



BUSINESS & ORGANIZATIONS

Longtime Merchant The Best Little Hair Salon in Rye Celebrates Ten Grand Years

By Janice Llanes Fabry

Don Mirello and Jonna Crispens met 16 years ago when she walked into his hair salon in Larchmont. "At the time, I remember telling my aunt that I had just gotten the best haircut ever," said Crispens. "It was one of the few times I didn't feel like I had to go home and restyle my hair." After a year's worth of fabulous haircuts, they started dating. Together, they opened The Best Little Hair Salon in Rye 10 years ago in April 1997.

Although not all their clients end up lucky in love, they all seem to enjoy a happily ever after. Once Mirello and his team style a client's hair, she is not likely to trust anyone else. Mirello, after all, has taught in New York, Italy, Paris and Japan. He, himself, was trained by the same stylist who trained Vidal Sassoon. The couple is quick to point out that the Sassoon method is based on precision and on the geometry of hair. Before ever taking a scissor to anyone's head, Mirello examines each individual's texture, growth patterns and density.

"I also work with bone structure. If I don't feel a style is appropriate for a client, I'm going to sit them down and have a long discussion," he explained. His haircuts are never cookie cutter and are a vast departure from those of today's younger stylists, who take a freestyle approach of chopping into the hair.

Highly experienced in the international scene, Mirello was a platform artist at trade shows throughout Europe and was subsequently handpicked to style hair for couture fashion shows in Milan. He became an owner of one of the largest independent salon chains in Westchester County and was Aveda's first international artistic director before opening his 15th shop in Larchmont in 1987.

Crispens' roots, on the other hand, are embedded in an entirely different career. Formerly an accomplished journalist and freelance writer, she was an editor for "HairColor & Design" magazine and the original editor of "The Pet Gazette." Once she started helping Mirello

at his Larchmont shop, however, she fell in love with the salon industry.

A decade ago, they became intrigued with the space tucked away on Theodore Fremd Avenue. "We loved the fact that the main window overlooked Purchase Street, rather than being at ground level. It gave a sense of privacy that we thought customers would appreciate," said Crispens, who took over management and customer service upon opening the new shop.

Completely renovating the old salon it once

It's the little things like taking someone's coat, bringing them coffee, tea, wine or their favorite magazine that help them relax and enjoy their visit." In addition, the salon offers wireless Internet access, so their professional clientele are welcome to bring laptops.

The couple's top priority is the health and beauty of hair, not manicures, facials or massage. They have always focused almost exclusively on hair services, specializing in corrective and creative color, precision cutting and nourishing hair and scalp treatments.

"We attribute the shop's longevity to truly great service and to the far superior classic work that we do. I work with young women and older women and can do classic or trendy. We're experts here," said Mirello.

One feature that sets The Best Little Hair Salon apart is a strong emphasis on color education and advanced training. Utilizing only the finest Goldwell color products, it has a reputation for color correction that draws clients from Manhattan, Connecticut and as far away as Florida for repair work, fixing problems that other salons can't.

On board with Crispens and Mirello is a close-knit group of highly qualified colorists/stylists. George Bennett, who worked on Madison Avenue, joined the salon when it first opened. Diane Piedmont has been with the salon since January 1999. Ana Correa, who trained with Mirello several years ago, is the latest staff addition.

New to the salon this year are Arbonne botanically based, hypoallergenic products. The Swiss line includes shampoos, conditioners, skin care products and cosmetics. The salon is hosting evening make-up parties featuring professional make-up artists.

In their off-hours, Mirello and Crispens love to spend time at their home in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. They were married in their backyard, with its panoramic mountain views, almost four years ago. They try to get there twice a month, but most of their time is spent right here in their grand little salon in Rye.

Hours are Tuesday through Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., except Thursdays 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. For appointments, call 925-1100.



Jonna Crispens and Don Mirello

housed, they painted the space yellow, added hardwood floors, ceiling fans, a bright yellow awning and wrought iron seating on its back deck. Charming, cheerful, comfortable and less than 600 square feet, it was dubbed The Best Little Hair Salon in Rye.

At the onset, customer service was of the utmost importance. It is Crispens' affable, sweet voice that clients hear when they call for an appointment. "We try to treat customers the same way we would treat guests in our home.