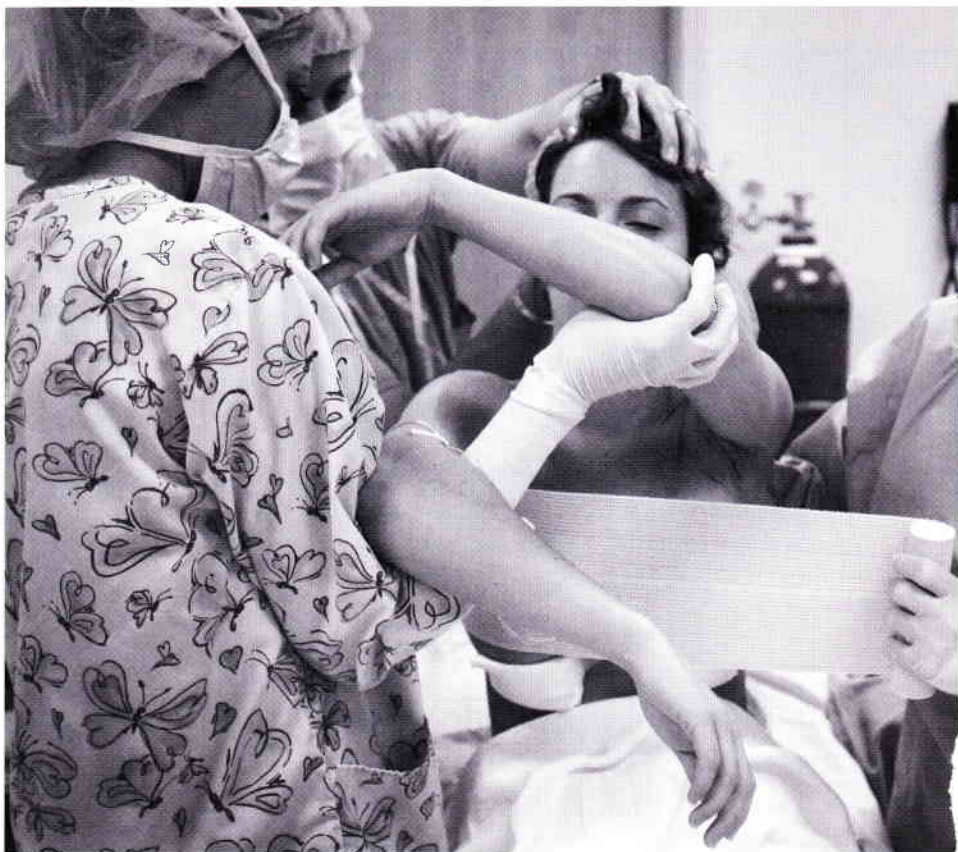
8:06 A.M.

Haas slices a 2-inch line beneath Shay's right breast. Over the years, Haas has put implants in through the nipple, through the navel or near the armpit. But he prefers this spot.

The incision reveals a layer of yellowish fat, which Haas pushes aside to get to the muscle beneath. With an electrocautery scalpel, he dissects the tissue and simultaneously seals leaky blood vessels. His goal is to create an opening beneath the muscle where the implant will rest.

He jabs a finger, then two into the opening to enlarge it. Taking an instrument that looks like a kitchen baster, he irrigates the expanding pocket with a saline and antibiotic solution. Now, using three Betadine-soaked sponges, which look like long gauze strips, he fills the space he has made beneath the muscle until Shay's breast stands out like a pointed pyra-

Each of Shay's implants contains almost 1/4 cups of silicone.



Dr. Thomas Haas makes incisions in his preferred position for this type of procedure, beneath each breast.

mid. With a few stitches, Haas closes the incision.

There are commercial expanders that fill the same function as the sponges, Haas says. But this is a lot less expensive. As it is, the surgery costs \$5,500.

---

8:10 A.M.

Haas makes an incision on the left side and repeats the entire process. Shay snores softly.

When both breasts are filled with sponge, Haas and his helpers sit Shay up and inspect the breasts for symmetry before beginning the next step.

---

8:15 A.M.

It's time to put in the implants. Haas removes the few sutures on the right breast, seals the last bleeders, pulls out the sponges and again irrigates the opening.

