In this part of the series, we will look at the administrators of the Pacific University College of Optometry in the early 1970s. In the present era, when many optometry schools have numerous assistant deans and associate deans for various functions, I wondered about my recollection that we had only three administrators. That memory was borne out by an examination of some of the Pacific University Bulletins from that time.

Bradford Wild was the dean during my class’ four years in school. The director for our years in Clinic was Earle L. Hunter. The director of Financial Affairs during most of our years in school there was Richard Septon.

Bradford W. Wild, O.D.

Bradford Williston Wild was born in 1927, the son of Fall River, Massachusetts optometrist, George H. Wild. He earned an A.B. degree in physics and mathematics from Brown University (1949) and B.S. (1951) and M.S. (1952) degrees in optometry from Columbia University. His identical twin brother, Bruce W. Wild, was his classmate at both Brown and Columbia. After optometry school, they joined their father in practice in Fall River, where Bruce continued on for 35 years.

During part of his year in private practice, Wild was also a research optometrist at the U.S. Naval Medical Research Laboratory at the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Connecticut. He then served in the U.S. Army, with most of his time being spent in the Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic at the Army Hospital at Fort Carson, Colorado. After discharge from the Army, he entered the physiological optics graduate program at Ohio State University where he completed his Ph.D. under the direction of Glenn Fry in 1959.

Wild was on the Ohio State optometry faculty from 1959 to 1969, serving as clinic director and teaching courses in geometric, physical and ophthalmic optics. He was dean
of the Pacific University College of Optometry from 1969 to 1974, associate dean of the University of Alabama Birmingham (UAB) School of Optometry from 1974 to 1986, and then dean for the UAB optometry school from 1986 to 1994. Sometime after his retirement, he moved back to northwestern Oregon.

Wild was a leader in several optometric organizations. He was president of the Ohio Optometric Association in 1966-67, chair of the Council on Optometric Education in 1984-85 and president of the American Academy of Optometry in 1979-80. The Academy faced some difficult issues during Wild’s two years of presidency, one of which was the prohibition by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) of restrictions against advertising by optometrists, which had been one of the requirements for fellowship in the Academy. In his 1979 report to the Academy, Wild stated:

“Of great concern to the Academy are the regulations of the Federal Trade Commission. The regulations specifically prohibit any form of discrimination based on advertising. As you know the prohibition of advertising is one of the items of the code of conduct for all Academy Fellows. The authority of the FTC is currently being challenged in the courts. Until this matter is resolved legal counsel has advised us that it will be necessary to refrain from enforcing this portion of our code of conduct. However we are confident that all Academy Fellows will continue to adhere to our traditional tenets of practice despite the necessity of dropping, hopefully temporarily, the enforcement of the prohibition of advertising from our code of conduct.”

Wild authored over 40 publications in various optometry journals and was the co-author of the chapters on single-vision lenses, tinted lenses and multifocal lenses in the third edition of Clinical Refraction by Borish. In 1973, Wild received an honorary Doctor of Ocular Science degree from Southern California College of Optometry.

I first met Brad Wild in 1969. In the summer after my junior year in college, family friends who lived in Forest Grove, Oregon, invited my family and me for a visit after they learned of my interest in optometry. During that visit, I looked over the Pacific University campus and the optometry building. I dropped in to the dean’s office unannounced and Dr. Wild graciously invited me to sit down and talk. The significant amount of time we spent discussing optometry and Pacific University was one of the factors which convinced me that Pacific was where I wanted to attend optometry school. In my subsequent years there, I always felt comfortable seeking his advice.

In the first semester of our first year in optometry school, we took a course from Dr. Wild called Optometric Orientation. He talked about the nature and state of the optometric profession and about some common eye and vision conditions. He said that he wanted us to know about the profession we would be entering and to be able to answer questions we would get from family and friends. Later in the curriculum, he lectured on progressive addition lenses, an area of his expertise. He had a smooth and confident lecture style, and he was dignified, but unassuming and approachable. Our class took a liking to him, and we named our intramural teams “Brad’s Boys.”

Years later, in the 1990s, I saw Dr. Wild when I gave a research talk to the optometry faculty at UAB. When there was an opportunity to speak to him after my talk, I wondered whether he would remember me from Pacific. That question was answered when he said in his usual kindly manner that he had known me longer than anyone else there had known me, and we had a nice conversation recalling those earlier days.

Earle L. Hunter III, O.D. (1929-2014)

Earle Hunter was born in Juneau, Alaska, in 1929. He attended Oregon State University and the University of Oregon before entering the U.S. Army in 1951. His military service included time as a medic in Korea. He then
attended Illinois College of Optometry, completing his doctor of optometry degree in 1957. He practiced optometry in Juneau for two years before moving to Oregon for better therapy opportunities for one of his children who had cerebral palsy.9

He established an optometry practice in McMinnville, Oregon, and practiced there until joining the Pacific University faculty in 1971.10 He was clinic director for the college of optometry from 1971 to 1974. He then moved to St. Louis, holding various positions with the American Optometric Association, ultimately serving as its executive director from 1987 to his retirement in 1995. He also served as special assistant to the dean at the University of Missouri St. Louis College of Optometry from 1999 to 2001.

Dr. Hunter was president of the Oregon Optometric Association in 1966-67, and received its Optometrist of the Year award in 1971.11 He was president of the St. Louis Association of Executives in 1983-84. He was presented with honorary D.O.S. degrees from Illinois College of Optometry in 1988 and New England College of Optometry in 1995.

Our classroom experience with Hunter consisted of the times that he met with us to give us instructions on operating procedures in the clinic. In addition to his clinic director duties, he served as a check-out doctor in the clinic. I remember him as being modest, caring, pleasant to talk to and work with, and very capable. Unbeknown to the optometry students, he was apparently quite a musician, playing piano in various local venues as a high school and college student.9,12

Richard D. Septon, O.D.

In the late 1970s, when I was in graduate school at Indiana University, I worked with Septon and others on a grant proposal for a study on myopia that would have involved a collaboration of Indiana University, Pacific University and New England College of Optometry. I found Septon to be very pleasant to work with, but unfortunately the grant was not funded.

Septon was on the Journal of Optometric Education Review Board for several years and was a consultant to the National Board of Examiners and to the American Optometric Association Council on Clinical Optometric Care. In 1984, he published a frequently cited paper showing an earlier initial age of wearing spectacles was associated with a higher amount of myopia developed by young adulthood.16 Scott Pike, O.D., a member of the Pacific University optometry class of 1970 and later a faculty member, remembers Septon as being “extremely kind and helpful, a good educator.”17

A Note on Staff

The administration of an optometry school depends heavily on dedicated staff members. In our years at Pacific in the early 1970s, there were two staff members who seemed to stand out as particularly valuable to the school. One was Marie Farr who served as secretary to Dr. Wild and to several other optometry school deans at Pacific. Mrs. Farr always seemed to be calm and highly organized.

Another notable staff member was Wilberta Teeter (1920-2014), affectionately known to students as “Mrs. T.” She had a B.A. degree and a library science degree from the University of Oregon.18,19 She was librarian and media specialist for the college of optometry from the late
1960s to her retirement in 1990.20 She was jovial and had a ready smile and was always eager to help regardless of what the problem might be.

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