

November 21, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Kimberly Boshart, and I have congenital bilateral aural atresia. In other words, I was born with both ears deformed internally and externally as well as moderate-to-severe hearing loss bilaterally.

At the age of ten, I began a series of outer ear reconstructive surgeries intended to improve the appearance of my ears. In the first operation, the top half of my right ear (which was ball-shaped) was removed. The second procedure involved taking cartilage from several of my ribs and two skin grafts from my right rear to create the top half of my right ear and to set up "cartilage banks" behind both ears. In the third surgery, the cartilage from the "cartilage banks" was used to build up both ears in an effort to "normalize" their appearance.

My parents and I were extremely disappointed with the final outcome. After three invasive procedures which cost thousands of dollars, required inpatient hospitalizations, and resulted in multiple permanent surgical scars, my ears still appeared grossly deformed. I continued to cover my ears with my hair to avoid stares and questions as I had done prior to the reconstructive surgeries. About ten years later, I consulted another plastic surgeon who informed me that nothing else could be done surgically on my ears because of the scar tissue.

Fairly recently, I was channel surfing when I came across an episode of Prime-time Live which featured Bob Barron and several patients with severe facial disfigurements. It was during this show that I became aware of the existence of custom facial prosthetics (ears, noses, etc.).

Shortly thereafter, I contacted and met with Bob Barron. He created prosthetic ears for me which were exactly identical in shape to my mother's ears and perfectly matched in color to my flesh. Needless to say, I was thrilled with the results of his efforts. Bob Barron's God-given artistic ability, relentless pursuit of perfection, and years of experience enable him to achieve in his custom prosthetics a degree of aesthetic normalcy and realism unattainable by surgical means for multiple reasons.

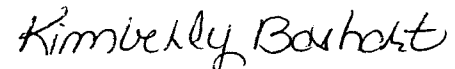
I am currently a third-year medical student at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center and am extremely grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the medical profession. Two concepts which we learned very early in the first year of medical school were "Primum non nocere" (translated "First do no harm") and the idea of the physician as a fiduciary (acting in the patient's best interest).

Plastic surgeons continue to perform outer ear reconstructive surgeries. Essentially, this violates the most basic professional and moral responsibilities of a

physician as described above. Due to the sheer complexity and intricacy of the human ear, it is virtually impossible to successfully construct or reconstruct one surgically; unfortunately, patients are not typically informed of this. Furthermore, patients are not usually made aware of other options, such as custom prosthetics. Most people know about arm and leg prosthetics, but very few have a working knowledge of custom facial prosthetics. Only through chance viewing of several news magazine and talk shows can one learn about nonsurgical treatment options pertaining to facial disfigurements.

I believe that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to compel plastic surgeons to enlighten their prospective patients about the dismal outcomes of outer ear reconstructive surgery and about more successful avenues of treatment. Therefore, I would be very interested in finding a way to convey this information to people with various ear malformations. People in these circumstances may still choose to address their innate or acquired deformity in a surgical manner, but at least their decision will be an informed one. I wish that I had had this information prior to undergoing multiple ineffective, needless, invasive procedures and would like to hopefully prevent others from making the same mistake.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kimberly Boshart". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name being more prominent than the last.

Kimberly Boshart