



BY SARA CANUSO

Step Up to the Bench

Oh no — here we go again, being asked to step up to the bench. The jury, along with everyone else in the room, is watching as you approach the judge. And what's more, they're observing how you look. Sad but true, that your image is speaking for you before you even have a chance to say a word. Don't miss out on opportunities because of a technicality.

Let's start with your shoes, since they take you through your day regardless of the weather, be it hot, cold, rain or shine. How much time do you give to what condition these poor soles are in? Ask people in the room, and I am sure they will be able to tell you.

One juror kicks the person next to him to point out your heels and how the dog must have gotten hold of them. Funny, your dog ran away five years ago. And how about the dust you forget to wipe off of your shoes after spending 10 hours of the day walking around? How on earth

did your socks get so wet? Well, the sole finally gave way and was very accommodating to the rain.

The solution? Shoes should be polished, even if quickly buffed, every day. Worn out shoes should be repaired or replaced.

Now let's get straight to your posture. When walking down the street one day, I noticed a man walking toward me with such a commanding presence. Not that he was wearing anything that great, but still he had a presence about him. As I watched him go by, I realized it was his posture. From that day on, I became very aware of holding my shoulders back and my head high, looking straight ahead. I wanted that look, for with that look came respect, confidence, image and power.

Take time to look around you at the way people carry themselves, and I promise you will soon be aware of the way you step up to the bench. We wake up with the intention and

knowledge that we intend to share, yet a lot of the time we are overlooked or not taken seriously because of the way we present ourselves.

OK, so your head is held high, your shoulders are back — now look ahead into the mirror to see how your clothing is fitting. Clothing that is too big can look just as bad as attire that is too small. Either way, most of the time you can take clothes to a tailor to have them altered. I realize that with today's fitness craze people are up and down on the scale, which will affect the way you look in clothes that were meant for your previous body.

Keep looking into that mirror to make sure your clothes are pressed and that no hems are hanging. And most of all, make sure there are no holes that have gone unnoticed by you — for I assure you that everyone else has noticed if they are there.

Now, speaking of straight ahead, what is going on with your hair today? I will be the first to admit that there are days when "bad hair day" is putting it mildly. I have come to know the problems that arise with my hair and I have equipped myself with tools and products that

will give me a quick fix and allow me to race out the door. You should do the same.

Once you're finally out the door, be sure to leave with a smile, and a bright one at that. Did you know that the cheapest and easiest way to look younger is to whiten your teeth? There are so many inexpensive ways to whiten your teeth that there are no excuses to not have a great smile. Take note the next time you are speaking to someone how you tend to look at their teeth, especially if they are stained or dull. People will be distracted from what you are saying and focus on your teeth. With so many distractions around us as it is, we need to eliminate as many as possible.

I am sure that not all of these may apply to you, but even if there are only a couple that need to be brought to your attention I will be willing to step up and say that you will notice a difference, not only in the way you feel, but also in the way others view you.

So with your polished shoes and neatly pressed clothes, with your shoulders back and with your bright smile, my guess would be that the next time you are told to "step up to the bench" you will do it with a presence like no other. Opportunities will come your way and you will accept them with a smile — and more importantly, you will have the shoulders to carry them. •