

Hat trick

Headgear grabs the attention

March 26, 2001

According to the Eagles, city girls can open doors with just a smile. According to me, a cowboy hat in New York City can get people to open their mouth, drop their jaw or even greet you in a city short on casual greetings.

My recent trip to the Big Apple gave me ample opportunity to study people's reaction to my headgear. A guy walking around in a turban or a Dr. Seuss Cat-in-the-Hat lid gets fewer looks and double takes than someone in a simple wide-brimmed Stetson.

Walking around Manhattan with a cowboy hat on got me the usual geographic accusations of, "Are you from Texas?" If I had a dollar for every time someone asked me that, I could buy a west Texas mansion and rightfully answer their question with a "yes."

The other common comment from people who don't say hello to hardly anyone was, "Hey, cowboy!"

I'm always at a loss for an answer to that salutation. Their greeting related directly to my attire. So do I pick out a feature of their wardrobe to greet them by? Something like "Hey, blue suit woman" or "Hey, black jacket guy!" Or do I try to guess their occupation by their appearance and say, "Hey, office drone" or "Hey, street vendor!"?

I usually just return their astute observation of who I am with a "Hi" or even a "Howdy" if I really want to make their day.

Cowboy privilege

New York City had lots of daytime attractions to check out, but a trip to the big city wouldn't be complete without seeing a little of the nightlife as well.

A hometown buddy of mine was working a construction job in Connecticut this winter to support his cow habit, so he came down to Manhattan while I was there to traipse around the city with me. If you thought one guy in a cowboy hat could attract attention in that city, you should've seen the looks we got with two guys in hats.

We had both seen the movie, "Coyote Ugly." We went to the show thinking it was a documentary on livestock predation by unattractive wild canines, but it turned out to be a pretty fun movie about a rowdy bar in New York City.

Since we were now in New York, we decided to see if this saloon really existed. It did, but "Coyote Ugly" was just its stage name. The real bar went by the name of "Hogs & Heifers." Seemed like the perfect place for a couple of cowboys to spend a Saturday night.

We jumped out of our yellow cab in front of Hogs & Heifers, and were greeted with a long line of people waiting to get into this quaint little pub. We went to the back of the line to wait our turn.

We weren't there two minutes when the lady at the door walked right up to us at the back of the line and said, "You two, come with me." She took us right to the head of line and we were in like Flynn.

It was rock star treatment. We were "the chosen." And it was all because of our hats. They needed a couple of North Dakota cowboys to add to the special ambience of Hogs & Heifers.

Our hats also got us noticed later that night by some panhandlers, a pimp, and a couple of hookers. "Hey, cowboy," was their best shot at an original opener.

Of course, once they found out we were real cowboys (meaning we actually owned cows), they left us alone. Hat or no hat, there's something about a cowboy's empty wallet that really turns those folks off.

