

## **My Rabbit Fur Hat**

**By Terri White**

It was a frigid 21<sup>st</sup> birthday on December 27, 1969, in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Like soundproofing, a snowy blanket quieted the earth. Pristine. Breathtakingly beautiful with trees decked out in their winter finery.

Meanwhile, my family enjoyed the warmth of a crackling fire while I opened my gifts. And there it was – a rabbit fur hat. The real deal. Not fake. My mom never failed to find the perfect gift for me.

I wore that fur hat every winter for years. In fact, when I moved to Texas in 1976, I brought it with me. Why would I need a fur hat in Texas? Because it was mine, and I loved my fur hat. I still do.

And I've worn it several times in the past 44 years, too. With each move, I carefully packed my hat. After all these decades, it's in perfect condition. It was, of course, made to last – not like these days when things easily fall apart after a few uses.

Recently, though, I thought I had lost it. It was not in its usual place. Searching through all my closets, I came up empty-handed. Boy, was I sad.

My beloved hat that I had faithfully preserved for 50 years had disappeared – until it wasn't. Last month, when I reached for my umbrella, I found it hidden behind a coat, hanging by its ties. What a relief. I nearly cried. My hat! Immediately, I donned it.

Oh, the stories this hat could tell.

Stories of slipping on sidewalks of lumpy ice. Stories of heart-stopping toboggan rides down steep hills. Anti-Vietnam War rallies in freezing winters.

Strolling by the campus ice sculptures every February. Frosty bike rides. Tromping through the frozen winter woods. Ice skating on frozen ponds and rivers.

Christmas shopping under sparkly lights, piped holiday tunes, and ringing bells. Snowball fights with my kids. Building snowmen.

All the while staying cozy under my rabbit fur hat.

But no owl ever mistook my hat for a real rabbit as happened to my brother while jogging through the woods. That owl swooped down to snatch it right off his head. Terrified, my brother ripped off his hat. Needless to say, he never wore that hat through the woods again. Lesson learned.

Hat stories. How they have enriched my life. It's one-of-a-kind. After all, probably not a soul in Texas owns one like mine. Surely, its value is priceless – at least to me.