

A TRIBUTE TO HENRY W HOFSTETTER, OD, PHD, FAAO: RECOLLECTIONS FROM STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In this article Dr. Linda Casser constructs a biographical profile of Henry W Hofstetter, OD, PhD from the point-of-view of his students.

KEYWORDS

Hofstetter; history biography; memoir; Indiana University, optometry education; Optometric Historical Society; optometry history

The annals of the profession of optometry have documented well the outstanding achievements of Dr. Henry W. Hofstetter and his enormous contributions to optometric education, research, and patient care.¹ On the occasion of acknowledging the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Optometric Historical Society (OHS), of which Dr. Hofstetter was a co-founder, it is a pleasure to have an opportunity to provide some informal perspectives about Dr. Hofstetter from a few of his former students in the Doctor of Optometry degree program at the Indiana University School of Optometry (IUSO).

As a student, it is sometimes hard to see beyond the demands of the optometric curriculum—lectures, laboratories, patient care, assignments, examinations, etc. In addition, as very new and emerging members of the profession, it can also be challenging for students to fully understand and appreciate the stature and accomplishments of their faculty members. And, for a variety of reasons, students don't always have an opportunity to get to know a faculty member as a "person."

The 65 members of the Class of 1978 at the Indiana University School of Optometry (IUSO), of which I was one, were fortunate to have Dr. Hofstetter as a faculty member towards the end of his illustrious academic career. More specifically, he served as the instructor for our introduction to optometry / history of optometry course. This provided a wonderful educational opportunity since Dr. Hofstetter had been such a direct contributor to much of our profession's

history and evolving stature. In addition, since Dr. Hofstetter was the founding Director of the Division of Optometry at Indiana University,² which was ultimately renamed the Indiana University School of Optometry, the opportunity to study at the IUSO in the mid-1970s in a modern facility was substantially the result of his leadership.

Putting our Best Foot Forward as a Profession

As member of the IUSO Class of 1978, I have several recollections to share about Dr. Hofstetter. I found him to be professional, humble, unassuming, well-organized, and attentive to detail. There was an aspect of Dr. Hofstetter's course that has stayed with me to this day: he felt that it was important that we spell "optometrically" related terminology correctly. For example, I recall one quiz in his course in which we were expected to correctly spell "accommodation" (not one "m" but two) and ophthalmic (not one "h" but two). I took this as an example of Dr. Hofstetter's approach toward guiding us to put our best foot forward as a profession in record-keeping, writing reports to other professionals, etc., which is a lesson I share with all of my students. Dr. Hofstetter's commitment to accurate spelling made eminent sense given that he authored five editions of the Dictionary of Visual Science. I am proud to own an autographed copy of the book.

Enjoying Life's Lighter Moments

At one point during his course, Dr. Hofstetter mentioned

that one of his hobbies was collecting optometry-related cartoons. To this day, when I see a cartoon that has an eye and / or vision theme, I think about Dr. Hofstetter taking the opportunity to enjoy life's lighter moments, yet keeping our profession in mind.

I believe that Dr. Nelson Whitling, a fellow member of the IUSO Class of 1978 who recently retired after 38 successful years as a private practitioner in Pennsylvania, perfectly captures our collective memory of Dr. Henry W. Hofstetter: "I mainly remember Dr. Hofstetter as a very gentle and classy man who was a good teacher and one of the giants of our profession."

Recollections from Richard Meetz, IUSO Class of 1976

Richard Meetz, O.D., M.S., who went on to a distinguished career as a faculty member at the Indiana University School of Optometry, including serving as an instructor for our Class of 1978, has very generously shared his recollections below about Dr. Hofstetter. In reading them, it made me think that the IUSO Class of 1976 was more rowdy than the Class of 1978!

"Dr. Hofstetter always strived to make the students feel welcome. Early on as a student I recall this story he told about when he and his wife, Jane, arrived in Bloomington to head up the Indiana University optometry program. Upon entering town, they stopped at a gas station to fill up. Dr. Hofstetter asked the elderly attendant if he thought they would be happy here. After a long moment the attendant asked if they were happy where they had come from. Dr. Hofstetter replied 'why yes, they had been' to which the attendant said, 'then you'll be happy here.' The message I took from this was if you are happy with your life, then you can be happy no matter where you go.

"Dr. Hofstetter had such a wonderful sense of humor and enjoyed the students. Before 1968, when the classes were small, he and his wife Jane would take great delight in having the classes over to their home, but by the 1970s the classes were much larger and our class was much more rowdy than those in earlier years.

"I recall the class Optometric History, which of course Dr. Hofstetter taught. He lectured straight-faced in a deep not quite monotone voice. On one mischievous occasion, our whole class gathered dark plastic spectacle frames, similar to the ones he wore, from the Ophthalmic Optics lab, and we all put them on the first time he turned around to write on the chalkboard. Struggling to hold a straight face, he continued his lecture, then as he turned to again write on the board, the

class switched to all wearing the blue up-swept Judy frame that was so popular in those days. Again, he held a straight face only to finally laugh as the class again switched the frames behind his back. All in all, I think he enjoyed us.

