

Postings

LOCAL ARTIST — Sheila Tolmie, of Old Greenwich, exhibits a collection of her art work at Nathaniel Witherell through August, sponsored by the Greenwich Art Society.

FILMING 'MISFITS' — "Through the Eyes of Magnum Photographers: Filming The Misfits" July 3-Oct. 17 at the Bruce Museum. Photographs from the production of the 1961 classic starring Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable. Call 869-0376.

RECOVERY GROUP — The original Twelve Step Program adapted for all addictions. Open meeting every Wednesday, noon at Christ Church Greenwich, Parish House Vestry Room. Call (845)887-5211.

FUN FLICK — "Dr. Doollittle" (starring Eddie Murphy), in the continuing summer movie series on July 29, 10:30 a.m. at the Clearview Cinema. Call 869-6030. Tickets for all shows are \$1.50 (For both adults and kids). Call 869-6030.

PRINT IT — Historic Fun for Families program will feature Print Making on July 31, 12-3 p.m. Inspired by the Childe Hassam exhibition, in the Vanderbilt Education Building at the Historical Society. Free for members, \$5 for non-members. Call 869-6899.

CALLING ALL PIRATES — Pirate map-making and true stories with first mate David on July 31, noon at the Byram Shubert Library. Call 531-0426.

KIDS CLUB — Join the Children's Summer Reading Club on July 31, 2 p.m. at the Greenwich Library. Ages 5 and up. Help solve a mystery and find the treasure. Call 622-7940.

CHILDE HASSAM — Join the Friends of Cos Cob Library for a gallery talk on Aug. 1, 1:30 and 2:30 and a museum tour at 1:15, 2:15 and 3:15 to view the Childe Hassam: Impressions of Cos Cob exhibit at the Bush-Holley Historic Site. Cost free for Friends of the Cos Cob Library and their family members, \$6 for others. Refreshments will be served. Call 869-6899.

GOLF — The Fourth Annual Sundown Saloon Golf Outing will be Aug. 2 at the Griffith E. Harris Golf Course. There will also be a \$1,000,000 hole-in-one shoot-out. Entries are limited to the first 108 participants. Call Jon Cutler at 253-2128 or Matt Fasone at 629-8212.

SUMMER SINGS — The Fairfield County Chorale and The Trinity Chorale will perform Britten, Rejoice in the Lamb, conducted by Michael Costantino on Aug. 2, 8 p.m. at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Southport. Cost \$5. Call 254-1333 or 255-1442.

LUNCH BUNCH — John Goldschmid doing '50s and '60s rock on Aug. 3, 12:15-1:15 p.m. at the Greenwich Commons. Call 622-7830.

GOLF & TENNIS — Celebrity golf and tennis tournament benefitting Greenwich ARC. Eating and playing all day on Aug. 3, 11:30 a.m. at the Innis Arden Golf Club. Cost \$495 for golf, \$250 for tennis. Call 637-4412.

NIGHT SHOW — Bring a blanket and picnic dinner to a concert under the stars. "Squeaky Clean" will be performing on Aug. 4, 7:30-9 p.m. at Roger Sherman Baldwin Park. Call 622-7830.

MORE MOVIES — "Agent Cody Banks" will be shown on August 5, 10:30 a.m. at the Clearview Cinema. Tickets for all shows are \$1.50 (For both parents and kids). Call 869-6030.

PICTURE THIS — A combined show of photographs one for seniors, one or youths at the Bendheim Gallery from Aug. 6-28 Mon-Fri. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat. 12-5 p.m. Thurs. until 7 p.m.

CHILD'S PLAY — Kid's parade, children's crafts and activities, a car seat installation clinic, health information and more than 30 vendors and entertainment on Aug. 7, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at The Old Greenwich Civic Center, at a fundraising benefit for La Leche League of Greenwich-Stamford. Call 531-8425 or 967-8353.

