

Foerster, Isaac & Yerkes, P.A. relocates

BY MARY WANSER
Resident Community News

After 37 years, Fred C. Isaac has sold his San Marco building. His Foerster, Isaac & Yerkes, P.A. firm has been a fixture in the area for a long time, and it will remain so. He and his partner have moved from the unique pentagonal-shaped building with the unusual roofline on Atlantic Boulevard. They relocated to Gate Parkway near St. Johns Town Center.

It's not only his business that has history in Jacksonville, but Isaac and his family do as well. He is the second of three generations born here, on December 5, 1942. He grew up in Avondale and is an alumnus of Robert E. Lee (now Riverside High School), just as his late father had been.

Isaac completed his undergraduate studies at Jacksonville University before continuing to Mercer University School of Law in Macon, Georgia. With his Juris Doctor degree in hand, Isaac returned to Jacksonville in 1967 because, he said, "I love my city!" He was admitted to The Florida Bar in 1969.

Isaac's first firm experience was with Blalock, Holbrook, Lewis, Paul & Isaac. It was an established practice in the American Heritage Life Building. After that firm split, Isaac partnered with David Lewis, Herman Paul, and Hal Castillo in 1977. A year later, he married Marnelle Jones, a Jacksonville dental



Lisa Frenzel with Fred Isaac and Rebecca Schriver at the former location of the firm, 2468 Atlantic Boulevard in St. Nicholas.

hygienist whom he'd met on a blind date. They built a home in Ponte Vedra Beach and raised a daughter and son there, Cameron and Rodgers. Isaac resides there still.

It was in 1983 that Isaac's firm— Lewis, Paul, Isaac & Castillo, P.A.—began constructing the 2468 Atlantic Boulevard building. Inspired by Lewis's service at the Pentagon in Washington during World War II, he and Isaac, along with Architect Frank Shumer, designed the San Marco structure. With Isaac as overseer, the project was completed in 1984.

Isaac's was one of the first law firms to move from Downtown Jacksonville to the suburbs, though still only five minutes from the courthouse. Isaac told how, at that time, nearly 99% of all lawyers were downtown based. Only over the course of years had they begun migrating to suburbia. In that regard, perhaps Isaac's firm could be considered somewhat of a local trendsetter. They no longer wished to occupy a big city building from which to practice law.

Some of his former partners passed on, and in 1987, Isaac started representing the Department of Transportation as an independent contract lawyer. Other lawyers moved into his building. That's how he became associated with David Foerster and Robert Yerkes nearly 30 years ago. The three merged in the early 1990s.

Foerster passed away in late November 2021. But the firm's name—Foerster, Isaac & Yerkes, P.A.—remains intact, and the two remaining partners continue to practice eminent domain law. "We're not retiring. We just sold the building, and we moved to a new location," Isaac said.

Many might recognize Isaac's firm as having provided defense in The Gilmore Building (formerly Haskell) case when the expressway was being built so close to it. The company's client list is extensive.

Isaac is also the lawyer for the Episcopal Diocese of Florida, but his service to the Church extends beyond his office. He has volunteered at Christ Episcopal Church in Ponte Vedra Beach for nearly his entire life, serving in capacities too numerous to list.

Ever willing to give of himself, Isaac has a new idea for how he can contribute to the community. "I want to establish a ministry for caregivers of Alzheimer's patients," he said. "I just formulated that idea recently. I have a lot to educate caregivers on." Isaac had cared for his wife for nearly 15 years, so

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he knows what is needed and what is lacking. She succumbed to the disease on June 9, 2021 and donated her brain to Mayo Clinic for research. Isaac stressed the importance of caring for the self during such times. “We’re so wrapped up with caregiving for our loved one, that we forget sometimes to take care of ourselves.”

For his own stress outlet, Isaac relies on exercise. He walks 3-4 miles every day and works out daily with a TRX belt. He enjoys fishing in Suwannee, Florida, too. And it’s important to him to spend time with his family. Isaac’s daughter lives in Nashville, Tennessee and has given him two grandchildren. “She went to Vanderbilt University and never returned home,” Isaac said of Cameron. His son lives in Howey-in-the-Hills, Florida and has also given him two grandchildren. “I have the most wonderful children in the world. They’re great,” Isaac said.

Talk of grandparenting brought to Isaac’s mind the story of his own paternal grandmother. She was born in Lebanon. In 1912, at 12 years of age, she and her 10-year-old brother boarded with their father a ship headed for Cherbourg, France. The intent was to eventually cross the Atlantic and reunite with her mother who had preceded the three in immigrating to America. But her father had developed an eye infection that prevented him from embarking on the ship headed for the States. So, Isaac’s grandmother, as a little girl with the family fortune tied around her waist, boarded the Titanic alone with her younger brother. Both survived, only because they were unaccompanied by an adult and, therefore, helped into a lifeboat when the ship sank.

