

Malls & Mainstreets

Susan DeMaggio, Editor 248-901-2567 on the web: http://observer.eccentric.com

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Images

Beauty bonus at local salons

Happy Birthday to me!
It is always such fun
and not so depressing,
to turn fifty-one!

Yes, my friends, the big 51 tolled this past Thursday, Jan. 22. But do not fret, I still look... fabulous.

(You know how shallow I am, and that's all that really matters.) The reason I am bringing up this major event is because I started my career on my exact birthday when I turned 17. Don't reach for the abc's, Thursday, began my 35th year in the business. (I hear a rumor that some people hadn't even been born 35 years ago!)

In reflecting upon the past 35 years, I recall the most common question that has been asked, ad nauseum: "Jeff, what about my hair?"

It has taken me 35 years to be able to give you a practical answer. In the past I recommended you to various salons that were in your area, but you usually entered with great trepidation, not knowing what really to expect. Well, the miracle has occurred! Several months ago while giving a lecture to the educators of Troy, I met a woman named Lorraine Skala. Lorraine is the premier image consultant in the metropolitan Detroit area.



JEFFREY BRUCE

Now I know what you are thinking: If you go for electronic imaging you will be shown the usual four hair-styles (Mamie Eisenhower, Mario Thomas, Barbara Bush, or Lord Jeffrey Hentherton, so attractive on a 60 year old!)

Lorraine has up-to-date computer imaging equipment that carries at least 1,200 different styles! When we met it truly was the answer to my prayers. We have joined forces in a way that has been most beneficial for the public.

How many times have you gone into a salon, sat down, asked for a trim and you walk out looking like... well, me! Yes, I've not done too badly, but very few women can carry my look (can you imagine?) The most important thing between client and hair stylist is communication: Don't be afraid to ask for a consultation prior to your appointment.

Brutal honesty
Many women go to a professional with unrealistic expectations. You may have a certain type of hair that will not do what is necessary to achieve the look you want. Your color you've decided to become will not become you! The new length you desired is too long, makes your neck disappear, you've automated an added 10 pounds to your frame, and lost two inches in stature. What in the world is the alternative?

Back to Lorraine. Here's the scoop on what she does: She works in two ways. The first is in a salon located near to you. You would have a make-up application, lesson, skin care lesson, and then a computer imaging taken with a television camera. This session is \$50.

The other option is Lorraine coming to you! She works either in groups of three or five. The 90-minute session consists of makeover, (with Jeffrey Bruce cosmetics of course,) as well as your computer imaging. You will have 12 new hairstyles, colors, lengths, recorded for you at that time so you may take the photos home to discuss with your significant other. Lorraine goes all over Michigan with her equipment. The at-home session is \$75 with \$36 going towards any Jeffrey Bruce products used.

To reach Lorraine at her downtown Riverfront Towers Studio, please call (313) 393-6032.

Appointments
As far as I am concerned, my January, February and March dates at The Townsend are sold out. We are accepting appointments for April to coincide with Mother's Day. The number to call is 1-800-944-0588.
My e-mail address is jwbb@worldnet.att.net.
Please keep your letters coming. They have given me wonderful ideas for the column this past year, and I look forward to an educational, informative and fun year with all of the Observer/Eccentric readers in 1998!

Mystery shoppers spy service



BY BARD PEIT TEMPLETON
SPECIAL WRITER

When Harold Blumeno, 68, of Farmington Hills retired from the advertising business several years ago, he thought he was ready for a life of leisure.

Instead he quickly grew bored, sought part-time employment and discovered a world of new challenges as a mystery shopper for local restaurants and retail outlets.

"When I was sitting around the house it was a bad time for me. I applied for several positions but kept being told there was nothing open," said Blumeno. "That's when I saw the classified ad for mystery shoppers. I've done 600 shops in the last year and believe me I'm not idle anymore."

After studying a clip board of questions, Blumeno drops by major retailers like Kmart and the Gap to take a good look at their service. His observations often begin in the parking lot as he checks out the lot and entry way of the store for clutter or cleanliness.

"Inside the store I usually start at the service desk and check on things like how long the line is and if the clerk is courteous," said Blumeno. "After that I might have specific departments I'm to visit to check the merchandise or to see if employees are helpful."

Although Blumeno is hired by an outside firm some retailers provide their mystery shoppers with congratulatory cards to present to good employees.

