

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

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“I Pale in Comparison”

I was only in the sun for an hour and it wasn't even summer yet. Nonetheless, that night, I saw red. Well, pink actually. Two thirds of my head and most of my face were bright pink, the result of solar exposure *without* sun block. Yes, I hate to admit it but I'm a sun-sensitive white boy. A *paleo sapien*. I was born pale, I'm still pale and I'll surely die pale. I'm almost clear.

It's taken me forty-five years to understand how to cope with my genetic disability and for the hosts of other *paleo sapiens*, I'd like to offer some tips for dealing with this dreadful absence of skin tone.

1. Use sun block. Sun block comes in different strengths. The strength is measured by SPF which I believe refers to Stop Paleo's from Frying. The higher the number, the stronger the block. I use SPF 425. It comes in a tub, smells like lard and spreads with the consistency of chunky peanut butter. I may look like the inside of a Reece's Cup, but I won't burn.

2. Wear a hat. I don't mind when my bald head burns. I hope people think I'm a red head. But eventually, the burned area will peel and that's when the fun runs out. Large chunks of dead skin tangled in my wispy locks of hair are pretty disgusting. It looks like I just ran in from an artificial snow storm on the set of *All My Children*. So wear a hat. (Note: Those big-billed gardening hats should only to be used when you're over 80 years old.)

3. Wear black. This is a trick my paler-than-me wife taught me. Wearing black clothes somehow makes your paleness less of an issue. It's that ebony and ivory thing – it looks good together. Look at Michael Jackson. He's always wearing black. Of course, I stay away from the single glove, the glittery coats and hanging my children from balconies.

4. Do not wear beige. This was a mistake I made early in life. I bought lots of beige clothes. One day, my sister said, “You don't look so good.” I looked in the mirror and discovered she was right – but didn't know why. A couple of years later; I discovered it was the clothes. My beige shirt had made my paleness look pasty. Pasty is not good. Pasty is pale lite. So ditch the light clothes and see #3 above.

5. Don't stand next to tan people. Have you noticed that you never see Queen Elizabeth and George Hamilton together? Coincidence? I think not. Her highness knows better than to stand next to a man of his leathery complexion. *Smart move, your pale majesty.* I suggest you don't get near anyone with a good tan and certainly never date them. And should you marry someone who is tan, don't reproduce or else your latté-colored children will be ridiculed their entire lives. Don't subject them to being called grandé and venti.

6. Go easy on the makeup. Most female *paleo sapiens* try to cover up their disability as if trying to blend in with the people around them. But just like a bad toupee, everyone notices. As one who uses no makeup, I suggest only slight alterations to your natural skin tones. Never, and I mean never, use bright-colored makeup or else you will likely scare small children and the elderly.

7. Stay away from tanning salons. You may be tempted to get a "little color" before going to the beach but be warned that a little color can turn you into a lobster in a matter of minutes. Before my seventh grade dance, I wanted a little color so my "date" would find me more attractive. I placed my face in front of a sun lamp while I listened to one side of the Eagles' *Hotel California* album – which apparently was one side too long. Oh, I ended up with a little color alright, plus running blisters and streaks of red that must have been some sort of circulatory heat poisoning. *Very attractive.*

Take heart fellow *paleo sapiens*. We may yet one day live in a world where tans are bleached, beaches have roofs and beige clothes are only sold on the black market. But for now, we must cope with our paleness and not give in to The Man's desire to tan us. It's just that clear.

Until next time, just humor me.

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