

# The Taming of the Curl



## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2011 • VOL. CCLVII NO. 67

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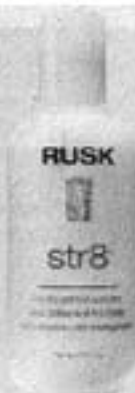
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# The Taming of the Curl

With 'Beach Waves' the New Ideal, Hair Salons and Products Sell Women on More Ways to De-Frizz

BY ANJALI ATHAVALEY

Fear of frizzy curls has taken hold in salons across America.

Whether upscale or mass-market, salons and hair-care products are selling women on the idea that straight hair can be theirs. The desired look is called "beach waves," a smooth coif with movement, shine and bounce but no frizzy curls. It's easier to achieve for most women than the extreme, pin-straight look of several years ago, which replaced wild, curling tendrils as the beauty ideal.

"It's the look that's on the celebrity, the long, loose 'beachy wave,'" says Brad Masterson, spokesman for the Professional Beauty Association, which represents the salon and spa industries.

Among the most popular straightening techniques are keratin treatments, also known as Brazilian keratin treatments, which straighten hair with a flat iron and coat hair cuticles with keratin protein to add shine and improve strength. The treatments cost from \$250 to \$600 and keep hair frizz-free for anywhere from six to 12 weeks.

Some image consultants say professional women with lots of curls often feel pressured to tame them for work. "The women who have the power spots in banking and hedge funds and all of that never wear their hair to extremes," says Susan Sommers, a New York business-image coach who has advised employees at companies including Deloitte and Colgate-Palmolive Co. Their hair isn't

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BEFORE



AFTER

# The Taming of the Curl: Products, Treatments Multiply



**HOWEVER THEY DO IT, THESE TV CHARACTERS AND PERFORMERS GO FROM CURLY TO STRAIGHT.** Julianne Margulies as a nurse in 'ER,' 2000, and as a lawyer in 'The Good Wife,' 2011. Beyoncé Knowles, in 2010 with *Destiny's Child* and in 2010. Taylor Swift at an awards show in London in November and at an awards show in Los Angeles a week later. Sarah Jessica Parker in 'Sex and the City,' in 1998 and in 2003.

Continued from the prior page  
too straight, too long or too curly. "People who are being groomed for high potential, and people who are handling a lot of money, have overseers who really understand that they can't look unkempt or un-groomed," she says.

Some keratin treatments, including the popular brand Brazilian Blowout, have come under scrutiny by state regulators concerned about formaldehyde, a suspected carcinogen, found in tests of both products and the air during the process. The Food and Drug Administration has received reports of eye irritation, headaches, breathing problems, rashes and fainting among salon workers. It is looking at whether hair-straightening products or ingredients are likely to cause health problems.

Last August, Procter & Gamble Co. pulled Brazilian Blowout products from its Frédéric Fekkai salons after the company's own tests showed they contained formaldehyde, a P&G spokesman says. Last year, the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division found average formaldehyde levels of 8% or more in two products in the Brazilian Blowout line—far exceeding the agency's 0.1% threshold for disclosure of the ingredient. Exposure to formaldehyde, classified by the Environmental Protection Agency as a suspected carcinogen, can

result in eye, nose and upper respiratory irritation. The Oregon regulators concluded that the treatments present "meaningful risks" to salon workers.

Brazilian Blowout says its products are safe. Mike Brady, chief executive of the Los Angeles company, says they contain methylene glycol, which is formaldehyde that has reacted with water, not formaldehyde per se. And he points to a portion of the Oregon study in which air samples from seven salons during treatment with the Brazilian Blowout Acai solution indicated permissible exposure levels. The company has launched Brazilian Blowout Zero, a product it says is free of both formaldehyde and methylene glycol.

The Personal Care Products Council, an industry group, says formaldehyde levels in cosmetic products shouldn't exceed 0.2% and advises consumers getting their hair treated with products containing formaldehyde and methylene glycol to do so only at a well-ventilated salon.

Despite warnings, salon keratin treatments remain widely available. The process typically involves shampooing the hair, applying a chemical solution, blow-drying, then straightening with a flat iron. The chemical solution rearranges proteins in the hair and softens the hair, making ironing more effective. Women, using a blow-dryer at home, can recre-



ate the smooth, straight salon look in less time than it would take with unprocessed hair. Or they can let their hair dry naturally for frizz-free curls.