"If I can find an employee who will walk me to the area I'm looking for or just gives me complimentary service, they get a congratulatory card - that's a \$60 bonus in their paycheck," said Blumeno. Noting that he's thrilled to be active and busy again, Blumeno said the pay rate for shopping isn't bad either. He usually earns about \$10 an hour and in some cases free dinner at the restaurant he's reviewing.

The basic job includes 20 to 30 minutes visiting inside the retailer and another half hour or so filling out paperwork. Most of Blumeno's assignments are close to home and he has been sent to visit a number of stores more than once. In fact one of his most frequent mystery shopping trips has been to area Kmart stores.

Keeping close tabs on how things look from the customer's standpoint is a major part of the program at Kmart, according to Mary Lorenz, Director of Media Relations. The popular retail chain utilizes an outside firm for its mystery shopping program and has all 124 of their Michigan stores shopped at least twice every month.

Cleanliness, stocked shelves and the friendliness and courteous of service

employees are areas Kmart likes to take a closer look at via the mystery shoppers.

"Mystery shoppers have a form to fill out and they are looking for certain things each visit," said Lorenz. "Things like, how do our associates serve our customers? Are they friendly and helpful? Will they answer questions, help you find a product or find someone that can help you?"

The results of the customer service report are taken quite seriously at Kmart and in fact the bonus and annual compensation package goes to store managers is based on the results of the report, said Lorenz. Kmart also utilizes the service to check out their competitors to see what's going on there.

"The shoppers bring us the information on our competitors and we can take that and perhaps improve and do better things in our stores," said Lorenz.

While Blumeno certainly takes his task seriously and is impressed with how important his work is to the retailer he admits he's still having a ball. A recent assignment had Blumeno visiting her Evola Music stores where he got to give away cash to attentive employees.

"I had three \$100 gift certificates and my assignment was to give them out if the employee greeted me as I entered the store and if they demonstrated the Yamaha keyboard first, before any other instrument," smiled Blumeno. "In all three cases they did it. I just love this, it's like being a mystery millionaire."

Blumeno has been so thrilled with his success he wants to share the



research and knowledge he has gained. His newsletter, "Mystery Shoppers Network" is issued four times a year with an annual subscription rate of \$29.95.

For more information call 1-800-215-3959 or write to c/o 33228 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48334.

Tailors save the day and the dollar

BY DONNA MULCAHY
SPECIAL WRITER

What do you do when your favorite clothes become too tight or baggy, or when the new pants and jacket you bought on sale are too long?

Well, you could move them to the back of your closet, to await the miraculous day when they'll fit. Or better yet, take them to a professional tailor.



The right fit: Dino (The Tailor) Mitropoulos (right) poses with one of his famous clients Lee Iacocca.

If you've never used a tailor before, they may be less expensive than you think.

An informal survey of five local tailors revealed what services they typically offer and the prices charged for each task. All of them said that they ask \$8 to hem a pair of pants, that sometimes alterations can be performed in one day, and that their shops are non-smoking.

Dino Mitropoulos, owner of Dino the Tailor in Adams Square, Birmingham, said he charges about \$18 to \$30 to hem a skirt, depending on the material and whether or not it is lined or has pleats. However, beaded skirts can cost \$70 or more to shorten, because of the work involved.

Besides alterations, Mitropoulos specializes in making custom-made clothing for men and women. Hiking custom-made men's suits (including coat, vest and pants) start at \$1,200. The price depends on the material. His better suit cloths range from \$60 to \$1,200 a square yard, custom-made dresses begin at \$200.

Originally from Greece, Mitropoulos attended a tailoring school in Athens. When he immigrated to Detroit in 1968 he went to work at Kosi's and became head tailor at the prestigious mens store.

He opened his own store, Dino's Tuxedo & Alterations, at Oakland Mall in Troy about 10 years ago. A year ago, he relocated that store to its present location, in the Adams Square on Woodward near Maple in Birmingham. For more information call him at (248) 645-2700.

Jill of all trades

Michelle Moenssen, owner of Metropolitan Tailor in downtown Birmingham, said she charges about \$8 to \$25 to hem a skirt and \$15 to \$20 to shorten sleeves.

She also custom makes clothing, including wedding dresses. Moenssen has a bachelor's degree in fashion design from Wayne State University and used to be a theater costumer for the Detroit Institute of Arts.

With 10 years experience, she opened her shop a little over a year ago at 267 S. Old Woodward in Birmingham. (248) 594-8465.

Sofia's Tailoring & Alterations, which has two locations, in Livonia and Canton, usually charges \$12 to \$16 to hem a skirt, and \$8 to \$16 to hem jacket sleeves, according to owner Sofia, who declined to give her last name.

