

Taking Skin Care One Step Further

by Mary A. Tobey

I've merrily kept pace with the advancements of modern society. I can't imagine life without the benefits of cell phones, high speed Internet, cruise control, or XM radio. The gadgets I haven't gotten yet—like TiVo or GPS—are nonetheless on my wish list. I've nurtured my appreciation for the efficiency and fun of technology. So why have I been so slow to give notice to advancements in skin care?

Undoubtedly, I've accepted technology that helps me be more productive and efficient. Undoubtedly, I was also influenced by my philosophy of beauty: genuine beauty comes from within. What I hadn't acted on was the knowledge that it's nice to feel good about yourself outside as well as in; that a well-groomed appearance can make a businesswoman more successful; or that I deserve pampering as well as practicalities.

All of that changed when I received a gift certificate for a LunchTime Peel at Skin Solutions. The certificate sat patiently for many weeks, subtly speaking to my psyche. "You know you could use some professional advice," it whispered. And, "You know you're curious."

I pondered, and peered objectively into the mirror. There was no problem big enough to warrant a trip to a dermatologist. But there were "issues." I'd been floundering for the right skin-care regimen, because the products that had worked in my twenties weren't doing the trick anymore. I had received little real support from department store cosmetics counters—the clerks were happy to sell me whatever product might work, but I didn't trust their knowledge or integrity.

So I went for my first facial. Before she began, licensed esthetician Sheri Flasch took a magnifying glass and gave me the diagnosis—nothing surprising, but a somber dose of reality. As I sat in her chair, my hands encased in paraffin and my ears capturing the peaceful background music, my face was cleaned, degreased, scraped, exfoliated, extracted, soothed, rejuvenated, and improved. Sheri carefully explained each of the six steps, alleviating the anxiety of trusting my most visible skin to another person, especially to someone with a teeny-tiny razor in her hand. When I left, I wasn't glowing red like a bright neon light, but could hold my head up high in public. And with the sample products she gave me, I could continue to see and feel the difference.

As a licensed, trained, experienced skin care professional, without affiliation with a single line of products, I could trust Sheri's treatment and her advice. She had graduated from the first licensed school of esthetics in America to focus exclusively on education; she holds the esteemed title of CIDESCO Diplomat; and she has over fourteen years of clinical skin care experience. The esthetician she hired to assist her at Skin Solutions, Celeste Ross, was also credentialed and shared Sheri's commitment to professionalism, safety, client education, and quality service.

Buyer beware! Unlike Sheri, not all Virginia estheticians are licensed professionals. Before a consumer gives her face into the hands of another, she needs to check on the caregiver's qualifications.

"Since Virginia does not regulate the esthetics industry," says Amy Craddock of Metamorphosis, "we pride ourselves in having estheticians that are licensed in other states."

Claudia Silva-Martins, owner of Claudia's Skin Care, believes that top-notch training is important, even if it isn't required for licensing. She remembers her father saying, "If you want to be the very best, then go to school and study your profession." She left her homeland of Brazil and completed programs at two qualified schools in the U.S. She got her license, even though it wasn't required in her newly adopted home, Virginia.

Professional estheticians offer a variety of services. Claudia's Skin Care offers therapeutic skin care treatments such as a deep pore cleansing facial, micropels and microdermabrasion, facial treatments for acne, facials using vitamins or oxygen, and combinations of the above, as well as a pampering facial to relieve tension and stress.

As featured in



Skin Solutions offers a variety of skin peels, including deeper peels; paraffin treatments; skin evaluations and consultations; and more. "Our two most popular services," says Sheri, "are the LunchTime Peel...and the Paraffin Facial. Both are very results oriented and people leave noticing an immediate improvement in their skin."

Lauren Hall has been getting facial treatments for over ten years. "I first went to Sheri Flasch at Skin Solutions because a close and trusted girlfriend had gone to her and told me 'OK, I am going to turn you on to something you will forever thank me for.' That was over ten years ago and we both still go to Sheri religiously. And I still thank her."

Lauren continues to go to Skin Solutions because of the results. "After regular visits to Sheri," Lauren says, "people will actually mention my lovely complexion. It took me quite a while to stop responding with 'Are you talking to ME?'" She also goes to Sheri because of her professionalism. "She regularly attends classes and seminars on the latest aesthetic procedures," says Lauren. "A session with Sheri is not just 'feel good' stuff... it's serious skin care that yields a noticeable and lasting difference."

Although Europe and more forward-thinking parts of the U.S. already embrace estheticians as commonplace, Richmond is just beginning to see the rise of qualified professionals who are able to make our women look their best.

Personally, I plan to embrace the wonders of what skin care professionals can do for me. I still won't spend more money on estheticians than on books, on spa treatments than on family time and memories. But I know that their skilled care can make my life even better. **V**