

# Frieda & Me



by C. Ellen Watts

While, for me, A Charlie Brown Christmas ranks alongside White Christmas and It's a Wonderful Life as pre-Christmas must-sees, one line in the popular cartoon show seems designed to keep me in line.

"Did innkeeper's wives have naturally curly hair?" asks Frieda as Lucy hands her a script and a costume and announces, "You're the innkeeper's wife."

Frieda and I share a same legacy: We both have naturally curly hair. How Frieda handles her curly mop is up to Peanuts creator Charles Schulz. How I handle mine, I've discovered, is up to me.

As a young child, I soon discovered that a head crowned with blonde curls grabbed attention. Grownups said things like, "My what beautiful hair!" or "Just like Shirley Temple!" While the mirror over the washstand denied any resemblance to the dimpled child star, such accolades were nice to hear. And, to my childish way of thinking, being liked or disliked had totally to do with whether or not folks noticed my naturally curly hair.

That Shirley Temple was my pre-school idol was no secret to my family or to anyone else within earshot of my favorite declaration: "Me and Shirley Temple are twins except that she was born April 23 and I was born April 5 and she's a year older than me." That I thought my tousled ringlets much nicer than the 55 curler-formed sausages crowning

Shirley's head was a secret known only to me.

True, having naturally curly hair has its plus points. Now that mine has gone from blonde to dark brown to salt 'n pepper gray, I can easily name two: Knowing how lazy I can be about hair care, God in his great wisdom gave me a break. Then, following treatment for a blood disorder, he lovingly added enough unsightly frizz and bounce to my thinning locks to almost cover bald spots that appeared following chemotherapy. For these and other reasons, I am grateful to God for his gift, which, by the way, came alongside freckles splashy enough to take me down a peg or two on the subject of outward beauty. I'd started first grade before I found out the hard way that "Pride goes before destruction" (Prov.16:18, NIV).

In our large family, the task of seeing that little sisters were ready for school on time got assigned to big sisters. Mom couldn't do everything.

That particular morning, I howled louder than usual as my sister brushed snarls from my naturally curly hair. I jerked and fussed and tattled to Mom who was busy kneading dough for the eight loaves of bread she baked twice weekly.

Mom calmly washed her hands, told me to sit still and be quiet, took her barber scissors from the drawer and, while I sat dumbfounded, cut off all

but about two inches of my hair. "There now, it shouldn't pull so much," she said as she returned to her kneading. Afraid to look in the mirror, I touched what was left of my hair. Like Samson, I had been shorn of my power to attract.

I wish I could say that the unplanned haircut cured me of pride. But hair grows quickly and I soon caught onto the knack of brushing my hair to a sheen that bought more than a dozen additional years of compliments related to you-know-wh

Then in the '50s came Peanuts. No verse from the Bible ever hit with more force than did Charles Schulz's cartoon with its keen observation having to do with Frieda's pride over her naturally curly hair. While Sparky's (Schulz' nickname) drawing days are over, I voted with others a few years back to keep his comic strip alive in our daily paper. A glimpse of Frieda now and then can't hurt anything.

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