



## One Part History, One Part Ragtime Blues

by Lynn Miller

**K**arl Dentino of West Windsor presents a musical performance at the West Windsor Historical Society, 50 Southfield Road, on Monday, November 1, at 8 p.m. His music program centers around a presentation of “Ragtime Blues,” a minstrel-like musical genre from the 1920s and 1930s. The performance includes songs, stories, humor, and historical commentary — as well as demonstrations of guitar picking and harmonica playing that defined the style and the period.

Last year Dentino started a music volunteer program which has taken him to dozens of senior citizen groups throughout Mercer County and surrounding areas. “I’ve been wanting to do this for a long time so I thought I better start doing it sooner rather than later,” says Dentino. “I started out playing at Grover’s Mill and It’s a Grind coffee houses. It’s a great way for people to play in a non-threatening environment and both places were terrific.”



***I’ve Got the Blues:***  
*Karl Dentino plays  
Ragtime & more  
on November 1.*

In West Windsor and Plainsboro he has performed for the West Windsor Keenagers, Plainsboro Seniors, and will perform at Village Grande in January. “There are so many clubs in active adult communities and so many groups looking for entertainment,” says Dentino. “There are many opportunities and I know I am not going to become rich and famous.”

“I’ve tried to combine history and entertainment to show people things that they are probably not aware of,” says Dentino, who also plays the harmonica sometimes as a second melody to complement his guitar. “The music from Memphis, New Orleans, and South Carolina in those times was comedic — almost vaudeville-like. That’s just what music was like in those times.”

Born in Camden to a non-musical family, Dentino’s father was a health inspector and his mother was a nurse’s aide in a hospital. Dentino received his first guitar when he was nine. “It was the ’60s and everyone wanted to play guitar and get in a rock and roll band after the Beatles arrived,” he says. “When I got to college if I had not learned finger picking acoustic blues I would probably have stopped playing.”

Dentino graduated from Glassboro State College (now Rowan University) with a degree in communications. “A professor there turned me onto mail order and direct mail advertising,” he told U.S.1 Newspaper in February. When he sent his first resume package to Direct Marketing Group in New York City in the form of a direct marketing package he was hired quickly.

His best friend, James Rosenfield, invited Dentino to

operate the east coast office of his California-based marketing company and Rosenfield Dentino began in 1983. When Rosenfield retired in 1990 Dentino changed the firm's name to Dentino Marketing. Last December he moved the business from Jersey City to Princeton. His biggest clients are Master Card, Netflix, Prudential, and the U.S. Golf Association.

"Playing guitar has always been a hobby," he says. "I never really played solo for anyone except for a group at church." Since 1996, he has been guitarist for the Contemporary Ensemble at the St. David The King Catholic Church in West Windsor. He will also perform at Village Bakery, in Lawrenceville on Friday, November 12, at 7:30 p.m.

His wife of 31 years, Verna, has a volunteer program as a food coach. "Her mission is to help people make better food choices at the supermarket with an eye towards nutrition," he says. "Her parents instilled good values as far as eating so this has always been her passion. There is so much more information available now."

When they moved to West Windsor in 1982 Dentino was commuting to New York City and wanted to get closer to his roots in southern New Jersey. "This location was perfect," he says. "We moved here for the train — not for the schools." Both of their children attended St. Paul's School and Notre Dame High School.

Their son, Luke, 22, graduated from St. Joseph's University in May and is working with an insurance company in New York City. "He is doing the commute that I used to do," says his father. Their daughter, Hannah, is a junior at Notre Dame High School, where she is a cheerleader.

"I have reached a point in life where I wanted to start a sustainable volunteer initiative and this is the one thing that gives me more pleasure than anything else I can do, so I decided to build a musical program that targets senior's groups," says Dentino. "It is great fun to play songs that make people smile, laugh or tap their toes. Doing so as a volunteer makes it that much more enjoyable. For me, when you combine music and money it becomes too much like work."

— *Lynn Miller*

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**Karl Dentino, Historical Society of West Windsor, Schenck House, 50 Southfield Road, West Windsor, 609-799-1230. Monday, November 1, 8 p.m.**

For more information about Dentino's program call 201-240-8888, E-mail to [dentino@comcast.net](mailto:dentino@comcast.net), or visit his website at [karldentino.com](http://karldentino.com).