Me and my Mad Men body



Keen to reclaim her once hourglass figure, Wendy Leigh tries a spot of lipotransfer to resculpt her rear

From page 1 At the age of 15, I was curvy and voluptuous, the proud possessor of a classic hourglass figure. Throughout my twenties, thirties and forties, my measurements were 38-26-38 in, I weighed 9 stone, and sported a figure displayed to best advantage in basques and skin-tight dresses.



Fuller figure: Christina Hendricks as the unashamedly sexy siren Joan Holloway in 'Mad Men'

However, by the time I hit 50, I began to notice that while the top half of the hourglass was extremely full, the bottom half was becoming slightly emptier. While my bust was still large, my bottom was not.

Initially, I wasn't upset by the change in my proportions. But then Mad Men swept on to our screens. The show's glorious, flame-haired siren, Joan Holloway (played by Christina Hendricks), whose overflowing cleavage is well-matched by her jiggling bottom, reminded me of the description of Marilyn Monroe's rear as resembling two puppies fighting in a sack. I wanted to look just like her.

And while I wasn't deluded enough to imagine I'd ever be 36 again, Joan's ample, unashamedly sexy proportions, made me wonder if I couldn't turn back the clock and get back mine.

My first idea to reclaim my hourglass figure was to have silicone buttock implants. But when I learnt that they can lead to a loss of sensitivity in the area, and that there is a danger that, with time, they can rupture or become infected, I decided to think again.

Fat transfer - or lipotransfer, as it is known in the trade - sounded like a safer bet. A relatively recent development in cosmetic surgery, it's a spin-off from liposuction whereby, rather than disposing of the sucked-out fat, it is reinjected into an area that needs plumping. The body's fat stores provide naturally soft padding and, unlike man-made filler or implants, do not show up so readily under the skin.

On the recommendation of a friend who has had practically every plastic surgery procedure known to woman, I flew to Germany to meet Professor Bjorn Stark, director of plastic surgery at the University of Freiburg Clinic, who administers lipotransfers at his private plastic surgery centre, the Erich Lexer Clinic.

I had been feeling guilty about my own frivolity in contemplating the procedure, but was promptly handed a valid excuse. Since I broke a vertebra during pilates nearly two years ago, sit-ups have been out of the question. While I might have been able to plump my bottom with rigorous exercise, my stomach will remain for ever gymproof. But as Prof Stark reminded me, by removing the fat from my stomach, it would, of course, flatten down nicely. A spot of lipotransfer would give me both the front and rear I'd been hoping for.

I moved into the Hotel Stadt Freiburg, a four-star hotel in the same building as the clinic, where I would be able to recuperate. The swelling typically lasts for more than a week, but recovery can take even longer when the fat removal and injections are performed in one operation. Those who prefer to be resculpted over time can have their fat frozen and injected back on monthly visits.

On the morning of the operation, Prof Stark begins by drawing lines on my body with a black marker, rather like an Ordnance Survey map, noting the points where he will harvest the fat, and the areas where he will inject it back through small incisions in the skin.

"Injecting fat into fat isn't that good," Prof Stark says. "But the buttock muscles are a great host, with lots of blood vessels there." Then, he gives me a local anaesthetic. One minute, I am stretched out on a chaise longue looking at the Black Forest, the next, I am awake and the two-and-ahalf-hour operation is over.

Afterwards, Prof Stark describes what it entailed, "First, you were placed on your back. I then made an incision on either side of your hips, just above the bone. Had I been performing liposuction, I would have attached a pump and removed the fat into a bucket. But as this was a lipotransfer, I attached a syringe to one-and-a-half feet of tubing.

"After administering the general anaesthetic, I inserted the tubing into your belly to reach the fatty deposits. You have to touch the belly to feel where the fat is thickest. I took 600cc [just over a pint's worth] of fat from the front of your stomach. Then I turned you over and made incisions on either side of the waist and took 200cc of fat from each side."

With the fat collected in the syringe, an antibiotic solution was added to "wash" the cells, before they were pumped back via an incision on each side of the buttocks. "You have to put the fat in the right position - it's like being a pilot," says Prof Stark. "Then you create a mound, which is rather like being a sculptor."

The operation itself is a breeze. It's the recovery that's the hardest part. For a few days after the operation, I felt as though I'd had 12 of the best inflicted by a sadistic headmaster. I couldn't sit down without pain for a week, and the bruises were magnificent.

For five weeks, I had to wear an elastic corset from bust to bottom, just to keep the skin in place and allow the fat to settle. On Prof Stark's recommendation, I went to an Endermologie institute (endermologiefreiburg.de), for four sessions on its bodycontouring machine. Endermologie massage is popular in Hollywood, as it helps firm sagging skin and can treat cellulite, too.

The aftermath of the procedure was neither fun nor painless. But to look at my new figure today - a smaller waist, a bigger, more shapely bottom, all in proportion with my bust, in the hourglass fashion - I'm thrilled with my Joan Holloway operation. Þ Lipotransfer at Freiburg's Erich Lexer Clinic (0049 761 896 4170, www.lexerklinik.de) costs 5,100 euros (£4,360), including one night's stay in the clinic. Wendy Leigh stayed at the Stadt Hotel Freiburg (0049 761 89680, www.hotelstadt-freiburg.de), from 130 euros (£110) a night. British Airways (ba.com) flies to nearby Basel from London Heathrow, from

