

Store not upfront about its topless special

I don't know where Ron Stroud is these days.

But I do know that wherever he's hanging his hat he's probably getting a big chuckle out of this whole topless business that has quickly become a no-brainer for newspapers looking to fill space on those slow news days of summer.

When I knew Ron a decade or so back, he was a retired LCBO employee who would spend his summers at an area trailer park while retreating to the warmer climes of Florida in winter.

He rented a room in my house while recovering from a bout with cancer one winter, spending much of his time regaling me with tales of his experiences in the sunny south.

One of these stories involved his success in finding a barber shop in Ft. Myers, Fla. that was sensitive to a thinning hair line that left him a little light on the top of his head.

This outlet was in the habit of luring customers in with an offer of a "topless special."

To Ron's delight, and the disappointment of would-be patrons looking for a little titillation, the come-on involved a half price hair cut for men with little or nothing on top of their scalp. As in balding.

Ron even made a point of sending me a picture of the shop and its attention-getting sign when he returned the next winter so I wouldn't think he was pulling my leg.

I don't know what Ron would think of the current crusade by female sunbathers, window washers and lawn cutters alike to convince women long oppressed by the statutes of common decency and self-respecting modesty to shed their tops along with their traditional inhibitions.

Like most men, he probably finds it somewhat amusing, a sure fire way of initiating conversation with a stranger at a bus stop or in an elevator.

I suppose it beats the timeworn Ontario custom of talking about the weather.

But for me, it all brings back memories of past hilarious experiences involving females who, wittingly or otherwise, found themselves temporarily exposed.

The first came while my wife Susan and I were honeymooning in Greece, where toplessness is a way of life on beaches and around hotel pools.

So enthralled by the prospect of joining their European sisters in removing their bathing suit tops were a pair of Canadian teenaged females that they obviously forgot to take the precautions to protect areas of the body more prone to sunburn. The following day found them draped from neck to knees, and less than enthusiastic about their exhilarating new hobby!

A second experience involved Susan herself during a Caribbean getaway two winters back.

Four months pregnant with our



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

second child, she realized she was pushing things a little by bedecking herself in a two piece bathing suit.

But she persevered, determined to soak up enough sun to see her through the long Canadian winter.

As she stood up after a sun session lying on a towel, her bathing suit top suddenly and without warning popped its clasp and flew to the sand.

Mortified, my proper and very traditional wife plunged to the ground, grasping and clucking while she wrapped herself in her towel.

But now that toplessness is well on its way to becoming as com-

mon place as ice cream cones and barbecues in summertime, I suppose such stories will soon become passe and without comic merit.

I can't help but think that the whole thing has Ron Stroud feeling like a modern day prophet, a man who turned out to be a decade or so ahead of his time!

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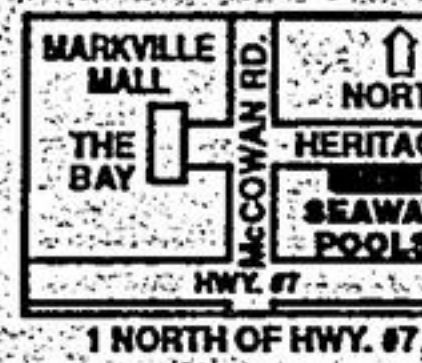
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