"PICTURES, ANYONE?"

Patricia Jaeger

(1) When someone brings out his 35-mm camera, I cringe in obvious disgust. I love being in photographs and paging through my old photo albums, but I detest having my picture taken.

(2) It's not posing in front of a camera that bothers me; actually, I will do anything to be in a photograph. I delight in a bit of buffoonery or devilment. On one occasion, I buried my body in a painfully cold snowdrift while snowflakes melted on my eyelashes and froze them shut. Another time, I pulled a nylon stocking over my head, grimaced ferociously, and brandished a butter knife at an unsuspecting victim. Posing for pictures allows me to release some of my excess energy in creative ways.

(3) Neither am I embarrassed by having other people look through my old photo books. There are a few pictures I used to hide, but now I find them entertaining. One, for instance, is a terrific action shot of me smearing my first birthday cake all over my face. Another of my favorite pictures shows me helping myself to the food in my dog's dish. My absolute favorite picture is the one of my dad carrying two naked little kids, my brother and me, up the stairs to the bathroom.

(4) The real reason I hate having my picture taken is that the amateur photographer usually takes so long to get ready. Focusing is a major delay; sometimes it takes several minutes before the photographer is ready and then he finds out he hasn't advanced the film yet. By the time he is finally ready, I'm usually looking in the opposite direction or talking. In the pictures that come back from the printing shop, I usually have my mouth open or fixed in an unnatural position as a result of saying "Cheese!" for three and a half minutes.

(5) I like to be in photographs, but I hate having them taken. That lengthy process the photographer goes through before actually pressing the button makes me too irritable and impatient to enjoy it.