

# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM



I couldn't take it any longer. After two years of wearing my hair long, I finally cut it off.

It's an odd thing, but I never did get used to the unfamiliar sensation of having hair around my ears and down the back of my neck. My teenage daughters thought I was a "right on" Daddy, and even my wife approved, but it was always a bother to me.

I never was able to explain just why I let it grow in the first place. Some surmised I was trying to appeal to the younger generation. Others said I was fighting middle-age baldness with one last fling. Some thought I was rebelling against society while others concluded I was crazy. Perhaps it was a combination. I don't know.

But I do know why I finally cut it off.

In the first place I hated to wash it every day. My long-haired daughters washed theirs and then to dry it cut down the thermostat on the air conditioner, went outside and sat in front of the compressor while it blew hot air. My pride refused to let me join them sitting cross-legged in the yard so I had to get up extra-early and spend a quarter hour in the bathroom washing and drying.

Reason number two was the wind. I never could figure out how the long-haired guys kept their hair neat without a hairnet. Inside I was okay (unless somebody opened a window or turned on a fan.) But outside I was constantly having to walk sideways or keep my hands on top of my head. It reached a climax before Christmas when I took my family to the theater. The wind was blowing like crazy so I had to enter the theater walking backwards. The usher thought I was trying to pull the old con game of walking in backwards so he would think I was leaving and not ask for my ticket. After the confusion died down he apologized in a loud voice saying, "I'm sorry, Madam."

My wife got me a can of hairspray. Besides being a blow to my masculinity, hairspray presents another problem. If it gets the slightest bit damp (say you're caught in a shower or get hit by a water sprinkler) it sets up like concrete. Only a shampoo can undo the damage. I'll never forget the look the Negro porter gave me in the Atlanta airport when he caught me in the men's rest room washing my hair between planes.

The final blow came when one of the beauty salon operators in our church offered to trim my hair. I had said I'd never be caught dead in a beauty salon, but I knew my shaggy head needed trimming. So I agreed. I sneaked in the beauty parlor after dark and sat in the chair while she put a sheet around my neck and clamps in my blond locks. Just at that minute the door burst open and the wife of my best friend came back to get her purse. She took one look at me, burst into hilarious laughter and ran out into the night. That did it. I went home, locked myself in the bathroom with scissors and razor and went to work like Delilah on Samson.

Unlike the Bible strongman, however, I think I've regained a measure of my lost manhood. Long hair on a man is an extension of his ego. Check out the long haired man. He's constantly combing, spraying and looking in mirrors. Some are more touchy about their hair than they are about their wives. Suggest he get it cut and you've got a fight on your hands because you've touched the center of his egotism. I know one long haired man who refused to let his church ordain him as a deacon because he didn't want anyone laying hands on his hair.

So maybe it was nice for a while to pretend I wasn't half bald. But it wasn't worth it. Floppy hair around my ears just ain't me. Even more than wanting to be mod, I want to be me. And it feels good to go combless in the wind.