

'Can't help losing my head over you'

By Kelly Laughlin

Of The Print
The year was 1981. Dr. Robert White, medical professor at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, had perfected research that began three years ago, transplanting—the heads of rats and monkeys. Recently, he'd extended his method to human beings.

One week ago, White successfully transplanted the head of actor/producer Orson Wells, to the body of country singer Mel Tillis.

When asked to explain the reason for the change, Tillis, I mean Wells, explained, "Thu, though I stu, stutter a bu, bit more than usual, I thought this would be the best alternative to a low fat diet," he said. Tillis gave his body to Wells after losing his head in a wild country music concert.

To some, this new development in science technology could border on the unbelievable. To others, a fantasy come true: a new self image; your body blessed with the exterminities and inner workings of a famous individual. Some may not be satisfied with their mental capacity or personality, and vie for a new head, while a select few may simply want a face change, and keep their own brain intact. What man wouldn't want the chance to look like Robert Redford or Clint Eastwood?

By now, this practice had become somewhat of a fad, and lever for big business. In this year alone, four of my best friends had made the switch at a cost of only one payment a month for two years, and a five year warrantee on all working parts. Satisfaction or their old head back.

The yellow pages were cluttered with businesses promoting the transplant operation. "Rent a John," gave their



customers a body for one or two nights, sort of like renting out a tux. But this was even better. The company's slogan: "Look great on the dance floor with the body of John Travolta and your own head."

"Athletic Cadavers, Inc.," sells the corpses of such greats as Jackie Robinson, Babe Ruth, Vince Lombardi and Gale Sayers. "The Perfect Smile" was a company who had at their disposal, such great grins as Carol Burnett, Linda Ronstat, Jimmy Carter, and Nipsey Russel. Oh yes, and for a small additional cost, you could have their complete cosmetic case, complete with toothpaste, dental floss, and poly grip. A few do have loose gums.

With such an overwhelming amount of pressure from my peers, and business promotion before me, I had to make a quick decision: either change my image, and gain status, or keep my old self and loose all my friends.

The odds were against me. I had to get a new face. Everyone has to decide whether to get a new body, a new head, or just a new face nowadays. I'm in pretty good shape physically, and I have a warm personality. At least that's what most people say. But a new face, that's an intriguing idea.

But I had to work fast, I supposed that most of the really good heads were gone by now. I heard that yesterday Steve McQueen donated his head to the prime minister of Uganda, and much to my dismay, John Wayne finally got rid of his old cancer ridden body and purchased the body of a 20-year-old Cherokee Indian. Although he said he would never faithfully do any more Westerns, he is starting a new series in the fall entitled "The Day I Scalped a Redskin."

So I jogged to the local head shop. By now they had surely outnumbered even gas stations. The owner of the store greeted me with a smile and a

nod of the head, and began describing the various heads in the store, which appeared to be as alive as if they were connected to a body. A few of them seemed a bit complacent, while others were reading, or making faces at me.

"This head," the owner said, pointing to a rounded, paunchy face, "used to be connected to an IBM executive. He was a statistical analyst."

"His face looks a bit beat up. Can you tell me why?" I questioned.

"Well," he said, "why don't you ask him yourself."

"You mean they can talk, too?"

"Sure, that's why our business is so successful. What good is a head to you if you don't know what he's like."

"But you don't understand," I protested. "I don't need an entirely new head, just the outer shell."

The statistical analyst's head interrupted. "Oh, then you want 'Heads Without Brains, Inc.' They're downstairs."

"Yes," the owner said, "just take the escalator up two floors and turn right at the first door. And be careful not to bump your head, they make the doorwells kind of low these days."

As I stepped on the escalator, I wondered if the knoggin' store owner was trying to be funny or speaking the truth. Toward the second floor I began to think he wasn't joking when I detected a line of

headless people standing outside the "Head Without Brains" department.

This was too much for me to take. First I see a line-up of bodyless heads in the head shop, and now this. I needed a beer with a good head on it.

But I tried to control my anxiety. I was determined not to let this bazaar set of incidents upset my stomach. I mean, how are these headless people going to know if I squeeze right through them to the door?

So I began working my way through the headless crowd, and had almost made it to the door when a voice said, "Hey buddy, what do you think you are doing?"

"But..."
"But nothing. Just because you've been blessed with an exceptionally good looking head, doesn't mean you can cut in. Step to the back of the line," the headless man said.

"Did you say you thought my head was handsome?" I said in surprise.

"Yea," he said, in a somewhat audible tone. "It's really nice, where did you get it?"

"Well, this is my own head, you know. I didn't buy it," I said.

"Then what are you doing here? Go home fella. You're just fine the way you are."

"I don't know what to say except, thanks for knocking heads with me, ugh, I mean bringing things to head, ugh, I mean..."

"Go home buddy, before you loose your head," he said.

So I took the man's advice. I guess I was so taken by the whole craze of transplantation, I got a notion that I might later have regretted. I wonder if Doctor White got the same notion?

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