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P.O. Box 1676

Frisco, Texas 75034

Phone: 972.335.1181

Toll Free: 877.781.7067

Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: info@friscostyle.com

Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306



Warren Brother's Barber Shop
photos courtesy of Bob Warren

Here is a shaving mug and brush, and this is one of my Dad's razors." Opening it, I said, "Be careful! It's really sharp, and here is the leather razor strop he used to keep it sharp."

"In those days," I continued, "shaves cost 15 cents, haircuts a quarter, shampoos 20 cents, and for another quarter you could get a hot bath in a big tub behind the partition in the back of the shop. If you really wanted to splurge, the shine boy would shine your shoes for a dime - all that for just 95 cents."

"But, where did women get their hair cut?" Brooks asked. "Well," I mused, "for many years, women let their hair grow long. Then, in the early 1920s - in what was called the flapper era - they began to venture into barbershops to get their hair 'bobbed'. It wasn't easy for men to get used to seeing women in barber shops."

"What's that striped thing?" Cooper asked, pointing to a picture of a barber pole. "That's a barber pole," I answered, "It had red and white stripes, a white ball on top and some blue trim." "But, what was it for?" he insisted. More questions followed, so I said, "Let's see what the Internet says about barber poles."

About a thousand years ago, barbers cut more than just hair. They also did surgery, pulled teeth and did "bloodletting", a primitive practice of cutting people and using leeches to make them bleed, hoping to make them well. Their supplies included white bandages, a wooden staff, which the patient was told to grip tightly to make the veins stand out, and a basin to hold leeches and catch the blood. After the surgery, the bloody bandages were hung on the staff and placed outside as an advertisement. Twirled by the wind, the bandages formed a red and white spiral pattern, which became the pattern for the barber pole. It is said the red on barber poles represents the blood, white the bandages, and blue the veins, while the ball on top symbolizes the basin.

"So," I concluded, "for years the barber pole has been like a sign for barber shops all over the world. Now, if you kids will get in the car, I'll take you to the shop where my barber, James, cuts my hair. It is a real barbershop with a real barber pole.

And that's the way it was in the early days."



Frisco native Bob Warren is a humorist, historian and former Frisco Mayor.

what's a barbershop?

by bob warren

"GRANDPA, WHAT'S A BARBER SHOP?" That innocent but shocking question came from our otherwise brilliant great grandson, Cooper Anderson, who was visiting from Abilene. He had been watching closely as we rummaged through a trunk of memorabilia from my Dad's barbershop.

Taking a deep breath I answered, "It's a place to get your hair cut. Who cuts your hair, Cooper?" "A lady at Toys-R-Us," he answered. Brooks, his older brother said, "That's right, mine too." "I'm letting my hair grow long," quipped little sister, three-year-old McKinley.

"Hold it!" I thought, "Something's wrong here - two great-great grandsons of a barber who have never even been in a real barber shop?" So, I said, "Gather around and I'll tell you a story about a barber shop... My Dad and Uncle Ernest Warren came to Frisco from Arkansas in 1913, bought a one-chair shop and started Warren Brothers' Barber Shop. It was in a wooden building on the south side of Main Street near today's Chamber office. After the big fire of 1922, the shop moved to a new brick building on the north side of the street where it stayed until they retired in 1960."

Sensing their impatience, I hurried on, "Visiting the shop was fun for me. When I was about five, I used to ride my tricycle the five blocks from our house to town. I enjoyed just listening to the grown-ups, and occasionally my Dad would pay me a nickel to sweep the floor."

I opened the book *History of Frisco* and showed them pictures of the early shops, but that triggered even more questions. Looking intently, Cooper asked, "What are those men doing lying down?" "They're getting a shave," I explained. "barbers laid their customer back in the chair, put a warm, moist towel on his face to soften the whiskers, lathered his face and shaved him with a straight razor.