

# REAL STORIES

WRITTEN BY Andrea Dawn Clark



Markham works his hairdresser magic during a recent video shoot.

## DETERMINED TO SUCCEED

**JIM MARKHAM, ColorProof Evolved Color Care** Founder and CEO, didn't have the

easiest childhood. "My parents got divorced early in my life and my mother was an alcoholic," says Markham. And, to intensify his challenges, by age 15 he was already married with a child. "My mother said, 'well your Uncle Clarence always did well as a barber.' So I enrolled in Lubbock Barber College, in Lubbock, Texas. I was pretty good at barbering, could make money for my family and be in charge of my own destiny. That was really appealing to me," says Markham.

By the time he reached 17, Markham owned his own barbershop. A few years later he went back to school for razor cutting and styling and started entering hair competitions. Eventually, after winning many regional awards, he won a silver medal in the Hair Olympics. Around that time he noticed an article in *Playboy Magazine* featuring a celebrity hairstylist named Jay Sebring. "He was charging \$50 for a haircut. I started off charging \$1.50 and worked my way up to \$2. He was also selling men's products. I loved the idea of selling products," says Markham. After calling Sebring, he flew out to Hollywood and found his future mentor. To test out Markham's skills, Sebring had him cut one side of an actor's head, while he cut the other. To Markham's surprise, Sebring's side was better. "I just tried to get the hair even all over. Jay taught me to cut a frame into the hair."

While under Sebring's guidance Markham met actors—Paul Newman gave him dating advice—and even found his future wife, Cheryl, whose father owned one of the largest independent special effects companies in Hollywood. Things were going so well that Markham bought his first franchise salon from Sebring. Then, tragedy hit. In 1969, the Manson Family murdered Sebring, along with actress Sharon Tate and coffee heiress Abigail Folger.

**Jim Markham, ColorProof Evolved Color Care Founder and CEO, started out as a "\$1.50 barber," but with unflinching resolve, business savvy and a childhood need for security, he became a beauty industry icon.**

"Jay told me, 'If anything ever happens to me, you'll take over.' And when he died, I was the only one who could take over," says Markham. After years of working on Sebring's line, Markham struck out on his own, developing an eponymous line of men's styling products.

That was just the beginning of Markham's career as a hair product developer. He went on to create some of the first sulfate-free shampoos with the ABBA and Pureology lines. "The sulfate-free surfactants were milder and didn't remove color," says Markham. "And the

timing was perfect, there was a big boom in color companies, but they didn't have any products to use after the color service." The new sulfate-free shampoo also served a personal need. Cheryl's best friend, Carrie, was fighting cancer and needed a gentle product. That type of problem-solution product development became the DNA behind Markham's current company, **ColorProof Evolved Color Care**. "Our unique point of difference is that we give clients with color-treated hair specific options and solutions," says Markham. "If your client has color-treated hair and wants volume, we have products for that. If your client has color-treated curly hair, we have specific products for her hair type." **Markham also prides himself on giving back to the hairdresser community. "At ColorProof I've tried to provide hairdressers with the same opportunities I was given, with the best products and unsurpassed educational programs."**

Even with five successful hair care companies under his belt, when you think of Markham's humble beginnings, it's not surprising to hear what he's most proud of in life. "I never had a family growing up. I was always worried about my mom getting killed. And in 1977, she was shot and killed by her alcoholic boyfriend," says Markham. "So for me, creating a family was the number one goal." And with Cheryl, his daughter Vickie, sons Bob and Jay (named after Jay Sebring), and three grandchildren by his side, he's more than surpassed his goal.