Aging Lifestyles: The graying of older Americans

by Joe_Volz

Just about everything that happens to our boomer president, Barack Obama â€” even the revelation that his hair is starting to turn gray â€” makes the news.

Of course, friends, the graying of America is not exactly news to us septuagenarians. Many of us men have almost snow-white hair, while our spouses often come and go to the hairdresser so that they can pretend to be blondes, brunettes and redheads.

Even a gentlewoman from the New York Times, who is writing a book on the "marketing of middle age," has weighed in on the topic. Call it the Clairolization of America. Clairol made its ad campaigns a bit naughty with slogans like "Does she or doesn't she?" That refers to dyeing her hair.

But what beauty salons (for those who wanted professional help) failed to mention was that ladies who rush off to the salon every few weeks put a nice dent in their husbands' wallets, especially in these perilous economic times. We are retired, too, and don't have that much disposable income.

My wife, Kate, a minimalist, estimates that she spends â€” or says we spend â€” $2,000 annually for the coloring, let alone all of the other beauty "necessities."

She and I regularly debate the merits of such expenditures. I argue that she is a natural beauty and needs no enhancement. She says I just don't understand; it is for the self-esteem. She can pretend she is not getting older. On the street, I point out attractive older women who don't dye their hair. But she always has an explanation: their skin tone or cheekbones or some such element render the dying unnecessary.

Well, I even invoked the experience of my sainted late mother who let her hair go completely gray.

"Not until she was 85," my wife retorts.

I switch my argument.

"I have never dyed my hair (now white)," I say.

"You ought to," she says.

It is a never-ending battle, one I am afraid I am doomed to lose. I have long since concluded that many women are more interested in how they appear to other women than to their husbands.

Kate, just has too much ammunition. She says our daughter-in-law insists, "There is no way I'm going gray before my mother-in-law."

One son is completely gray in his 40s. Nothing pleases Kate more when a new acquaintance thinks Kate is his sister instead of his mother.

As far as my own insistence that she dye her hair, Kate says, "I think he is really concerned because my red hair makes me look a lot younger than the old graybeard. But, of course, he would never admit that. I also notice, however, that Joe often refers to me to friends as his lovely 'redhead.'"

Well, maybe I have carried this debate too far. Should I ask my "hairstylist," Walter Mills, to make me into a redhead?

What do you think ladies? It would make me look younger.

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