

RINA MONARCA FIELD NOTES

DATE & TIME: August 20, 2012 1:26pm
LOCATION: Rina's Beauty Centre
2237 Silas Deane Highway
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860-529-2772

I was interested in interviewing Rina Monarca because she is a Sicilian hairdresser with a predominately black clientele. In the salon world this is a rare. Most black women will only go to black hairstylists because they are more familiar with their hair texture. Since southern Italians tend to have curlier hair, I imagined that Monarca had more experience and less fear of handling black hair.

We arrived at Monarca's salon at noon. It is located on a large, busy, suburban highway in an unassuming building. However once we walked in it was quite impressive. It was a large salon, about 1500 square feet with vaulted natural wood ceilings. Monarca is small and blonde with a generous spirit and welcoming personality. She was very easy to talk to and extremely professional.

Her client, Jessica Glover, an African American woman, was getting her hair blown straight. I photographed Monarca washing Glover's hair and blowing it dry. Her hair is not chemically straightened so she had to blow it out from its natural state. I have never seen this done before. Most black women who get blowouts have their hair straightened beforehand. It was quite impressive and labor intensive. The blow out took about forty minutes and a great deal of physical effort. It was a significant transformation from thick, coarse, kinky hair to smooth and straight.

After Monarca finished styling Glover's hair, we sat in the back room and I interviewed her for over an hour. The salon was closed that day so it was completely quiet. After we finished, Monarca offered to wash my hair and blow it dry, which I graciously accepted. She did a beautiful job and I tried to offer her money, but she wouldn't take it. We left about 4:30pm.