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Fads Good, But Won't Hold Job

MANY of us Old Fogies are pleased to see what appears to be a trend back toward cleanliness and neatness of dress on the part of young people.

Anybody can look like a bum, but it takes a little talent and effort to look like a lady or a gentleman.

The directive that Oklahoma City police should spruce up their haircuts and beards deserves public encouragement. Sloppy dress by uniformed officers suggests sloppy law enforcement.

The owner of the New York Yankees baseball team has set new dress standards for members, too, including shorter hair. This might not improve the Yankees' league standing, but it should present a more pleasing sight to the paying public.

Fads have probably existed throughout history. The wheel may have been regarded as a fad at first, and certainly the bicycle was held in that category 100 years ago when young men were spending time and money on the weird invention.

Because of our freedom and high standard of living, we Americans probably have experienced more faddism than people of other countries. Flagpole sitting, goldfish swallowing, phone booth crowding, marathon dancing and hundreds of other stunts by attention-seeking individuals have amused us and passed on.

Home styles, furnishings and decorations are affected by faddism, too.

A Houston firm last year put up a new building with a huge gap in its facade where bricks appear to be collapsing. Designers called it "fascination with demolition and ruin."

Fads in clothing and hair styles are not new. Many are improvements over existing customs, but others are not. In the 1920s, "jellybeans" and "lounge lizards" wore bell bottom trousers and slicked-down hair to attract the short-skirted "flappers."

In the 1930s, baggy pants and overalls became a sort of economic faddism. The military look was "in" in the 1940s, and the trim Ivy League look followed. There's no real objection to fads in clothes, houses, games or stunts.

However, the sloppy look of the 1960s seems to have had a deeper meaning. It was adopted first by those who took exception to customs and traditions that made America great. The fad of not dressing up became the uniform of rebellion against "the establishment," patriotism, work and respectability.

Beards and long hair have been worn periodically all through history, but probably never developed as many bitter confrontations between parents and offspring as occurred in recent years. It was attitudes, more than hair, that created sparks.

A person doesn't lose individuality or independence by conforming to acceptable social customs and dress.

In a recent article concerning "What (Job) Recruiters Watch for in College Graduates," Nation's Business magazine reported that, "Whatever social and cultural changes have occurred in the past decade, it's still necessary for an applicant to be neatly dressed, friendly and alert, rather than badly groomed and ill-spoken."

Fads may be good for a laugh, but they won't hold a job.