

# Restoring hair



Mannequins model wigs at John D'Orazio's Upper East Side salon.



## *Stylist's wigs help cancer patients to cope*

By HALLIE LEVINE

**T**WO months ago, celebrity stylist John D'Orazio was trimming the locks of yet another famous client when an absolutely unforgettable woman walked into his tony Upper East Side salon.

"Lorna was one of the most beautiful women I had ever seen, with a cascade of auburn curls that fell halfway down her back," D'Orazio recalls.

But there were tears in her lovely green eyes, and for good reason: She had just been diagnosed with breast cancer and was about to undergo chemotherapy that would cause her to lose her beautiful hair.

Lorna, who lived a block away, had wandered into the salon with her husband and daughter after seeing the fashionable-looking wigs displayed in the salon window.

D'Orazio, who for years has been tending to the tresses of such notable women as the late Jacqueline Onassis, Nancy Reagan, Stephanie Seymour and Gloria Steinem, more than a decade earlier had begun developing wigs for clients who were undergoing cancer treatments.

But D'Orazio took one look at this magnificent woman and realized he simply couldn't fashion her a wig from someone else's hair.

"I said, 'There's no way I'll let you lose those fabulous locks,'" D'Orazio recalls. "I gave her my cell-phone number, my home number, my work number and said, 'The moment your hair starts falling out, start saving the strands and call me. I'll cut it off and make a wig for you out of your own hair.'"

Several weeks later, he got a call on his cell phone. An hour later, he was ushering Lorna into his salon after hours so he could cut off the rest of her auburn curls.

"Every time she looked at the clumps of hair, her eyes began to water up," he says. "I was crying, too. I could feel her pain at that moment."

Two weeks later, Lorna returned to his salon, her bald head sheltered by scarves, so he could give her the wig.

And when he slipped his creation — a mass of auburn curls in a style identical to Lorna's original — on Lorna, they both stared in the mirror and began to cry.

# — and spirits



Celebrity hair stylist John D'Orazio is a man with a mission: making real-hair wigs for cancer patients.

N.Y. Post: Don Halasy

"I could barely see myself through the tears. I just couldn't believe it," Lorna recalls now. "I kept stroking the ringlets. It was my hair again; the same color, the same texture. I said, 'John, you've given me my identity back.'

"It's so nice to have a part of myself back. I had already lost a part of my breast to cancer and I couldn't bear the thought of losing my hair. It seemed, at the moment, my ultimate symbol of femininity."

D'Orazio says he is now on a mission to help other men and women who have lost their hair after going through traumatic procedures such as chemotherapy.

It's a cause close to D'Orazio's own life. He says he first understood the emotional devastation of hair loss back in 1976, when his father was diagnosed with terminal prostate cancer.

"I walked into the bathroom and found him sitting in the tub with tears in his eyes, grimly shaving his head," D'Orazio remembers. "I thought, 'This is criminal!' Cancer is devastating enough. Why should a person be

degraded further by losing his or her hair through some awful procedure like chemotherapy?"

When he opened his swank new salon on the corner of 72nd Street and Madison Avenue 12 years ago, he made a point of adding wig-making to his list of services.

But it wasn't until recently

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John D'Orazio

that he realized he could help clients feel even more comfortable by fashioning wigs from their own hair.

"In life, one has to picture something they want and make it happen," he explains. "It wasn't until Lorna walked through my store that I realized I could start doing something

very special for my clients."

D'Orazio's wigs are pricy — they can cost up to \$10,000 — but they are custom made to fit his clients perfectly.

He designed a lighter wig for Lorna, for example, to wear for activities that require her to wear a hat or helmet, like horseback riding or skiing.

"If she had worn her regular wig, it would have bunched up underneath the hat and looked ridiculous," he explains. "This wig had less of her hair on the scalp, so with a hat on, it looked very natural."

Lorna, who is finishing her final round of chemotherapy, says little touches like these made a huge difference to her in living with cancer.

"It was so important to me to keep living my life as I had before," she explains. "It meant a lot to me to walk into a room and know that I looked the same, or to do the activities I loved, like riding and biking, and know my hair wouldn't look ridiculous."

"The bottom line is, I still have my own hair — something that is a special part of me — and psychologically, I feel that that's important."