

Generations

Blurred journey from contacts to cataracts

I've wanted to be free of glasses from as long as I can remember — and even before.

My Mom told me I started wearing glasses at the tender age of 5. By middle school, I was tired of hearing kids call me "four eyes" so I asked teachers to put me in the first row to see the blackboard because of an "eye condition." By high school, the horn rims occasionally made their way to my eyes, but not so in the yearbook or on graduation day.

By the time I was dating, vanity took control like a tidal wave crashing on a sandy beach, and I hardly ever wore glasses. It was the 1960s, when black liquid eyeliner was a must for any cool girl, and I wasn't going to cover up my wing tips with horn rims. As a result, the number of mishaps multiplied, such as falling down stairs, dancing with the wrong partner in a crowded club, getting into the wrong car while my girlfriends laughed on the sidewalk. I sat through the 1966 movie, "The Russians are Coming, the Russians are Coming," three times, with three different suitors, but the glasses remained in my purse. The critics loved the movie, but I had no idea why everyone was laughing.

Still, I did not surrender to glasses until I was forced to wear them for my first job. Working in the mayor's office of a Long Island town, I needed them as I typed away, careful not to make any typos that

would get me fired.

It was about that time that I explored the world of contact lenses. In those days, hard lenses were the norm, so I was fitted for a pair and then tried hard to convince my brain that nothing was in my eyes. I carried around several handkerchiefs while my supervisor encouraged me during the struggle. She even forbade one of the councilmen from smoking his stogie when he entered the office so the smoke wouldn't set off my tear duct smoke alarm.

I gave up the contacts for years, but tried again in my mid-20s, determined to walk down the aisle and see who I was marrying. Since I am on my third marriage, perhaps cloudy vision wasn't my only problem.

For years, I wore contacts until Lasik surgery came along. The freedom Lasik gave me was immense and even little things that those with 20/20 take for granted I could now enjoy, like easily finding the shampoo bottle rather than feeling around blindly for it in the shower, or waking up and seeing the alarm clock rather than reaching first for my glasses. I no longer had to depend on anything to see the world around me. It was exhilarating!

But then, the lights went out



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— sort of. After I turned 60, street signs weren't that clear anymore, a magnifying glass became a necessity for the small print on objects, and even with a 19-inch computer screen, I couldn't make out a font without blowing it up to around 150. It seemed to always be cloudy even when the sun shined for everyone else.

That's when it was time for my first cataract surgery, followed by the second just last year. The results were super for distance, but reading glasses were prescribed, and I knew I'd have a hard time mentally going back to glasses. Sure, there were now at least 500 designs to pick from (horn rims seem to be coming back!) and beautiful movie stars promised that I'd look gorgeous if I paid hundreds of dollars for their particular frames. But I had suffered so many years to get rid of glasses that I had no zip or zing to try on any frames and took the closest pair just to get out of the shop.

I had no choice but to wear those darn glasses again, but, somehow, it was different. Perhaps it was time to admit that the two shatterproof plastic oval shapes on the bridge of my nose were my friends and not my enemy.

Vanity had finally taken a TKO and that was true freedom.

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