

## Shave and haircut with feminine touch

# Women barbers cut convention to keep town buzzing

By LYNN ORR

Getting a "buzz" has changed. A stroll into a local Farmington barbershop will find "Vogue" and "Bazaar" among "Fortune" and "Sports Illustrated" magazine stacks. Hanging plants and bright yellow accents lend a sunny ambience to the reception area. Private booths assure a customer's privacy.

More than cosmetic changes await the customer.

Three young women wielding scissors at the "Kut and Dry" barbershop in the downtown Farmington Center

are licensed barbers; and two of them own the new shop, formerly the "Men's Quarters."

Co-owners and sisters Mary Halady and Karen Durnian may be the first woman barbers in Oakland County to own a barbershop.

While they await confirmation of their trailblazing feat from the State Board of Barber Licensing and Regulation, they're sure of one thing—they're the first female barbers to own a shop in Farmington.

"SOME GUYS still walk in and think I'm a manicurist," said Ms. Halady. 24.

For some male customers, a trip to Kut and Dry is their maiden voyage with a woman barber. For others, it's an experience from the past, said Ms. Durnian.

"When I was overseas, a woman cut my hair," is a common remark, said Ms. Durnian, 23.

"Men are getting used to having a woman cut their hair, but there's a few who wait for the male barbers," she said.

But most customers, like Bruce Lamb, find gender doesn't make a difference when hair cutting is involved.

An insurance representative with All State, Lamb liked the hairstyle shaped by Ms. Durnian. One of his associates, however, expressed amazement with the entire shampoo, cut and blow dry process.

"It still kills me," said Roy Van Zandt.

FORTUNATELY for business survival, the majority of male customers want a good haircut, regardless of who cuts it, the owners said. And female patrons, accustomed to female beauticians, easily make the switch to a barber.

Changes in the law have blurred the difference between barbers and cosmetologists or beauticians, Ms. Halady said.

"It used to be that barbers could cut a woman's hair, but weren't supposed to use rollers or color," she explained. Cosmetologists were not allowed to cut men's hair.

"When they changed the law, the barbers went crazy," she said.

"For years, men have been going in the back door to their wife's beautician. Now they can go in the front door."

Barbers objected to the law allowing beauticians to work on men. A barber's license requires 2000 hours of training, a beautician's license 1,500.

A barber usually is paid 70-75 per cent of the total intake, beauticians are paid anywhere from 40-60 per cent.

"In other words, a shop can make more money off beauticians," Ms. Halady said.

In barbers' college, a student learns to cut, style, color, curl, and perm. They also learn to shave, although very few customers request a shave. Ms. Durnian said, who gives them at Kut and Dry.

In addition, barbers learn about skin diseases and recognizing health problems. Sometimes, they learn by working "swings" and walk into the barber colleges for a weekly cleanup.

"You learn about things like head-



Bruce Lamb gets his first haircut from a woman, Mary Durnian. (Staff photos by Harry Mauthe)

lice," Ms. Halady said. "Lice jump, so if one kid gets it, everyone's going to get it."

If the barber spots a problem, it must be handled carefully.

"You have to be very diplomatic with customers," the sisters said.

DIPLOMACY works in other arenas as well, they said.

"You can give the best haircut in the world, but if you have a bad personality, they're not going to come back," Ms. Halady said.

Men who want permanents or color treatments seem to prefer the semi-enclosed booths at the shop, they said.

"A man just doesn't want to get his hair washed in front of people," Ms. Durnian said.

Female customers are used to the close quarters of most beauty salons, but they, too, like the booth arrangement, she added.

The two sisters bought the shop from previous owner Rick Johnson. Both women have been with the shop for more than one year, which they hope will make former customers comfortable. But getting started on their own is difficult, they admit.

"This shop has gone through many changes. When you're in a service business, people get insecure about that," Ms. Halady said.

They're discovered that Farmington customers are pennywise, especially in comparison with Birmingham customers, whose hair Ms. Halady styled for a few years.

To keep prices in line, they follow union scale fairly closely; a shampoo (required before all styles, with the exception of standard male cuts), style and blow dry is \$10 for men over 16, and \$12 for women. Children's cuts are less.

Whether their sex will have a positive effect on the business is yet to be determined, but they're hoping it will.

