

Sensory Delights

Get Real

by

Brooke Bessesen



My hair? It's a gray issue

Lately I'm obsessed with my gray hair, the kind that's insistent and no longer scattered enough to pluck - well, at least without leaving bald spots. Some might say my hair has gone to my head.

This admittedly shallow fixation began after a fateful trip to the hair salon for a quick trim. I saw a new stylist who, combing his fingers through my locks, casually suggested a tint to help "cover my age."

My smile stiffened, the blood drained from my face. Has it really come to this?

Seeing my response, he

deftly backpedaled, saying, "It's not too bad yet. Let's just wait."

This sounds crazy, but I actually was looking forward to getting gray hair. Both my mother and grandmother had precise streaks of white at their temples, which stood boldly against thick, dark brown tresses. The effect was remarkable. As a little girl, I remember people stopping us to ask what talented beautician had created such a striking look for them and I always expected to inherit this unique trait in my tresses.

My hair is fine and mousy

brown, more like my dad's, but at 26, when the first shimmering strand debuted along the hairline by my left brow, I felt undeniable relief.

I may battle other age-related opponents: crow's feet, falling arches and sagging skin under my arms, I thought, but salt-and-pepper hair will not become my nemesis.

Now, approaching 40, I can see that providence has abandoned me. Who knew white hair followed the same reproductive progression as rabbits - that a single strand could spawn an entire breeding colony? Coarse white stalks are sprouting everywhere. They're unruly and seem to be multiplying in loose, random patterns. It's follicular chaos!

This unfortunate twist of fate has plopped a real dilemma on my shoulders (pun intended). I'm not sure how I feel about this errant army of gray marching across my head.

My first inclination is to rush to the beauty salon

and exterminate every wiry white strand. After all, most of my peers color regularly and consider it social suicide to allow budding roots to expose their shameful loss of melanin.

Let's face it, women whisper hairdresser secrets like million-dollar stock tips and most of us have been guilty of insider trading.

I'm no stranger to chemical processing; I have permed and highlighted my hair, and to mention the time I accidentally dyed it orange.

I even endured a popular '80s experience called "streaking," which was not nearly as fun as the '60s version, from what I'm told. No, for me the polemic does not stem from coloring my locks, but from suddenly having to.

Besides, in this era of enlightenment, couldn't one argue that those light, spunky wisps are symbols of my growing wisdom? Reflections of my life journey? All those crazy bohemian-grays poking out of the everyday-brown crowd to sing "I've gotta be me!"

Is it right to quash their spirit and thus, perhaps my own? Moreover, do I really want to dedicate the time and money necessary to sustain a chromatically perfect mane?

These questions haunt me as I struggle to find the best part line.

Imagine if we all wore our silver hairs like tiny Medals of Honor for time served in the war zone of Human Existence. Commemorating

our experiences, the joy of a graduation, pressure of a new home, love of a baby, stress of a job or exhilaration of a well earned retirement party, each strand would be displayed with dignity.

"Wishing you a few new gray hairs in the coming year," might even be the closing line of a holiday greeting card. It would be a better world.

Don't get me wrong. I want to feel confident, beautiful, even younger if possible. I paint my toenails, keep up with most fashion trends and, even during my busiest periods, at least think about going to the gym three-to-four times a week. But I also want to grow old gracefully and be able to break the confines of media-defined beauty without my girlfriends calling me a "granola."

Fortunately, where my mother's genes failed me, my father's offered one surprising benefit. If I stay out of well lit areas, my mousy brown coloring keeps my gray hairs somewhat obscured.

So for now I go au natural but I have to admit, when the few friendly soldiers become an occupying force, I may just abandon my philosophical post for a large bottle of Brown No. 6.

Scottsdale resident Brooke Bessesen is the author and illustrator of the children's book *Look Who Lives in the Desert!*, a humorous-but-educational look at desert wildlife. It's available at all book retailers, including *Gridleys of Fountain Hills*.

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NEELY'S DINER

by Crawford



Sci-Fi, scary movies fans can get their fill at festival

The First Annual International Horror and Sci-Fi Film Festival is set for Oct. 21-23 at Tempe's Harkins Centerpoint and Valley Art Theaters.

This is the largest cross-genre cult festival in North America. Horror and Sci-Fi films accounted for seven of the top 10 films of 2004 and have an extremely loyal following.

Sponsored by the Phoenix Film Foundation, the festival

will showcase the best talent and celebrate the masters of both Horror and Sci-Fi by welcoming Peter Mayhew, who brought Chewbacca in all six Star Wars films to life, Troma Entertainment Founder Lloyd Kaufman and many others.

As part of the International Horror and Sci-Fi Film Festival, the Executive Board has created the IHSFF Hall of Fame to honor individuals

Please see Film Fest page 23.