

GUEST EDITORIAL: WHY OPTOMETRY HISTORY MATTERS

The best reason I ever heard as to why optometrists should know about the history of their profession was delivered by Dr. Roger Seelye at the 2016 American Optometric Association (AOA) annual meeting in Boston, MA. Dr. Seelye, a prominent Michigan doctor of optometry, was the recipient of the AOA Distinguished Service Award that year.

At one point in his acceptance speech, Dr. Seelye addressed the new graduates and the young optometrists in the audience. He said something like the following: "Optometry has made significant advances over the years. As you enter the profession, you will find yourself on third base, and let me tell you now, you didn't get there by hitting a triple."

My apologies to Dr. Seelye if I didn't get his quote exactly right. But his message was right on point. Optometry will depend on the next generation of optometrists to advance the profession. Yet if they enter their careers with a sense of contented entitlement, (or worse, blissful ignorance) our young O.D.s will not be able to lead us to the next level of achievement.

All optometrists, especially those who will be our leaders, must understand and appreciate that optometry as a profession is anything but entitled. And we must be anything but content. Our forefathers in this field have had to endure a hardscrabble existence to get us where we are today. Early optometrists faced discrimination, unfair media assaults, legal challenges, and nasty interprofessional squabbles.

There is wisdom to be gained by being aware of the adversity that past

optometric generations encountered. There were sacrifices that had to be made and battles that had to be fought. Along the way, brilliant victories were won. But there were also serious miscalculations made which the profession must never repeat.

The Optometric Historical Society (OHS) exists, in part, to inform our profession of the many lessons to be learned from our storied past. *Hindsight: Journal of Optometry History* serves as optometry's main receptacle of these lessons, and it continues to be the main narrator of optometry's past.

So why do optometrists need to learn about the history of their profession? Because you can't score a run if you remain stranded on third base.

I invite all my colleagues in optometry to join the Optometric Historical Society. It is the best means to learn about the legacy of our great profession, and to gain the insights necessary to advance ourselves to the next level.

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