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Color me beautiful; I dare you

By Curtis Seltzer

BLUE GRASS, Va. One of my recent duties as nurse and head fetchtotum for the getting-back-in-the-game resident female was to take her to the local beauty parlor to get her hair done.

My experience with getting my own hair done is sparse, consistent with my dwindled content.

The familiarity I have with gender-based beauty parlors is neither wide nor deep.

I have imagined that they were equivalent to either sports bars, less the drinking, or male locker rooms, less the smelling.

From second-hand accounts and bald-faced rumor, I am led to believe that beauty parlors run heavy to exchanges of advice, therapies, complaints and tactical decisions regarding how much to take off and how much to leave on...in various situations.

Barber shops I once had reason to visit never promised that I would look better leaving than I did coming in. Perhaps this explains why America has 82,000 *beauty* salons and only 4,000 *barber* shops.

I stopped going to such places years ago when I realized that for every hair my head ejected the cost of my haircut went up a buck.

I was bad advertising for barber shops. Each time I left, I had fewer hairs and fewer dollars. After a while, my barber stood in his shop door and refused to let me enter.

The whole Seltzer line has had bad experiences with hair groomers.

In the last years of his life, my father invested most of his money in a chain of barber shops called Your Fathers [sic]

Mustache. Bernie Haberman, CEO and head scalper, fled to Mexico a few months after my father died, and just before his Ponzi scam collapsed on dozens of Pittsburgh-area investors, all of whom praised YFM's 20 percent return

while it lasted. I was just a few days short of unloading what I had suspected was shaky paper when Bernie ran with the money. Bernie Haberman, like Bernie Madoff, clipped his friends.

As far as I know, barbers are limited to shaving and snipping. It never occurred to me that they might be able to color my gray hair. (I'm using hair in the distressed singular, a quiet construction that's been scared off the printed page by social media.)

The last time I tried to chemically darken my appearance -- I was 13 at the time -- I came out orange—streaked, splotted and spotted. The stuff I smeared on was called ManTan.

I was not the only orange in the discount dating bin that summer. There were more ManTan pumpkins popping up that August than impersonators at an Elvis convention at the Heartbreak Hotel.

Orange seemed to be a rite of adolescent passage back in the early 1960s, something unpleasant but character-building that had to be gotten through like knowing that you would get turned down for the last dance even when you were the only one left—and you still asked.

My small hope from a barber during my orange period was that I would get out of his chair looking a little less like an orangutan than when I sat down.

Traditionally, men went to barber shops for a haircut and women went to beauty parlors to get beautiful. Note the gender-based difference in emotional, spiritual and realizable

expectations.

Im not 100 percent sold that dyeing my remaining hair will make the rest of me beautiful, which would certainly be my expectation on entering a beauty parlor to have it colored. I refuse to pay hard currency to look worse.

Those in the know tell me that my hair color should project my inner personality. The Cinnamon Red of Jawbreakers? Petunia purple? Mousy brown? Should I just keep it simple and stick with highlights and streaks?

Lest I be misunderstood. I am certainly in favor of both women

and men improving their looks once a week, and even more often than that when necessary. Im just not sure that a hair job on its own will do the trick for me.

I am willing to undergo a permanent permanent were a barber to offer it, but I reject out of follicle one of those temporary permanents that beauticians typically provide. My hair needs to be both waved and straightened, permanently.

Im also up for a bikini waxing if no one knows about it.

I will not, however, change my shampoo. Tide has done a good job since I was in high school. The secret of my sidewalls—Ajax.

Obviously, I did not share these thoughts with either the resident purchaser of beauty-by-hair-do or the beauty provider.

My last words as she entered were: Longer , not shorter. Over the years, this warning endlessly repeated has had no effect.

I was, of course, banned from the inner sanctum during the proceedings.

From the waiting room, I peeked in several times during the Doing of the Hair. I can report that a hair-do is like a sausage

in that its better not to see how its made and just enjoy the result.

On her emergence, I oohed and aahed; I extolled and heaped praise.

I also remembered to ask the beautician whether she wanted to buy a \$100,000 note promising a permanent 20 percent yield on the original amount for next to nothing.

Your Fathers Mustache? she asked. Insiders always know.

UPDATE: Ms. Took-it-on-her chin is gradually shedding her 24/7 collar. Her voice is less screechy. Her lower lip will probably need cosmetic surgery within the year. Her energy is coming back. She tired less this week than last. She can chew soft solids and thick sludges. She would like to drool less and spit more. But she may have lost her piercing two-fingered whistle—a major cool in anybodys book.