

# A Cut Above

BY STACY BOOTH



This  
PEOPLE PERSON  
helps others feel  
beautiful, but doesn't  
forget to take time  
for herself.

Sam Long has been cutting hair “almost so long I hate to say.” Her hairstylist career has spanned 40 years, and Sam says she has always enjoyed it. “I decided a week before I started beauty school to go, and I liked it from day one.” Between good instructors in school and an excellent first boss, Sam has built a career with some clients that goes back to 1969—the year she moved to Washington from Iowa. One particular client comes in weekly and Sam says she attends the client’s birthday party each year. “She’s going to be 95 in June. It’s nice. You really build a relationship with clients.”

For Sam, styling hair is just the start of the job. The client comes in to get a particular service, but she also gets a chunk of Sam’s time. “I’m a people-person,” she says, and adds that she really enjoys hearing her clients’ stories and getting to know them for the brief time they are in her chair. She says she’ll really listen to what clients are saying so she can match the haircut, color or perm to the client’s lifestyle and wishes.

In addition to working with individual clients, Sam also enjoys working with families and watching them grow. She says after working in Bellevue for so many years, she’s cut grade-school kids’ hair, continuing until the children went to college. And even then, she says, they sometimes come back. “That’s a fun part of my job.”

Because she sees all kinds of people, Sam’s job keeps her on her toes. In addition, she decided not to specialize in a service—coloring hair, for example—unlike

many other stylists. This gives her a variety of services to do throughout the day. And of all the people Sam sees, some of her favorite clients are those that come in wanting a change, and give Sam license to give them a brand-new hairstyle. "It's so gratifying when they really like it and are open for the change." She adds she'll encourage these clients to visit a makeup artist and complete the look.

"It's like buying a new outfit. If you don't accessorize it, it doesn't have the finished look."

For Sam, it's important that hairstyles make the most of what is available. She says she believes in keeping it natural and having a hairstyle fit a lifestyle. For her, that means short hair that can be styled in five minutes and will look good no matter what she's doing.

Sam currently works for herself, leasing a chair at Salon Peigne in Bellevue. She's been at the small, six-chair salon in the Brierwood Center for eight years. Previously, Sam managed a salon for 18 years. "I never wanted to own my own salon," she says. "I know my personality—I'd be there 24 hours a day, not physically, mentally. I didn't want that." Her current situation allows time for her to get in daily workouts and frequent tennis matches at the Club, as well as a couple of trips a year to either golf or relax at a spa.

When Sam isn't at the Club or at work, she spends time gardening—at least when the weather cooperates. Jim, her husband, takes care of the lawn while Sam grows flowers on their acre of land. "Gardening is so satisfying because you have instant results in the spring when things start coming up," she says. Sam can't name a favorite flower, saying she loves them all. And



although she enjoys cooking, she says the growing season is too short in Washington to have more than a very small vegetable garden.

In order to stay in shape for both her job and her gardening hobby, Sam likes working out at the Club. She says the personal trainers at the Club are helpful, giving her variations on workouts so she can stay on track. Exercise, she says, is "just a good way to relieve stress." Sam can also be found on the tennis courts. She plays doubles with friends every Thursday morning, participates in many of the Club's tennis tournaments and has also gone on some of the Tennis Department trips that happen each year. "I'm here quite a bit. I don't think, if I'm in town, I've missed a week," she says.

Sam started playing tennis because she was looking for something organized. So 30 years ago, she joined a racquet club and started playing tennis. "I never really did anything organized until then." She decided to join the Bellevue Club 25 years ago because, she says, "I just thought it's an investment to my future, both mentally and physically ... I started (working out) in 1972 and I've continued all these years.

**TOP** Sam and her husband, Jim enjoy gardening. While Sam says she tends the flower beds, Jim takes care of the larger lawn.

**ABOVE** Sam plays tennis weekly with her friends Ann Staberg, (Sam), Nancy Johnson & Sue Holmes (l-r).

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Sam leases a chair at Salon Peigne in Bellevue. She says she enjoys getting to know her clients.



Now it's a way of life. I can't imagine not working out. It's so fun to come in, in the morning and see the same people."

For Sam, spending time with and connecting to other people is rewarding both in her career and in her free time. Especially at the Club, she says, "it's just like a family. I love it."