

G. N. GETMAN: A PIONEER



Gerald Nathan Getman, O.D., D.O.S., Sc.D.
August 24, 1913 - April 9, 1990

Optomety lost a dedicated pioneer and dear friend in early April, 1990. G. N. Getman, O.D., D.O.S., Sc.D., passed away, quietly, at his home in Waldorf, Md. Jerry had contributed so much for so long, it is hard to believe that he is gone.

Getman graduated from the Northern Illinois College of Optometry in 1937 and received an honorary Doctor of Ocular Sciences degree from ICO in 1950. He was conferred an honorary Doctor of Science Degree by the State University of New York College of Optometry in 1986.



From the left A.M. Skeffington, O.D., Mary Jane Skeffington and G.N. Getman, O.D.

Coming from an optometric family, Jerry was in private practice in Luverne, Minn. from 1937 to 1967. He took frequent leaves from his practice to work with many of the greats in education, child development and optometry, including Skeffington, Crow, Ewalt (on the Baltimore Myopia Project), Streff, Halstead, Spache, Betts, Barsch, Young, Renshaw, Harmon and many others. A most significant experience was the opportunity to work with Arnold Gesell, M.D., at the Yale University Clinic of Child Development from 1946 to 1950. While at Yale, Getman

worked closely with Gesell and made significant contributions to the landmark book, "Vision, Its Development in Infant and Child," published in 1949. After retiring from private practice, Jerry accepted the appointment as Director of Research in Child Development at The Pathway School in Audubon, Pa.

His other academic experiences included positions at Purdue University, Texas Women's University, University of Groninger in the Netherlands, the University of Sydney in Australia and as a full-time Associate Professor at the Southern California College of Optometry, 1974-76.

Jerry dedicated a great deal of his professional life to working with educators. He served as a consultant to The Gateway School in New York, Lee-Valle School in Pennsylvania and numerous other schools and school districts in California, Colorado, South Dakota and Wisconsin during his long career.

Among the dozens of awards and honors received by Jerry over the years, was the Apollo Award, the highest award presented in optometry, from the American Optometric Association, in 1967, for "Distinguished service to the visual welfare of mankind." He received the Pioneer Award in 1950 from the National Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (now LDA) for "Distinguished professional contributions to the discovery of knowledge for the improvement of the welfare of children with learning disabilities."

The College of Optometrists in Vision Development recognized Jerry by naming one of their two major awards in his honor.

"Jerry will always be remembered for his significant contributions to our profession. His philosophy and teachings will continue to be a concrete foundation to all who practice developmental optometry. The College of Optometrists in Vision Development proudly established an annual award in his name in 1971. The G.N. Getman Award, given each year at our annual meeting, is our highest award in clinical recognition. Recipients must meet a demanding list of criteria including a devotion for practicing developmental optometry which exceeds all else. This award will always be an everlasting testimonial to Jerry's career."

Steven A. Levin, O.D.

A Clinical Associate of the OEP Foundation for more than 54 years, Jerry's contributions to optometric literature were surpassed by very few in the profession. His contributions to OEP Curriculum II courses include: *Developmental Vision*, with Glenna Bullis, 1950-1951; *Visual Training At Work*, 1952-1953; *Visual Training At Work*, 1955-1956; *Developmental Vision*, with N. C. Kephart, Ph.D., 1957-1958; *Developmental Vision*, with N. C. Kephart, Ph.D., 1958-1959; *Operational Vision*, 1959-1960; *Optometric Child Care And Guidance*, with Ray Barsch, O.D., 1960-1961; *Optometric*

Child Care And Guidance, 1963-1964; *Optometric Child Care And Guidance*, 1964-1965; *Vision, Audition And Problems Of Learning*, 1968- 1969; *Language Of Visual Performance*, Series 14, 1969-1970; *Vision Development And The Analytical Examination*, 1970-1971; *Optometric Consultant In Early Childhood Education*, with Bruce M. May, O.D., 1973-1974; *Optometric Dialogue*, 1975-1976; *Optometric Analysis Of Visual Performance*, 1976-1977; *Optometric Analysis Of Visual Performance*, 1977-1978.

Two of OEP's most popular pamphlets were also contributed by Jerry: *Educator's Guide And Checklist* and *Parents' Guide And Checklist*.



Visual Research Group, Ohio State University, 1952.

OEP President J. Baxter Swartwout, O.D., remembers Jerry as a friend and colleague:

"It was just 40 years ago that I first met Jerry Getman. He was a lecturer at the first Eastern States Congress in New York City and I was a senior student at Columbia University School of Optometry. His lecture included information about a new procedure called "book retinoscopy." Several students went back to the college clinic and saw for ourselves the very changes he discussed.

"My experience at that first congress greatly influenced my mode of practice from the very outset. And, Jerry Getman continued to influence me and thousands of optometrists all these years. His teaching and enthusiasm will be sorely missed by all who knew and loved him. He has left a heritage with us that will benefit generations yet to come."

J. Baxter Swartwout, O.D.



OEP Section on Child Vision Care & Guidance, back row from the left: R. Wayne Knight, G. N. Getman, Robert W. Henry, front" Homer Hendrickson, Mrs. Cavonne Matus, George Slade.

He also authored several other major works. "How to Develop Your Child's Intelligence," was originally published in 1957 as mimeographed sheets with line drawings. The book form, published in 1962, and currently in its 8th edition, with more than 12 printings, has been translated into German and French. It is difficult to estimate the number of copies in print or, even more significantly, the number of lives which have been positively influenced by the concepts presented in this classic on child and vision development.

