

## After 60 Years, Greens Barber Shop Still Makes the Cut

By Melissa James, York County Contributor

It's said that the more things change, the more they remain the same. At Greens Barber Shop, the current COVID-19 restrictions mean wearing masks and urging customers to get appointments before coming. But otherwise, things are pretty much the same as when John "Peter" Green first launched the business back in 1960. Even the brass plant hanger on the wall (a grand-opening gift from a fellow York County businessman) hasn't moved.

But the most remarkable feature is the barber chairs, which predate even the building. The devices are marked with a manufacture date of 1948.



"I saw that when I took the seat off to have it reupholstered," Peter said. The chairs have only needed reupholstering three times in 60 years, he added. Even the customers are largely unchanged, with regulars who've been coming since the shop opened.

Peter started Greens Barber Shop after leaving the military, having served both the Marine Corps Reserve and the Air Force. He had recently begun a job in downtown Newport News when he heard a property was available on George Washington Memorial Highway. Peter had gone to barber school during summer vacation in high school, and decided it was a good opportunity to start a shop of his own. His mother gave him the down payment. What appealed to him about this type of business?

"Well, I like to eat, for one thing," he laughed. "Also, it was indoor work— heat in the winter and a/c in the summer." But business took a downturn a few years in, thanks to a certain hit British band.

"We started with four chairs, and then the Beatles knocked us down to two. The parents would bring the kids in and tell you how to cut their hair, and the kids didn't want it like that. They wanted it long [like the Beatles]," he said. "Now we're back up to three chairs."

As a York County institution, Greens Barber Shop has seen a who's-who of customers over the years.

"At one point, every congressman and senator running would come in... the sheriff, the board of supervisor members, everyone," said Peter.



Peter cut hair personally for the first 12 years, then went into civil service and kept the business going. He's been a York County resident his entire life, except when he was stationed in Cape Canaveral, Florida. But he doesn't regret his time away because that's where he met and married his wife, Betty. They returned to York County and built a house right next door to Peter's childhood home, so Peter has lived on the same street since birth.

Together, Peter and Betty raised two sons: Steve, a retired boat operator with the Department of the Navy in Norfolk, and Frank, a former York County Sheriff's deputy who famously survived being shot in the heart in 1988. Peter and Betty are proud grandparents and even prouder with the addition of two great-grandchildren, Ben and Tesla.

Peter is also proud of his hard-working staff: Renee, Stephanie and Stacy—the manager, who has been there close to 20 years.

"They give good service, the three ladies. They love their customers. That's one of the big things that's helped us, having steady barbers," he said. "We're still a barber shop. We lather you up, shave around the ears... haircutteries don't do that."

"And I get to do my favorite thing all day—talk," quipped Stacy. "To be working somewhere that's been here so long and is a staple, well, it's an honor."



### **Greens Barber Shop**

4515 George Washington Memorial Hwy,  
Yorktown, VA 23692

<https://greens-barber-shop.edan.io/>