

Paper Mache for 8-21-26 by David Read

Are magazines dead? I grew up in a household that received various magazines in the mail each month. Aside from *Fortune* subscribed to on our family's behalf by my businessman grandfather for my totally nonbusiness oriented father, I looked forward to *Arizona Highways*, *National Geographic*, *Family Circle*, *Mad* and *Life* magazines. Oh, and don't forget the comics I'd buy at the local newsstand on the way to school. Sure wish I still had that copy of *The Incredible Hulk* #1! At school, we read *Highlights* magazine and of course, the *Weekly Reader*, not quite a magazine, but it was likely the start of my love affair with newspapers. I learned so much from each of them. The covers like the portraits on *Life* were often works of art. When my children were young, we subscribed to *Ranger Rick* and *Zoobooks*. We currently receive *National Geographic*, *Time*, *Sactown*, and *American Indian*, the publication of the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian (their name, not mine.)

While preparing our calendar submissions for the September edition of the Appeal Democrat's *Prospect*, I started wondering if magazines are still relevant. A few weeks ago, I walked into a real bookstore and wandered over to the magazine rack. I expected to find the usual suspects, *Smithsonian*, *The New Yorker*, *Birds & Blooms*, *Fine Woodworking*. Instead, I found a fraction of what once filled an entire aisle. There was a time when magazines were our windows to the world. Long before the internet, we waited eagerly for the next issue to arrive in the mailbox. *National Geographic* transported us to the Serengeti. *Sports Illustrated* brought us face-to-face with our heroes. *Popular Mechanics* promised the future. *Mad* magazine made us laugh at the present. Even the advertisements were worth reading, well, maybe except for the cigarette ads. They reflected the hopes, fashions, and technologies of their time.

I kept some of those old magazines; *Arizona Highways* featuring the magnificent color landscapes of David Muench, *National Geographic*s including the one documenting Sir Edmund Hillary's successful ascent of Mount Everest. Every so often I pull one out and am reminded that magazines possess something websites rarely do, a sense of permanence. Once printed, they become snapshots of a particular moment in history. Fifty or more years later, they tell us not only what people believed was important, but how they chose to present it.

Of course, the internet has changed everything. News travels at the speed of a swipe. Recipes, travel advice, and product reviews appear instantly. Why wait a month for a magazine when your phone refreshes every second? Yet something interesting has happened. Many magazines that survived did so by refusing to compete with the internet. Instead of chasing breaking news, they embraced thoughtful storytelling, beautiful photography, and high-quality design. They became objects to savor rather than consume. Holding a well-designed magazine still feels different than scrolling through a screen. There are no pop-up ads, no notifications, and no endless distractions. Just words, images, and ideas. And for the record, some of the most popular magazines in the U.S. currently, across various categories are #1, *AARP The Magazine*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Vogue*, *National Geographic*, *American Rifleman*, *People* and *The New Yorker*.

Perhaps that's the lesson. Technology changes how we receive information, but it doesn't eliminate our desire for thoughtful stories or beautiful images. Whether it's a painting hanging in a gallery, a book resting on a shelf, or a magazine waiting on a coffee table, physical objects still invite us to slow down. So, are magazines dead? I don't think so. Like so many art forms, they simply found a new audience, one that values quality over quantity, reflection over speed, and the quiet pleasure of turning one more page before setting it down.