

# Owner of Larry’s Lemonade Restaurant in Yorktown Pondering His Role In The Business

Jen Holden, Peninsula

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Photo by Jen Holden

**YORKTOWN**-The owner of a popular restaurant along Yorktown’s waterfront is contemplating his future with the business.

Known for its fruit-infused craft hard lemonades and locally inspired seafood and sandwiches, Larry’s Lemonade restaurant opened on Water Street in Historic Yorktown just over four years ago.

The restaurant lends patrons the opportunity to escape the elements with a cool drink or meal from its award-winning menu while soaking up riverfront views that are synonymous with Historic Yorktown’s waterfront.

Larry Wilson created a concoction in 2008 that he nicknamed “Larry’s Lemonade” and offered it to family and friends at one of his infamous backyard cookouts. It was an instant hit, and Wilson teamed up with St. George Brewing Company In Hampton soon after to produce small batches to serve in its taproom. Larry’s Lemonade became a local favorite as word spread like wildfire throughout Hampton Roads. Wilson knew he was on to something monumental that would change the course of his life.

In 2016, Wilson teamed up with Arlis “Vic” Reynolds and Bill “Senior” Ballou, an investor and successful businessman, who agreed to partner in The Original Larry’s Hard Lemonade

## Brewing

Company to take it to the next level. Reynolds met Wilson when he was working as emcee at the annual East Coast Surfing Championship in Virginia Beach.

“I had been working as a comedian for a few years and was scheduled to perform at the championship,” said Reynolds. “At that point, I had never bombed in front of an audience. In true form, I waited until I had a crowd of 3,000 people in the audience to totally bomb.”

Reynolds was pulled in to emcee the event after the original host had to cancel at the last minute. “I wasn’t supposed to narrate the whole thing and be the primary emcee, I was just supposed to have a small section of it,” said Reynolds.

The show had been delayed and the crowd was getting restless. Reynolds was struggling to ease the crowd when Wilson came to his rescue by jumping on stage and instantly changing the atmosphere of the event by throwing T-shirts out to the audience. Who doesn’t like free merch?

“That’s the moment it hit me,” said Reynolds. “Larry has always been very magnetic. People have always just gravitated to him. On top of that, he had a solid product.”

Reynolds spoke with Ballou in search of financial backing and The Original Larry’s Hard Lemonade Brewing Company was launched in 2016.

Reynolds took the saying, “when life hands you lemons, make lemonade” literally.

“We’re all about second chances here,” said Reynolds. “I’m a combat veteran who served in the military and also worked in special ops for a contractor. Some of our employees are disabled veterans who had a hard time finding work in other places, and some are employees who were looking for a second chance in their career trajectory.”

Reynolds knows what it feels like to be on the hunt for a fresh start, though his own story comes with the sort of controversy and publicity most people only read about. After his work as a military police officer with the U.S. Army as well as contract work, Reynolds was a police officer with the Hampton Police Division for a few years. Then, at 32 years of age, he became a patrolman with Windsor Police Department. “I went from patrolman to the youngest chief of police with Windsor Police Department within three years,” said Reynolds.

He was fired in 2013 after seven years in the position after being charged with embezzling. Reynolds said he entered the lowest point of his life and made a pact with his dad, who was falling ill, that he wouldn’t give up.

“I’ll never forget walking in and seeing my dad sitting at the kitchen table hooked to an oxygen tank,” he said. “My dad described his condition to me, ‘they found some spots in my lungs and they’re figuring out what to do,’ He died nine days later.”

Reynolds said his mind was becoming inundated with intrusive thoughts. Remembering the pledge he had made to his dad, he sought out a change of scenery and made the life-changing

decision to visit his sister in Florida, where he eventually found his way into comedy, using his own story as fodder.

Reynolds performed his comedy act for a few years before he bumped into Wilson at the surfing championship. Soon after beginning the collaboration with Wilson, the company's namesake was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer and told he had six months to a year left.

Staying true to the Larry's Lemonade motto of 'We don't quit. We stay in the fight!' Wilson beat cancer; however, he was diagnosed with dementia in 2018 and now lives in an assisted living facility after residing with Reynolds for several years.

"Larry is one of the most beautiful human beings on the face of this planet," said Reynolds. "I vowed to support him every step of the way and will continue to do so for the rest of his life."

Reynolds met his wife, Anna, while she was assisting with Wilson's care as a home healthcare provider. Now married for two years, the couple has a room ready for Wilson to return home, when he's able.

At 47 years old, Reynolds has spent the majority of the past decade attempting to rebuild his reputation. He regularly invests his time and resources to improve mental health resources for veterans and never underestimates the miraculous power of a second chance.

As for The Original Larry's Hard Lemonade Brewing Company and its waterfront restaurant, Reynolds said he's pondering whether to step back from the company to see where it may go without his reputation linked to the business. He expects to make his decision within the next few weeks.

In addition to its signature hard lemonade beverages, the restaurant also has 26 beers on tap, in addition to seasonal offerings from St. George Brewing Company. Menu options include burgers, wraps, subs, chicken tenders, hot dogs, and more.

Larry's Lemonade restaurant is located at 524 Water St. between the Yorktown Pub and Yorktown Beach Hotel. Current hours of operation are 11am to 8pm Monday through Thursday and 8:30am to 10pm on Friday and Saturday. The eatery is closed on Sunday.

For more information, call 757-872-3383 or visit its [website](#).