



Robert Williams, LHD

Costa Mesa, California

Executive Director

Optometric Extension Program

Foundation

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We will get to some of the back stories mentioned in my prior guest editorial over time, but we may need to change some of the names to protect the innocent. For now, there was another phenomenon at the 1st ICBO in 1990 that caught our attention. Some 16 “optoms” were wandering around the halls of the Loews Hotel and Monte Carlo Convention Center wearing identical jerseys. At least that is what they called them...“jerseys.” They looked like pullovers or sweaters to me, but I was just starting to learn Australian. These were jerseys, probably made from merino wool, straight from Down Under.

The Australian College of Behavioural Optometry had recently emerged from what had been “OEP Australia.” The Aussies represented a significant percentage of the non-European attendance at the 1st ICBO. They were determined to attract attention and perhaps be awarded the 2nd ICBO, tentatively scheduled for 1994. I think the OEP Board had already decided that Australia was to be the location of the next ICBO, and they may have even dropped a hint to some of the Aussies, but they needed them to sell the venue to both European and American attendees. Australia is a long flight from anyplace in the world (except New Zealand). One does not book that flight casually! I even seem to recall hearing “Waltzing Matilda” being sung in the Loews Hotel hallways but admit that might have been me!

I recall having several very amazing Australian optometrists on that program, nominated by the organizers with recommendations from ACBO. I do not remember all 16 of them, but Bev Roberts or Claire Alexander might. I do know we have lost several of that group. ACBO won the day, and the venue was announced at the closing banquet. Looking into travel plans, I found out that it was a 14-hour direct flight

from LAX to Sydney, with three full-length movies and three meals served. But, the anticipation was building already, over three years in advance.

In the ensuing 40 years, ACBO and Australasian behavioural optometry have become very prominent in worldwide vision care. E. B. Alexander, Homer Hendrickson, Jerry Getman, and Greg Gilman contributed to the development of ACBO, but for the most part they did it themselves. Self-reliant lot they are and not afraid to tell you so! What they did object to, and finally let it be known loud and clear, was that they were not about to be talked down to! ACBO began inviting an internationally renowned practitioner to Australia each year for a series of seminars. Using the Gilman model, they would set up three or four seminars in a two-week period. It was a marathon for the speakers. It seems the first several lecturers assumed that all Australian optometrists were totally unaware of anything Skeffington and Associates had published on the topics, or that behavioral was spelled without a ‘u’! This was far from reality. In fact, E. B. Alexander, founding President of OEP circa 1928, had taken a trunk load of OEP publications on a cruise in 1964 and dropped it off with Keith Woodland, maybe just short of dropping the trunk into Sydney Harbour, with a message that basically said, “Read all this then call me!” They listened to and learned from every visitor from that point forward! However, about 1968 or so, Chris Henderson wrote to OEP requesting an ‘interpreter.’ Seems OEP had invented a clinical language that did not translate well into Australian! OEP sent Homer Hendrickson—meticulous, patient, straightforward Homer—to sit with and share OEP insights with a small group of Australians so they could then translate into Australian and share with their brethren! And it worked.

But ICBO and Australia is not what I really want to talk about here. I want to talk about people and the OEP root philosophy of openly sharing for the good of the profession and patients who need our unique vision care.

In the early days, a primary means of intra-professional sharing was the OEP Papers, mailed monthly to all Associates, and the OEP Study Groups that met to discuss the papers. At one point, there were some 450 active OEP Study Groups. Size ranged from 2 members to dozens. Some were so well known

they were almost notorious. Others were just a few dedicated clinicians getting together periodically to share cases and clinical insights, openly and willingly, with colleagues in their own community. They were not competitors but Clinical Associates...Skeffington's Associates.

I have heard stories of optometrists not referring patients who would have benefited from optometric care to other optometrists who could provide that care, vision therapy or specialty contact lenses, for example, for fear of losing that patient and their family to the new optometrist. While it may be a bit naïve, I want to think OEP Associates would not hesitate to refer for specialty care because it was the right thing to do. A "pay it forward" moment, if you will. And the Associate who got the referral would make sure that patient and her family were sent back to the referring doctor.

As an aside and for possible future attention, I am convinced that fully half of all the care that optometrists could possibly provide is sent out the door of optometric offices every day in this country and around the world because ODs do not want to be bothered to provide specialized care or choose not to refer to a colleague. Optometry can be so much more than it is, just saying!

An early formalized example of the sharing, paying it forward, was the Ohio State Meeting (not the Ohio State University School of Optometry), hosted by Dr. Sam Renshaw. Each summer, for many years, 20-40 optometrists and related professionals would descend on Dr. Renshaw's labs in Columbus to talk, study, experiment, test each other....as well as smoke, joke, and drink excessively! Did I just see that the Renshaw Papers, 25 years of his insights and wisdom, has been reintroduced in digital form? A brilliant man who contributed extensively to optometric knowledge and clinical care. Well worth a read, and any related expense.

A more modern version of the Ohio State Meeting emerged as the Joint Conference on Theoretical and Clinical Optometry held at Pacific University for some 20 plus years starting in 1986. JCTCO (or 'jucto' as the Aussies dubbed it!) was the result of a vision by Jimmy Tumblin, OEP President from 1983-87, and supported by Dean Wid Bleything of Pacific University College of Optometry. Jimmy's thought was a 'town and gown' kind of interaction, bringing the best of clinical optometry into contact with academic and research scholars. Wid supported it wholeheartedly. Homer Hendrickson guided the first JCTCO program. We all sat in the unusual-for-Forest Grove 100 degree-plus weather in the non-air conditioned lecture halls and dorms at Pacific in July 1986...in coat and tie! That was Homer's role model, and we dare not deviate from it...until Homer did not attend in 1987. That's when I initiated the T-shirt contest, and everyone thought it was brilliant! It was!

Among other things, Jimmy saw the conference as a possible leadership development opportunity and a chance to observe young, developing OEP Associates in their native habitat, if you will, talking clinical optometry and sharing clinical insights. There were many important outcomes from Joint Conference, including several future OEP Board members and Presidents. But all of that is for another time!

Correspondence regarding this article should be emailed to Robert Williams, LHD, at rwill23@hotmail.com. All statements are the author's personal opinions and may not reflect the opinions of the representative organization, OEPF, Optometry & Visual Performance, or any institution or organization with which the author may be affiliated. Permission to use reprints of this article must be obtained from the editor. Copyright 2021 Optometric Extension Program Foundation. Online access is available at www.oepf.org and www.ovpjournal.org.

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