

Dear Norbert,

My name is Susan Thumma, I am all but 48 years old, a wife, a mother, a veteran. Almost 8 years ago I had a thyroidectomy which left me with bilateral vocal cord paralysis. I had no idea what this was or what I was in store for. I went home and they told me to wait - maybe it will get better. Then my body went into full blown respiratory failure - I woke up about a week later - with a trach. 13 days in the hosp - 9 in the ICU. My life was turned upside down.

I have 2 beautiful girls. I have tried to raise them to be strong & independent no matter what obstacle comes their way.

I ended up with a Shiley trach - which my kids grew acustom to. And my husband. All very supportive.

I was very self-conscious of my track - especially out in public. I have quite the scarf collection!

When I saw your design - I got so so excited - I couldn't believe my eyes. I am constantly looking for new & better - now I found it.

It was very liberating for me. I wore a chain with my shiley, to save money on ties. Honestly I felt like a dog - and at times sounded like a goose - the wonderful 'honking' sound my old speaking valve made.

I am a nurse, my residents often comment on my scarves - or how loudly I coughed - they thought I was sick. I just smiled and it said it's just a tickle.

I have since worn my speak EZ at work - I did notice less coughing. It's more of a habit I believe.

I still feel the need to pinch myself - how can this work? I am truly amazed. I feel beautiful again - I can look in the mirror and see me. Not my shiley staring back at me as a constant reminder. I know I will have my track the rest of my life - thanks to you it will be more comfortable - more enjoyable and more beautiful.

My family has always been more than accepting, and I try not to dwell on the negative. This is definitely a turning point for me.

Someday I will get to meet you - I hope to share my gratitude. I wish to thank you in person - for now a much too long letter.

But I wish to finish by saying - Thank You, for sharing your talent, for improving my life and countless others I imagine. Words can't do justice for feelings. My favorite quote is: Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away. You truly have taken - and given me new breath!

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Truly you are a gift from God! An angel!

Yours truly
Susan Whumma