

It's an old-fashioned barbershop, but you might not know it upon first walking into Rusty Winget's

Sports memorabilia *mecca*



Rusty Winget poses among his sports memorabilia at his downtown Torrington barbershop Friday afternoon. The 49-year-old started the business in 1997.

By John Miller | *Staff writer/photographer*

Walking into the little shop at 2125 Main Street is a trip to another dimension where sports rank supreme.

A spot where one can debate the relative merits of quarterback Carson Palmer while taking a little off the top.

"I had all this at my house," Rusty Winget said, owner and operator of Rusty's All-American Barber Shop in downtown Torrington. "When we bought this shop, it was my wife's idea, she said I should take it all down there. I think she wanted to get it out of the house."

Indeed, literally every wall, floor and ceiling tile are layered and plastered with baseball, basketball and football memorabilia. Baseballs signed by his favorite player, Pete Rose, vintage Wheaties boxes, baseball and football jerseys signed by past and present day sports heroes; all of it in a grand display of sports worship.

"These stadium seats came out of Riverfront Stadium," Winget said, motioning to four numbered seats

across from the barber chairs.

"I grew up in Cincinnati, and the Reds and Bengals are everything," he said. "My mom would give us 5 bucks, we would catch the bus and drive downtown and get a ticket and we would sit in the top two rows of the stadium. I grew up in those seats."

Pointing out two more towards the back of the shop he said, "These two are from Mile High."

A Torrington basketball jersey signed by this year's state championship team is one of the recent additions for a man who wasn't always clipping away at customers' hair.

The 49-year-old began his life as a barber in Torrington in 1997 after years of working as a landscaper. A 1982 Eastern Wyoming College graduate, he decided he needed an occupation that didn't depend so heavily on the elements.

"I wanted a job where I could work anytime I wanted

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to, whether it rained or snowed, whether it was hot or cold," he said. So he decided to become a barber and attended barber's college in Colorado Springs, coming home on the weekends to be with his family.

"I hated that down there," he said. "You couldn't make a left hand turn, so many people. My rent was more than my house payment up here. We didn't have any money, and I'm tryin' to go to school. My goal was to make two dollars in tips in the morning that way I could go across the street and have a Wendy's Single and a Frosty."

"But it was worth it. Everyone has to go through it."

Though his shop is overflowing with sports artifacts, he said there's plenty more at his home; a Johnny Bench jersey and lots of classic Big Red Machine memorabilia. "Everything here has a story, but this is the best thing I got," he said, pointing to a toilet seat bearing a Nebraska logo. "I'm not a big Nebraska guy, and everybody asks me 'where's all your Nebraska stuff'

so I got the toilet seat here..."

Trash talk aside, the one-time city kid has grown to love small town life. "Torrington is a great place; it's really treated me well," he said. "Coming from Cincinnati I didn't think I'd like a small town as much as I do. I love to hunt and fish, if I'm not following my kids around attending their events."

A former high school baseball player, Winget saw, or most likely didn't see, his aspirations of being a ballplayer dashed early on. "My vision went early in life. I played center field, and you've got to be able to see the ball, and I'd run and that ball would be like..." He smirks as he mimics himself chasing an elusive ball in all directions.

The Wingets have four children, all of them involved in some type of sporting competition at one time or another: Katie, 24, Tucker, 22, Michael, 17, and Wyatt, 14.

"Yeah, we're a baseball family," he said. "We get the camper out every summer and we just travel from game to game, and that's what we do."

A game or two in Cincinnati, perhaps, might even be in order.

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