Last Friday, Nina Glucksman was at Salon AKS in New York, for the Lasio One-Day Keratin treatment. The process took about two hours and cost \$600. "It just takes the frizz out and makes it a prettier curl," says the 33-year-old Brooklyn, N.Y., floral designer. Before getting the treatment, she used to spend an hour straightening her hair with a

flat iron; now, she needs less than half an hour. "I love curly hair in theory," she says. "But when it gets too big and the curls are undefined, I just think it looks messy."

Demand for keratin treatments comes in part from women who have defected from chemical "relaxers." Those products, often containing sodium hydroxide, were long targeted to the African-American market. Lisa Jean-Francois, a 28-year-old manager at an educational company, says she was 9 or 10

when she started getting her hair relaxed to make her "kinky curly" hair more manageable; she stopped at 17. "I didn't want to use something that I felt was damaging my hair," says Ms. Jean-Francois, a New Yorker of Haitian descent. More recently, she says, she has begun keratin treatments.

A salon process known as "thermal reconditioning" was popular when the pin-straight look was in. Longer lasting than keratin treatments, the thermal method uses a "reducing agent," like thioglycolic acid, to break hair bonds, followed by an "oxidizing agent," like hydrogen peroxide, to restore them, says Arun Nandagiri, president of Bria Research Labs, of Libertyville, Ill., which develops and tests hair products. The effects last until the treated hair grows out. But enthusiasm for this method has faded: The treatment includes a hair-ironing marathon and typically lasts up to six hours.

Any straightening treatment can damage hair, says Paradi Mirmirani, a dermatologist at the Permanente Medical Group, Vallejo, Calif. With many chemical treatments, "you're breaking and re-forming the bonds in the hair, so you will get damage."

Companies are already positioning alternatives to keratin treatments. L'Oréal plans to launch its L'Oréal Professionnel X-Tenso Moisturist straightening treatment in 12 U.S. salon

locations next month. The treatment, using thioglycolic acid, takes three to four hours and costs from \$250 to \$500. "When the whole dilemma about formaldehyde came X-Tenso became very popular in Europe because salons wanted to find something that's safe," says Alejandro Perez, general manager of L'Oréal salon products division.

Some proponents of curly hair encourage women to resist straighteners. "We want to help people embrace their hair," says Michelle Breyer, co-founder and president of NaturallyCurly.com site she started 14 years ago that classifies curly hair in four categories and helps women choose haircuts and products. "We hope that if you have texture in your hair, you wouldn't have it straightened. There's a lot of people who like that's the only way they can be pretty, and we hope that people don't feel that way."

The flexible look results from keratin treatments that blur the line between straight and curly, says Ms. Breyer, who has had keratin treatments. "A lot of people want some predictability."

WSJ.com

ONLINE TODAY: Watch a video discussion about why curly hair is out of fashion at [WSJ.com/Lifestyle](http://WSJ.com/Lifestyle).

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LIFE & CULTURE | MARCH 23, 2011 The Taming of the Curl With 'Beach Waves' the New Ideal, Hair Salons and Products Sell Women on More Ways to De-Frizz