She also custom-makes clothing, including wedding dresses. She said she learned the art of tailoring in Greece and brings with her 35 years of experience. She's been in business at both locations for 10 years.

The Livonia shop is on Plymouth at Stark Road, (313) 422-6080, the Canton shop is on Joy between Lilley and Sheldon, (313) 454-0330.

Restoring fabric

Rainbow Custom Tailoring & Tuxedos in Farmington Hills charges about \$15 to hem sleeves (the price can be higher, depending on the material and work involved), and anywhere from \$30 to \$80 to re-weave suits that have been ripped or torn, said Marie Warra, who owns the business with her mother, Layla Shihadeh and brother, Michael Shihadeh. The business has been in their family for 35 years. Her mother makes custom clothing for women (including wedding gowns), her brother makes custom clothing for men, and she handles the renting and selling of tuxedos. The shop is on 12 Mile, west of Middlebelt. For more information, call (248) 477-0510.

Denise Gerke, owner of the Village Tailor in Plymouth, said she charges between \$8 and \$25 to hem a skirt, and about \$8 to \$20 to hem sleeves. She's been in the tailoring business for about 15 years and at her current location for about 10 years.

She does zipper replacements, re-weaving, monogramming and other repairs and alterations, but does not custom make clothing. Her shop is at 696 N. Mill, between Spring and Liberty in the Old Village, Plymouth, (313) 451-7820.

Gerke said many dry cleaners also offer simple alterations for a fee - they'll mend tears and fix zippers, but most don't offer fittings like a tailor would. Also tailors do not insist that garments be dry-cleaned before working on them like many cleaners do.

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

(248) 353-4111.
Motivational speaker
Borders Books hosts Judy LaSle, author of "9 Chances to Feel Good About Yourself" with a 7:30 p.m. workshop addressing "Problems! Stress!"
14 Mile/Orehead Lake, Farmington Hills.
(248) 737-0110.

THURSDAY, JAN. 29
Spring Home & Garden Show
Through Feb. 1, more than 300 exhibitors present the latest technology/products for home improvement. Admission \$6, Seniors \$4, Kids 6-12 \$3. Sponsored by the Building Industry Association of South-eastern Michigan. Treasure chest contest with daily prizes. Today and Jan. 30 from 2-10 p.m. from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Feb. 1 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Novi Expo Center 1-96/Novi Road.
(248) 737-4478.

Bookstore fun
Children meet Curious George from 11 a.m. to noon at Barnes & Noble. Later, Linda Cox discusses

"A New Year, A New Beginning," 4-5 p.m.
Tigerph/Maple, Bloomfield Hills.
(248) 540-4209.
Fashion Breakfast
Nordstrom offers a runway show of winter-to-spring collections for children and women, beginning with breakfast at 8:30 a.m. Coat is \$10 per person. Call the concierge for reservations.
Somerset Collection North.
Big Beaver/Coolidge, Troy.
(248) 816-5100, ext. 1690.

THURSDAY, FEB. 5
Winterfest
Downtown Birmingham merchants and restaurateurs present an ice sculpture show in Shain Park through the weekend. Stores offer extended hours and clearance sales throughout the shopping district.
Merrill/Bates, Birmingham.
(248) 433-3550.
Winter makeovers
Neiman Marcus presents a spring colors event in Cosmetics through Feb. 7. With any \$50 fragrance/beauty purchase, shoppers get a NM signature black tote filled with sampling of products.
Somerset Collection South.
Big Beaver/Coolidge, Troy.
(248) 643-3300.

News of special events for shoppers is included in this calendar. Send information to: Malls & Mainstreets, c/o The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009, or fax (248) 644-1214. Deadline: Wednesday 5 p.m. for publication on Sunday.

SUNDAY, JAN. 25
Puppet show
"The Littlest Mermaid" performed daily at 3 p.m. Saturdays 11, 1 and 3 p.m. Sunday at 1 and 3 p.m.
MendowBrook Village Mall.
Adams/Walton, Rochester Hills.
(248) 376-9451.

TUESDAY, JAN. 27
Financial seminar
Ginger Ward of Dean Witter Reynolds presents "How to realize your retirement dreams," 7:30 p.m. at Borders Books, Free.
34300 Woodward Ave., Birmingham.
(248) 203-0005

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 28
Antique Show
Through Feb. 1, glass repair by Mr. Chips, plus exhibits showcasing furniture, books, dolls, pottery, china, prints and cut glass throughout the mall during regular mall hours.
Tel-Twelve Mall, 12 Mile/Southfield.