



PHOTO BY SANKHA KAR

# Women are under a lot of pressure

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SKINCARE AND THE USE of a variety of ingredients on the skin is a subject that has always fascinated me.

I grew up in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, and started using cosmetics as a teenager. I didn't have much of a clue about the ingredients that were needed to make a good skincare cosmetic - I simply knew what worked for me.

Much later, when I travelled through Africa by road, the lush flora of the tropical rain forests of central Africa gave me ample opportunity to learn

about the natural ingredients from forest plants that worked wonders on local people's skins.

When we shop for food, we always check the labels for ingredients and additives to learn what we are eating. I think the same goes for cosmetics too.

Most women would like to know what goes into a pot of cream that they are using. But not many of us

understand what the ingredients are.

There is a lot of pressure on women to use make-up and look good and groomed at all times. Social role models and glossy advertisements constantly build up this psychological pressure and besides, there is also a 'feelgood' factor that makes a woman feel more pampered when she uses good cosmetics on herself.

The truth is you cannot stop the ageing process with creams that claim to erase wrinkles. You would need plastic surgery or collagen injections to do that.

Good skincare products can, however, mask the wrinkles. I would tell women (and men) the best skin care regime is to stay out of the sun, follow a healthy lifestyle, exercise, eat the right food groups and drink a lot of water. Use a moisturiser to hydrate your skin.

Labelling regulations state that ingredients have to be listed with the largest amount at the top of the label, and gradually going downwards according to proportion. Not all cosmetic manufacturers do this.

I became a journalist straight from school in Zimbabwe, taking the cue from my father who was the editor of a Bulawayo newspaper. I joined *The Herald* newspaper in Harare as a rookie reporter (or, as they called it, a "cub reporter".)

After two years of reporting on anything from flower shows to the bush war going on at that time, I took to travelling all over the world. Among other jobs that I have held were those of a tour guide, travel journalist and photographer, barmaid, secretary, nanny and apple picker.

I kept going between the UK and southern Africa, never knowing which place to settle in. When I met my husband in Zimbabwe in 1997, we decided to move to the UK and stay put.

In the course of time, being a mother

at home in the UK, I felt compelled to look at alternative therapies to relieve the stress of motherhood.

I took a course in aromatherapy and massage. My teacher, Maurene Charlwood, is an ITEC-approved tutor of anatomy, physiology, massage and aromatherapy. Her grandfather was a perfumer and she inherited his talents and formulates many skincare cosmetics at home. She is a member of the Society of Cosmetic Scientists and of the Institute of Patentees and Inventors. So

Maurene had all the knowledge and me being a journalist, could write.

Maurene had always felt there was a need for someone to demystify the names of ingredients that go into skincare cosmetics, and to simplify it into a readable book for everybody.

So we pooled our strengths and interests and decided to do an A-Z listing of 400 of the most common

cosmetic ingredients used in skincare cosmetics worldwide.

There are more than 400,000 known ingredients. We wrote this book to inform consumers of the ingredients available in skin care cosmetics, from their origins to their use.

The aim was not to do an expose or scare the public. We wanted to make it readable for the person-in-the-street, and while it is technically correct (having been

approved by UK toxicologists and beauty organisations), it is not a book only for scientific minds.

We have deliberately not touched upon colour cosmetics such as mascara, lipstick, eyebrow pencil, nail enamel, etc as this is a different ball game. We have divided the book into cosmetic history through the ages, the anatomy of skin and common factors that affect it.

It is interesting to note that although there is no international law to prosecute violators using harmful ingredients,

## PERSONAL NOTES

**My favourite home remedy for a quick fix in skincare... is to apply Vaseline (petroleum jelly) to my heels most nights to prevent cracking from dryness.**

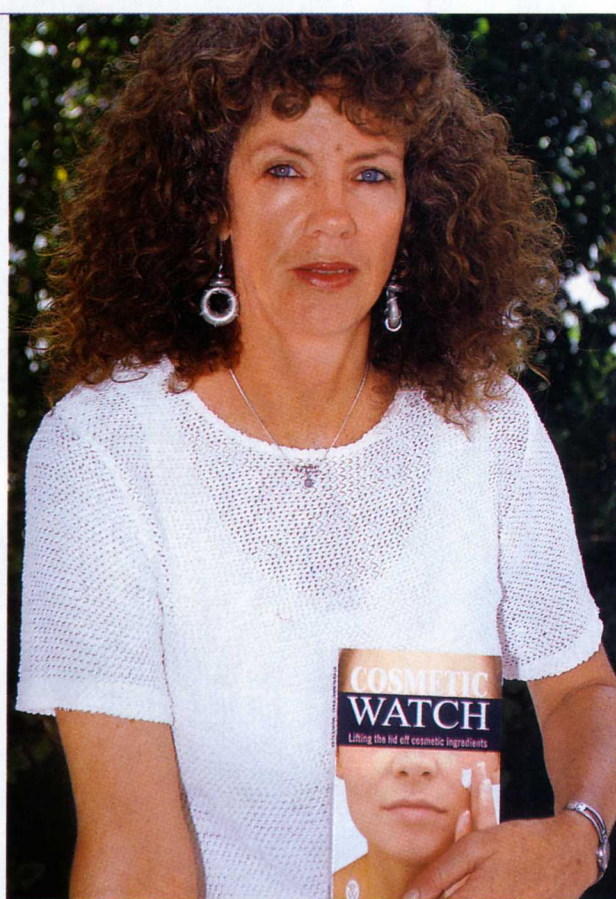
**My favourite tip to age gracefully... is to make every second glass of whatever you drink water instead of any other beverage.**

**The most beautiful women according to me are...**

Penelope Cruz, Cameron Diaz, Julia Roberts and Sandra Bullock.

**The most potent beauty herb of our times... is chamomile. It has soothing, healing, sedative and anti-inflammatory properties and can even be drunk as tea.**

**To me friendship means... being honest with each other. Honesty is the best policy after all.**



**Robertson** is the co-author of the book, *Cosmetic Watch: Lifting The Lid Off Cosmetic Ingredients*.

consumers can seek redress with the parent company itself, or go to the Consumer Protection Association (CPA) or the Advertising Standards Authority.

Our research indicates that most cosmetic manufacturers stay well within the guidelines provided by the EEC Council Directive and the Cosmetics Product (Safety) Regulations.

An international labelling system known as the International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients (INCI) is followed by manufacturers in most countries in an effort to standardise all cosmetic formulations.

Our research work paid off and the book has been added to the list of recommended reading for students taking CIBTAC (Confederation of International Beauty Therapy & Cosmetology) diplomas. The book is available for order on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and [www.tesco.com](http://www.tesco.com) Web sites, as well as from the publishers Web site at [www.right-way.co.uk](http://www.right-way.co.uk).

From general news reporting to writing and researching an informative book has been one long journey and I intend to write more – I am currently working on a children's poetry book; later I want to tackle two biographies and a novel. **F**