

SOMEONE LIKE YOU

Tom's moustache was back. And again he was being mistaken for another by new people he met.

"We've seen you somewhere," they said.

It was a reminder of the 70s when moustaches were de rigour and he'd first grown one. He blamed John Newcombe, the Wimbledon tennis star, whose Cowboy style bush had entranced his wife. Tom shaped his to match but though his wife was pleased with his effort she was still enthralled with the Australian's Zapata look. It was about this time that the recognition anomalies began.

At first, Tom wondered if he had some unknown sibling or even perhaps a lost twin but couldn't believe either of his parents had strayed or given away a child.

Several years later, when his bushy black moustache turned grey, he shaved it off and the recognition incidents stopped.

Now, in the autumn of life, with drawn cheeks and a sagging chin, Tom felt the need for some facial camouflage to disguise his aging. He cultivated a tailored beard and a new Walrus. He thought they would help him drop a few years and acquire an air of mature sophistication. Of course, they did but the recognition anomalies soon returned.

Even on a recent group holiday, many fellow travellers commented that they had seen him before. One of them went further producing a picture of a friend that they said he resembled and who had a similar sense of humour. At least, this was evidence, but on inspection the resemblance was only across the eyes.

Maybe, Tom thought, he just had a common face, with some distinctive national features. He had always prided himself on identifying a German, a Spaniard or Italian at first glance by their looks. However, a check on his ancestral inheritance scuppered this theory. He was a mongrel with a wide genetic inheritance.

The mystery continued until the widespread availability of AI offered the opportunity to use facial recognition to find his double. He had tried a basic matching app on his phone years back which suggested he had a 55% resemblance to John Travolta. Ludicrous, Travolta was clean shaven.

Now modern AI software was more up to the job. He took several selfies, blurred the backgrounds, and uploaded them. But there was no clear result and too many faces to check.

Discoveries are often made by chance and coincidence not through diligent research.

Surprisingly, the revival of vinyl records was the catalyst that revealed his famous double. A visit to an HMV store and a shuffle through recently issued LPs uncovered a remastering of a 50 year old Wings LP - Band on the Run. On the cover were pictures of Paul and Linda McCartney with Denny Laine wearing prison uniforms together with Michael Parkinson, Clement Freud, and four famous others. And there, perched on the top of the group picture was Tom's double, clearly known by millions from his films. Eat your heart out, James Coburn, Tom's been dining out on your looks for years.