

Tailor outfits shoreline's movers and shakers

By Lisa Reisman

6/7/19

A day before the Governor's Ball last November, state Rep. Sean Scanlon, D-Guilford, phoned Greg Karachristos of Greg's Tailor in New Haven. He needed a tux.

"Greg made it happen for me and he makes it happen for a lot of people," Scanlon said, whose mother first discovered Karachristos in New Haven in the mid-1980s. "He's been through all the milestone events with our family, it's like he's part of us."

The same, it seems, is true for Branford's Michelle Johnson and her husband Clark.

"The way he remakes anything my husband and I give him is worth that trip across the Q bridge," she said. "Whatever he does — hemming, sleeve shortening, taking in the waist — is just top notch. And he really cares — not just about getting it right. About us."

Traditional tailors are getting scarcer, according to CNBC. So when people discover the Greek-born Karachristos, who honed his craft back in the old country, they keep track of him. And it's not only longtime clients like Scanlon, but many of the leading doctors and lawyers in New Haven and up and down the Shoreline.

Count Richard Rubin, MD, the Guilford psychiatrist, among them. And Antoine Ferneini, MD, chief of vascular surgery at St. Raphael's.

"I met Greg about 15 years ago when I needed to have alterations on a jacket and I've been with him ever since. The distinction is in his skill set. And the service. If I need it right away, he's on it."

Growing up in Makrisia, a tiny village about 175 miles west of Athens, Karachristos earned a diploma in tailoring from the Academy of Koptikis. In 1976, he and his wife Theodora immigrated to New Haven. There, they opened a shop on Temple Street.

There were challenges at first. Offering custom-made clothes wasn't drawing customers, they soon learned. So they turned to renting tuxedos. By then, they'd moved to 242 College St., across from Shubert Theater, where they would stay the next 33 years.

"We rented mostly to Yale students for formal events, to the Glee Club and also the Whiffenpoofs and Alley Cats singing groups," said Karachristos in his softly-accented English.

"And then gradually we became known for hand-selecting fabrics in specific colors, and altering



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Mark Wawer, left, brought two jackets to have buttons fixed by Greg Karachristos, owner of Greg's Tailor Shop & Formal Wear, on Court Street in New Haven on May 30.



Greg Karachristos, owner of Greg's Tailor Shop & Formal Wear, stands in his store on Court Street in New Haven.

anything, from formal attire to jeans."

All along, he was cultivating a

following, it seemed, and not just because of his craft.

Dr. Sharon Chekijian, M.D., an

emergency medicine specialist at Yale, recalled bringing a pair of white pants to Karachristos to be altered for an upcoming trip. Once she got to her destination, she realized she'd forgotten to pick them up.

"I called Greg," she said. "He Fedexed them to me that day."

Likewise, Reva Siegel, a professor at Yale Law School.

"Going into his shop, there's just a slower pulse," she said. "And of course his work is at a consistently high standard."

It's that high standard that perhaps explains his customers' loyalty over the years. Just letting out a pair of pants or bringing in the waistline of a dress can add years to its wearing life. Because Karachristos prides himself on reasonable prices — there are never any hidden or surprise fees — his customers usually come out saving far more than they anticipated.

So when the lease expired on his College Street shop and Karachris-

tos closed its doors, he found his customers calling on him at his home in Hamden. And when, in September 2018, he re-opened on Court Street, they followed him there.

Not just long-time customers. "I discovered Greg's walking by, and then he altered a few of my suits, and I started spreading the word," said Otis Johnson, Jr., executive director of the New Haven Fair Rent Commission, who stopped in to chat with Greg on a recent afternoon.

"Good tailors are few and far between around here," he added.

Scanlon, it seems, feels that same regard for Karachristos.

"From my prom tuxedo way back when to going to the Governor's ball, Greg is my guy," said Scanlon. "He's family to us."

Greg's Tailor Shop is on 113 Court St. in New Haven. 203-776-4461; gregstailor@gmail.com; www.gregthetailor.com.