



# THE WHISTLE

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## Tender Memories

At Junior's Grill, Owner Tommy Klemis Treated Everyone in the Tech Community Like Family

KRISTIN BAIRD RATTINI  
GEORGIA TECH ALUMNI MAGAZINE

When you hear the name Junior's Grill, what do you think of?

Your answer likely depends on which decades you have been on campus and patronized this beloved mainstay of the Tech community, which closed its

doors and turned off its blue neon sign in 2011.

Maybe it's a slice of Edwards pie and a milkshake. Or the oversized slices of French toast, dusted with cinnamon. Perhaps it's the warm chocolate chip cookies, sold three for \$1. Or the first time you ate Junior's chicken tenders, a veritable Tech rite of passage.

Whatever your particular culinary craving (we know your mouth is watering right now), everyone remembers the man behind them: Tommy Klemis, Junior's genial and generous owner who helmed his family's restaurant for 36 years and

see **JUNIOR'S**, page 4



Photo by Allison Carter

Students select succulents and decorate planters at the 2018 Earth Day festival on Tech Walkway.

## Who's Down for Earth Day?

CATHY BRIM  
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

This year marks the 25th anniversary of celebrating Earth Day at Georgia Tech. A four-day schedule of events is planned for this campuswide program to celebrate nature, the preservation

of our planet, and the Georgia Tech community's contributions to campus sustainability. A few events are already collecting items or have opened registration — so get a head start on your Earth Day plans.

see **EARTH**, page 3

## Relief Fund Created to Support Students From Ukraine

VICTOR ROGERS  
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

The war in Ukraine is having devastating effects on the nation, its people, and its economy. Many of these effects will be long-lasting regardless of the war's length or outcome. Similarly, students from neighboring countries, including Russia, Moldova, Estonia, Romania, Poland, Belarus, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, and others in the region, are facing economic hardship as their countries are stressed by millions of refugees and the threat of additional

see **UKRAINE**, page 3



# When the Whistle Blows

## Georgia Tech's Remembrance Ceremony



*Nothing can replace the joy that a loved one or cherished friend brings to our lives. We at Georgia Tech are deeply saddened when we suffer the loss of members of our own community.*

*Each spring, we honor the memory of the students, faculty, and staff who died the previous year. This year, we honor those who died in 2021. Join us as we pay tribute to these individuals who have touched our lives and contributed so much to Georgia Tech.*

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Graduate Student  
Materials Science and Engineering

**Lorrie Buchanan**  
Associate Vice President for  
Development Operations  
Development

**Cynthia Correa**  
Senior Research Engineer  
Georgia Tech Research Institute

**William Fowler**  
Locksmith Electronic Specialist  
Housing

**Chengming Julian Gu**  
Undergraduate Student  
Computer Science

**John P. Hartley**  
Graduate Student  
Computational Science and Engineering

**Rebecca Herrera**  
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**Debra King-Pringle**  
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**Steven Taylor**  
Senior Application Developer  
CEISMC

**Gloria Williams**  
Senior Recruiting Consultant  
Georgia Tech Research Institute

**Thomas M. Wilson**  
Undergraduate Student  
Nuclear and Radiological Engineering

## Applications Open for Emerging Leaders Program

The Emerging Leaders Program started in 2016 and is designed for associate and full professors who have attained tenure. Over the course of nine months, participants take part in several activities including a fall weekend workshop, monthly workshops, small-group work, and a 360-degree assessment. The program is a collaboration between the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Executive Vice President for Research, the Institute for Leadership and Social Impact, and the Office of Graduate Education and Faculty Development.

Learn more and submit a nomination at [provost.gatech.edu/emerging-leaders](https://provost.gatech.edu/emerging-leaders).