Unlike many occupations, barbers must pay their own medical insurance and pay for retirement out of their wages. Customers who return can make that job easier.

In terms of working for a woman, barber Bob Janovich appears satisfied. "After going through barber college, it's a breeze."



Don Wilson gets a trim from Mary Halady.

## THE INSIDE \* ANGLE

Welcome to "The Inside Angle."

This new feature is dedicated to the proposition that every reader of the Farmington Observer has a right to enjoy the bits of information which ordinarily go unwritten.

Some of the information you read about will be downright silly. Other bits will give kudos to area residents, and still other information will be announcements about happenings in which you might be interested.

But the most important ingredient in this column is you, the reader.

We want you to pay a little extra attention and when you see something that's interesting—a relative who wins an award, an unusual incident—sit down and write to the Farmington Observer, P.O. Box 69, Southfield 48037.

"OUR FIRST KUDO goes to MARYANNE PEARSON of Farmington Hills, who recently became a television star, of sorts. A bowling enthusiast, Mrs. Pearson recently was chosen to appear on the Channel 20 program "Make it and Take it." No sooner had she appeared on that program, than she got a call from, you guessed it, "Bowling for Dollars." On the "Make it" program she guessed she would knock down seven pins, but tested herself by knocking down nine of 10 pins. As of this printing, we are unaware of how she did on "Bowling for Dollars."

"COFFEE, the American drink which gets politicians, diligent reporters and astute residents through late-in-the-evening meetings, came into focus at both the Farmington school board and Farmington Hills meetings this week.

Reflecting on a "bare bones" budget was bad enough for school board officials, but the board had to attend to an immediate problem of gratification. It seemed an administrator, who shall remain nameless, was responsible for the coffee which was termed as the "muddiest" in board history. It seems the beleaguered man misunderstood the machine's directions and deposited considerably more grounds than were required.

Funny thing though—some of the board members barely noticed. Could be swallowing the budget was bad enough for one night.

Over at the Hills meeting, Councilwoman JOANNE SMITH found the issue at hand too much to handle and dropped her steaming hot brew all over her lap. Administrators and council colleagues rushed to her aid. But as one administrator noted, everyone concentrated on wiping the spilled coffee off of the table, floor and papers. Meanwhile, Smith's attempt to revive hot pants ground to a halt.

"SQUARE DANCING buffs will have a chance to kick up their heels on March 10 when the Fancy Farmers of Farmington will feature singing callers BRUCE AND KAREN LIGHT with square and round dances. The dance will be at the old Farmington Junior High School, Warner and Thomas at 8 p.m. Refreshments will be served and guests are welcome.

"MICHELLE ABOWD, of Farmington Hills, has been doing her homework and is participating in the 14th annual Southeastern Michigan Junior Science and Humanities Symposium at Wayne State University this weekend. She will present a paper on an analysis of John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath." The primary purpose of the symposium is to stimulate interest in the sciences and humanities among high school students. She is a student at Our Lady of Mercy High School.

"NEXT DOOR neighbor DORIS RUETENIK of Novi, was named as "Queen of Tip-up Town" recently. The Tip-Up Town festival is conducted by our northern neighbors in Houghton Lake to promote the winter activities in that area. Her duties will include traveling to other Michigan communities' special events as a representative of the Houghton area.

"LEONARD WADE, a Farmington Hills orthodontist, has decided to use his skilled hands for something other than fixing patients' teeth. An avid artist for years, Larry will have a one-man art show this Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the Farmington Hills Community Library on Twelve Mile. His art consists of acrylics, water colors, stained glass and pen and inks. Many of his works are in private collections and public buildings.

"THANKS, say Farmington Community Band officials. The recent All-Sports and Variety Show to raise funds for the band was a great success according to BILL CONROY, PAUL BARBER AND RALPH CHAPMAN. The board wishes to thank the athletes and performers, the advertisers and patrons and those who came to enjoy the evening.

"TAKE HEART if you don't think you're bringing home enough in your paycheck. Just 45 years ago in March, a new federal law set the minimum wage at \$1 an hour. Of course a dollar stretched a lot further in those days. If you, through some mischance, are still making only \$1 an hour, it might be wise to inform your employer that the times are changing.

"MARCH is here and spring not far away. But whether it comes in like a lamb or lion is yet to be seen. Actually, the ram is the most important animal this month with March to April being the month for Aries.

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