

Shampoo and Set (2013)

Houston Hodges, for Writer's Corner, WLRH Radio Huntsville, AL USA

My mother underwent a sophisticated and delicate advanced procedure yesterday aimed at restoring her self-image. She got a "Shampoo and Set," and I was allowed to watch this for the very first time in my entire life; it was quite a privilege to be allowed into a specially equipped chamber with all kinds of mysterious devices.

The person in charge -- called The Operator -- was extremely capable; she showed her advanced level of competence by talking constantly as she worked, about subjects totally without reference to what her fingers were doing.

Two others were undergoing similar procedures, seated in the chamber in various stages of completion. They seemed to be quite content, regardless of the extreme measures which were being applied to their heads, and appeared to be immobilized or perhaps tranquilized by large plastic globes like helmets which came down over their heads and hummed to keep them quiet.

After the hair was sensuously laved, lathered, and rinsed, Myrt the Operator combed it smooth as spun silver, placid in her fingers. Then she skillfully chose a requisite amount of hair, and spun that swath around a hollow plastic tube, fixing it with a cunningly designed aluminum clip. There seemed to be a platonic order to the process, as her fingers knew exactly the number of rolls which were required.

Once done, the roll-bedecked head was placed beneath the dome which hummed it into tranquility, while The Operator turned her attention to other supplicants.

When the dome stopped humming, Myrt The Operator turned to Betty again; like lightning her fingers retraced the rolls, removing the blue cylinders. Then with some specialized instruments, she

touched, combed, lifted, patted, smoothed, then nodded with satisfaction.

You should have seen her smile as I wheeled her back to her room, to the admiration of all we passed.

We have something called a Permanent ordered in two weeks. It's something like an advanced degree.