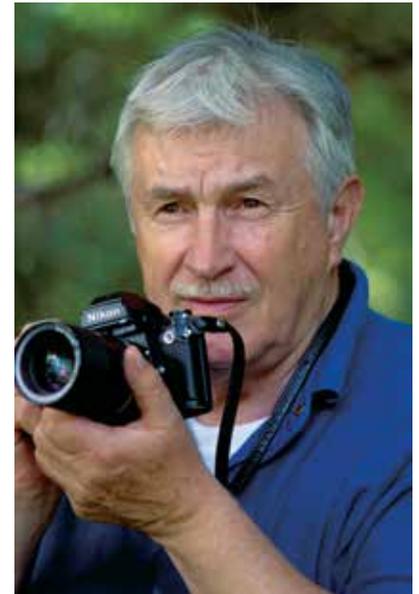




When Sylvian E. “Sinch” Ofiara died last May 18, he left behind much that will remain as reminders of the positive impact his 85 years had in this community.

Born in Manchester in 1926, Sinch was a World War II veteran, serving our country in the U.S. Army Air Force. He was a photographer, spending years at the Manchester Evening Herald and later as a professor of photography at Manchester Community College. He also freelanced widely and served as the photographer for the Connecticut Opera for more than 20 years. The picture of the square dancers here once appeared in *Life* magazine.



The Photographer Who Loved Manchester



Sinch’s life impacted everyone around him. Executor Susan Barlow called Sinch a gifted photographer who was generous with his time and effort. His students affectionately called him “Mr. O.” One former student and mentee of Sinch, Dick Jenkins, says his mentor’s skills at photography were unique. “Sinch was well-versed in many subjects and possessed a magnetic personality. It was an honor to be considered his friend,” Dick adds.

A Financial Gift of \$215,224

“Sinch was one of the kindest men I’ve met,” says Susan. “He took care of his wife with such compassion.” And Sinch’s compassionate and generous spirit is evident in his leaving a gift of \$215,224 to Manchester Memorial Hospital.

He also left the gift of many fine photographs, a few of which you see here. Another gift was his informal memoirs. In 2004, in “When Capitalism Came to Hackmatack Street,” Sinch wrote about growing up in Manchester mainly

for his friends and family. Through the eyes of this generous and caring man, here are glimpses of what life was like in Manchester 70 years ago.

“I became aware of the world about 1931 or so, just in time for the market crash and the depression that followed. It didn’t matter to me that we didn’t have much of anything but love.”

“Our indoor plumbing consisted of a cold water tap in the kitchen... the light bill [was] under \$1.50 a month.”

“The depression was quiet. Most sounds cost money. There were few cars, radios were off most of the time... No chain saws, no power lawn mowers, no power anything! Piano practice could be heard, and slamming of screen doors and a dog bark was about it.”

“You saved everything. Everything had a second use... Oh, yes, you saved used nails, straighten them out and use them again... town trash collection was only twice a year. And most barrels on the curb were only half full.”

“It was hard to hear something bad about Cheneys. They built the high school, fire department, police department—the list goes on and on.”



“Note: This is not a story of how bad I had it, but how it was mostly good.”

Sinch Ofiara

“We had trust for one another. We had no crime. We almost never locked the door. Even if we did, you could use a hair pin to open it.”

“What was this thing called a ‘zipper’?... Everybody was talking about it... it was the thirties when it came to replace the overworked and tired buttons in Manchester.”

“We did not smell good in the thirties, especially on a hot day in the summer when we exerted ourselves. There was no AC and lots of houses did not have a bath tub. We had an orange soap with a slogan, ‘Lifeboy really stops BO.’”

“On Thursday night all stores were open ‘til nine. Everybody was there promenading... I said in the past and I’ll say it now, there is no place in the wide world I would rather be on Thursday night than Main Street, Manchester, Connecticut, USA!”

Sinch concludes his memoirs with words meant to describe his writing project but applicable also to life in general: “This is a work in progress, I am adding all the time. It’s like saving certain pieces of a puzzle and putting it together years later and it looks different because some pieces are missing. Always looking for corrections and suggestions for improvements.”

He was looking for ways to improve. But in Sylvian E. “Sinch” Ofiara’s life, we couldn’t suggest any corrections or improvements.

As a child growing up in town in the 1940s, the works of Sylvian Ofiara appeared almost daily in The Herald. His name was unique and his skills as a photographer were as well. I’d always had a love for photography, but it wasn’t until retirement that I pursued the craft. When I finally met and shared with Sinch my love and desire to advance my skills, I asked him to be my mentor. He took me under his wing, and over the next 10 years I’d offer my work and he’d provide his critique across the miles that separated us. Sinch was well-versed in many subjects and possessed a magnetic personality. It was an honor to be considered his friend
Dick Jenkins