HAVE A BOWL — "Old Timers Fun Day" on Aug. 7, 9:30 a.m. at Bruce Park. Free lawn bowl instruction available. Call 869-0087.

TRI THIS — The BMW Greenwich Cup triathlon (half-mile swim, 15-mile bike and 3-mile run) on Aug. 8, 6:30 a.m., will benefit The American Red Cross of Greenwich. Start/Finish on the Beach at Tod's Point. Cost \$55. Limited race day registration from 5-6 a.m. Call 661-0142.

AUCTION — Annual picnic and "Trash to Treasure Auction" on Aug. 8 at Bruce Park. Call 874-4752.

SOUL A-PEEL — The soulful sounds of Linwood Peel, on Aug. 10, 12:15-1:15 p.m. at Greenwich Common. Call 622-7814.

SWING TIME — The big band

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All in the family

By Kristina Berlin, Staff Reporter

John Schinto's career as dentist, which has become a family legacy, got off to a rocky start nearly 90 years ago.

"I had received four D's from my homeroom teacher and four A's from the other teacher," he said. "I said, 'You don't love me.' She said, 'What do you mean I don't?'" Dr. Schinto explained to his teacher that she never saw him raise his hand because he was the shortest kid in the class, sitting in the back row. "She starts crying and finally she calmed down and said, 'Can you get A's from me?' I said, 'Sure I can get A's from you. You move me up front.' She moved me up to the front. Sure enough I got all A's from her. She says, 'Here I can take this little immigrant boy and make him a star,' and she did."

Dr. Schinto's family came from Italy, and he was the first born in America. When he was three, the family moved to Greenwich, and he's been here ever since. This October will mark his 100th birthday.

After coming to Greenwich, he made his way through the Greenwich school system, attending Havemeyer School, and in the eighth grade he took his classes at the high school building, which was next to the firehouse, because there wasn't enough room in the grammar school. When it came time to graduate from eighth grade and attend high school, his chances of attending looked slim. In those days, only about a third of eighth grade graduates went on to high school. In Dr. Schinto's own family of eight, both of his older brothers had gone straight to work in the family grocery store.

Dr. Schinto had quite a different experience. At his eighth grade graduation, he spoke as the valedictorian, and caught the eye of Julian Curtis, for whom today's elementary school is named.

"The chairman at that time, Julian Curtis, he was the head of the biggest athletic outfit in the country. So he's reading names out and when it came to my time he said, 'Wait a minute, you come right down here, I'm going to hand you this myself,' and he turned around and he says, 'Any people from the press here?' There were two of them and he said, 'I want you to print this boy's speech word for word.'"

At the end of the ceremony, Dr. Schinto's teacher and principal took his parents aside to convince them to allow him to go to high school, an issue Dr. Schinto's father was firmly against. Finally, the principal asked Dr. Schinto if he wanted to go to college.

"Do I wanna go to college!" said Dr. Schinto.

"What would you study?" asked the principal.

"I want to be a doctor!" said Dr. Schinto. So his parents agreed to let him raise money and go to school. All through high school he sold candy out of his father's trucks at the official baseball games in town, which the town allowed him to do.

"Years ago we didn't have baseball teams like we do now, I was allowed by the town of Greenwich to go with my father's little truck and I had two five gallon tanks of ice cream, cracker jacks, peanuts, soft drinks and chocolate bars and all that kind of stuff and I was allowed to sell it," he said. He made \$3,900, which covered the \$250 per year tuition and room, board, transportation, books and fees. Thus a future dentist paid his way through school on candy money.

Dr. Schinto graduated from Harvard and Cornell and finished in 1929, five months before the stock market crashed and began the Great Depression. He finally made up his mind to open a practice anyway at 45 East Putnam Ave., on top of Razoook's.

By 1934, though many people didn't know how to take care of their teeth and often needed dentures, Dr. Schinto's business was struggling.