"Since meeting Jerry and Dr. Arnold Gesell speaking at the Northwest Congress in 1949, and meeting his wonderful wife, Clara, and family for the first time in Luverne at his summer classes for optometrists in 1954, he has had a tremendous and positive influence on my personl and optometric life. Of the thousands of optometrists I've met and worked with, worldwide, Jerry was the most energetic, untiring, dedicated and giving person. He taught and championed the cause of vision development and guidance in infants, children and adults, by parents, teachers and behavioral optometrists, so each could enjoy and succeed in learning, earning and life in general. His exemplary dedication has thus touched millions of lives and he'll be remembered for

his many contributions to the behavioral aspects of the practice of optometry."

Homer Hendrickson, O.D.

"Developmental Optometry," the summary of Jerry's philosophy for optometrists, was published in 1987. In the foreword to the first edition, Jerry paid tribute to the Child Vision Care Section of the OEP Foundation for the contribution that group made to optometry. Composed of optometrists R. W. Knight, W. R. Henry, George C. Slade and Homer H. Hendrickson (and, of course, G. N. Getman as Chairman), the Child Vision Care Section offered more than 200 three-day seminars from 1957 through 1975 to audiences large and small across the United States and internationally.

At the time of his death, Jerry was working on a revision of "Developmental Optometry." OEP will be working with Research Publications to insure the continued availability of this important optometric text.

The appendix of "Developmental Optometry" refers to Jerry's latest manuscript, "Smart in Everything ... Except School." OEP will also be working with Research Publications to make certain that this book is published. The posthumous publication of "Smart in Everything ... Except School" will be a fitting tribute to the contributions that Jerry made to the profession.

In addition to these publications and the aforementioned contributions to the OEP literature, Jerry authored more than 200 papers for optometric and educational



journals in the United States and internationally.

The lectures he delivered are far too numerous to record. Jerry was the featured speaker at state, regional and national educational seminars and congresses held under the auspices of OEP and through organized optometry. He lectured in many countries abroad, including Australia, the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium and Sweden. In Holland there are two 'Getmanstichting' clinics dedicated in his honor.

Optometric leaders from around the world join their US colleagues in praise of Jerry's dedication to optometry, worldwide:

"Jerry conducted many seminars during his long and illustrious career. The SOE CECO Course No. 65 held in Italy in March of this year was the final educational meeting of a fruitful life as a teacher. We are grateful for the opportunity.

"The European Society of Optometry will dedicate most of the next 'SOE Communication' (official publication of SOE) to his seminar in Sirmione. We want to keep Jerry in our minds and hearts, remembering him as he was there, sharing his humanity and his knowledge with all of us. We shall always remember him as he was when we were together a few weeks ago.

"Jerry, you are still with us, the European optometrists. You will be with us forever."

Ugo Frescura



Dr. Getman presenting recognition award to Ugo Frescura at 1985 Leadership Conference. From the left: Bob Williams, Ugo Frescura, Homer Hendrickson, G.N. Getman

"Jerry Getman mastered the art of movement, orientation, identification and communication. He was able to reach, grasp and manipulate with

kindness and then release his great knowledge so that those of all ages who came in contact with him could easily learn. We salute a great pioneer and a giant among men. Optometry will be the poorer for his passing. We offer our deep condolences to his dear family."

Selwyn Super

Jerry served as the Director of Education for the Studt Foundation for 14 years, arranging more than 50 one-day practica for students, the Southern California College of Optometry and the Pennsylvania College of Optometry.

"What a fortunate day it was when the newly formed Studt Foundation, through one of its trustees, Homer Hendrickson, was able to obtain Jerry Getman as its program chairman. Jerry's masterful way of putting together the best speakers, content, continuity and developing interest in optometric visual training, gave the Foundation 47 successful Practica these past 14 years, not only in Southern California but also accredited courses at Pennsylvania College of Optometry. His special guiding hand has helped change the lives and direction of thousands of people who have benefitted and will benefit in the future from visual enhancement programs.

"Jerry's lectures at the Practica platforms were always a highlight at 'must attend' events. His inspiration led, not only hundreds of undergraduates, but also practicing optometrists and optometric assistants into this wonderful field of service to patients. How proud my father, Walter, would have been to know that Jerry would fulfill his reason for establishing the Foundation. The funding of these Practica shall continue, but the Foundation will never be able to replace Jerry as its guiding light. How proud we all feel that we were close enough for him to touch our lives.

"Thank you Jerry."

Donald E. Studt

Professionally active until his last days, Jerry prepared a paper which he gave to attendees at his lectures in Italy and Holland in March and which



was used for the introduction of the fifth elective two-day course for students at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in April. The course was held under the auspices of The Studt Foundation for which he had arranged 43 one-day Practica for students of the Southern California College of Optometry since 1976. A copy, sent just days before his death to his lifelong friend and colleague, Dr. Homer Hendrickson, is presented on page 96 as Jerry's final contribution to optometric literature.

At his family's request, the Getman Memorial Fund has been established at the OEP Foundation. The Fund will be used to support those areas of optometry that were of particular interest to Jerry, including the developmental philosophy of vision care; programs for optometric students; and the expansion of behavioral optometry internationally. A Committee of friends and colleagues will administer the fund. Those who knew him, benefited from his teachings, and are interested in making contributions should mail their gifts to: Getman Memorial Fund, c/o OEP Foundation, 2912 S. Daimler, Santa Ana, CA 92705. Details on page 104.

Those who knew Jerry are richer for the experience. He fought many battles for behavioral/developmental optometry during his all too brief lifetime, as often with his friends as with his detractors. Optometry worldwide is better prepared to provide quality clinical care to its patients because of these challenges. We are greater for having known him and lesser that he is gone. He will be remembered as one of the true pioneers and major contributors to our profession.