

Beard Limericks – Joseph G. Rosenstein

I didn't always have a beard.
One day it suddenly appeared.
I had a clean-shaven face,
No hair any place.
In those days I really looked weird.

**When did my beard come alive?
At what moment did it arrive?
A razor last touched my cheek,
Forty years ago this week.
It was December nineteen sixty five.**

I was working on my Ph.D.,
Writing a thesis on recursive degrees.
A job for me they were saving,
So I had no time for shaving,
I had to finish it ASAP.

**Exactly forty years ago this week {fifty}
I was up to my ears in Greek,
Typing symbols like beta and rho
And banging out on the piano
Beethoven's Sonata Pathetique.**

**That's the only piece I knew how to play
I played it again and again, every day
On one keyboard I typed math
On another the Sonata Path
etique – and my beard went its own merry way.**

This happened in a different age
before word processors became all the rage
If an error you made
A big price you paid
They made you retype the whole page.

**By the time I finished my thesis
and developed the entire exegesis
my beard was well-grown
bushy and full-blown
But it hadn't yet reached my knees.**

The impression I just gave you was wrong.
My beard never grew very long
But it has been quite full
You can give it a pull
And you'll see that it's also quite strong.

**It was very dark and thick way back when
It once served as a nest for a wren
That's the story I told
to my nephew – five years old.
He believed it until he was ten.**

**My mother was not pleased with my hair
She said it obscured my face, so fair,
That may have been true,
I will leave that to you,
But my father had other reasons to care.**

**He wanted me up on his barber's seat
to make my hair exceedingly neat.
My appearance he knew
Was very similar to
A cobbler's son with rags on his feet.**

**Why then did I let my beard grow on
After the doctoral pressure was gone?
Was it a statement political
Of the Vietnam war critical
Or was it simply parental rebellion?**

**My memory about this is somewhat hazy,
But looking for ulterior motives is rather crazy.
Weeks of not having to shave
Not being to the razor a slave
Was great – in other words, I liked being lazy.**

**But if a beard in sixty-five you wore
It conveyed opposition to the war
It insulted the average voter
In Minneapolis Minnesota
One of them drove at me with a car.**

**I have a picture of my beard age one
That appeared in the Minneapolis Sun
I'm high up on a ladder that day,
with a hostile crowd, condemning LBJ
I was lucky to escape when I was done.**

**My beard has been with me since that day,
No one here has seen me clean-shaved
I can't imagine it not being there
Although slowly, hair by hair
It's progressed from black to gray.**

**These limericks I wrote ten years back
When my beard still had a tinge of black
It's now no longer grey
Its hair is white all the way
I guess there's just no turning back. (Added December 12, 2015)**

**Hip-hip-hurrah for my beard's forty years {fifty}
It's stuck to me through smiles and tears,
May it thrive many years more
Perhaps even another two score
So please all stand and give it three cheers.**