Dr. Hofstetter gave me some very important advice when I was a very junior faculty member about the next step in my career. He gave me many pieces of advice that would shape my future. Three I remember well:

"1. Get a Master's degree in an area that would be outside of, but complement, optometry: He, along with Dr. Ed Marshall, were my main motivation to pursue a Master's degree from the University of Michigan School of Public Health in 1988 which opened so many doors for me.

"2. Get some real world clinical experience: He told me that a good clinical teacher needs the confidence that they could really run an office. 'Prove to yourself that you can not only run an office, but also care for people and make an income.' He felt that being able to run an office was the true mark of a successful doctor. 'For a clinical teacher, go in with the notion that every patient has something to teach you. Those will be the classroom stories that will make you a great teacher.' He recommended me to a rural area alum as someone who could temporarily cover a few open days a week until a full time replacement could be found. That led to a 24-year experience of providing rural eye care and unique clinical examples for two decades of graduates.

"3. Join and get involved in the American Academy of Optometry (AAO): I became a full fellow in 1979 and after 39 years have been an active presenter, lecturer, and a strong supporter of the AAO and its programs."³

To Sit Out or Dance

Richard Meetz shared one more anecdote about Dr. Hofstetter: "At a formal dinner (likely at the Academy) my wife, Lois, and I were at a table with Dr. Hofstetter and his wife Jane. Towards the end of the dinner the music picked up and a dance floor was cleared. After we watched a set or two, Dr. Hofstetter and Jane returned to the table where he promptly asked Lois to dance. Shocked, Lois exclaimed 'but I can't dance' and before he could respond, Jane leaned across laughing, 'neither can he but it has never stopped him.' He was such an old school gentlemen that Lois couldn't refuse him, and she had a rather good time. But, Lois insisted that we take dance lessons in the future, which we did. Nothing much stopped him."³

Conclusion

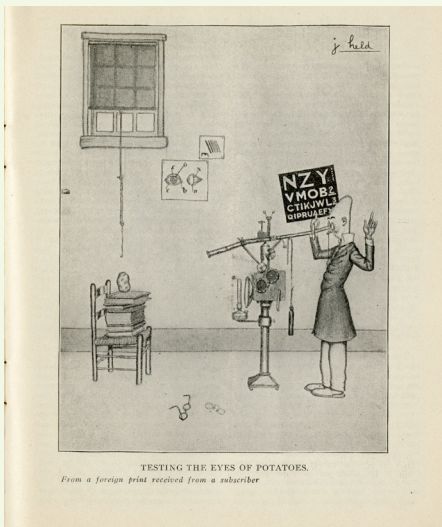
I am sure that the readers of *Hindsight* and other former students of Dr. Hofstetter have many more memories and recollections that they could share, but of this I am certain: we are fortunate to have learned from such a special, gentle but fun-loving giant within our profession.

References

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3. Meetz R. Memories of Dr. Hofstetter, personal communication, 2018.

OPTOMETRY CARTOONS



"Testing the Eyes of Potatoes." *The Optometrical Record* 1914; 1: 469.

Did you know that cartoons, like optometry, have a history dating all the way back to Leonardo da Vinci? While British satirist William Hogarth (1697-1764) is credited with the first political cartoons, an early form of caricature developed by da Vinci is considered the first renderings of the technique employed by today's editorial and spot cartoonists.¹

In her tribute to OHS co-founder Henry W Hofstetter, Dr. Linda Casser mentions that Dr. Hofstetter collected cartoons featuring topics relevant to optometry—and he was not alone! The manuscript

collections held in the Archives & Museum of Optometry hold several scrapbooks compiled by optometry's leaders that feature cartoons and other items clipped from newspapers and magazines.

Whether editorial commentary, advertisements or simply meant to inspire a chuckle, cartoons can be a treasure trove of historical information because they capture the mood of an individual or a society at a specific point in space and time, often succinctly communicating a complicated idea, attitude or concept in a way that only an artist can do. They are also one of the scrapbooker's favorite pieces of ephemera and collections of cartoons can add dimension to these rare resources, painting "personal constructions" of events or time periods "that contribute to the telling"² of optometry's story!

Valuable as they are, cartoons in archival scrapbooks often pose a special set of problems for archivists because newspaper—the most common media used to publish cartoon spots—is highly acidic and fragile, and the glue or tape used to adhere these items to scrapbook pages in most cases have not stood the test of time. For this reason,

preserving scrapbooks can be an urgent and expensive endeavor for a small repository. Luckily, modern scrapbookers can find acid-free albums and "archive-safe" adhesive tools in art and craft stores. If you are a collector of optometry cartoons or other ephemera, please reach out to the Archives & Museum of Optometry for guidance on the best materials to use and ways to store your precious assemblage!

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