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Editor's Vision

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### My first magazine love

The magazine that drove me through undergrad, through the Army and on into graduate school is, admittedly, one that doesn't yet exist.

For a long time I would have said Vogue was my inspiration. Looking back, however, I don't remember having a subscription to it. Ever. I'm 33 now, and I started telling people I was going to write for Vogue when I was in high school. I think the idea at that point was the opportunity to meet Johnny Depp and steal him away from Kate Moss when she was still a runway model.

Over the years I wanted to write for other magazines: YM, TV Guide, Newsweek, Sassy, Mademoiselle, George, British Cosmopolitan, Entertainment Weekly, Glamour, Allure, InStyle, Rolling Stone, People. When I was broke, between graduating from West Virginia University and moving to Keyser, W.Va., to run the lifestyles section of the Mineral Daily News-Tribune, and again between moving home to Edinboro, Pa., and leaving for basic training, one of my favorite ways to spend six or so hours and \$2 was going to Barnes and Noble in Erie, getting a stack of magazines, a cup of tea, and just reading. The staff at the Starbucks in Barnes and Noble would just keep giving me hot water, so I would read and try to absorb as much information as I could.

It was around that time I realized that most of the beauty and fashion magazines didn't seem to address what I thought they should: how to work with what you have. I loved reading about the newest cosmetic colors, but being told a particular color would

work on redheads didn't mean as much if the model was tan and blonde. Being told a dress would look good on a curvy body didn't help if the model looked like an adolescent boy. Or worse, if the magazine instantly equated curvy with plus-size. (Or if the fashion spread was only photographs of clothes. No help at all!) I didn't begrudge supermodels for being skinny; I figured dieting and working out was their job. But if a magazine is trying to say a look will flatter a particular body shape, I want to see it on that shape.

I essentially wanted the magazine version of my grandmother, Helen Currie. She was a buyer for a Pittsburgh department store. My grandfather liked to proudly remind people the store never had to have sales, my grandma knew her customers so well. She made sure my sister and I, and our mom before us, were always dressed in good clothes that flattered us. She dressed up to go to the mall.

My grandma didn't manage to talk me out of a horrible, puffy spiral perm. But she did instill the importance of fit and flattery, and the concept that if something didn't look good on me, it wasn't because of me, it was because of the article of clothing itself.

I decided I would start a magazine, and name it Helen. It wouldn't include relationship advice, or much of anything else. It would sort out all the trends and present them at every price to help women find what they needed to feel beautiful.

This decision almost took me to Northwestern University. When I realized, while working in Keyser, that I didn't want to continue writing for newspapers, that I really didn't want to live in small towns and I was vastly unaware of how the magazine industry worked, I started looking at graduate schools, and the final project for Northwestern's magazine program was creating a prototype.

The lure of the G.I. Bill to pay for graduate school and the possibility of getting to write for a military magazine or getting stationed somewhere urban led me into the U.S. Army. But I remained a newspaper Jill-of-all-trades, writing, taking pictures, laying out brigade newsletters teaching my broadcast-trained bosses to write in the inverted triangle and spell -- I never got to write for a magazine, and I spent five years going back and forth between Fort Hood, Texas, and Iraq.

I continued to read almost every magazine I would get my hands on. I noticed that among the women's magazines, more attention was paid to women of all shapes and sizes and budgets. The women in my office loved the April 2009 issue of Glamour, with Crystal Renn, who is classified as a plus-size model, showing off swimsuits. Even the most fitness-obsessed lieutenant in the room remarked Renn looked healthy, toned and gorgeous in the issue.

So I don't see as much of a need for Helen the Magazine today. I get the impression from the Editor's Letters in Allure that Linda Wells gets that beauty and fashion should be fun and make women feel good. I think Valerie Monroe, the beauty director at O, The Oprah Magazine, and Cynthia Leive at Glamour do as well. I would be honored to work for any of these women.