

Gorgeous granny

BEFORE



PRE TUCK

Left: Chris, 18 months ago. Above: After losing 58kg she had an 'apron' of excess skin.



PRE TUCK



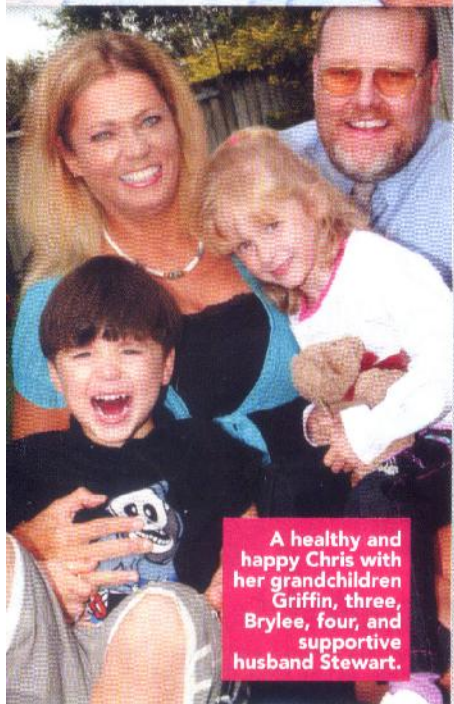
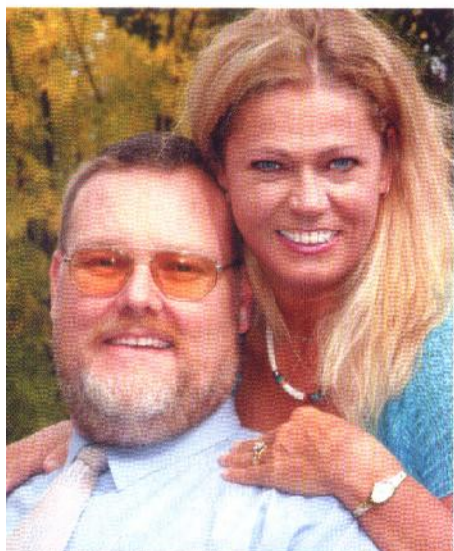
POST TUCK

Above: Chris had skin and fat removed from her tummy, hips back and bottom.



POST TUCK

63KG A tummy tuck changed my



A healthy and happy Chris with her grandchildren Griffin, three, Brylee, four, and supportive husband Stewart.

Depressed with her weight, Manawatu grandmother Chris dieted and lost a massive 58kg then spent \$16,500 on a tummy tuck with stunning results!

Chris Harvey is getting used to friends walking straight past her on the street. The outgoing Palmerston North mum and grandmother is quite literally half the size she used to be, and barely recognisable – even to people who have known her for years.

"People are gobsmacked," laughs the 46-year-old, who has lost 58kg through Weight Watchers and a further 5.3kg after having plastic surgery to remove an enormous apron of skin from her stomach.

"I used to avoid shopping in town because I was afraid I'd catch my reflection in one of those big plate glass windows. Now, I'm checking myself out! I'm so proud of myself and I can't stop smiling."

Just over 18 months ago, Chris was 128kg and desperately unhappy. The deaths of two brothers, her mother's struggle with cancer and her father's crowning had taken their toll and Chris' weight had crept up.

"I ate myself silly," she recalls. "I was miserable – I had given up my job to stay at home and look after the two grandchildren my daughter couldn't care for. And I hated myself.

"It got to the stage where I would be eyeing up big trucks knowing that if I walked out in front of one of them, I could

end it all," confesses Chris.

But with a husband, six children and two grandchildren who needed her, Chris knew she had to carry on. She gathered the strength to join Weight Watchers.

"A light went on when I walked through that door," she says. "And that was it – there was no way I wasn't going to lose the weight."

Halfway through her weight loss, which she says is a credit to her Weight Watchers' leader and support group, Chris was horrified to notice that her excess stomach skin would not budge.

"The weight had fallen off everywhere else, but I had this ghastly belly. I began joking that I was going to need a tummy tuck, but a year on, I could see I really did need one! I began to get deadly serious about the idea."

'I was afraid I'd catch my reflection in one of those big plate glass windows'

The overhang of skin began causing Chris great discomfort and she suffered from rashes and chafing.

"I lived with a constant skin infection so bad that it felt like a burn from one side of my tummy to the other. I was always putting cream on, and it worsened in the

heat. I was in constant pain – it was horrible."

So Chris began to investigate options for plastic surgery. Motivated by shows such as TV2's *Extreme Makeover*, she began searching for a local surgeon.

"I researched for seven months, read everything you could possibly read, and looked at hundreds of before and after photos. I wanted to find someone who had extensive experience in dealing with people who had lost a lot of weight ... and I found my surgeon in Wellington."

