

# *chapter 1*

## **COSMETICS COP**

### WHY YOU NEED TO READ THIS BOOK

Here's the answer, in simple terms: Because reading this book will save you money. Lots of money! Depending on how you spend money on skin care, it can add up to savings of thousands of dollars over the years. More important, it can also help you take better care of your skin. It may literally save your skin if you happen to be using products that are poorly formulated or just plain bad for skin. What you don't know about skin care and makeup can waste money and hurt your skin. The bottom line is simple, too: Getting ripped off isn't pretty.

For those of you who don't know me, let me introduce myself. I am the author and publisher of several best-selling books on the cosmetics industry. My first was *Blue Eyeshadow Should Be Illegal* (which was revised four times and reprinted dozens more); then came *Don't Go to the Cosmetics Counter Without Me* (the sixth edition was published in January 2003); and *Don't Go Shopping for Hair Care Products Without Me*. In addition, I am a syndicated columnist with Knight Ridder News Tribune Service and a consultant to other cosmetics companies, helping them understand the latest research regarding ingredients in relation to skin health.

Over the years my writing has been based strictly on my earnest desire to get beyond the hype and chicanery of the cosmetics industry and to disseminate straightforward information a consumer can really use to look and feel more beautiful.

My expertise, like that of any other consumer reporter who covers such topics as food, cars, or toys, is based on extensive research in the subject area. What makes my situation unique is that I also have over 20 years of personal experience from working as a professional makeup artist and aesthetician and from selling makeup and skin-care products at department stores, salons, and my own stores, and, recently, selling my own product line.

I use my reporting background to continually and extensively research the cosmetics industry. I base all my comments on comprehensive interviews with dermatologists, oncologists, cosmetics chemists, and cosmetic ingredient manufacturers, and on information I've gleaned from both medical journals and cosmetics industry magazines. I am constantly reviewing scientific abstracts and studies. I do not capriciously or abruptly make any conclusions. Everything I report is supported by studies and information from experts in the field, and I document my sources throughout this book. Naturally, there are many who disagree with my assertions, and I do the best I can to present other points of view whenever possible. However, I assure you that a great number of people in the industry agree with my conclusions, even if they can't do so publicly.

In many ways I'm surprised that reviewing, researching, investigating, and questioning the cosmetics industry is what I do for a living. When I started out as a makeup artist back in 1978 it was never my intent to end up writing as a consumer advocate about the cosmetics industry.

At first my quest was personal. I had suffered with acne for many years. I visited over a dozen dermatologists, I tried hundreds of skin-care products from both inexpensive and expensive cosmetics lines, and still I had acne. How could that be? How could all the stuff I diligently applied to my skin—which salesperson after salesperson and doctor after doctor assured me would work—not work? Sometimes one routine worked a little, but not as well as I had hoped and not for very long. And there were always side effects. Most products made my skin so red and irritated I thought it was going to fall off. Slowly but surely I worked my way through the confusion, and after much research and lots more frustration I began to recognize some fundamental problems with the information provided and the products sold by the cosmetics industry. I also found that many of the same difficulties were present in the field of dermatology.

The cosmetics industry's information was little more than marketing mumbo jumbo with exaggerated or misleading claims. In the field of der-

matology most doctors don't have time to give their patients the information they need or to explain the limitations and pros and cons of treatment. There is also a great deal of misinformation, not to mention myths that dermatologists generate on their own now that almost 50% of them are selling skin-care products.

In truth, I started out wanting to be an actress, and being a makeup artist was a way to pay the rent. In a very short time it became clear to me that I wasn't going to enjoy much success at acting, or at least I didn't have what it takes to persevere, but I did have what it takes to be a good makeup artist and skin-care consultant. My clientele quickly grew, as did my income. I found I definitely preferred a paycheck to struggling with acting auditions and rejections. Of course, that didn't mean everything was rosy. Along the way, when my freelance makeup business was slow, I supplemented my income with work at department-store makeup counters. But each new job for a different cosmetics line resulted in my being fired.

My first dismissal came after an argument with the line representative of a department-store cosmetics company where I was working. The representative wanted me to say that a toner could close pores and a moisturizer could heal, when I knew it wasn't true. (If a toner could close pores, everyone who used toners would have flawless, poreless skin, and if moisturizers could heal skin, no one would have a pimple or a wrinkle or a scar.) That job lasted about two months.

Several months later, at another department store and for a different cosmetics company, I was involved in a conflict with several of the cosmetics saleswomen working at the other counters. If a customer wanted a particular type of product and I didn't think the product from the line I was selling was right, or if my line didn't offer one, I would walk her over to another counter that I knew had the right product and sell it to her. That caused a nuclear meltdown. I was told to stay behind my counter and not touch another product from any line other than the one I was assigned! (When I recommended that the woman could walk over to the other counter herself, I got in trouble with the sales representatives from my line.) How ludicrous! A great product, five feet away, was out of my reach because it wasn't from the counter I was standing behind.

