

“Eye” Can See You!

Imagine, if you can, sticking a clear, semi-rigid dime into

each of your eyes. As a ninth-grader in the early 1960s,

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that’s what I felt I will be doing with my first pair of contact

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lenses. In those days, wearing contact lenses

was, truly a novelty. “Hard lenses,” as they are called, is an

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apt description of those things, and equally so of the

frustration they cause in the pursuit of clear vision.

I was diagnosed in third grade as being near-sighted

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and astigmatic. My teacher had noticed that something was

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wrong because I stood about a foot away from a classroom

projection screen in order to read the captions on the

science slides. In those days, we learned through a sequence

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of picture slides the teacher would narrate, kind of like a

rudimentary computer presentation. While most students

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were thrilled to see the teacher dim the lights and fire up the

projector, I sank in my seat to avoid her attention once the

time inevitably came in order to read aloud the fine print so

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fuzzy in the distance.

[1] When I was finally fitted with my first glasses at age

eight, I remember thinking how cheated I had been in my

young life; I had no idea that most people could see as

clearly as I began that day! [2] It was dizzying walking

Out of the optometrist’s office. [3] Objects were suddenly

more ridged and linear; colors seemed more intense and

striking. [4] For eight years, everything around me had been

one big blur and I hadn’t a clue! [5] I felt so alive! [6] My

eyeglasses became a sort of lifeline, the first thing I put on
and the last thing I took off every day. ⁵³

Although they represent a less dramatic change, my first
contact lenses six years later once again sharpened my
focus and heightened my senses. Wearing contact lenses,
however, took some adjustment; several weeks were
required to build calluses on the underside of each eyelid.
putting those saucers in each eye also proved a challenge.

Regardless, the old lenses were much thicker than today's
⁵⁴
contact lenses.

While the lenses were difficult to insert,
they were easiest to pop out, especially when you least
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expected them to. There is nothing like fishing a contact
lens out of a toilet bowl or gingerly using the stopper to
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retrieve a lens from the wall of the bathroom sink drain.

I probably lost and found at least a dozen lenses in the first
two years of wearing them. Since I was virtually blind
without my contacts, my immediate reaction was always to
cry out for help in locating the missing lens.

I can still remember one day sitting in the back row in math
class surrounded by several classmates. I glanced up quickly at the
teacher when, in a flash, out came a lens. I could sense it falling to the
tile floor certainly in the path of some kid's foot. I tried working my way
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to the floor as discretely as possible, palms down. Suddenly, my chair's
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metal legs slipped a few inches on the waxy floor and I landed right on
top of my precious lens with a thud, crushing it to oblivion. I had gotten
my new contacts only three days earlier. How would I explain this to my

mother? She had already questioned my maturity for months before
buying me this latest pair. 60