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OUTLOOK

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The Story of How I Was Scalped and Lived to Tell the Tale

They say, "you don't know what you've got until it's gone" and I can swear to that in spades, or in this particular case - in blades. Hair has always been a particularly sensitive topic with me - probably because there was a long time when I never had any, and then a stretch when I had a lot, and then a time when I didn't, and then... well, perhaps I should let the story speak for itself.

"Hair today - gone tomorrow," would be an appropriate summary, but there's fun in the telling and maybe a moral or two for anyone who cares about their hair as much as I treasure mine. The fact is, I never really had any hair until I was 18. I grew up with a flat-top and lots of butch wax, the skinniest kid with the shortest hair in the 1950's. Scissors were never the tool of choice for my barber; the blades just couldn't get that low and the only option he ever had was to ask me if I wanted to leave a little "sideburn" - a question put to me endlessly and one which I must confess I never did really understand until I was in college and in charge of my own hairdo for the first time. What a joy it was to have hair, and lots of it! I can remember standing in front of the mirror late

in my freshman year and declaring myself the "hair god." It was long and thick and ready for those girls to run their fingers through, if I could just get up the courage to ask one of them out on a date. The Beatles were invading the States and I was intent on being the first on campus to out-Ringo, Ringo. Or maybe it was Paul. No, Ringo; I was never that good-looking.

It was not to be. Early on a Saturday morning while driving to pick up donuts for that day's fraternity rush, I skidded on a downhill snow-covered road, plowed head-on into an oncoming car and went sideways into my windshield on the passenger side. You never feel a thing, they say, and it's true, but I was bleeding profusely and as I staggered into the emergency room of Duke Hospital, which just happened to be two blocks down the road, the look on the nurse's face told me I was in deep trouble. "Let's have a look," the doctor said calmly as they stretched me out on the gurney. But it was then that he lost all composure and issued what has to be the all time classic bedside manner blunder. "Son," he

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840 NEWPORT CENTER DRIVE . P.O. BOX 9000 . NEWPORT BEACH, CA 92658-9030 . TELEPHONE (714) 640-3031