My final department-store cosmetics counter experience ended when I just couldn't take listening to the distortions and exaggerated claims anymore and decided to go out on my own. I opened my own makeup stores in 1981. I didn't sell blue eyeshadow, wrinkle creams, or toners

that claimed to close pores. Along the way, I hooked up with a business partner who was at first thrilled with my ideas and concept, mainly because of the media attention my rather controversial stores attracted.

My stores were generating a lot of attention from the press, and eventually I was asked to make regular appearances on a local TV station in Seattle, KIRO-TV. I also started receiving national and international TV and print exposure.

Eventually my ideas and concept no longer pleased my partner. The department store counters were crowded with women buying blue eyeshadow, wrinkle creams, and toners, so why shouldn't we sell them, too? After all, if you saw women throwing away their money on those sorts of products, at prices ranging from \$25 to \$250 an ounce for items that cost 75 cents to \$4 to produce, you wouldn't want a partner like me, either. I sold my shares back to her in 1984 and stayed at KIRO-TV for the next two years. Sadly, the stores went out of business shortly after I sold them—but I learned a lot about investigative reporting and writing during my time at KIRO-TV in Seattle.

I left the TV station in 1986 after finishing my first book, *Blue Eyeshadow Should Be Illegal*. I decided to self-publish after receiving several rejection letters from major publishing companies telling me that, although they liked my manuscript, I wasn't a celebrity or a model, and no one would be interested in my point of view. I disagreed. I believed lots of women (OK, not all) were tired of hearing useless, and at times incorrect, information from models and celebrities who were born beautiful and knew which makeup artists, photographers, and managers to hire, but very little about the cosmetics they promoted.

I was right, and I sold several hundred thousand copies of my first book! I believed I had given the consumer the more balanced complete information she needed to tackle the cosmetics industry. I was wrong. After I wrote *Blue Eyeshadow*, I received thousands of letters from women asking me, now that they knew how crazy the cosmetics industry was, what they should buy or what I thought of this product or that. It was one thing to have an overview of the cosmetics industry, but quite another to have specific information about a specific product. How could anyone tell if the formulation was effective? How would a person know whether the information about the research done by the doctor or scientist who formulated it was valid? How could someone find out if a company's claims about their impressive study backing up their miracle

skin-care product were true? That's when I wrote *Don't Go to the Cosmetics Counter Without Me*.

Meanwhile, the demand to know what works and what doesn't has grown, mainly because the industry has grown. The number of new product lines emerging every day is sheer madness. Between keeping up with infomercials, multilevel direct marketing lines, home shopping network lines, new lines at the department stores and drugstores, and the endless parade of new product launches from existing cosmetic lines, my job was only beginning.

That brings me to today. The cosmetics industry has gone through many changes. In many ways the industry has gotten more complicated, yet as the research into skin and skin-care products has increased it has also become more exciting. My goal in creating this complete beauty bible is to compile and clarify the new data and research to help each woman create the best skin-care routine possible for her specific needs. In addition, I want to help women achieve the best makeup look possible in the fewest steps with the easiest and most effective techniques.

As is true in all the books I write, I also want to separate cosmetics fact from cosmetics fiction and reality from myth, because the fiction and myths spread by the cosmetics industry are nothing less than startling and frustrating. Compared to the information provided by the cosmetics industry, Mother Goose stories sound like the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Perhaps the most difficult part of my job is keeping a straight face when I hear the crazy things cosmetics salespeople tell consumers. Combating this endless parade of useless and bizarre information can be maddening. But it's my job and, thankfully, it has been far more rewarding than I ever expected.

## EVALUATING PRODUCTS

How I evaluate skin-care formulations deserves some straightforward explanation. Think of the ingredient lists you find on prepared or processed food products, and information on the nutrition content of whole foods. These are the best analogies I can make to ingredient lists on cosmetic products. When it comes to dietary health concerns or awareness, most women start by judging a food on the basis of its ingredient list, or the nutrition content. Information about fat, sodium, preservatives, coloring agents, calories, and many other details is spelled out there. Then the

consumer, using various health resources (books, health professionals, research journals, reliable Web sites) can evaluate the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-mandated ingredient information. Without that information, regardless of how the item tastes (everyone has their own bias), you would never know what you were putting into your body. You could be causing yourself harm by eating more fat than you should, or eating more calories than you should, or skimping on vitamins, antioxidants, fiber, or protein, and on and on, leading to a variety of health problems.

