

Never Go to Mr. Hoffman

This past week Ruth and I were given a tour of the Kent Historical Society Museum by our friend and museum volunteer, Henry Halem. Henry is a glass artist and had offered to give us this tour featuring the show he had organized of current photos of iconic Kent locations comparing them to similar photos of years gone by.

One of the displays was of a barbershop that had operated in Kent for many years...Emory's Barbershop. I jumped into the chair for a picture and Henry grabbed a pair of hand operated clippers. The moment he did that, a vivid memory of me getting hair cut many years ago flashed into my head.



My father and I always got our hair cut on Tuesday evenings, the night that The Milton Berle Show was on TV.

You see, most farmers didn't have TV's and our only chance to watch TV was to go to the barbershop or hardware store where they were selling TV's. We never watched TV at the barbershop unless we were getting out hair cut, unlike some of the townsfolk who dropped by the barbershop nearly every evening. At the hardware store the owner kept asking if you wanted to buy a TV, so we didn't go there unless we needed some hardware supplies. We would all sit around watching TV until our name was called. My father and I had a ritual. If Mr. Hoffman said "next," my father

would take a seat, and, if Charley Ed would say “next,” I would take a seat in the chair. The reason for this ritual was simple: Charley Ed was in his thirties and used electric clippers, and, Mr. Hoffman was in his seventies, had palsy, and used hand clippers like the ones pictured below.

My only experience with Mr. Hoffman convinced me that I would let my hair grow like a girl rather than get another haircut from him. Mr. Hoffman didn't as much cut your hair as yanking it out follicle by follicle. Dad could take it, but eight year old Glenn couldn't. One of the “breaking news” items at our elementary school was, “Go to Charley Ed...Never Go to Mr. Hoffman to get your haircut!”



January 2017 (Nearly seventy-five years after the event!)