

Hair today, still hair tomorrow

IDON'T MIND GOING to the dentist, but the hair salon is a feared errand. I hate staring at my wet head in the mirror, I don't like the gauzy thing that is supposed to keep the itchy hair bits off my neck, and making — or listening to — small talk is tedious.

That's why I was thrilled to find Leo. He has a one-chair shop on a sleepy rounded corner of Anacapa Street, where a ship sails in a round stained-glass window on the south side.

If you walk by when he's not snipping, you'll see him settled snugly into the chair, reading the Daily Sound or glancing through a magazine. His black hair is pulled into a simple pony tail, and he always seems to be having a nice day.

I learned about him the usual way, through my friend Teri, who paraded her two lovely daughters and herself to him from the time they were children. They're both twenty-somethings now, and schedule their own hair appointments with Leo whenever they visit from the East Coast.

I don't go often, not only because I still



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hate going to the hairdresser, but also I don't do all the salon stuff that women are "supposed" to do. It seems obvious to me that my healthy, thick hair is related to not damaging it with coloring and perming, but I haven't been able to get a hairdresser to admit that correlation.

For a few years in my twenties, I permed my hair, but I always felt uneasy about the chemicals: for my hair, the hairdresser, and the creeks. When I asked my then-stylist if the perm solutions were biodegradable, she immediately

responded, "Oh, sure, they're fine," in a voice that told me she had no idea. That was my last perm.

I didn't mind my hair's gradual darkening, all except for one period in my life. For three years in my mid-forties, we lived in the Pasadena area close to my sister. She evidently still believed that blonds have more fun, for her hair was at least as blond as when we were in high school. Suddenly, I was the darker-haired sister, and just as suddenly I felt the urge to be blond again. When we returned to Santa Barbara I again allowed

nature to take its course. (NOTE: my natural hair color is lighter than hers!)

You can imagine that for these reasons, I'm not Leo's best client. I don't even buy the salon shampoos he displays around his shop. Yet he seems genuinely pleased to see me, even when I've gone six months between visits. He doesn't try to talk me into the latest cut, and he is comfortable with occasional contemplative silence. He takes time to partition my hair into several layers to get it even — thick hair requires patience.

We've had our differences, I have to admit. Once I came for a trim before my wedding anniversary celebration. I just wanted a skosh off, and he took at least two skoshes (skoshi?). When I look at photos from our anniversary party, my hair looks quite nice. Nonetheless, I felt betrayed and went to SuperCuts for the next couple of years.

SuperCuts was fine. But with haircuts a stressful occasion anyway, having a different person cut it each time was painful. I returned to Leo. He remembered and welcomed me as if I hadn't been absent.

We talk a little more now. He told me how his mother, a hairdresser, encouraged him to follow her career when she saw how gently

he worked with his hands. The neighborhood moms eventually paid him to cut their kids' hair, but maybe that was to keep him away from their pets.

"I liked to cut hair, and I'd cut hair for dogs, cats, chickens: whatever was around," he laughed. Then he got into coloring, and a very patient neighborhood cat endured pink-, then red-, then purple-dyed fur. Its owners ran a latex business and paraded the cat around as advertising.

I won't reveal Leo's last name or his exact location, because I like being able to call and get an appointment within a week or so. I don't really think he likes to be too busy anyway. Last time, after he'd just cut the agreed-upon four inches, he told me about donating hair for wigs for cancer victims; the minimum length is six inches. I guess I'll have to wait a little longer next time.

Sorry, Leo.

*Karen Telleen-Lawton's column is a mélange of people, nature, events, and observations transporting the reader around the world and back to Santa Barbara. Her writing can be found at www.CanyonVoices.com, including excerpts from her book, *Canyon Voices – the Nature of Rattlesnake Canyon*.*

PETS

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nose? I suspect they aren't particularly excited about being referred to as green eggs and green ham either.

Animal rights activists claim that experiments such as the one taking place in Taiwan cause a needless and abusive manipulation of an animal, while scientists who work with fluorescent proteins dismiss the project as interesting, albeit innocuous.

"There's nothing dangerous about it, as far as we know," says Woodland Hastings, a

biologist at Harvard University and co-discoverer of the jellyfish's glowing gene and its function. "But the project is rather frivolous. There are many more important things you can do with these genes."

Speaking of the frivolity of it all...variations of the jellyfish's glowing genes have long been used in nonscientific applications. Several years ago, a company called Prolume began to market squirt guns loaded with reproduced versions of jellyfish DNA. The liquid squirts like water but lights up when it comes in contact with a person or any substance containing calcium. Currently, other researchers are working on

developing glow-in-the-dark hair mousse, ink, cake frosting, and even beer and champagne.

Do we really need to sacrifice animals in the name of science (and shampoo, for that matter)? Every year, scientists use millions of animals in expensive and inhumane animal tests; many of which eventually prove detrimental to human health (think Vioxx and Fen Phen).

Today, there are a plethora of alternatives to testing on animals such as computer models, databases of tests already done (to avoid duplication), and even human clinical trial tests, to name a few. Call me

crazy, but I'd rather think of animals behaving as nature intended: rolling in the grass (or mud) instead of huddling in sterile laboratories awaiting the next poke of the needle.

Let's hope that one day scientists will see the light and cease using animals in painful and pointless experiments. Yeah right, when pigs fly.

Karen, who has a glowing future as an animal advocate, welcomes your comments about animal testing. Send a message to her at karenleestevens@cox.net.