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■ GOOD LOOKS

continued

to be beautiful, we're supposed to be *naturally* beautiful. A Seattle woman told her friends she was going into the hospital for an appendectomy and was mortified when her little boy let slip that she was having a tummy tuck. Even in Los Angeles, where having plastic surgery is almost as commonplace as coloring one's hair, surgeons are often sworn to secrecy in writing and provide a private entrance for publicity-shy patrons.

Finally, many of us may have nagging doubts about our own values if

we make attractiveness a high priority. Don't we want to be loved for who we are, anyway? If we change our exterior, will we still *know* who we are?

The rewards of beauty

How we answer those questions depends on how we define ourselves, how much we know and care about the importance of attractiveness, and what our needs and goals are.

For example, Barbara Bush defines herself primarily as a mother: After bearing six children, she makes no apologies for her matronly figure (she says she's been a size fourteen for

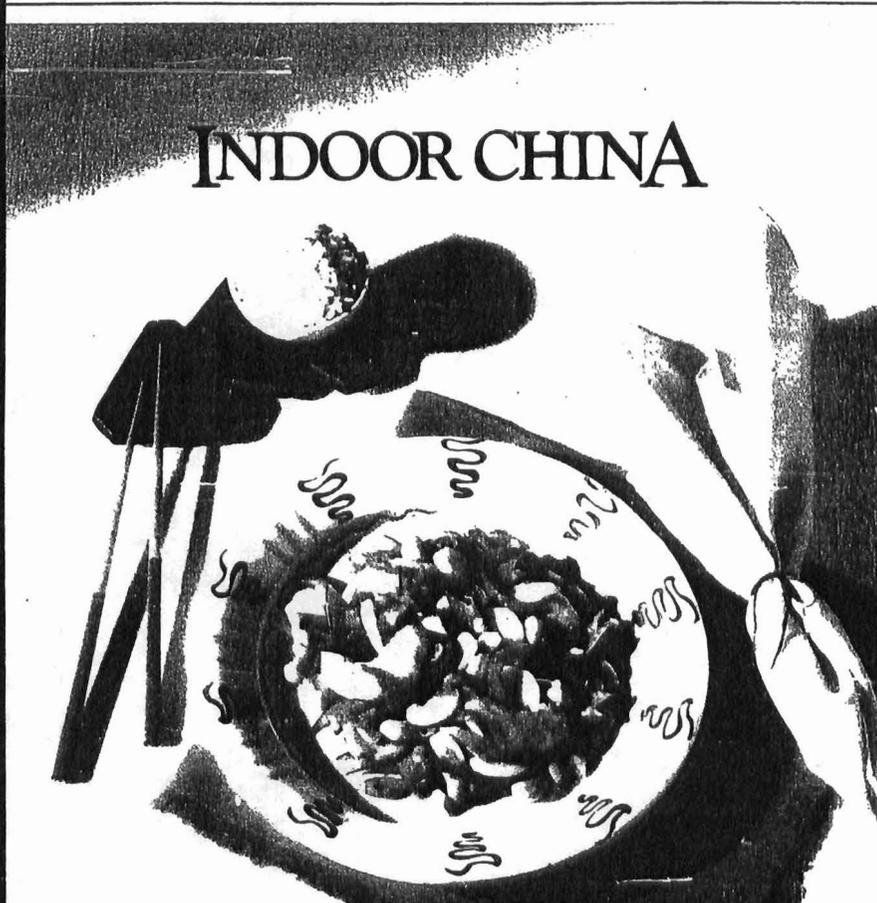
years) or her wrinkles and whiff which she wears as badges of honor. It's not that she lacks about her appearance—she wears contact lenses because, she admits, "too vain" to wear glasses and her trademark fake pearls to counteract her sagging neck. She also walks and rides a stationary bike to control her weight. Yet she draws at dieting or dyeing her hair.

"I colored my hair for ten years in 1970," the First Lady recently admitted. "I used to spend my time in beauty parlor. So I finally said, 'ridiculous.' People who worry about their hair all the time are boring exercise, play tennis. I don't say to George, 'I can't do that, I've had my hair done.' You have to have priorities in life. And mine is: What is what you get."

True. But women who are hired, as Mrs. Bush is, or who are competing in competitive fields, often find it difficult to disregard the power of attractiveness has in our culture and the rewards it can bring.

In a landmark 1972 study, psychologist Elaine Hatfield, co-author of *Mirror, Mirror: The Importance of Looks in Every Day Life* (State University Press, 1980), interviewed college students and colleagues at photographs of good-looking men and women. She discovered that most people are attracted to good-looking men and women. "The good-looking men were perceived to be warmer, more responsive, more sensitive, kinder, more interesting, more sociable and outgoing," she wrote. "The good-looking women were ascribed a 'better character' than the less appealing," says Hatfield. "Our work, too, we are often attracted to good-looking people. Studies show that attractive men tend to view attractive women as more successful and intelligent. Attractive women only are pretty faces more often hired, they often command higher starting salaries, according to a study in *Social Psychology of Facial Attraction* by Ray Bull and Nicholas (Springer-Verlag, 1988). Pretty people, too, tend to be favored. It's not that the obese are often discriminated against, probably because they are perceived to be lacking in self-control.

