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## Three generations of dentists serve Lamorinda for 55 years

By Kara Navolio



From left: Al, Mark and Blake Swimmer Photo provided

into the profession. However, when he saw the types of jobs his classmates were getting in food science, he just wasn't excited about the field. He added one more year in college to take the science classes he needed, then went on to the dental school at the University of the Pacific, the same school his dad attended.

About 30 years later Mark Swimmer's son Blake, a 2011 Miramonte graduate, faced a similar crossroads. The University of Oregon junior, who was majoring in sports marketing, had a change of heart when he discovered his passion lay more in the sciences than in his business classes. Or perhaps there was a bit of a subconscious pull toward dentistry as his mom is also a dentist in Orinda, and he grew up hanging around both offices.

A young woman that Al Swimmer hired when he first started the business, Colleen McCune Deutscher, became the office manager and was like a second mom to Blake and his brother. Deutscher spent 50 years with the Swimmer Dentistry practice, starting as a part-time office assistant through high school and college. Her unexpected passing this past September has left a hole in all their hearts. "She was the glue of this place," stated Mark Swimmer.

Blake Swimmer changed his major and also went on to attend UOP's School of Dentistry, graduating this past summer. Patients now have more flexibility as they can see either Dr. Swimmer. Although retired now, Al Swimmer still meets for breakfast with fellow Lafayette retired dentists every week. The group used to have lunch together every day when they were practicing. "It's a dream come true," he reflected, "to have my son and grandson all working in the same profession, in the same practice."

In July, Blake Swimmer became the third generation Swimmer to practice dentistry in Lafayette.

His grandfather, Al Swimmer, began the general dentistry practice in 1963 when Lafayette's population was only about 7,000. For 38 years he served thousands of Lamorinda residents, the last 12 years, from 1988 to 2001, with his son, Mark. "Those 12 years were the best part of my life," said Al Swimmer.

Mark Swimmer now runs the practice and has taken his own son on as an associate. Although it may appear that a family business was the plan all along, Al Swimmer said, "I never pressured them to become dentists or suggested it, but I think they saw the friendship and support I had with other Lafayette dentists. Being happy in your work is reflected in the home."

In fact, Mark, a 1980 Acalanes High School graduate, went to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and majored in food science. He was not planning to follow his dad

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