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MAQUOKETA

SENTINEL-PRESS

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Lechtenberg's newly renovated dental office to host open house

Lechtenberg Dental, a fixture at 129 West Pleasant Street since 1992, has completed construction on an addition that will nearly double its office space.

Dr. Joe Lechtenberg stated the expansion was necessary to accommodate facilities for new technology and the addition of another dentist, Dr. Jolene Hermes.

Hermes is a Maquoketa native and a 2000 graduate of Maquoketa Community High School. She spent a year as a dentist in Dubuque before returning to her hometown.

"Jolene shadowed us while in high school, making frequent visits to our office to observe us at work. I mentioned to her, if she ever became a dentist to consider joining our practice. I guess she remembered us. We are glad to have Jolene with us," Dr. Lechtenberg said.

The new space will make room for another dentist and provide four operatories, including a laboratory, sterilization room, storage space and a hallway.

The parking lot has been re-paved and expanded to include almost every open space on the lot at the southeast corner of South Second and West Pleasant Street.

Dr. Joe and his father, Dr. J. A. Lechtenberg, said the three-month project under general contractor Robert Thola and many sub-contractors from the area went according to schedule.

"Our target date was September and that was met," they indicated.

Dr. J. A. Lechtenberg was raised in Lansing, Iowa. His father, also named Joe, was a realtor. He graduated from Loras College and got a degree in dentistry from Marquette University in Milwaukee. A lot went on between then.

"I graduated from high school in 1942, just after the attack on Pearl Harbor. So, you know what might be in store for me," he began.

His first job was at a button factory in Lansing where he got his first experience in drilling. Not teeth, but drilling hole in walnuts, eight hours a day, to put them on necklaces!

"I realized there must be something better, so I headed for Minneapolis and then to San Diego to work for Consolidated Air Craft. It was across the street from a Marine Depot. I got to know some Marines. They seemed like a good bunch of guys, so I decided to enlist in the Marines," he recalls.

While serving two and a half years in the South Pacific, he spent time on the USS Denver with 1,500 servicemen and one dentist.

"I thought the dentist had the best duty on ship, so I got the idea to become a dentist," he said.

After getting his degree in 1952, Lechtenberg headed for Cedar Rapids. He planned to continue a practice for a friend until he returned from a four-year obligation in the armed forces and then possibly join him in business.

While waiting, he made trips with a dental supplier around eastern Iowa. He met Sister Regis, administrator at Mercy Hospital in Clinton. Many Maquoketa physicians brought their patients to Mercy before the hospital opened in Maquoketa.

"Sister Regis thought I should consider Maquoketa," he recalled.

Dr. E. V. Andrew was the first local doctor he met. Lechtenberg fell in love with the town. Clinton Engines was booming with 2,000 employees working three shifts. The tax base ranked in the top four of the state among cities their size. It was a small town, close to the (Mississippi) river, just like Lansing.

He moved in with Dr. Andrew at his office at 117 North Main Street. His space was a spot



MSP photo

A father-son dentist office has spent over 60 years in Maquoketa. Dr. Joe Lechtenberg and his father Joe, Sr. will welcome visitors to their newly expanded office at 129 West Pleasant on Oct. 8. They have helped remedy dental problems of generations of Maquoketa and area residents.

vacated when X-ray was moved from private offices to the newly opened Jackson County Public Hospital.

"It was adequate for me," he explained.

Dr. Andrew told him there never was a professional man in Maquoketa that did not succeed, if he applied himself.

Eventually Dr. Andrew moved on to assume duties in other aspects of the medical profession and do considerable traveling. He eventually settled in Iowa City.

Lechtenberg stayed at the same location, sharing space with a Dr. Kratz, who later moved to Burlington. Dr. Leo Biehl came to Maquoketa and they shared offices from 1966 to 1992.

When his son, Joe, graduated from dental school at the University of Iowa in 1990 and joined his father and Dr. Biehl, the office became crowded.

When Maquoketa State Bank purchased Capital Savings and Loan, the Lechtenbergs eyed the modern building as a possible spot to relocate.

"We let Maquoketa State Bank know we were interested in purchasing the building before they even had the keys. It was an attractive building at an excellent location and fit our needs," the older Lechtenberg explained.

They were able to make the purchase. It took a tremendous amount of work to convert a financial institution into a dental clinic.

Joe did a lot of the work himself and the rest of the family kicked in. Mike Burns, who married a daughter Mary Pat, and his father Sherman

provided much of the extra help.

They moved in 1992.

"It worked out fine. As new technology was introduced, we managed to find the space. It's amazing the changes in dentistry since I began in 1952," Dr. J. A. Lechtenberg mentioned.

The father is proud that his oldest child followed in his profession, and his second oldest, Mary Pat, is a dental hygienist.

"Then somehow we lost control of our family. The other six children went in other directions," he joked.

In 1996, he retired as a dentist and lives with his wife, Kay, a block from the office on West Pleasant Street.

He admits to promoting Joe to go into dentistry and said it took a little more persuading to pull him from Iowa City to come back to Maquoketa and join his father.

"It's the best decision I've ever made," Joe said.

Joe's wife, Liz, is the director of Ohnward Fine Arts Center. Their daughter, Ashley married Jesse Wing. They have twin daughters. A step-daughter, Katie, is a sophomore at UNI.

"I think one of the best things about our practice is that I'm now caring for children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren who were patients of Dad more than 50 years ago," Joe pointed out.

The newly renovated office will be open for the public at an open house scheduled for 4 to 7 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 8, at 129 West Platt Street.

Preston man dies in accident

A Preston man died last week of injuries suffered in a motorcycle accident that occurred in northern Wisconsin six days earlier.

Brandon Jon Oldag, 20, died Thursday, Sept. 24, at Aspirus Wausau Hospital in Wausau, Wis., of injuries sustained in the accident.

The accident was reported at 10:19 p.m. Sept. 18 and occurred at U.S. 51 and Mill Road in the town of Hazelhurst.

Hazelhurst is about 65 miles north of Wausau in north central Wisconsin.

The Oneida County Sheriff's Office said investigation showed Oldag failed to negotiate a curve on the roadway.

The Hazelhurst Fire Department, Minocqua Fire and Rescue and Oneida County Emergency Medical Services assisted sheriff's deputies at the accident scene.

The sheriff's office and Oneida County Medical Examiner's Office are continuing the investigation.