

# Judy— I really missed my eyebrows and eyelashes much more than I missed my hair.



My alopecia journey began when I was 24 although I did not know it at the time. I went to my hairdresser one Saturday morning and asked her to cut my hair very short and spiky on top as was the fashion in those days. She told me that she wouldn't be able to cut it too short because of my bald spot to which I replied "What bald spot?" She proceeded to give me a mirror and to my surprise, I saw a 15mm bald patch on the back of my scalp. Over the next couple of months, the hair grew back and I didn't think about it again.

At the same time, my mother was in hospital having a major operation and contracted a golden staff infection. Upon her release from hospital, her hair started to fall out and within a couple of months it was all gone, including her eyebrows, eyelashes and all body hair. We were told it was alopecia universalis and that it more than likely was caused from the stress and medications she had been taking and that there was nothing that could be done to re-grow her hair.

Over the next couple of decades, my "bald patch" would come and go but I never even thought to link it to Mum's Alopecia. I was 48 when I lost all my hair. Just prior to Christmas I found another bald patch and by the end of February all my hair was gone.

My husband and I went to the Doctor and he referred me to a specialist and I tried a number of different treatments stopping short of injections, I had been doing a bit of research and had drawn my own conclusion that it was not curable and that I would probably never re-grow my hair either. It was at this point that I started to wonder if it was hereditary and worried if my own daughter would also be a sufferer.

I really missed my eyebrows and eyelashes much more than I missed my hair, it's easy to put a wig on but it was much harder for me to do my eyebrows and lashes. I felt like one of those faceless dolls you see hiding in the corner of the room.

I was feeling very sorry for myself and one day a good friend pulled me aside and told me "wake up to yourself - you're still the same person on the inside and it's not life threatening". Some times tough love is what you need and from that moment on, I decided to embrace my condition.

One of the highlights of my journey has been being involved in a project to raise public awareness and acceptance of alopecia. The project was called The Turning Heads Art Crown Project and was the idea of Helen Beasley from Rainbow Face Painting and Body Art in collaboration with photographer Lina Hayes.

I decided to get involved supporting others with the condition and this past January I took on the position of Branch Manager in Queensland for the Australia Alopecia Areata Foundation.

I now look at all the positives that Alopecia has given me - No more waxing, no more shaving my legs, no more hairdressers and I save heaps of money every year. Having the latest hair style can make you feel pretty but you don't need hair to be beautiful, as my friend told me, that comes from within.