If you expect, as did Judith S. Liberman, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Pennsylvania State University, that secretaries have to be pretty, surely not mid- or high-level secretaries, you're in for a surprise. In a 1985 study, Waters found that physical attractiveness matters at the lowest skill level, "and that it did play an important role in the hiring process on all skill levels in certain industries—like fast



INDOOR CHINA

CASHEW SHRIMP

Sauce:

1/2 cup chicken broth
1 Tbsp. La Choy® Soy Sauce

1/4 tsp. pepper
1 Tbsp. cornstarch

Shrimp and Vegetables:

1 lb. shelled and deveined raw shrimp
1 Tbsp. La Choy Soy Sauce
2 Tbsp. peanut or vegetable oil
1 1/2 cups julienne-cut red bell peppers
1 tsp. minced garlic

1 (8 oz.) can La Choy Sliced Water Chestnuts, drained
1 (6 oz.) pkg. La Choy Snow Peas, thawed and drained
1/2 cup toasted cashews
1/4 cup chopped scallions

Combine sauce ingredients, set aside. Mix together shrimp and soy sauce. In a wok or large non-stick skillet, stir-fry shrimp in hot oil until pink. Remove and set aside. Sauté bell peppers and garlic 1 minute; stir in water chestnuts and snow peas and heat through. Stir sauce, add to pan with shrimp. Cook, stirring constantly, until thick and bubbling. Sprinkle with cashews and scallions. Serves 4.

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entertainment—looking good is an acknowledged requirement for any job.

Compelling reasons, these, for women to slim down and spruce up. But there are also reasons not to get overzealous. First, standards of beauty are constantly changing. In this century alone, we went from the busty Gibson Girl, to the flat-chested flapper, to Marilyn Monroe voluptuousness, to Twiggy thinness, back to curves in the 1970s and muscled sensuality in the 1980s. Clearly, it is impossible—and foolish—for women to try to keep up with changing ideals.

Second, women, made anxious by the constant media focus on their bodies, often exaggerate their shortcomings. In a recent survey, 45 percent of women who were actually underweight believed themselves to be overweight, says Rosalind Barnett, Ph.D., of Wellesley College, a psychologist in Weston, Massachusetts. Sometimes the desire to be thin leads women to extremes of anorexia or bulimia. In his best-seller *Bonfire of the Vanities* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1988) Tom Wolfe dubbed excessively svelte women "the social X-rays" and wrote longingly of the female "who glows with plumpness and a rosy face that speaks, without a word, of home and hearth . . . Mother." (Score one for Barbara Bush.)

Benefits and risks

Even if you've taken all the factors into account and are finally contemplating some serious self-improvement, you need to consider the costs of cosmetic surgery. Procedures are priced from \$1,500 for a nose job to up to \$4,000 for liposuction, the suctioning of fat from the body; a face-lift can cost \$10,000. And because this is elective surgery, medical insurance will probably not cover it.

Historically, women have always suffered in the name of beauty—corsets, girdles, pointy high heels. At least surgery is one-shot pain—provided all goes well.

But what if it doesn't? Horror stories about cosmetic surgery abound. One of the most sobering concerns Elaine Young, wife of actor Gig Young, who had silicone injections in her face to give her a high-cheekboned look. After a few years, the silicone migrated and hardened, and eventually had to be chipped out of her face. "Many people think that because most procedures are done today on an outpatient basis, having plastic surgery is like having a tooth pulled," says Susan Craig, M.D., a plastic surgeon in New York City. "Absolutely not. This is not minor surgery. There is a potential for scarring, particularly around the face and eyes,

and for an enormous amount of bleeding and for infection."

Face-lifts may cause nerve damage; breast implants not only may contract and harden but also interfere with cancer detection by preventing some portions of the breast from being visible during mammography; liposuction can cause fat clots, shock and coma. It has already killed eleven people.

A certain number of people disregard the dangers, however; repeat patients have earned the name scalpel slaves. Often, they are pathological narcissists who focus on external appearance alone, believing that perfect beauty will win from others the love

they don't feel for themselves. "They want to have their eyes done today, the nose tomorrow and something else the next," says Peter Fodor, M.D., a plastic surgeon in New York City. "You get the sense when they come back to you that it's not because they weren't pleased with the result. They were pleased, but they've forgotten it—now it's on to something else."

A delicate balance

Of course, most of us will not go to the extremes of cosmetic surgery; in one recent poll, 70 percent of women said they would not have a (continued)

OUTDOOR CHINA

ORIENTAL BARBECUE
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