

## CLOSER INSPECTION

# A long career, any way you cut it



Walk into the D.C. Barber Center (3817 14th St. NW; 202-722-9621), and it's impossible not to feel that time has been rewound. The walls of the Petworth barbershop are nearly covered in decades-old ephemera, including a framed black-and-white photo of Sugar Ray Robinson and a poster advertising the Million Man March in 1995. ¶ The setting is a backdrop for the mementos and tools that owner Aaron E. Whitaker has accumulated since he opened the barbershop in 1969. While the neighborhood has changed and business has slowed in recent years, the 83-year-old isn't hanging up his scissors and shears just yet. "As long as I'm healthy, I'll keep working," he says.

BY KRIS CORONADO



### SHEARS

While Whitaker has five pairs of shears, he says this pair of Supercut shears, which he's had for 25 years, is his favorite. "These have changeable blades. You take the screw out and take the blade off."



### RAZOR

Whitaker estimates this German straight razor is more than 50 years old. He tests the strength of a blade by plucking it with his thumbnail. "If you hear a 'ting' when you do that, you've got nothing much. You want a very dull sound," he says, which signifies a stronger blade material.



### SIGNAGE

The sign in front of Whitaker's shop is his own creation. "It's been repainted and done all over again," he says. He cut the wood letters eight years ago. The frame and base are made from the discarded street sign stands.



### CASH REGISTER

This circa 1940s National cash register is no relic. The barber still rings up customers — cash only — every day. "Why would I throw a cash register away? Waste not, want not," he says. He received it as a gift from a friend and fellow barber in the 1960s.