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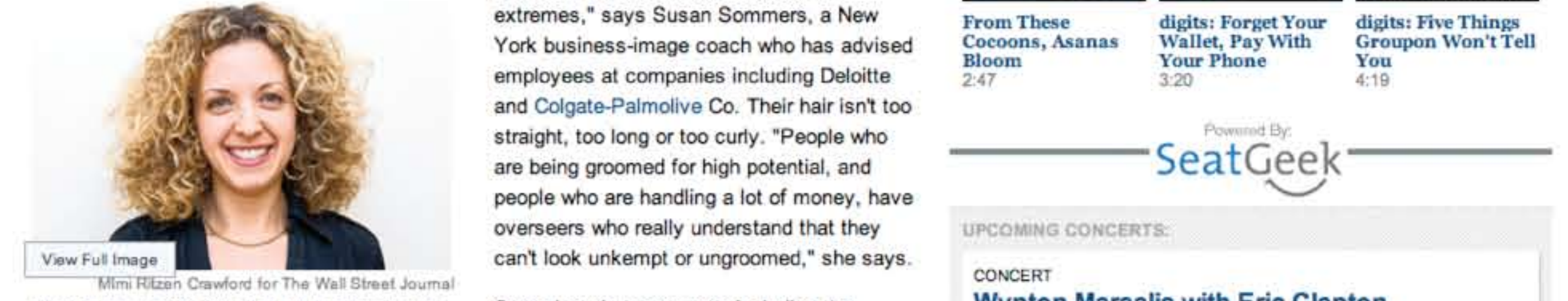
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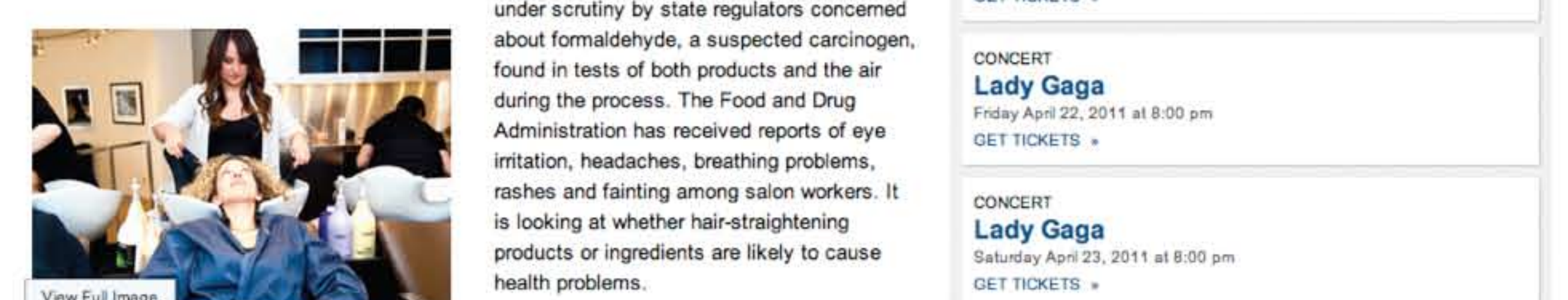
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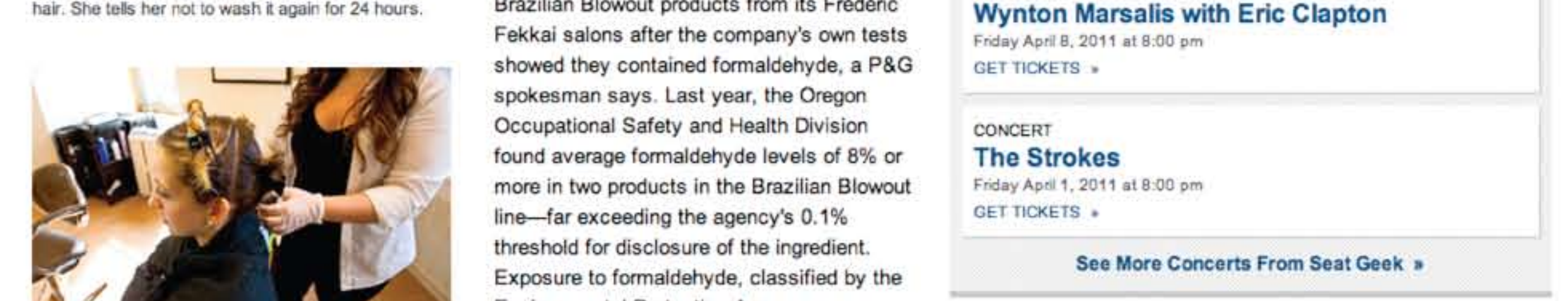
Five Steps to Straighter Hair A two-hour keratin treatment at AKS Salon, New York, gave Nina Glucksman silky, straight hair.



