



A PROPER SHAVE

by Wyatt Abernathy

The earliest forms of removing facial hair involved two shells to pluck out individual hairs. Around 3000 BC the first razors were invented and shaving became popular due to Alexander the Great's insistence that it avoided "dangerous beard grabbing" in combat. A boardroom is as close as most of us get to combat and that rarely results in beard grabbing, but the importance of a good shave remains.

Only recently has it become commonplace for men to shave themselves, our grandfathers would visit the barber shop for a "two bit shave" from a professional. During WWII our troops needed a better way to shave on the front lines, which led to the popularity of safety and disposable razors. Since then, the art of the straight razor shave has been on the decline. "It's a shame most men have never had a professional shave," Von says as he reclines the chair, "you can improve your daily shave by using the same techniques at home."

A proper shave starts with a hot towel or shower; this opens your pores and softens the skin and hair. After the skin is warm, Von recommends applying natural pre-shave oil. This creates a slick surface on your face that protects against cuts and razor burn. After the oil is massaged in, it is time for the lather. Most of us use some form of shaving cream or gel, which Von says is a mistake. "Creams and gels have stimulants in them to help your hair stand up, which is both bad and unnecessary for your skin," says Von. He recommends you use a Badger hair brush and a quality natural shaving soap. The combination of the bristles and soap produce the same effect without harsh chemicals. On the question of what type of razor to use, Von has a surprising answer. "I would use whatever you're comfortable with," says Von, "a \$300 razor doesn't necessarily equal a good shave." In fact, he recommends that you don't use a straight razor at home. Your disposable will do just as well, without the danger of removing your ear.

The main point to remember about razors is that once they start to pull, they need to be replaced. It should slide effortlessly across your face; using a dull razor leads to cuts or razor burn. Instead of worrying about straight versus disposable, Von recommends you focus on technique. His mantra is "don't over-shave," meaning that a proper shave is not necessarily about getting close, it is about comfort. I'm anything but comfortable as Von gently places the razor against my face, but I quickly see my fears are unfounded. He moves with confidence, first with and then against the grain.

Before I know it, the razor is put away and my skin is as smooth as the day I was born. Von applies natural aftershave, followed by moisturizer. You remove skin with every shave, hence the importance of immediately protecting your face. Afterwards I find myself absent-mindedly rubbing my jaw and it isn't until two days later that the first hints of stubble appear. The smooth skin has me questioning my own clumsy morning ritual and wondering if we've all been robbed of a rite of passage. "A straight razor shave is like stepping into a time warp," says Von, "back to a time when proper grooming wasn't about being metro sexual, it was just part of being a man." It's reassuring to know there are places where that tradition continues.

*Von, the barber out of Dallas, TX