



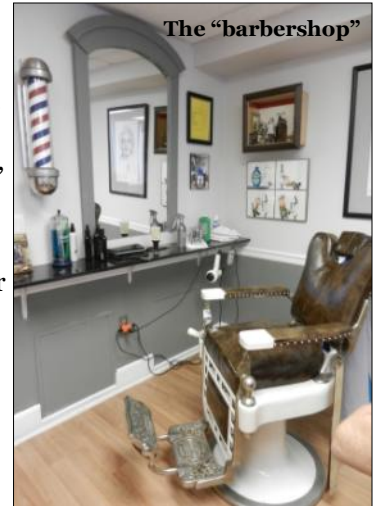
## Member Spotlight: Harbor Freight



Steve, with one of Harbor Freight's early trucks

A first-time visitor to Harbor Freight President Steve Liberti's office might think they've stumbled into the wrong address: suddenly, you're face-to-face with an antique barber shop, complete with leather customer chair, assorted combs soaking in Barbicide, and even an old-fashioned barber pole. Perhaps the most surprising thing of all: it's not just for show.

So, how did a Staten Island barber's setup end up in the heart of Port Newark? When Cosmo, his longtime barber, retired and didn't have a place to keep the chair, Steve offered to store it for him. As time went on, the chair eventually ended up tucked into a corner of Steve's office. When Cosmo saw how good it looked, he brought in the barber pole, too, and the other accessories soon followed. Now, Cosmo simply drops by the office whenever Steve is in need of a trim.



The "barbershop"

The incredible story behind the unconventional decor reveals a running theme in Harbor Freight's history: When the unexpected happens, embrace it, and adapt.



Jimmy Liberti

Case in point: in the early 1940s, just a short time after starting up his own trucking company, Ignazio "Jimmy" Liberti—Steve's father—received a draft notice from the U.S. Army. Without hesitation, Jimmy quickly dissolved the company and headed off to serve in World War II.

After the war, he worked for another trucking company until he was able to start his own business again, and in 1947, he founded Harbor Freight in New York City. Steve loved going down to Varick Street with his Dad on Sunday mornings, and by the age of 13, he'd pass the time by driving one of the company trucks up and down the pier. "As a kid," he says, "I would do anything just to drive." Just shy of his 18th birthday, Steve got his Class 1 license, and started doing runs up the north river, from Pier 2 to Pier 92.

**"I spent my whole life with him. We lived in the same house—I saw him every day. And I was the luckiest guy in the world."**  
—Steve Liberti, Sr.  
*On working with his father*

After graduating high school, Steve passed on college in order to keep working with his father. He was a quick study, and took on many responsibilities within a short time, including loading, driving, dispatching, and truck repairs: "Whatever needed to get done," he says, "I did it." His typical work day started at 5am and ended at 7pm—or later. The long hours paid off, and as the company grew and expanded, Harbor Freight's operations moved to Elizabeth, NJ.



Steve Liberti, Sr.

And then, once again, the unexpected happened. When Steve was just 22, during a casual conversation about the future of the company, his father suddenly said, "You want it? You got it." And just like that, Jimmy handed the reins over to his son and retired. Of course, the twists of fate didn't stop there. "After 3 or 4 years," laughs Steve, "he got bored, and started coming in every morning." By that time, they were living together in a two-family home, and Steve recalls giving his father "a five minute head start" to ensure that the elder Liberti would arrive to the office first.



Steve Jr. with his dad at their warehouse in Newark

When Jimmy passed away in 1984, Steve looked back on those long hours working alongside his father as precious time well spent. "I spent my whole life with him," he says. "We lived in the same house—I saw him every day. And I was the luckiest guy in the world." Now, the tradition continues with his own sons: Steve Jr. is Vice President at Harbor Freight, and Dennis is a partner at Ground Force Logistics. Granddaughter Krista also works at Harbor Freight, ensuring the next generation is represented.

Working alongside his family, Steve is not only teaching them the trucking business, but more importantly, the Liberti legacy of taking life's unexpected twists and turns in stride. When Hurricane Sandy flooded their offices with 5 feet of water, Steve and his entire staff pitched in to get the company running by the time the terminals reopened. "When I came in the next day and saw the damage, I couldn't believe the violence of the water," he says. "We had a 20 foot container in the front of the yard that ended up in the back. But all of my employees helped—everyone. They volunteered, took everything apart, and put it all back together again."

Although current conditions at the port can be challenging, Steve credits his early start in the business with giving him the much-needed perspective to endure in the intermodal industry. "I got to see this business before containerization, when everything was done by hand," he says, "and I got to see it all evolve. I'm sure we'll see more changes here at the port, hopefully changes for the better. When it does happen, how do you handle it? You evolve."

Harbor Freight is a diversified, full service trucking, warehousing and distribution company. To learn more, visit [www.harborusa.com](http://www.harborusa.com)