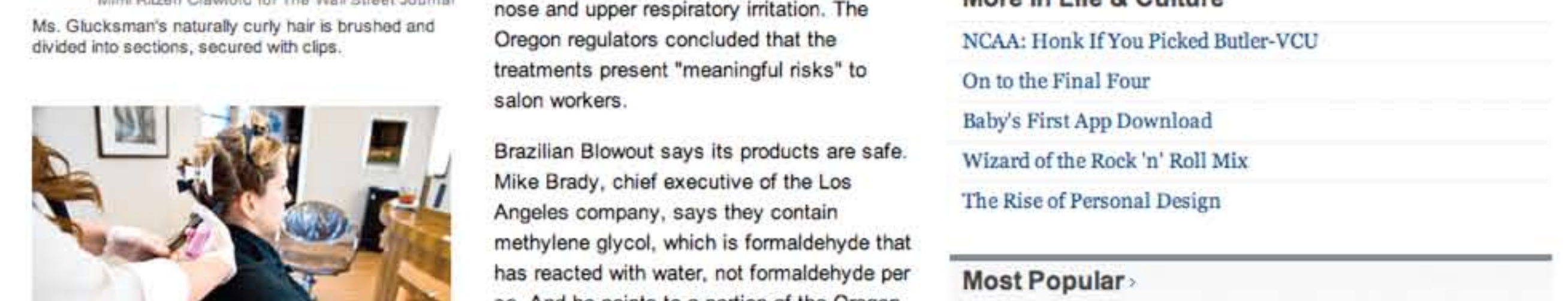
Mimi Ritzan Crawford for The Wall Street Journal Nina Glucksman, 33, of Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, before her straightening treatment



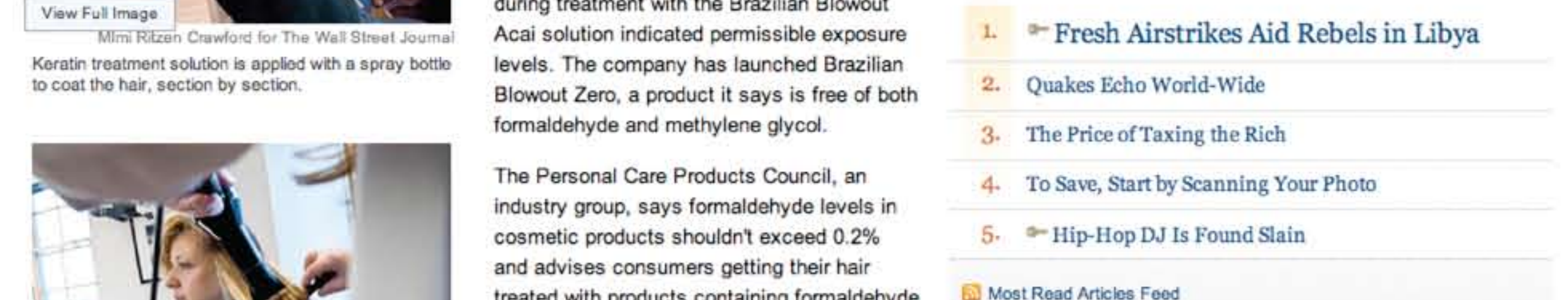
Mimi Ritzan Crawford for The Wall Street Journal To start, Sadah Saltzman washes Ms. Glucksman's hair. She tells her not to wash it again for 24 hours.



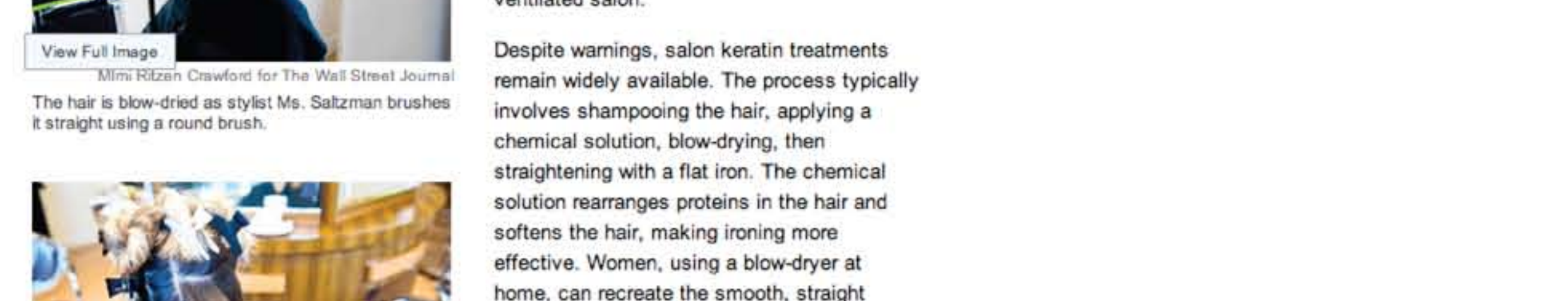
Mimi Ritzan Crawford for The Wall Street Journal Ms. Glucksman's naturally curly hair is brushed and divided into sections, secured with clips.



