

Guest Editorial • A Trip Through Time - ICBO

Robert Williams, LHD • Costa Mesa, California



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1985-2014

I got my first glasses in the 4th grade. My teacher noticed I squinted when looking at the blackboard and told my parents. I went to an optometrist and came away with glasses. I never wore them. (I found out later that my sight was 20/30, but had no idea what that meant.) Only one other kid in my class had glasses. He was farsighted and needed them to read. By the time I was 13, I was wearing -4.50 lenses. I never read for pleasure and struggled through high school and college, managing a B average, which was good enough for me.

Fast forward to 1974. With BA in history in hand, married with two kids and a mortgage, I met Richard Hopping, the new President of the Southern California College of Optometry, while I was working with the Boy Scouts of America. The back story to that meeting is for another time, but eventually, Dick asked me to apply for a position at the College as Development (fundraising) Associate. It was greased, as they say, and even though the Development Director was less than enthusiastic, I got the job.

I shared an office with the Director of Alumni Relations. She only worked part-time, so I ended up seeing and working with many graduating students in her absence. I also started to get to know some of the 4th years; Greg Gilman graduated in 1977. In this practice, Greg specialized in vision therapy, while his new partner focused on contact lenses.

After leaving the College, I joined the Optometric Extension Program Foundation's growing administration in January 1982. Greg's office was in Irvine, a few miles from the OEP office in Santa Ana. Because he was the closest OEP Clinical Associate to the office, becoming a patient in his office was natural.

I had had a full OEP 21-point examination a few months earlier (another back story for another time), so the extent and even the focus of the exam process

were not foreign. During the exam, Greg asked me how long I could read before feeling fatigued. I had no idea, so I said a couple hours, I guess. He said that was pretty good! In fact, it took me a full year to read James Michener's *Centennial*, a 1000-page tome about Colorado, written in the traditional Michener style. Yep, 3 pages a night, through my single-vision distance lenses. About 15 minutes, and I was out. But I did not connect that experience and Greg's question.

Even though I was only 35 years old, he asked me at the end of the exam if I had ever worn reading glasses. He might have said 'near-point lenses,' but I had no idea what that meant! I said no but that I would be willing to try them. Most of my day was spent with written material and reading. I got up about every 15 to 20 minutes to wander about, not knowing that this was a stress-relieving activity. Then he told me that I did not have much 'plus acceptance,' whatever that meant! He prescribed single-vision near-point lenses, +0.25. Not a 0.50 or a 0.75 but yep, a quarter!

My office at the time was about 10' by 10', with the door about 5 feet from my desk. Any time someone poked their head in to talk to me, I had to switch from my +0.25 single visions to my distance glasses because the blur was intolerable! That lasted about 6 months before I got used to the distance blur, but my reading speed increased, along with comprehension and enjoyment. Who knew? I went on to read everything Michener ever wrote as quickly as I could find the books, except *Poland*. I just could not sound out those long names and places! I have vowed to try one more time to complete the set.

Focus again on 1982. Greg was getting restless. His desire to travel grabbed him big time. His mentor and close friend, G.N. Getman, got to talking about international optometry and behavioral optometry around the world. Jerry could not travel like he once did and more or less anointed Greg as his disciple. Greg and his wife, Karen, got excited and started writing letters to every OEP Associate in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. Dropping Jerry's name got many replies that the Gilman name might not have! After several months, the itinerary started to emerge. They sold their house, two practices, and two cars, put stuff in storage, packed a suitcase or two, booked flights, and hit the road! Eighteen months later, Greg and Karen were back in California, having visited more than 30

countries on 4 continents and given over 50 seminars to 2500 vision care specialists.

He wanted to talk to the OEP Board of Directors. He had an idea that would knock their socks off. The Board was meeting in Anaheim in conjunction with a leadership development conference. Greg presented his idea: "World Conference on Vision Therapy. Everyone wants to go to Paris!" The Board looked a little less than enthusiastic! The Board was made up of all Americans, who did not travel all that much except for holidays. They did not know more than a few international optometrists. The Board agreed to consider the idea and moved on to the next item on the agenda, after maybe 15 minutes of discussion. Greg left the meeting disheartened. I walked out with him and told him to let me see what I could do. I ended up introducing him to a couple of my new friends. Elisabeth Antoine and Ugo Frescura attended the leadership conference as President and Executive Secretary of the European Optometric Society (SOE). SOE hosted an annual Congress in Europe and had expertise in organizing such gatherings. Greg and I introduced the idea to them, and the enthusiasm level went up immediately.

It took a while to get the idea to materialize, but in November of 1990 in Monte Carlo, Monaco, at the Loews Hotel overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, Greg

was the first speaker at the first International Congress of Behavioural Optometry, co-hosted by the OEP Foundation and the European Society of Optometry. The 8th ICBO was held in Sydney, Australia, in April 2018, the first one I missed. OEP will host the 9th ICBO in Canada in 2024. Greg passed about 5 years ago, but I hope that his best friend, the second Mrs. Gilman, the former Dr. Beth du Bruyne, will attend with me as an honored guest.

ICBO has taken on a life of its own, but it would never have been born without my friend and personal optometrist, Dr. Gregory Gilman.

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Ins and Outs of Stroke and Brain Injury Chris Borgman, OD and Melissa Zarn, OD

Monday, May 10, 2021-Tuesday, June 08, 2021
Course dates: 6 lectures of 2 hours: 5/10, 11, 24, 25 and 6/7, 8

Description: A review of structural and functional results of stroke and other brain injuries. The series will include six 2-hour lectures covering essential definitions, statistics, epidemiology, signs and symptoms, urgent versus emergent issues, neuro-anatomy, the impact of visual deficits on function, neuro-imaging, tips to maximize your optometric evaluation, treatment modalities, and plans. The final 2-hour block is dedicated to discussing cases. Bring your questions, and we will work through them together!

To purchase this course, click this [LINK](#).