

## PEOPLE



Renée Burgard

## Faye Brown and Erma Moore: those stylish Hutchins sisters

"You know your sister better than anyone."

Four years separate Faye and Erma Hutchins, now Faye Brown and Erma Moore, but not much more than that.

They shared a bedroom as children, worked at the same place in high school and went to the movies together every Saturday. Now they are East Palo Alto neighbors, business partners, members of the same child advocacy programs and—always—each other's hair stylists. "I've never had anyone else cut my hair in my life," said Brown.

Born in Muskogee, Okla.—"We're real Okies from Muskogee," said Brown—their mother died when Faye was 4, and all six children went to live with their grandparents. "She was the youngest when my mother died and I looked out for her. But I never really needed to protect her. She was pretty tough. We really did it together."

"Sometimes I wonder, if mother hadn't died, if we would be so close," added Moore. "Now we are sisters and friends."

They have endured as business partners as well. For 23 years, the two have run Mixed Media Hair Design on Menalto Avenue in Menlo Park. They do women's hair, men's hair and children's hair, as well as manicures, pedicures, skin care, massage for women and color analysis.

Their sister Kathleen Semien is the manicurist.

They have more than 700 clients on their roster and see nearly 500 clients a month. "We've seen our clients' children grow up," said Brown. They have also seen more than a few of their clients turn gray over the years.

If they had their way, they would turn many of those gray heads into redheads. Including this reporter's. "You don't know it yet, but you would be great as a redhead," said Brown.

Brown is a redhead now, but next week might not be. "We are adventurous," she said, "and so are some of our clients. We have one woman who has been coming for

23 years and she has never had the same haircut."

Not that they mind if a gray head isn't ready for life as a redhead. "Believe me, we have plenty of customers who have been getting the *same* haircut for 23 years."

When they aren't shearing heads, they shore up committees, with the emphasis on the plural of committees. Moore works with the Center for a New Generation, an organization Stanford provost Condoleezza Rice helped found; anti-drug Decide Program in East Palo Alto, and the Foundation for Education for Ravenswood School District. "I started working with kids a long time ago and I'm still working with kids," she said. "I'll probably always be working with kids."

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She has five children of her own: four sons and one daughter. "And three grandchildren," she adds.

At one point, Moore single-handedly tried to turn 13 third-grade boys into paragons of domesticity. She took them into the kitchen, taught them to crack an egg, cook sloppy joes, make french fries and bake a Bisquick cakes. At the end of the experiment, they made a dinner for their parents and teachers and cleaned up the mess afterward. "Their mothers would come to me and say, 'I don't like having him in the kitchen because he can't clean up after himself.' And I'd say, 'I just taught him how, now you reinforce it.'"

For her part, Brown works with Target Success at Menlo-Atherton High School, an organization that "helps black children keep their focus on academic success and college," she said. Brown has two children, including a daughter who attends Menlo-Atherton.

They both work with the East Palo Alto Kids Foundation

(EPKA), a joint effort by the communities of East Palo Alto, Palo Alto and Stanford that raises funds for educational programs in the Ravenswood school district. The nine-month-old organization held its first fundraiser in August at the Holiday Inn in Palo Alto. The leading guest at the event was Moore's son Allan Dean Moore, an up-and-coming Hollywood actor who appeared in "Lethal Weapon 2," "Trade Winds," "L.A. Law" and "Colors."

Naturally, Allan's mother wanted him to be an engineer, like his father. "But did he listen to his mother?" she said. "Of course not."

The event raised \$4,000 for EPKA.

Their business grew out of a kaffeeklatsch. "We just sat down at the dining room table together with some papers and went to work," said Brown.

Moore studied cosmetology in high school, but left the field to raise children. Brown studied graphic design and designed packaging for beauty products until Moore pushed her to get her cosmetology license. Moore had already taught Brown to do her hair. "I didn't have anyone to do my hair, so I taught Faye."

Then Brown pushed Moore to get her license "before she had one more baby." With all these licenses, and a loyal following made at de John's Hairstyling in Palo Alto, they opened the Menlo Park salon. It has been a prosperous 23 years, and not just financially. "We come to work every day and we are grateful," she said. "I can say that in 23 years of being here, I have never had a boring day. And I'm sure Erma would say the same thing."

But they don't always say the same thing. As close as they are, they don't always do the same thing. For one thing, Faye belly dances. And Erma does tai chi.

For information on the East Palo Alto Kids Foundation (EPKA) call 325-8410. To reach Mixed Media, call 323-3146. ■

—Diane Sussman