

JEWISH EXPONENT

— WHAT IT MEANS TO BE JEWISH IN PHILADELPHIA —

The Breast Sort of Book

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I'm married to a breast man. I don't mean an admirer of breasts, although he is.

My husband, Ted Eisenberg, is a Philadelphia cosmetic breast surgeon who enlarges, reduces and lifts breasts. He has performed so many surgeries that he holds the Guinness World Record for the most breast augmentations done in a lifetime.

At a party or at the gym, when people find out what Ted does for a living, he's bombarded with questions. Men invariably ask: Do you get a lot of exotic dancers? Does your wife mind that you look at other women's breasts all day? Can I be your assistant? Does your wife have implants?

In brief: No. No. No. None of your business.

Through the years, Ted kept a list of the questions most commonly asked and the ones that tickled him: questions about bulletproof vests, bags of birdseed and kickboxing. After thousands of consultations and tens of thousands of questions, he thought, "I could write a book. I could bust the myths about breast implants and the women who get them."

He didn't have to go far to find a co-author for *The Scoop on Breasts: A Plastic Surgeon Busts the Myths* (www.thescooponbreasts.com).

I happily volunteered. I've been a writer and editor since 1976 — including time spent at the Jewish Exponent — and this project sounded like fun.

In *The Scoop on Breasts*, Ted candidly answers hundreds of questions from actual patients. I add the extra padding: fun facts about breasts and breast implants around the world, from Down Under, where the Royal Australian Navy paid for a sailor's breast implants; to Japan, where they worship a goddess of breasts.

I sifted through thousands of Google alerts for breast news: the Israeli woman whose breast implants saved her during a Hezbollah rocket attack, the Spanish woman who hid cocaine in her breast implants, the media guessing games about which celebrities augmented their breasts.

Our kids helped shape the book, too. Ben, 27, kept Ted on his toes by questioning his data and demanding sources. Samantha, 24, grew up with a barrage of media messages about beauty, dieting and body image. She made sure that we were sensitive to these issues.

Ted and I met in 1970 as camp counselors at what is now the Kaiserman JCC. Three years later, he invited me to his surprise 21st birthday party; he proposed to me after dinner. He was just starting his second year of medical school.

His decision to become a plastic and reconstructive surgeon was inspired, in part, by my mother's death from breast cancer when I was only 8. For the first half of his career, he did plastic surgery procedures from head to toe.

He did pioneering work with tissue expanders, using them to reconstruct a nose lost to cancer and a scalp shredded by shrapnel. He rebuilt a young woman's eye socket that had been damaged by radiation so that she was able to wear an artificial eye on her wedding day.

About 12 years ago, Ted transitioned his practice to focus entirely on cosmetic breast surgery. To be honest, I thought breast augmentation was frivolous; I thought he could make a bigger difference if he continued to do reconstructive surgery. I had misconceptions about women who got breast implants, and so did the members of his staff.

This is what I've discovered: Ted's patients range in age from 18 to 63. They are your sisters and your daughters, policewomen and CEOs, teachers and nurses. Only about 3 percent are exotic dancers.

I now understand that for the women who choose it, cosmetic breast surgery can make a profound difference. And in 2010, about 336,000 women in the United States elected to have breast augmentation; worldwide, that number exceeded 1.5 million.

We have been pleased to discover that our readership is much broader. It includes a 73-year-old grandmother who told us she was surprised to learn so much new information about breasts; and breast cancer survivors, including a woman who had a mastectomy and is finishing up her treatment and reported that the book was sensitively written and useful.

Others? Men: OK, so we weren't surprised that men liked the book, especially since it has more than 250 photographs and illustrations, but we heard about a 7-year-old girl who saw her father reading it and said, "Dad, I think this is the first time I've ever seen you reading a book!"