# HELP MAKE COMMENCEMENT HAPPEN



Photo by Allison Carter

Georgia Tech's Commencement events would not be possible without the involvement and support of faculty and staff volunteers. This semester, graduates will be celebrated at four ceremonies on May 6 and 7. Volunteers are needed at all events and in a variety of roles. To learn more and volunteer, visit [c.gatech.edu/spring22vol](https://c.gatech.edu/spring22vol).

## UKRAINE, from page 1

instability. Many students and faculty at Ukrainian universities are unable to continue their studies or their work. As part of its mission to improve the human condition, Georgia Tech would like to host a number of students to complete their degrees as well as faculty in need of a temporary university home.

The Office of Development is leading a fundraising initiative to support the approximately 80 current Georgia Tech students from Ukraine and neighboring countries. While these students will be the top priority, we also want to generate resources

to support displaced scholars and welcome them to join the Tech community.

We estimate an urgent need of between \$3 and \$4 million in current, expendable funds, which will be administered through the Office of International Education. After four years, any funds not used for the purpose described will be allocated to a fund to support the ongoing emergency needs of international students.

To donate to the Ukraine Student and Faculty Relief Fund, visit [mygeorgiatech.gatech.edu/giving/ukraine](https://mygeorgiatech.gatech.edu/giving/ukraine).

For more information, email Marta Garcia at [marta.garcia@gatech.edu](mailto:marta.garcia@gatech.edu).

## EARTH, from page 1

For a full schedule and to sign up for events, visit [c.gatech.edu/earthday](https://c.gatech.edu/earthday).

**Celebration and Keynote with Maria Cimilluca, vice president of Infrastructure and Sustainability**  
April 18, 11 a.m., virtual

**Clough Commons Waste Audit**  
April 19, 10 a.m. – noon, near Tech Green

**Group Bike Ride**  
April 19, 5:30 p.m. meet at CRC, ride begins at 6:30 p.m.

**Earth Day Celebration Bird Walk**  
April 20, 9 – 10:30 a.m., The Kendeda Building

**Campus Sustainability Fair**  
April 20th 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., The Kendeda Building

**Tree Planting Volunteer Event**  
April 21, 3–5 p.m., Krone Engineered Biosystems Building and BioTech Quad



**JUNIOR'S**, from page 1

made sure all customers felt welcome and left well-fed.

**The Family Business**

Junior's Grill was named for its original owner, Wilbur Gold Jr., who opened the restaurant at the corner of Techwood Drive and North Avenue in 1948. When Jimmy Klemis and John Chaknis — Tommy's father and uncle — took it over in 1958, the year Tommy turned 10, they didn't intend for him to follow in their footsteps.

"My dad told me, 'I work like this so you don't have to go into the restaurant business, so that you can go to Georgia Tech,'" Klemis recalls. When his father passed away suddenly in 1964, his mother, Lula, insisted that Klemis still pursue his own path. She took over as co-owner of Junior's with Chaknis, a member of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra who occasionally serenaded diners on his violin.

After serving in the Marines, Klemis was accepted into the electrical engineering program at Georgia Tech in 1970. "But life came just a little bit faster than we had planned," he says. He and his wife had an infant son, Jimmy, at home and another child — his daughter, Leigh Anne — on the way; money was tight. He left Tech after one year to work as an engineering associate at Western Electric.

In 1975, Chaknis suffered a heart attack. Lula Klemis couldn't run Junior's alone; she considered selling the restaurant. "My family encouraged me to try to save the business," Klemis says. He left his job and joined Junior's full time as co-owner with his mom. "God had a plan," he says. "He brought me back on campus, but this time to serve Georgia Tech students instead of be one."