Food labels are incredibly important, and so are the labels on skin-care products. To continue with the food analogy, for example, if one cake mix contains 100 calories per serving but a different cake mix contains 500 calories per serving, that's fundamental information you can use to decide which one you want to buy. Or suppose you are looking for chocolate cake and you find that the mix contains artificial chocolate flavoring—you would probably want to consider another choice. Likewise, if a skin-care product says it is good for sensitive skin but contains ingredients known to cause irritation or breakouts, that is crucial information for making a decision. If a skin-care product sells for \$100 but contains the same ingredients as a product that costs \$20, that is important information. If a product says it is good for breakouts but contains alcohol and peppermint oil, it would be helpful to know how those ingredients could hurt your face and actually cause more breakouts. That's why the ingredient list is important: It helps you sort through the jungle of choices. Besides, it is a far better starting point for making decisions than are unsubstantiated or one-sided advertising claims.

The fundamental review process for each ingredient or product formulation starts with analyzing the published research about whether or not those ingredients or formulations are capable of providing the asserted benefit.

When it comes to makeup, my team and I actually test a large percentage of the products reviewed. I have purchased over \$100,000 worth of cosmetics, and I spend a great deal of time at the cosmetics counters. I use, and test, a lot of makeup, relying on my years of experience along with the feedback I receive from thousands of women.

For makeup application, I make it a point to explain tools and techniques that make sense for everyday use. This isn't the book to use for elaborate or trendy makeup looks. Fashion magazines are replete with

those, and you don't need another book to help you paint black smudges all around your eyes or apply glitter from head to toe.

#### COSMETICS CHEMISTRY—AN ART AND A SCIENCE

I had the opportunity to speak at a meeting of the Society of Cosmetic Chemists, Chicago Chapter, in October 2001. I told this group of accomplished scientists that, despite my anger at the cosmetics industry when it comes to their claims and misleading information, I wanted to affirm that there are wonderful products out there. I know I tend to overemphasize the negative—the crazy claims, high prices, and poor quality—but there are also countless extraordinary products to choose from. This boundless parade of superlative makeup and skin-care products is nothing less than exciting for the consumer.

Every step of the way I am in awe of how beautifully most cosmetics work. Where would we be without the brilliant work of the cosmetics chemists who make the exquisite products we use? Because of their astonishing skill, we have moisturizers that take care of dry skin and help skin heal. They create mascaras that can build thick, lush lashes without flaking or smearing, and foundations that smooth out skin tone, making it look flawless. We have sunscreens that protect skin from sunburn as well as from wrinkles and the potential for skin cancer. There is an endless array of sensuous lipsticks that add relatively long-lasting color and definition to the mouth (and keep it there even longer with the advent of Procter & Gamble's PermaTone lip color—but I'll get into that in the makeup section of this book). Not to mention blushes that softly accent cheekbones and eyeshadows that define eyes, and, well, the list is endless.

I want to sincerely thank all the cosmetics companies who have provided so much of their time and information to me for this book, as well as for my newsletter and my other books. We often don't see eye to eye, but despite our differences, more companies than ever have been generous and forthcoming with information and products.

I also want to thank all the cosmetics chemists everywhere who strive to produce the better and better products that continue to make the beauty industry so incredibly beautiful. I also want to ask cosmetics chemists to do the best they can, whenever they can, to combat the insane marketing departments they have to work with! After interviewing and talking to hundreds of cosmetics chemists over the years, I know

most of you don't believe even a fraction of what the advertisements, salespeople, infomercial hucksters, or editorials in fashion magazines say about the products you create. Your work is rooted in science, not hyperbole. I also know this is a risky business. After all, creating products that no one buys is not going to get anyone a promotion, and the marketing department knows all too well what women love to hear, no matter how ridiculous. But try anyway, just to bring a bit of fresh air into an otherwise very cloudy business.

### IS BEAUTY EVER NATURAL?

Beauty is definitely in the eye of the beholder, but in our culture, where the cosmetics industry is a \$40-billion-a-year industry, beauty takes effort and money. From celebrities to models, and from homemakers to lawyers, hair care, skin care, and makeup are part of a woman's morning ritual. It is probably important for me to make it clear (as the picture of me on the cover of this book shows) that I am hardly anti-makeup, anti-skin care, or anti-hair care—far from it. I do use several skin-care products, I wear makeup (sometimes a lot of makeup), I dye my hair, I have had corrective cosmetic medical procedures (including Botox, breast implants, and nonablative laser resurfacing), I get manicures and pedicures, and I am diligent about wearing sunscreen. Some women may be shocked at the fact that I am not writing about “a return to basics” or making your own cosmetics. My entire perspective throughout every book that I've ever written is to be as nonjudgmental as possible about a woman's personal decisions on what she chooses to do around her own appearance. When it comes to almost all aspects of beauty, I am interested in relating the research in regard to what works and what doesn't. The final decision is always up to the consumer. No matter what that decision is, I want every woman to know what is possible (or impossible) to gain by using a product, so she can purchase what works and not waste money on gimmicks or products that can't possibly live up to their claims.