"The Depression was bad and the dentists were having trouble,"



Three generations of dentists, John J. Schinto Jr., left, John J. Schinto III and John J. Schinto get together in the office they have used since 1984, where each of them has provided dental services over the years. — Kristina Berlin photo

he said. "You had those who could pay and those who couldn't pay."

"I was making \$15 a week," he said. He hired his sister as his secretary and gave her \$5 a week.

"Everybody worked. It wasn't how much you made, but you worked," he said. In response to the hard times, Dr. Schinto became a specialist in dentures and traveled all over the country to specialists, learning from them. When he married, his wife began working as a registered nurse in the office. She doled out the chloroform and got half of the money coming in.

"We had a lot of fun," Dr. Schinto said. "In those days there was no such thing as an oral surgeon. There were some in New York, but who the hell could afford to go to New York in the Depression."

The lack of modern technology and surgical know-how often caused a lot of pain for patients.

"In those days we had cruder working conditions, instruments. No wonder people were afraid to go to the dentist, because they were being hurt. As nice as you could be, they would be hurting... until diamonds came out. We didn't have that in our days. When you used that drill it was almost like using one out in the street compared with today, now it's nothing! You used to have to close the door so you couldn't hear it," he said.

Another adaptation Dr. Schinto made in response to the Depression was to help start a clinic for patients who couldn't pay for dental work.

"I was one of the pioneers of the clinic," he said. He joined up with a group of local dentists and they piled together old equipment and old chairs and started providing free service. The clinic took off when a woman married to a equip-

ment dealer donated a lot of instruments.

Dr. Schinto became the director for several years and tackled issues such as people coming from Stamford to use the free services, which Dr. Schinto felt was difficult to accommodate. The clinic became Greenwich Dental Clinic and evolved into what it is today, a group of 60 dentists working out of Greenwich Hospital.

But Dr. Schinto didn't stop there. He went on changing the shape of Greenwich dental care as president of the Fairfield County Dental Society, the largest in Connecticut. He stayed on as president through World War II.

"After the war I was still president and I said we gotta have a Greenwich Dental Society. So I started that," he said. He went on to head that group as well, at the request of one of the senior dentists in the society.

In the meantime his son, John J. Schinto Junior, was born. John Schinto would grow up in his father's footsteps to become the second dentist in the family, but John Junior didn't announce his decision until he got his undergraduate degree from Boston University. When he graduated, he had something to tell his father.

"He said 'I want to be a dentist, Dad.' I said 'Oh, OK, that's good,'" John Senior recounted. Off John Junior went to New York University dental school, but the Vietnam War claimed his dental services before Dr. Schinto could welcome him back to the family practice.

"He didn't go to war to fight, because he was a dentist and a doctor. He worked in the Air Force in South Carolina. Each week you had to be checked over by the dentist and the doctors, because, of

course, aviation they had to be in perfect condition. They had beautiful training. I don't know how much money they spent for aviators," said Dr. Schinto.

After the stint doing dentistry during for the Air Force, John Junior came back to practice with his father, which led to some changes at the Schinto office, including a move from the office above Razoook's to one at 19 Riverside Ave.

"We weren't saving enough, thank God he did that," said Dr. Schinto.

"His practice was better than mine... He brought it up to a higher level," Dr. Schinto said of his son. As the years went by and Dr. Schinto aged, he felt less like keeping up with current technology and more like retiring.

"I turned everything over to him, of course, as soon as he got out of the Air Force." After working with his son for six years, Dr. Schinto finally quit at the age of 71, in 1984. But a third dentist was already in the making.

His grandson, John III, narrowly avoided a business career, though he said his grandfather wasn't subtle with the dentistry hints. As a business major in college, he came to an epiphany his junior year while on spring break, realizing his love for medicine and working with his hands. He caught up on his biology and chemistry quickly, taking classes at the University of Connecticut.

After getting his dentistry degree in 1995, he went in to work with his father, John Junior, specializing in cosmetic procedures. Now John III flosses his teeth every night with his six-year-old son, John IV, who has already shown an interest in science, according to his dad.