Now, taking a plastic sheet with a slit in the center, he soaks it in Betadine and places the slit over the opening he made. The sheet prevents the implant from touching skin. With a grunt, he pushes the implant through the slit and into the tight pocket beneath the muscle. "That's a little implant compared to what we usually do," Haas says.

The breast tissue spreads and rounds like a bowl-shaped champagne glass over the implant — the martini-glass shape of the sponges is absent. The procedure on the left breast is identical, and again the surgeon inspects the completed work for symmetry and balance.

"Looks pretty good," he says.

---

8:26 A.M.

Haas places fat rolls of bandages on the outside of each breast to push the implants toward the center. He and his team wrap more bandage tightly around the top of the breast to prevent the implant's natural tendency to ride up.

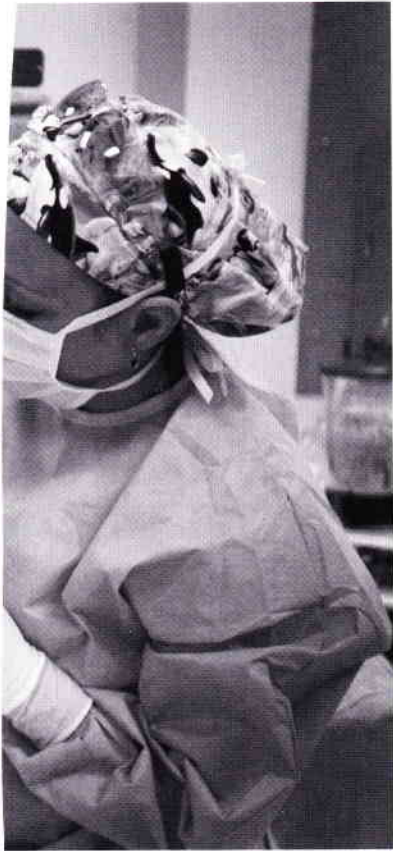
---

9:04 A.M.

Shay wakes up in recovery. She's loopy and sentimental. The doctor walks in, chats with her briefly and, as he is leaving the room, puts a hand on her shoulder. Shay grabs his hand and rests her cheek on it. "Hey! You're a good doctor!" she hollers.

Moments later, she lifts her blanket to peek at her new breasts. "Whoa!" she exclaims.

Nurses wrap Shay Perna's breasts tightly with bandages after the procedure, which keeps the implants in their proper positions.



SATURDAY, APRIL 3  
HOME IN BRANDENBURG, KY.

Shay gets her first good look at her new breasts while changing her dressing. "The nipples are straight. Everything was wonderful," she says. But as the anesthesia wears off, she is sore. "It's like you bench-pressed a house." She's on Tylenol with oxycodone and a muscle relaxant.

She bloats, her belly swollen with fluid for a day. She will need to sleep at a 45-degree angle for a few weeks longer.

TUESDAY, APRIL 6  
IMAGE MEDICAL SPA

Shay returns to Haas' office for a checkup. "She looks pretty good now," the doctor says. "I'm pleased."

She'll be off of work until Wednesday. She won't be able to drive for a week. And she'll only be able to wear sports bras — no underwire or push-up bras for at least six weeks. Right now, her implants are hard, and Shay still is adjusting to them. They get in the way.

"I was blow-drying my hair and punched myself a couple times."

MONDAY, APRIL 27  
IMAGE MEDICAL SPA

With swelling noticeably diminished, Shay stands for inspection at her surgeon's office for the last time until autumn. The implants are beginning to soften as the pocket that contains them expands. They no longer ride high. Haas shows her how to push the breasts from the outside toward the center to keep the pocket from contracting.

"I want you to push and hold this way for 30 seconds every day for the rest of your life," he instructs.

She has occasional bursts of shooting pain, Shay says. It's normal, she's told. And in the past week, her skin got so itchy as it stretched, it drove her crazy. Ice soothes the itch. But the discomforts and occasional pain are nothing compared to her satisfaction.

"I love it. I never had a self-confidence issue, but now I feel like I don't have to spend nearly as much time on myself as I did. It's as though, subconsciously, I was overcompensating.

"I just feel better, which I didn't expect. I really didn't."

At left, top: Shay gets help from nurse Lisa Deener immediately after her breast augmentation.

At left, bottom: Shay talks with Brandy Immerso, operating-room manager and surgical assistant, at her second checkup.

Above, Shay Perna now says, "I love it."

For more photos, go to [herscene.com](http://herscene.com)