Returning his thoughts to the recent sale of the building he’d worked in for nearly four decades, Isaac said, “There really has been some outstanding lawyers that have practiced

law in that building, all of whom were my partners.” Three have since passed away.

“Bob Yerkes and I continue the legacy,” Isaac said. They have been partners for nearly 30 years. They remain as interested as ever in defending property owners’ land rights. They work to obtain full compensation for land-owners when a condemning authority takes their property. “Our practice is not scaling back. We simply wanted to remove the burden of ownership. It’s time to become tenants rather than landlords,” Isaac said.

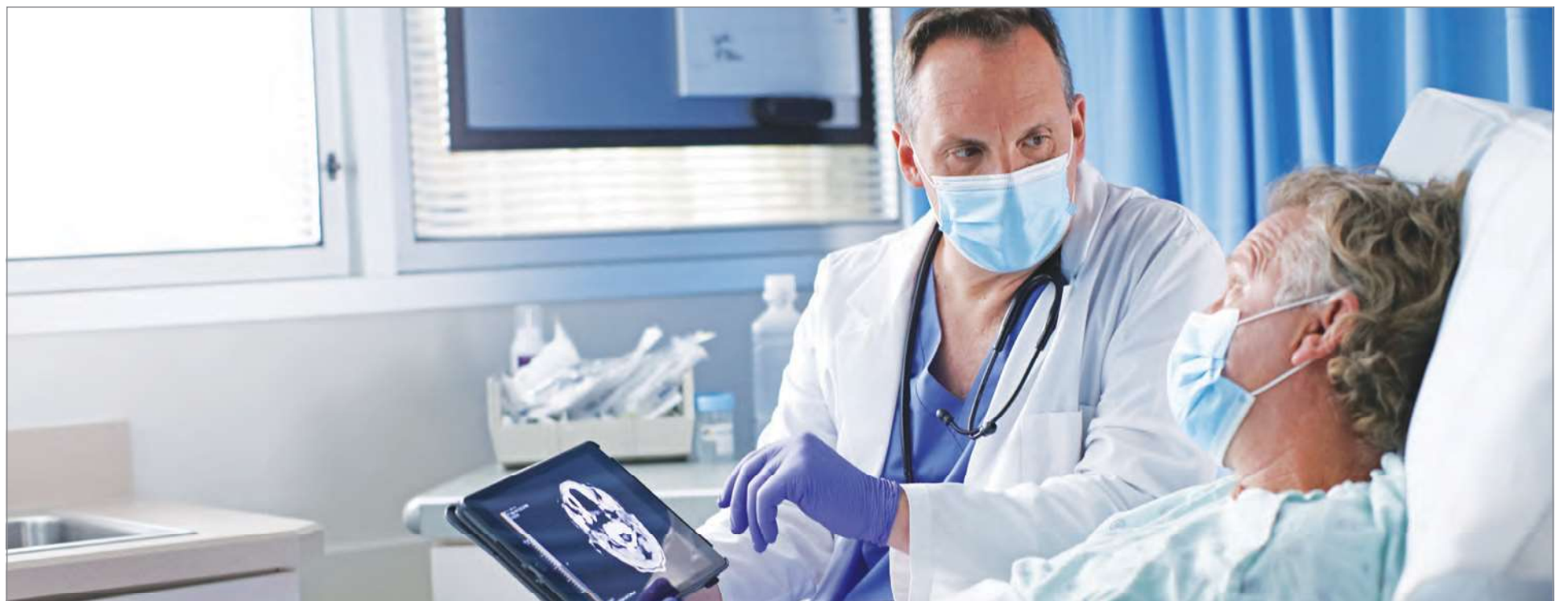
Along with Isaac and Yerkes moved their staff members—Rebecca Schriver, a paralegal who has been with Isaac for 35 years, and Lisa Frenzel, who has been his personal assistant for the past 15 years. “The great thing is, all four of us will be a little closer to home. I can be in my new office in 15 minutes. I’m excited. I’ve never done that in the last 50 years I’ve practiced law,” Isaac said.

The pentagonal Atlantic Boulevard structure was purchased in October by Trenton Postell, Owner of Impact Learning Center. The building is transforming into a school. The law firm, since December, is located at 7880 Gate Parkway near St. Johns Town Center on the east side of the Beltway.



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—Fred C. Isaac,
Foerester, Issac & Yerkes, P.A.



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