**Taking Care of "Their Students"**

Among those students was Larry Curtin, AP 1987, who patronized three incarnations of Junior's Grill over his 15 years on campus as a student and as a staff member. Curtin lived in

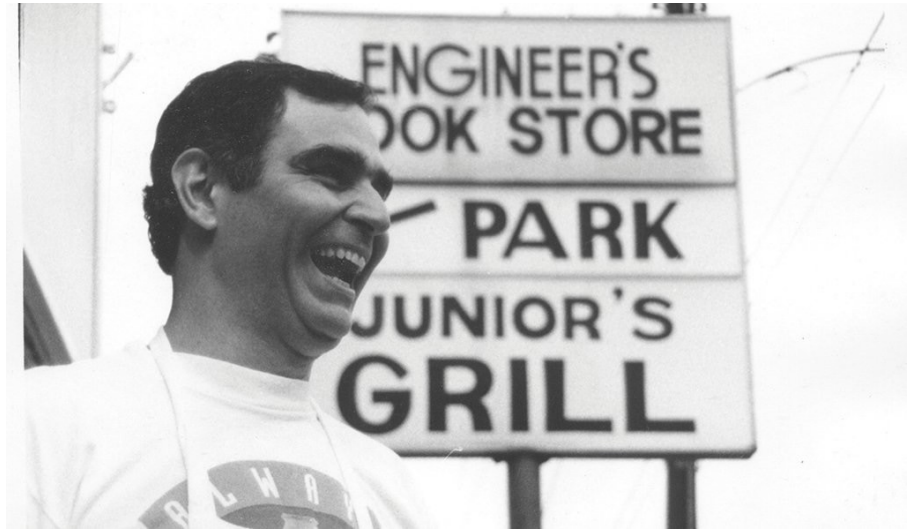


Photo courtesy of the Georgia Tech Alumni Magazine

Tommy Klemis, who operated Junior's Grill on campus for several decades.

Techwood Dorm, which stood next to the second Junior's location. Squeezed into a former barbershop on Techwood Drive, the 28-stool diner served an average of 800 patrons a day. "Junior's was our dining hall," Curtin recalls. He still has a few coupons left in a Junior's meal book, which provided \$22 of Junior's value-priced meals for \$20, a deal that kept many cash-strapped students fed over the years.

To speed up the line, students often used shorthand, a "Junior's jargon," to order. "French strip, hold the dust" meant French toast with a strip of bacon, no cinnamon. "Top two, 10, cheese and choke it" meant the top two vegetables from the daily list of eight options and a 10-ounce hamburger steak with sautéed onions and cheese on top. "Honeymooner" for lettuce alone. The most popular call was "dress two cheese side:" two cheeseburgers with everything and an order of French fries.

In 1987, Junior's expanded into the adjacent space vacated by the Engineer's Bookstore. It was there — in the larger Junior's 3.0 — that Klemis hosted an unforgettable event for Curtin and his friends: a candle-light dinner for the 12 "Gentlemen of Techwood" and their dates after the dorm formal. Klemis brought porcelain plates from home and dressed in a tuxedo to serve ribeye steaks and

baked potatoes to the appreciative guests. "I was overwhelmed," Curtin says. "Outside of my family, there had never been an adult in my life who went above and beyond to do something so special for me."

Klemis, his mother, and his aunt Anne Pamfilis — affectionately known to all customers as "Miss Anne" — constantly looked after "their students" and cared about what was happening in their lives. "Sometimes when the ladies worked the register, you had to remind them, 'Hey, quit talking so much! There's a line!'" Klemis says with a laugh. If a customer looked glum after an exam, Miss Anne might slip them some chocolate chip cookies. If a student couldn't pay, they ate anyway, their meal extended on credit.

Klemis' generosity was not forgotten when Junior's Grill was torn down in October 1993 to make way for dorms for the 1996 Summer Olympics. Alumni and supporters rallied for the restaurant's revival. In February 1994, Georgia Tech handed Klemis the key to the new Junior's Grill: a 4,000-square-foot restaurant in the Bradley Building under Tech Tower, "in the best neighborhood ever," Klemis says.

*This story has been edited for length. Read the rest of the story at [c.gatech.edu/tendermemories](https://c.gatech.edu/tendermemories).*