

All In The Family

Forty years with the Schoppes.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIANE DULTMEIER

When Dr. Jack Schoppe arrived in Stuart on a warm December day in 1969, little did he know he would spend the next 40 years practicing podiatry in the then-sparse city. On that fateful day, he began a love affair with Stuart that his family would sustain for generations to come.

When he arrived, Schoppe was the podiatrist on a team of four doctors – including an OB/GYN, an orthopaedic surgeon and a general surgeon – brought in from Martin Army Community Hospital in Fort Benning, Ga. They were to take up residence here in Stuart at a time when the burgeoning city was desperate for doctors. The population was on the rise, but the city needed just as much attention as the citizens themselves.

“It looked more like a flower farm than a city,” Schoppe says. “There were more cows than people. Nothing but cows and a wooden bridge.”

Much has changed in 40 years. Stuart has a modern Palm City Bridge and more: a mini-metropolis where there was once rolling farmland as far as the eye could see. The cows have moved on.

What hasn’t changed, however, is Schoppe’s commitment to medicine and to the city he helped build. It’s a legacy that Jack’s three podiatrist sons, Joe (38), John Jr. (37) and Paul (36), work tirelessly to keep alive.

“Our father kept the Schoppe name good for so many years,” Joe says. “Now, it’s our responsibility to follow up.”

And follow up they do with a new practice in a new building that the boys triple-handedly designed.

The Ocean Medical Center, an impressive, pristine structure between downtown Stuart and Sewall’s Point, is Stuart’s first-ever all-in-one medical facility, home to the Schoppes’ Family Foot & Ankle Clinic, Coastal Orthopaedics, MedStat Urgent Care Center, Premier Physical Therapy and Stuart Urology.

Dr. Jack Schoppe maintains his 40-year practice, but plans to join the Family Foot & Ankle Clinic in 2011. He prefers to see his sons settled and happy before joining the mix, he explains.

“Ocean Medical is a really unique concept for Stuart,” Paul



The Schoppes (from left): Paul, Joe, Jack and John Jr.

says proudly, “and an asset to the community.”

“We hear it a few times a week,” Joe adds. “Wherever we go, people say, ‘Man, that building is so beautiful. You guys did a great job for Stuart.’”

No wonder, considering the great job Stuart did for them. Looking back, the Schoppe boys have nothing but fond memories of growing up in Stuart – fishing on the St. Lucie River, building sand castles near The House of Refuge, playing doctor at their father’s Osceola Street office – and they wouldn’t change a thing. As it turns out, the Schoppes have enjoyed fateful moments all along.

Today, Joe, John Jr. and Paul are grateful for the opportunity to raise their own children right here in Stuart where it all began.

“It just feels right to be here,” John Jr. says. “It just makes too much sense.”