

Jim's Perspective...

Hair

With the shutting down of non-essential businesses, which, at least in Lincoln at this time, includes barber shops and hair salons, I have not had a hair cut since early February. The current state of my hair takes me back to a time long, long ago, roughly 1970, when I had long, black, curly hair. I can thank my mother for this physical characteristic!

Recently, my wife and I were sitting out on the screened-in porch one evening having a cocktail. She started laughing at me. She couldn't believe how long my hair was getting, and how curly it looked. Alas, it is no longer black, but it is still very curly. She started reminiscing and laughing about my hair issues as a young man. I did some funny things related to my hair, and so in honor of our current environment and my lack of a hair cut, a few tales from the past.

The First Wig

As I mentioned in the past, I went to basic training for the Air National Guard at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio in the early fall of 1971. I arrived at the base with long black curly hair, bell-bottom jeans, and a flowered shirt. It didn't dawn on me to show up at the base with some aspect of military bearing. Needless to say, the drill instructor was not amused. I received my first military hair cut shortly after he assigned me a bunk in my barracks. On about my last day of basic training I was marched to the military barber shop and given a "welcome to the military" buzz cut. I was irritated about that because I was getting married to Janie shortly after returning to Lincoln. The barber knew I was unhappy, so he scalped me all the more for good measure!

Shortly after returning from boot camp, during the week of our wedding, my buddies were all kidding me about my bald head. They all had long hair. Some had hair down to their shoulders. So I went to some type of novelty store in Lincoln which was near the University campus. There I found a hat with long blond fake hair sewn into the bottom rim of the cap. When I put on the cap it looked as if I had shoulder length blond hair. We had our rehearsal dinner at The Knolls restaurant in Lincoln. At some point I went to the podium and made a few remarks about how fun everything was, but at the end I admitted I was a little unhappy about all the people joking about my short hair. I then pulled out my hat and voila! I had long blond hair! I turned to Janie and asked her if it would be OK if I wore my hat during the wedding. She was not amused! And so, in our wedding pictures, with my short hair, I look as if I am from another time and place. I look like I could fit in with any wedding today! Now, all my buddies look odd with their long hair.

The Second Wig

In the spring of 1972 I was back in school at the University of Nebraska. One weekend each month I had Air National Guard duty at the Lincoln Air Base. As the semester moved along, my hair was growing. During one weekend of Air Guard duty, my immediate boss, who was a staff

seargent, took me into his office and told me my hair was too long and it had to be cut. I came home that day to Janie and I was upset. My hair really wasn't very long. All my friends had longer hair than I did. I wanted to "fit in" on campus with long hair, but now the staff seargent wants my hair cut! Janie tried to comfort me and asured me it was not a big deal and that she really loved me no matter how my hair looked. Well, that was very sweet of her, but I was still mad. I found a hair salon that provided a broad range of hair care services. I don't remember the name of the place, but I went there to see if they could provide me with a short-hair wig to place over my long hair when I had to go to weekend guard duty. They had a huge array of wigs for both men and women. They measured my head and took pictures of my hair and made notes about the thickness of my hair. They told me to come back in a week for a fitting. I returned in a week and tried on the short-hair wig. It worked! It looked great! I showed it to Janie when I returned to our apartment. She was...how shall I say it? Perplexed? Stunned? Maybe worried she married the wrong guy. But eventually I got her laughing about it, and so on we went to the next air guard weekend.

That Saturday morning I cut off part of the end-piece of one of her nylon stockings. I pulled it down over the top of my head so that my hair was smashed against my head. I then put on my wig and attached it to the nylon with little hair pins. If you saw Brad Pitt acting as Anthony Fauci recently, and you saw him remove his short-hair wig, that is exactly the set-up I had! Very funny to watch Brad Pitt do that. It reminded me of my Air Guard wig days.

I now wore my wig to weekend Air Guard duty. It worked great! In addition, my hair continued to grow and I felt like I fit in better with my college friends. One Air Guard weekend I was assigned mess hall duty. I basically cleaned tables and hauled plates to the kitchen. Lunch was over, and I stood in the mess hall and removed the big rubber apron I was wearing. I pulled it up over my head. The apron caught my wig. My wig went flying to the floor! I was embarassed and worried I would get in trouble. Luckily, lunch was over and there were only a few people in the room. They were all college guys. They exploded with laughter, but otherwise nothing happened. I finally discarded the wig when I started law school in the fall of 1973. I figured I should have a well-groomed appearance upon entering this graduate school.

End Piece

The long-hair craze started with the Beatles in 1964. It really caught on with the arrival of the Broadway rock musical production, *Hair*, in 1968. Although this musical was celebrating hair length, it is also known for the cast dancing on stage naked at the end of the first act. To give you an idea of how revolutionary this production was, at the time it started, the other Broadway plays were, Hello Dolly, Funny Girl and Fiddler on the Roof. Janie visited her sister and her husband Bill in the summer of 1969 and they all went to *Hair*. It was performed at the Shubert Theatre located in The Loop in downtown Chicago. I remember after she saw this, she sang all of the songs from this play many times over the summer. When I hear the song *Hair*, I think of her sitting beside me in the car. My right arm is over her shoulder, and my left arm is on the steering wheel. She is singing songs from this play. What a pretty voice!

Janie texted a picture of my long grey hair to my two sisters. Women can have a diabolical sense of humor! They texted that I should put a big bow in my hair. They suggested a man-bun.

Well, I finish with the Broadway song, *Hair*. I also finish with a picture of me from about 1970 to give you an idea of what I covered up in the Air Guard, and what I am dealing with now. I only wish it was still black! I am just a hairy guy – noon and night!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_zsKZks1A



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