

SYLVAIN CHAMBERLAIN

March 26, 2004

RE: Apnea Awareness Exhibit

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a Fine Artist and a sufferer of Severe Obstructive Sleep Apnea. In 1998 an overnight sleep study done at Saint Jude's Sleep Studies Center in Southern California determined my "sleep index" was 89. 89 cessation events per hour...I was asked to sign papers before they would release me, which absolve the center of responsibility should I drive a vehicle or operate machinery or engage in activity that might put me or others in danger should I fall asleep. I cannot hold a steady job since my mind wanders and I occasionally suffer from narcolepsy. A badly deviated septum from a football injury suffered when I was 13, make the C-PAP machines I have all tried simply create worse problems as my sinuses clog within 30 minutes. I am now 46 years old and well aware of my slow decline each year. I have been a fine artist for the past twenty years and have always drawn and enjoyed the arts as well as a few years in the architectural field.

My goal in writing to you is a bit selfish, but I also feel the condition of Obstructive Apnea is a far more destructive and debilitating illness than the established information would lead one to believe. My case may be on the severe end of the scale, but I believe that the full scope of destruction of quality of life, relationships, sexual dysfunction, heart stress, blood pressure, memory (which is our experience of life and identity), and even a few psychotic episodes I have had along with myriad other internal illnesses including gastro-intestinal problems, and severe chest bloating and pain due to constant "heaving" spasms like a fish out of water during the night, can all be attributed to this profound lack of restorative sleep!

I feel especially aware of the limitations in propaganda and accepted treatment for this disease, since I no longer have insurance, nor can I afford it. I was scheduled for surgery in California. Aetna took three years to approve the procedure, and only after I saw their Physician (the same man who kept turning me down). My appointment with Dr. Richardson lasted about 7 seconds. As soon as he looked at my throat, he approved the surgery. Unfortunately, I lost my job soon after. The surgeon said I had a 50/50 chance of waking up each morning. I could almost live with that if it weren't for my beautiful wife. She is an angel. She deserves better.

Please peruse the enclosed materials. They represent a theme in my artwork that is becoming more and more omnipresent. The theme for all the works is Apnea. Specifically, my experience of Apnea visualized. I would like these paintings and more to be toured around the country, and the world, if need be, to raise awareness about the profundity of this illness. I will volunteer all of my time to support this with appearances, interviews, more art works, essays, etc... to keep this alive. I hardly have anything else to live for.

If this could lead to my participation in a trial procedure with promise, or some other opportunity to open my breathing passages, I will be eternally grateful and gladly donate all my artworks toward payment. But, even if that does not happen, I believe something must be done to make this illness a greater priority, and more serious attention given to treatment and repair. The C-Pap is a really bad "patch" seriously limiting movement, interaction with partners, and never, never goes away. This is like saying dialysis machines are a cure for diabetes. We can do better.

Please give me your thoughts on the possibilities for this kind of endeavor. If it requires networking, I am prepared to come on board and follow your lead.

Sincerely,

Sylvain Chamberlain