

Exploring AH – Paul’s Shoe Repair

By Bernie Michel

Each month, as I deliver the printed copies of the News & Views to the 80+ locations throughout the neighborhood, I stop at the shoe repair shop at 620 Asylum Ave to leave a few copies. For years, the cobbler was never there, but rather a young woman greeted the customers, taking in and returning the shoes repaired. “It was almost as if elves did the work.” Paul explained.

Paul Ellis, who owns the shop, also had a day job, and would repair the shoes and other items at night. Recently that changed when he lost the day job. He now gets to do the work he loves during the day and meet the customers who benefit from his craftsmanship.

Paul began working as a cobbler in his native Jamaica, and while he wasn’t able to do this when he first arrived, he never lost the love or desire for it.

So ten years ago when Nick Santangelo who had owned this shop for decades, decided to retire, Paul bought it and began the night work.

Being a cobbler these days is not the work it once was and with most shoes designed as unrepairable and too cheap to be worth the effort, his clientele is small, but faithful.

His skills also extend beyond repairing shoes. Recently a combination glasses and pen and pencil case that I have had on my belt began to come apart. I had some ideas about how it could be made better both in design and workmanship, but it’s an item that just doesn’t seem to exist anymore.

So I brought the project to Paul, explained my idea and what I wanted it to do, and he accepted the challenge and exceeded the quality expected.

The conversation, when I came to pick up the completed case was every bit as satisfying as the new home for my glasses, pen and pencil.

If you find yourself in need of quality shoes to be repaired or something too heavy for a standard sewing machine, stop in at Paul’s. His customers have included Governor Malloy.

