

‘I INVENTED THE SPIROLL!’

AFTER WORKING ON AN IDEA THAT’S BEEN BILLED THE “GHD OF HOT ROLLERS” FOR 18 YEARS, JANIS EAGLE’S PAYOFF OF A MASSIVE 20,000-UNIT ORDER FROM THE UK IS JUST THE BEGINNING...

AS TOLD TO GAIL SEDORKIN PHOTOGRAPHY BRENDAN FRANCIS

“A photo of my daughter when she was just four with her soft, natural curls was the birth of this concept. She’s 18 in a few weeks, so that’s how long it has taken to produce this invention and get my Spiroll Heated Roller on the shelves.

Mary was just out of the shower and her hair had dried naturally into these beautiful silky curls without any rollers or any help.

So 1997 was the first time I really thought about it, but I didn’t do anything about it for a year.

I’ve been hairdressing since I was 15. I’d finished year 10 in Sydney where we lived and mum took me to Goondiwindi where she’d got me a job as an apprentice.

We did a lot of perms back then.

I lasted about two years there and seemed to spend two years in each place including Toowoomba and the Gold Coast, though at Mt Isa I only lasted eight months.

Then I moved back home to Sydney. I wanted to work in the city and actually wanted to work with men’s hair for a change.

I had a choice of two men’s salons and ended up in a basement salon under Pitt St. I can remember the first time a train rumbled through underneath us and I had no idea what it was.

Then an opportunity came up to work in a women’s salon just around the corner in St James Arcade and I worked there for a couple of years before I bought it and operated it for nearly 12 years.

I met my partner, Shane, and left to live and work at Bundaberg for two years, where Mary was born. It was just a little bit small, though – and everyone knew your business. That’s why I loved Sydney because you could walk around and say, ‘ha ha, no one knows me’. But we both love Queensland and both love the tropics and we had a friend up here, so Cairns it was and has been now for more than 17 years.

As a hairdresser, I have always seen it and know what a natural curl should look like.

It was like a light bulb – I just saw this vision of what these rollers should look like to achieve that natural look.

A friend said, ‘what are you going to do about that?’ But she also said that someone’s probably

already thought of it and so I dropped the idea.

It wasn’t until a year later when my father died and I was with my brother and he marched me off to the design and patent office to search all the Australian hairdressing patents and then register my invention once we found that nothing had been done like this. There were no conical-shaped rollers like mine – just round ones in different sizes with either clips or big claws to hold them in. They have been out for 40 years or more and some people still have them at home.

Spiroll is the 21st century heated roller. Mine can be put in two different ways and can be for any length of hair with a unique plastic clip so the heat is locked in the curl.

I also wanted to make it easy for people to use at home, not just for use in hairdressing salons.

It took many years and a lot of money to move from the light bulb moment to the packaged, finished product manufactured in Hong Kong.

I have had other visions but they may have to wait. Instead of spending money, I need to start bringing money in. My Sydney accountant, who has helped me since 1987, knows what I’ve been doing and said we’ll probably need to have a talk soon.

I still operate my salon as well as distribute Spirolls in Australia and have just had 129 cartons, each with four Spirolls, delivered to my home. I have no hallway now, you have to come in through the kitchen. The packs include a training DVD featuring Mary’s photo, which is also featured on the packaging.

Initially, (styling products company) Wahl said no to my invention and that’s when I decided to distribute it myself.

However, the year started with an order for 20,000 units from Wahl and it will be launched by them in the UK next month. My invention was described there as the best home hair tool since the GHD iron. I’m hoping it will go to the US next.”



Determined: The Spiroll was inspired by Janis Eagle’s daughter, Mary (pictured right), then four.

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