

History of Frager's Hardware

1920 – Frank “Fritz” Frager, a Russian immigrant (1902), skilled in many languages (Russian, Italian, Yiddish, and English), after being laid off from the Navy Yard as a foreman, and skilled cabinet maker, opens a hardware store, with a loan of \$5,000. The store is at 1115 Pennsylvania Ave., 11 blocks from the United States Capitol.

1931 – As a testament to Frank Frager's success, during the Great Depression, Frager's expands with an addition next door. This more than doubles the size of the store and provides a modern apartment over the store for living space for the Frager family.

1958 – August 10th – Frank Frager, a merchant on Capitol Hill for 38 years, passes away from a heart attack in front of his home at 1115 Pennsylvania Ave SE. He was 75. His two sons, George and Julius Frager, take over running the store.

1968 – With race riots flaring all around, Frager's is fortunately spared any damage. Frager's attributes it to good customer relations.

1969 – George and Jules Frager, having worked at the store their entire life, grow tired of managing the business and put it up for sale.

1975 – After 6 years on the market George and Jules sell the store to John Weintraub and Ed Copenhaver.

1975 – August 5th – Frager's Hardware re-opens under the management of John and Ed. The new owners are extremely lucky to have George Frager continue to work for them for the next 10 years, imparting valuable knowledge on how to run the store.

About 1995 – Kate Redmond becomes Frager's first female employee starting a long tradition of very successful women working at Frager's, in what had been a male dominated industry.

1996 – December – Nick Kaplanis is hired as general manager of the store and continues to act in that capacity today.

1997 – Frager's undergoes a major store modernization/remodeling, without ever closing.

1999 – Lawn & Garden department grows to become a successful blossoming Garden Center with the vision and dedication of Lucy Pfeiffer.

1999 – John and Ed purchase 1101 Pennsylvania Ave., a two-story office building adjacent to the store.

2000 – Spring – The rental store, known as “Frager's Just Ask Rental”, opens in part of the new building's first floor with much input and training from True Value.

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2000 – August 5th – John & Ed celebrate 25 years running Frager's.

2001 – December – Frager's begins the tradition of going "BIG" for Christmas (trees, gifts, ornaments) spearheaded by Amity Jeanes.

2002 – March 19th – Ruth Ann Overbeck, Capitol Hill Historic Project – Interviews John and Ed.

2002 – May 15th – John & Ed receive the Capitol Hill Community Achievement Award from the CHAMPS Community Foundation for recognition as outstanding retailer and neighborhood store as well as their continuing philanthropy.

2002 – May – Paint store opens in the remaining area of the first floor of 1101. The manager, Nick Kaplanis, Juan Wilson and several others, set up a complete paint store. True Value, again, provides excellent advice and support in making it happen. Juan Wilson continues today as the very capable manager of the paint store.

2003 – July – Frager's paint store is fortunate to be chosen as an outlet for Benjamin Moore paints. The addition of Benjamin Moore paint goes a long way to making the paint store a "destination" paint store.

2006 – May – President George W. Bush honors the store with a presidential visit. The President stopped by to talk about the improving economy and to buy treats for his dog. "It's a good place to shop, by the way. I just spent some of my hard-earned money on Barney. I bought him a couple of toys to chew on -- but don't let him know until I get over there, because it's a surprise. Thanks for letting me come by."

2006 – December – Washingtonian magazine selected Frager's Hardware as one of "Best" of the old reliable businesses in the Washington area . . . defined as businesses that had been at it for at least 30 years and still as "good as ever". Selection was made by Washington's Consumer CheckBook using their responses from people in the Washington area over the last 30 years.

2008 – December - Frager's receives Council Member Tommy Wells' 2nd annual Livable, Walkable Community Award after being nominated by the neighborhood.

2009 – Sept 13 – A celebration is held at the hardware store as "Mom & Pop Store Day" and a book signing with Author Robert Spector was held. Mr. Spector's recently published book *"The Mom & Pop Store: How the Unsung Heroes of the American Economy Are Surviving and Thriving"*, includes Frager's Hardware, and was the cause for the celebration.

2009 – November – Frager's wins "Best Retailer" at CHAMPS 1st Annual Hilly Awards. The Hilly awards are the result of voting on line by the local citizens of "the Hill" neighborhood.

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2009 – Frager’s donates Benjamin Moore paint to the Sasha Bruce House which President-elect Barack Obama uses in his pre-inaugural “Day of Service”.

2010 – February – “Snowmageddon” hits DC. Generates Frager’s single biggest sales day.

2010 – September – The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton, of the District of Columbia, recognizes Frager' Hardware for 90 years of service, stating that “Frager's, as it is commonly known, has remained an indispensable fixture of the community and serves as a prototype of quality customer service”.

2010 – December – CHAMPS 2nd Annual Hilly Awards, again, recognizes Frager's Hardware by giving the “Legacy Award” for 90 years of service to the neighborhood.

Additional Information on the Current Owners of Frager’s Hardware

John Weintraub & Ed Copenhaver

Being one of the few gents who weren't from the Richmond area in their Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity at the University of Virginia, the outsiders immediately formed a lasting connection. They roomed together for a year during college, and after college, went off to serve in the military. After graduation John attended the Coast Guard Officer's Candidate School and Ed attended the Navy’s Officer Candidate School. Once commissioned, they both did tours in Vietnam.

They reconnected again at George Washington University while pursuing their Masters Degrees, Ed in Engineering Administration and John in Business Administration, when they decided to go into business together, specifically to purchase an existing business that was well founded. Their search to find an operation to purchase lasted over a year, but in 1975, they came back around to one of the first businesses they visited, Frager's Hardware, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Today, the business has grown to include a robust garden center, a rental store and a paint shop. As the neighborhood has prospered over the years, so has Frager's, while retaining that old-fashioned hardware store charm. Although the current owners do not live above the store, they live in Capitol Hill and normally walk or bike to work.

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