Chris travelled south to meet surgeon John Masters, armed with two pages of questions, including, "Have you ever been sued for malpractice?" laughs Chris. All issues addressed, the pair decided that the best way to remove Chris' flap of skin was not just a front tummy tuck, or abdominoplasty, but a circumferential abdominoplasty, where skin and fat is removed from the abdomen, hips and back. Chris opted to combine her surgery with a bottom reshape

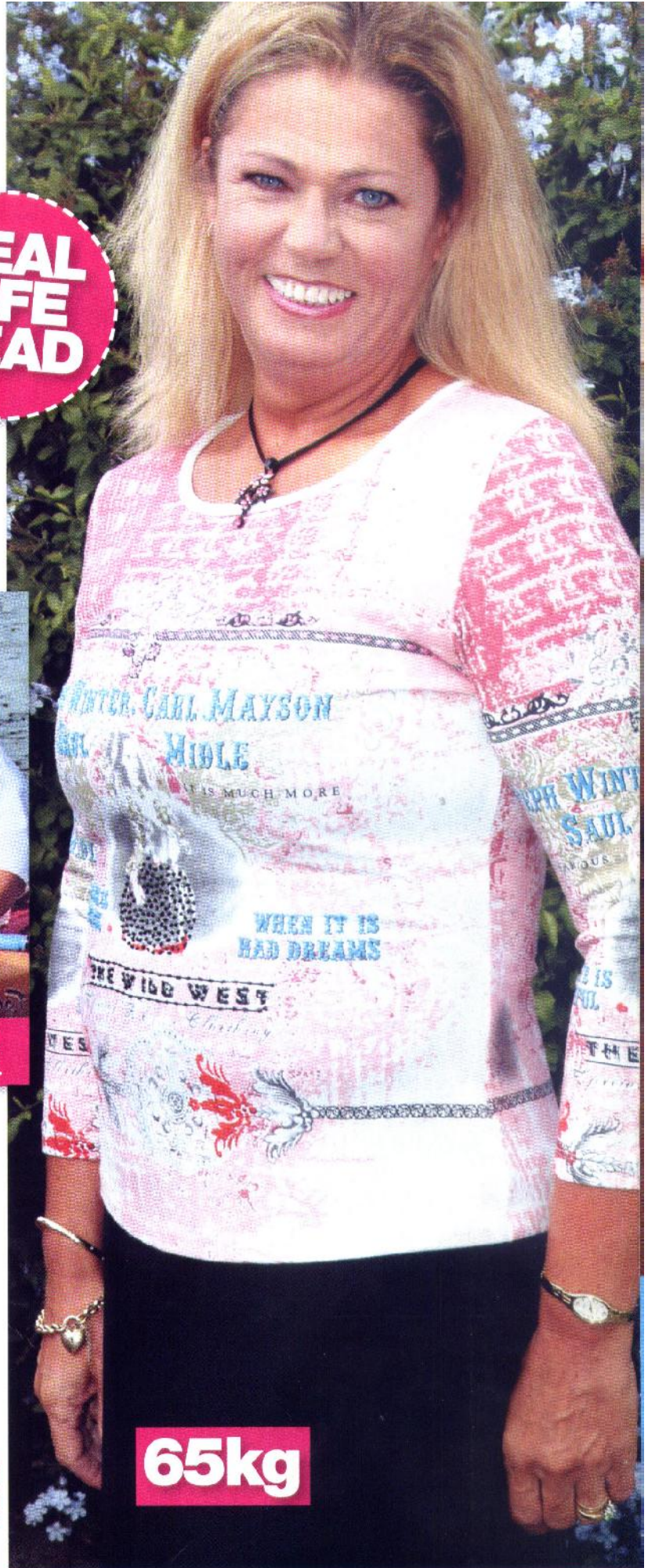
and lift for a total cost of \$16,500.

"Astronomical, but worth it!" she laughs. "I discussed the cost with my family and we agreed we could fund it through personal finance."

Chris' husband Stewart, 44, says he completely supported his wife's plastic surgery and

LIGHTER my tuck nged LIFE

**REAL
LIFE
READ**



Chris stuck to her diet because of her family – those 'eat herself silly' days of misery are now in the past.

128kg

65kg

that there was never any doubt in his mind that it would be worth every cent.

"I saw the surgery as a total mind, body and soul thing. Getting rid of the stomach was important, but mostly I just wanted Chris to be content with herself. If she'd kept the excess stomach skin, I guarantee she would have ended up filling it again ... and that would have been soul-destroying."

Eight hours of surgery later, Chris emerged the woman she wanted to be. Over five kilos of surplus skin and fat had been removed from her belly, hips and back. Her bottom was where it had been 20 years earlier – but she was in indescribable pain.

"I felt like I was dying. The surgeon had said to me that first I'd feel like I'd been hit by a truck, later I'd feel like I'd been hit by a four-wheel drive and eventually by a Mini. When you feel like you've been hit by a small bike you're all better."

"It took me about six weeks to feel human again, and I had to limit my exercise and wear a pressure suit when I went walking, but the results are fantastic. I love the way my body looks and I really love my new bum! I told the surgeon I'd sue him if he gave me a fat arse!"

Chris says the weeks of agony were worthwhile, and Stewart is over the moon to get his old wife back – the bubbly, confident, contented Chris he'd always known was hiding in the fat, uncomfortable body.

"It was really neat experiencing the different look of her body and seeing how great she felt about

it," he says. "She's a much more positive person now, and when she's relaxed and happy and healthy, so are we!"

While Chris is overjoyed with her flat tummy, there will be no more plastic surgery.

"I'm perfectly happy the way I am and I plan to age naturally," she smiles.

"I really don't care if my boobs are pointing towards China ... but I just couldn't live with my belly any more. I've fixed that now, and I'm perfectly happy to live with everything else."

Story: Fiona Fraser

tell the day
wdaynz@acpmedia.co.nz
If you've had a dramatic weight loss, write in and tell us how you did it.

PICTURES: LEIGH DOMIE, MAKE-UP: JULES BEAUTY SPOT