

Commentary Bill Hall Where oh where is your hair?

Long before presidential candidate Donald Trump became a victim of sparse hair, I knew the heartache of comb-overs.

I suffered in the struggle for better head hair just as Trump has waged his own brave battle to save what thinning hair he has left. He and I watch our dwindling hairy fluff fade away as we mourn larger and larger patches of baldness showing through.

But it wasn't the loss of hair that I feared when young; it was the ridiculous remedy that awaited me. During my teen years, I noticed a weirdly bald national politician and swore that, if that ever happened to me, I would try to be saner.

I speak of Robert Taft, an Ohio senator who lost the GOP presidential nomination in 1940, 1948 and in 1952. That was when I first noticed that Taft was a man with unsuccessful hair. And it was his fault. Taft was mostly bald and chose a comb-over anyway.

A comb-over involves letting your hair grow around your ears until it gets long enough to be combed up and over the naked top of your head. I couldn't respect Taft for denying his baldness. I felt like yelling out to him, "Be a man!"

After all, it's not like a comb-over is the only remedy. For instance, I have heard it said that some men let their eyebrows grow out and then they comb them up over the top of the bare head.

I never expected to lose my own hair. I had often looked at that senator and wondered how he could be so vain as to let a little thing like losing some hair get him down.

On the other hand, there came a day when I would personally experience my own loss of hair. I was 28. Suddenly there were clumps of hair in my bathroom sink.

I am saddened to report that I was suddenly in denial and went through a few years of a comb-over. That was so Taftish of me.

I came to resent this country's voters because they hardly ever vote for a bald presidential candidate. But then in 1952, lightning struck. The top three candidates for president were all bald - Robert Taft who lost the Republican nomination to bald Dwight Eisenhower and the bald Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson. At last, we had you bushy guys by the short hairs.

I finally came to my senses and fear came to my rescue. I was out in the yard gardening when a 40-mile-an-hour wind started whipping me across the head and face with my own hair. I was afraid my snapping hair might put my eyes out. So I found my courage and owned up to my silly life with a comb-over.

Now Donald Trump, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, would have us believe something that I doubt even he believes. He pretends to believe a person with a little blond puff of very thin hair isn't a borderline baldy.

There are essentially two kinds of hair crops - flimsy hair grown loosely and hair that is dense and closer to being animal fur than human hair. That appears to be where Trump went wrong. From what I see in his television close-ups, Trump is an ordinary, thin human hair sort of guy.

That's why he is sensitive about rumors of a toupee. From where I sit, he doesn't have a toupee. The best he can do now is probably a variation on a comb-over. He fluffs up what little disappearing fuzz he still has. And he does admit he uses hair spray on his noggin. That's probably necessary to keep the super structure within the fluff from collapsing.

One recent day Trump was emboldened to let an admirer touch that pathetic patch of hair. She conceded squeamishly that it was quite a bit like hair. But that's not a whole head of hair. That's more a thin head of individual hairs that are simply a variation on my old comb-over blowing in the wind.

Thus I say to you, Mr. Trump, be not afraid. So what if one day you look into a White House sink and see the rest of your hair deposited there. After all, you can't keep a collapsible hairdo alive forever.

Frankly, Mr. Trump, I do admire your skill with a blow dryer. After all, a politician can hardly function without hot air.

Hall is editor emeritus of the Tribune's Opinion page. His email address is wilberth@cableone.net.