

Lillian—hair today, gone tomorrow

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Lillian the hairdresser was one of those happenings that sometimes take place when a person walks into a situation without premeditation or appointment.

She was standing there in a Montecito hair dressing salon the day I decided on the spur of the moment to go in for a fast, unscheduled and uncomplicated trim for my shoulder-length hair.

"Lill-YAN," she said her name was in a very heavy French accent as she adjusted the little black bow around the neck of her white blouse and smoothed out the black vest she was wearing. As she wrapped a big plastic bib around my neck I took notice of her black hair that was done in a short, boyish hair style I think they call punk.

I told Lillian that all I wanted was a little trim, and away we went.

As she energetically picked up an indeterminate number of clips and partitioned my scalp into a strategic map of small squares to cut, Lillian explained that she had left real estate for hairdressing because, "Ma chérie, zee maisons, they are not selling!"

Snip, snip.

"Lillian," I said, "how much are you

cutting off?"

"Your hair is so HEFFY," she exclaimed. "Maybe a little more than usual! Zee houses, no one can sell. Do you have money? You should buy!"

Snip, snip.

"You are my first customer," she then told me.

"Today?" I asked.

"No, no!" said Lillian. "My first customer EVER."

I immediately realized I was in one of those situations where the best thing to do is sit back and enjoy the ride. Lillian, meanwhile, proceeded to tell me that she had immigrated from France to Dallas where she had met her American husband and that she was 38 years old. Snip, snip.

"Je suis Americain," said Lillian, explaining proudly that when she took her vows as a citizen of this country she was moved to tears.

"This country is so, so magnifique," she said.

She said that she and her husband had moved to Ventura and that this was where she got into selling real estate. But when "zee maisons" were not selling anymore, said Lillian, she got into hair-snipping. Snip, snip, snip.

I now found myself studying Lillian's

punk hairdo with renewed interest.

She then readjusted all the clips in my head for another go-around, and as she considered her next attack she began to cut the air with the scissors.

I asked Lillian if she missed France, and she replied that she really didn't because before that she had lived, for a time, on a kibbutz in Israel.

I told her I had a pianist friend who had done the same thing and asked her if, like my friend, she had ever patrolled an Israeli border with a gun.

I might as well have lit a match to gasoline.

"Don't get me started!" she exclaimed, snip, snip, snip, SNIP. "I get SO angry when people think we are militant!" SNIP!

"Lillian," I said, "watch the scissors."

I told her that my friend was there during a tense time and that I was simply fascinated by the whole concept of women soldiers.

"What nationality are you?" Lillian asked.

"German," I answered.

Cut, cut, cut. SNIP, snip.

"You don't look German," said Lillian. "You look more Greek. Or Arab!" SNIP, SNIP!

"Lillian," I said, "I like my hair

right now, as it is. In fact, it's beautiful. Stop. In fact, please stop."

Lillian stopped, and as she brushed me off, she told me that her job in the kibbutz was mainly taking care of children. She had a daughter of her own, she said, and "I love her, but no more children! No more!"

I got a lot of compliments about my hair when I reported for work that day, and although I thought people were just trying to make me feel better it wasn't long before I realized, as my hair began to assume more of its old ways, that Lillian had in fact given me the best haircut I'd ever had.

Therefore, when I called that same salon this morning to make another appointment with Lillian, I was sad to find her no longer there. I asked the woman on the other end of the phone where she had gone, and the woman said she didn't know. Back to Ventura, she thought.

I couldn't help but wonder if Lillian's co-haircutters ever really knew this woman in their midst, and I hoped that Lillian's return to Ventura was because of improved prospects in the real estate business rather than that her distinctive style with the scissors proved to be too much for the customers of that salon.