

Look  
what  
they  
done  
to my  
hair, ma

by Lisa Whitman

Larry Taylor saw his ears the other day for the first time in two years.

Taylor is a New York public-relations man and, hence, supersensitive to what's "in." And what's becoming "in" these days is shorter hair for men. After almost a decade of cascading male manes, a reversal is beginning to set in. Masculine hair lengths are receding a bit—though hardly back to the crewcut style of old.

The new look, which first took hold in England and France

early last year before crossing to the U.S., "is neater and slightly shorter but not the real short cut of the '50s," according to Chicago barber Paul Guarino.

In fact, Jerry Spallina, who charges \$50 for a "pinch cut" at his salon in New York's Bergdorf Goodman department store, compares the shorter style to the compromise between the extremes of the maxi and midi in women's hemlines. "It's a blunt cut done in layers," he explains. "You just shake your head and it all falls into place."

Taylor says he decided to opt for this kind of shorter cut because "I got sick of having to fuss with my hair and spend 20 minutes under a hand dryer whenever I washed it."

Indeed, convenience as well as appearance seems to be spurring the new trend. "The surfers and the Beatles promoted the long-haired look and everybody wanted to get with it," says New York hair stylist Hugh Harrison. "Then it got long and greasy and messy, and nobody looked individual anymore. So the trend now is to have shaped, groomed hair."

"Hair fashion seems ripe for this brand of conservatism right now. Long hair expressed something in our society. People were doing their own things. Now they're trying to express something else that's more individual."

But there are more practical considerations at work, too. As some of the youngsters who helped popularize long hair have moved out into the workaday world, they have had to choose between their locks and their paychecks.



One afternoon recently, for example, two shaggy-haired field representatives for an insurance company walked into Florencia's men's salon in Hollywood and handed the barber a slip of paper which listed the company's specifications for haircuts (hair no longer than the shirt collar, sideburns no longer than the earlobe, etc.).

"It's not that I want it this way," one of the young men said morosely. "But I've got no choice if I want to keep my job. That's the way the company wants it."

The jobless in California, moreover, now face the loss of unemployment checks if long hair makes them unemployable. The state Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board recently ruled that in communities or occupations where employers objected to flowing locks, job applicants would have to meet grooming standards or be ineligible for unemployment compensation.

Some former long-hairs have been driven to the barbers because many establishment types—Wall Street bankers to Philadelphia lawyers—have taken up the style and blunted its impact as a symbol of protest. Yippie leader Abbie Hoffman was one of the first rebels to get shorn. "Today," he exclaims, "even the corporations have long hair. My God, even the barbers do!"

At the same time, some of the older men who hoped to get "with it" by adopting long youthful locks have concluded that they look more like Father Time instead. Mr. Kenneth, hairdresser to New York's jet set, admits that he was "trying to grow it long like everybody else. One day after a long look in the mirror I decided I looked even more tired and older than I really was, so I cut it."

The return to neater, shorter haircuts is, needless to say, welcomed by the hard-pressed barber industry. The long style was disastrous for business. In Chicago, for instance, 1,700 barber shops folded during the past three years. But now business is picking up and some barbers report they're recapturing 10 per cent and more of the clients they lost to long hair.

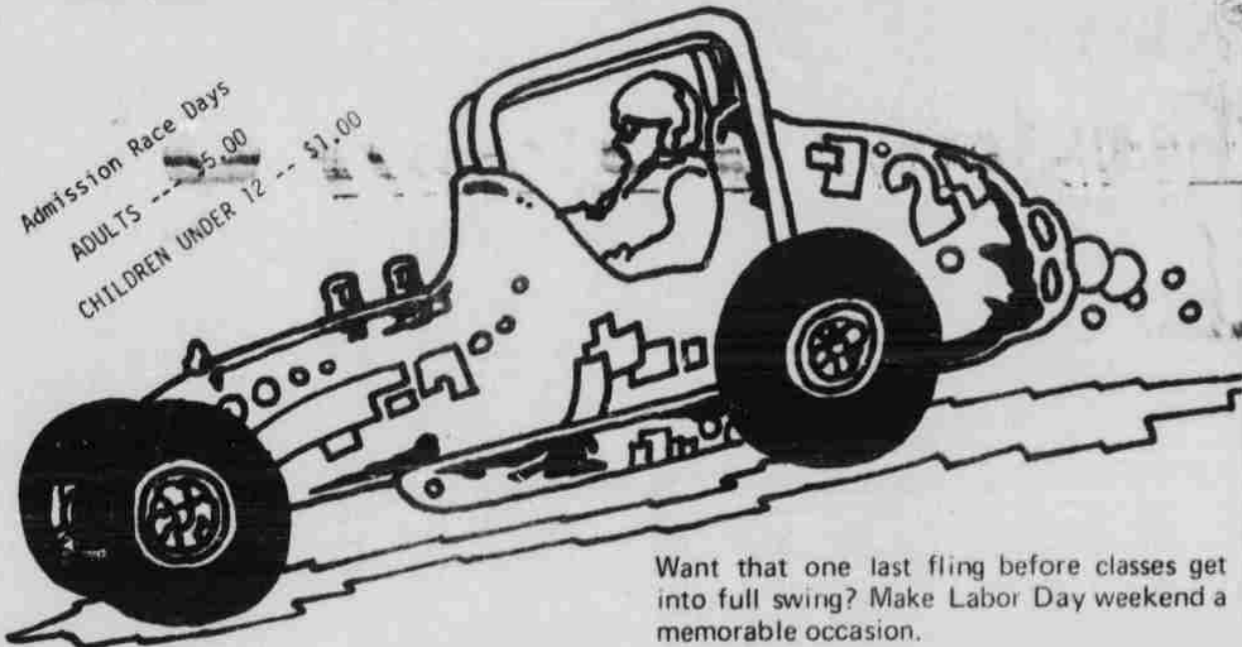
Gio Hernandez, a barber at Spallina's salon in New York, reports almost all his customers are having their hair shortened. "Long hair gets in the way when you play golf and tennis, and gets caught in car and elevator doors," he says. "Besides, what girl wants a man who fusses with his hair all the time?"

Newsweek Feature Service

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