

## HOWARD COUNTY

## Son's surprise 'Mohawk' a hair-raising experience for 'McBurbia' mama

### JANET'S WORLD

JANET GILBERT

**I** GUESS IF YOU ASKED ME MY preference, I would have to state that I prefer my children with hair. But the "Mohawk" is growing on me.

I had no idea that my son and some of his college friends had decided to get "Mohawks" a few days before spring break. But his siblings knew. My husband knew. My son had told them all to keep it a secret so he could "surprise" me.

How about terrify me?

I admit it, I'm not exactly trendy. Or fashionable, even. I could easily be a finalist in one of those reality shows where they go through your closet and pull out your straight-leg jeans and sensible shoes and have some spontaneous, hilarious television moments making fun of them.

But I would not relinquish an item. I am a mall-shopping mama from McBurbia, and I'm unashamed of it. "Listen," I'd tell the cute reality show hostess in her short, tailored jacket and 3-inch designer mules, "I can't toss that embroidered Halloween vest with the cornucopia on the back, because it reminds me of simpler times. I wore that 15 years ago on the nursery school pumpkin-picking trip with my oldest son, before he went off to college and let some guy from the swim team cut his hair into a Mohawk."

I think I am connected to the people I love in a way that is almost as startling as a Mohawk. True to form, a day or so before I went to pick up my son, I for some unfathomable reason decided to log onto "Facebook" to see if he had posted any new photos.

There was a shot of five guys with Mohawks. I didn't know any of them, so I scrolled down. No sooner had I done that, then reality registered.

"Oh no!" I called to my husband, who was in the kitchen. Normally an above-average user of the English language, I found myself repeating: "Oh NO!"

"Hair grows back," my husband said.

"You *knew* about this?" I said.

"It was supposed to be a surprise," he said.

We then had a detailed philosophical discussion about what constitutes a "surprise" and what is in fact a "shock."

Happily, the Janet's World Institute of Marital Bliss has come up with a short list that you can refer to should the difference be unclear.

Your child is going to study Arabic — surprise! Your child is going to do a semester in Iraq — shock! You're making an authentic Tuscan meal for dinner — surprise! Those aren't Rock Cornish hens you're eating, they're pigeons — shock! Your parents are moving to Florida — surprise! They're operating a nude beach — shock!

Thanks to my usual premonition, I was able to adjust and engage in a spirited e-mail conversation with my son, wherein I explained that if I were to show up at his college in a sequined bra and leather skirt, he'd have to agree that I'd be making a statement. He sent me an article from *The New York Times* on how Mohawks and all sorts of versions of it, including the "fauxhawk," are very "in" right now. The article included a photo of Angelina Jolie's baby, who has a Mohawk.

To which I responded, "I hate to break it to you, but Angelina Jolie's baby looks stupid."

So I picked up my son at college and took him and his sister on a quick weekend trip down South. Our hotel happened to have a "Moose Lodge" convention, with many seemingly conservative attendees over age 65. When my well-mannered son genially offered to help one of the conventioners who was having difficulty operating a computerized vending machine, the person made eye contact, then abruptly and rudely turned away.

It turns out that the Mohawk has been quite the living classroom, for both of us.