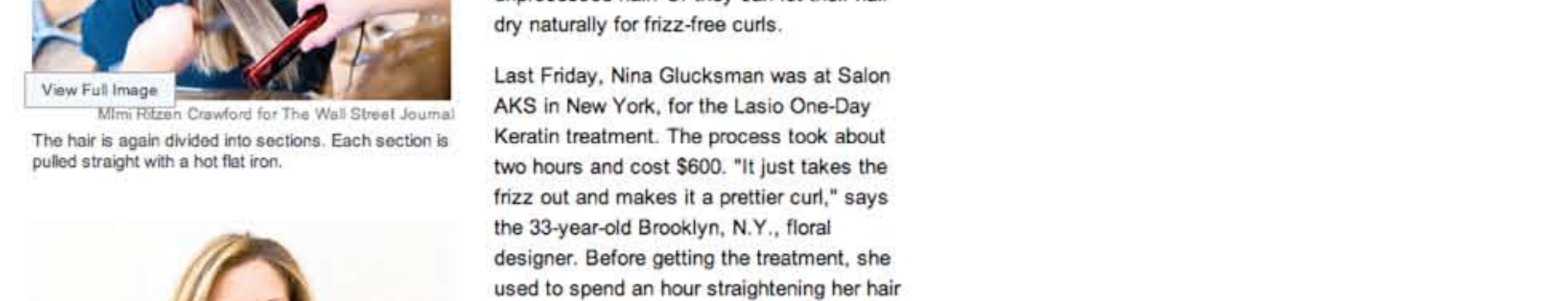
Mimi Ritzan Crawford for The Wall Street Journal Keratin treatment solution is applied with a spray bottle to coat the hair, section by section.



Mimi Ritzan Crawford for The Wall Street Journal The hair is blow-dried as stylist Ms. Saltzman brushes it straight using a round brush.



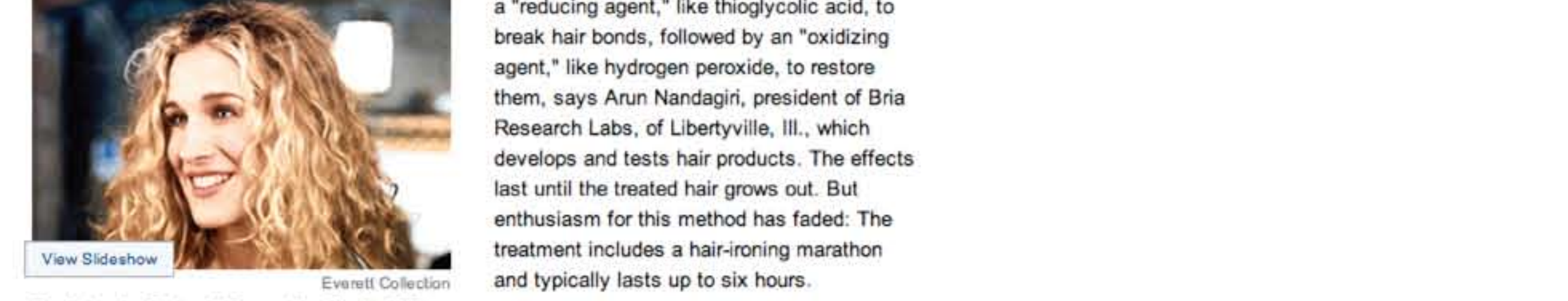
Mimi Ritzan Crawford for The Wall Street Journal The hair is again divided into sections. Each section is pulled straight with a hot flat iron.



Mimi Ritzan Crawford for The Wall Street Journal Nina Glucksman after her two-hour keratin treatment at AKS

educational company, says she was 9 or 10 when she started getting her hair relaxed to make her "kinky curly" hair more manageable; she stopped at 17. "I didn't want to use something that I felt was damaging my hair," says Ms. Jean-Francois, a New Yorker of Haitian descent. More recently, she says, she has begun keratin treatments.

From Curly to Straight However they did it, these TV characters and performers went from curly to straight.



Everett Collection Sarah Jessica Parker in 'Sex and the City,' in 1998

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The flexible look resulting from keratin treatments is blurring the line between straight and curly, says Ms. Breyer, who has had keratin treatments. "A lot of people want some predictability."

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