

Never, ever leave her

GOOD HAIR

WHAT IS IT ABOUT lesbians and bad hair? I was just as guilty as the next dyke, coiffed in a manner that would send the hosts of *Queer Eye For The Straight Guy* running away screaming like little girls.

Bad perms of the 1980s aside (been there, regrettably done that), I refer to that singularly hideous do of the politically correct '90s — the ledge cut. It was simple in its atrocity. Take one über-radical feminist dyke and shave her head halfway up the back to the tops of her ears. You are left with a cliff edge of hair transecting the back of the skull, not unlike a 12th-century monk's hairdo. For the fashion avant-garde, the shaved section could be used as a personal billboard, with a double women's symbol emblazoned in the centre.

Lesbians have sported some of the worst hair around. I decided to go to a professional to hear how bad it can be.

She also knew of a woman with lovely hair who wanted to look like Elvis Stojko. It's a wonder Shann hasn't tossed in her scissors.

For those coiffure-challenged lesbians who think a rattail is the way to go, Shann has some basic tips. Get a good haircut that "joins in." A decent haircut, she says, should maintain itself and last six to eight weeks without looking shabby around the edges. Once you get that good haircut, maintain it. "Don't think you've scored getting a cut every four or six months. You haven't."

My partner, who has gorgeous, thick, curly, dark hair, is a case in point. Shann aptly calls her Kramer when she strolls in three months after her last appointment.

Once you have that decent cut, before leaving the house, take these simple steps.

"Wash it, brush it and see what it looks like from behind." Shann shakes her head.

"If they do anything, they just do the front, and they have this spiky, sticking out bit at the back." (Helen is clearly referring to me.)



**KATE
BARKER**

Helen Shann has been a stylist at Hair 'N After since Dolores Pitcher opened the salon on Wellesley years ago, offering the same price hair cuts for men and women — something almost unheard of at the time. Helen has seen some doozies.

"A woman had long hair, one length down the back, about four inches in front, and two inches on top, blown dry to flip back, and wanted a French braid. She told me she had had that cut since the '80s. I said, 'Really? You don't say.' When she left I decided I needed to quit hairdressing."

Shann came to Canada from England in 1991, when Canadian hair frankly scared her. It was the ponytail era — for both sexes. Aside from ponytails and retro-'80s hair, Shann warns sporty lesbians against what is possibly the worst haircut since the bouffant: hockey hair.

"It's a mullet, which really frightens me," she shudders. "Very short on the top, front and sides, and long at the back." Not that Shann hasn't snipped the odd mullet or two, she just prefers not to admit it. The worst dyke do Shann has seen was not her own doing, she is quick to point out.

"I do have boundaries," she says. This was one. A woman walked by with an Elvis cut in front, ponytail in back, and the sides were wedged. "She had three haircuts in one."

In terms of products, invest in a decent shampoo, conditioner and styling agent. "Not Dippity-Do," she warns. And for godssake, do not try this at home — colour. Leave that to the salon. If your hair is thin, keep it short, and for the guys, if you're balding, shave it off — no comb-overs. "You'll look 10 times better, even if you have a funny-shaped head."

As far as men are concerned, Shann wishes they would branch out. "All the boys tend to look the same," she says. "It's short, going forward, sticking up at the front and probably blond." Instead of getting the gay cut du jour, Helen suggests "do what's right for you rather than what's trendy."

If behooves us all to invest a little more into our relationships with our stylists, because, let's face it, it could be one of the longest and most stable pairings of our lives. Before Shann, I had a rocky but monogamous go of it with one stylist that easily outlasted at least six girlfriends. Sadly, her mood affected her art. If I walked in and saw several decidedly lopsided ledge cuts walking out, I knew she had suffered a breakup, and my hair would suffer right along with her.

Now that I have found Shann, I'll never leave her. How many of us can say that about our lovers?

*Hair 'N After just moved to
556 Church St.*