

Although attention to my hairstyle is not a noticeable facet of my personality, I do occasionally have a haircut. The last time the woman who cuts my hair shook the clippings from the cape and handed me my glasses, I told her, as always, that Runo and I would be back for haircuts sometime in the future. She knows us, and she knew that I meant “sometime long after most people would consider a haircut a necessity.”

That was back in late winter. Soon after this the scope of the coronavirus outbreak became very evident, and we knew that haircuts were not an aspect of grooming that would be in our lives again for a long time.

So, here we are. Runo actually looks pretty good, hair curling down over his collar, fanning out from the edges of the cap he wears most of the time. I couldn't tell you exactly what I look like, since I don't often stand in front of a mirror, but I can guess that my hair looks pretty bad. My bangs are long enough that I have to brush them away from my forehead to keep the hair out of my eyes. I can't quite make a pony tail yet, but, with the national scenario concerning the pandemic looking worse and worse, I imagine the day for pulling my hair back with a rubber band isn't far away.

I can help my situation, though, in one of two ways. Sometimes, I wrap a bandana around my head—Willie Nelson style—to keep the hair out of my face. Most of the time, though, I wear a hat.

Hats have always fascinated me. During my youthful years, my mother had several hats. Most women wore them for “dressy” occasions during those years. But, oddly enough, I can't really picture any of Mom's hats. I do know that some of them in my earliest memories had short veils. Later, there are only vague visions of small hats that she would adjust in front of the big mirror in the kitchen.

As far as I remember, I have only had one hat that wasn't a “work hat.” It was white, something akin to a pillbox, that I wore when my sister was married. I think it is the only time I wore it.

My dad's hats are more memorable. The Ericksons, as a general rule, have rather large heads. I mean this in a physical sense, though I suppose there are those who might describe some in the family as “big-headed” in personality and excessive self-esteem as well.

Dad had a hard time buying hats in those days when men wore felt hats for any important occasion—funerals, churchgoing (though Dad wasn't in favor of sitting in a pew on Sunday morning when it was much more enlightening to throw a line in the creek for a brook trout or, in winter, to sit by the kitchen stove and read), and hats were the norm even for the weekly trip to the village for banking, necessary shopping, and exchanging news with other farmers. So, Dad always took care of his “good” hat. His old one was his work hat. Though he sometimes wore a cap, usually a straw hat was his summer protection from sun. During the chill of winter, most farmers in our area wore wool caps very much like the Stormy Kromers that are popular now, but with better ear flaps to protect from the wind.

I usually had a cowboy hat when I was growing up. During the summer, it might be made of straw, but, instead, often was an old hat of Dad's that I

manipulated to create a cow-boy-hat like brim. In the winter, though, when we were children, we wore wool scarves—usually squares of bright plaid woolen fabric that were folded in triangles and tied under the chin.

These days, though, I wear a hat to keep my messy coiffure from blowing in the wind and obscuring my vision. A friend gave me a little narrow-brimmed “fishing hat” that her daughter had tie-dyed years ago. If I don’t need too much sun protection, I wear that. It is equally at home in the garden or when my head is against Lily’s side, trying to keep her from kicking while I milk. And, though no one would use this word to describe me, I feel kind of “jaunty” in that little hat.

We are not looking forward to the possibility of haircuts any time in the foreseeable future. It may be pony tails for both of us before the end of the year.