

## **Pat....Only my immediate family and a few friends and faceless people at the beach have seen my bald head.**

My alopecia story began in 1989 when I was 39 years old. I was raised in a cult from the age of three and in 1988 I discovered another cult member who was also a member of my extended family had sexually abused my daughter. I experienced a tremendous shock that was to last some years. Not long after this discovery my first small patch of hair disappeared from the top of my head. To be honest, my loss of hair was less important to me than the loss of my previous life in the cult and I never thought in my wildest dreams that I would have alopecia universalis. The dermatologist I visited seemed rather unconcerned. His exact words were "oh people are walking around like this all the time" like it was no big deal. Yet the patches became larger and the cortisone injections into my scalp only regrew sparse white hairs of a totally different texture to my own. In time I stopped having the injections and decided I would get a wig.



In those days, living in Adelaide and of course pre-internet, there was little to choose from. I remember coming home with a wig my nana may have worn and feeling so desperate and alone. I never wore that wig. Then a friend of mine gave me an old wig she had worn in the 1970s. At least it looked fairly modern being long and straight but of course it was hardly in good shape. However, a hairdresser cut it and I wore it for a little while, feeling very self-conscious the whole time. At that time I preferred a hat or scarf but with those I never felt like myself.

In time my family and I relocated to Queensland and amazingly there was a wig store not far from where I lived. It was where I bought my first wig and it was the very first time since my hairloss that I felt like *me*. Since that time I have continued to wear wigs and I rarely go out without one on my head. Only my immediate family and a few friends and faceless people at the beach have seen my bald head. Nearly 30 years on since my first bald spot appeared you would think I would not care about being bald but I can assure you I care very much indeed. I hated being bald then and I hate it now. Yes, I have accepted it because rather than rant and rave about my baldness I decided a long time ago to be responsible for myself. Being responsible for myself means I want to look and feel good about myself. I may not be young anymore but I take no pleasure in being wrinkly *and* bald.

Over the years I have worn many wigs, the good the bad and the ugly, but I have persevered in trying many types. I've worn synthetics, remi hair and virgin hair wigs. I've bought from stores and the internet. I keep an open mind and realize wigs have their failings. No matter what, they are not my own hair. The other day I got out a box where I keep a little of my own hair that I gathered up and kept all these years ago. I often forget what colour my hair was and I need reminding from time to time. It was dark blond with reddish tints although when I buy my wigs I buy them darker, I don't know why. One day I will have to buy a grey one I suppose, but for now I'm putting that day off. I was thinking the other day, going grey is a milestone in everyone's life we alopecians may never experience. Another stage in our journey of life denied to us.

When I buy a wig I am already looking for the next, as I like to have one on standby should the current wig suddenly turn up its toes. They seem to expire suddenly so I keep myself prepared. Have you ever gone back to wearing an old wig and wondered how you ever wore it as it looks so awfully tatty? I do that all the time. I never throw my last old one away though, just in case I may need it.