

at that time. These inspiring stories illustrate their dedication, perseverance, accomplishments, and many “firsts” as female optometry students, practitioners, and leaders despite encountering obstacles inherent in change and as mirrored in our profession. Their efforts and success leave a legacy from which we all benefit and that is contributed to by female colleagues every day.

The submission of this Guest Editorial has provided an opportunity for me to reflect on the issue of women in optometry. If demographic trends continue toward the feminization of entering optometry students and ultimately optometric practitioners, it is interesting to consider that women have the potential of transitioning from the prospect of ruining optometry to the potential of continuing to raise optometry.

Much has been written over the years about the interpersonal styles and leadership attributes of men and women, yet each of us is different irrespective of our gender association. And, the expanding diversity of our profession beyond gender is vitally important. My hope / encouragement is that each current and future optometric student, resident, practitioner, and leader commit to, and actively demonstrate both individually and collectively, the following attributes to help ensure the vitality and stature of the profession of optometry:

- Actively embrace a caring, patient-centered approach
- Project confidence
- Practice strong communication skills, including active listening
- Model a dedication to excellence
- Tell and show who we are and what we do, and our role in the health care arena
- Commit to inclusivity
- Value constructive debate while fostering a culture of unity and civility
- Unlearn stereotypes that interfere with interpersonal skills and interactions
- Collaborate, both intra- and inter-professionally

- Serve as a mentor and positive role model who supports caring and leading
- Foster a sense of community
- Be action-oriented, especially in envisioning / articulating optometry's future
- Always be passionate about the profession
- Celebrate the contributions of the optometric profession throughout its history

If we consider the Snellen chart parallels with the coming calendar years in the 21st century, the risk is that our “acuity” may not improve chronologically since the year “2020” is ultimately followed by 2030, 2040, etc. Let us continue to set the clarity of “2020” in our individual and professional sights.

## References

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## Letter to the Editor:

When I saw the photos of Dr. James S. Wahl and Dr. William C. Ezell on the cover of the July, 2019 issue of *Hindsight*, I just had to read it all, because I always looked up to and admired both when I was a young man and now as an old man! This wonderful issue of *Hindsight* made me realize that I am part of optometric history and so proud to have met and known so many of our leaders over the past 55 years that I have practiced optometry.

I graduated in 1964 from Southern College of Optometry (SCO) at age 26. My wife Michele and I arrived in Griffin, Georgia in the summer of my graduation year to do a three month

“internship” with Dr. W. Randolph Gilbert, a prominent optometrist and Georgia optometry board member who I had not known previously. I think the man who fostered my interest in optometry, Dr. Edward H. Shannon, Sr., from my hometown of Gainesville, Georgia, had something to do with it. Dr. Shannon will always be my original sponsor and a person whom I idolized.

I was excited about the internship, but scared, as my wife was pregnant with our first son who was to be born that November. Dr. Gilbert had many interns before me, most of them becoming leaders in our profession and sadly, most of them now deceased. Dr. Gilbert paid me only \$50 per week, minus taxes! My wife and I rented a small apartment which cost more than I was being paid, but our parents were very generous, and we had saved money from Michele's teaching third grade in Memphis where she made a whopping \$240 a month during my years at SCO.

Later in the summer of 1964, I had been seeing patients and learning from both Dr. Gilbert and his optician for several weeks. I must have been doing a pretty good job, because one day Dr. Gilbert asked me if I would like to go up to Spartanburg, South Carolina with him to take the South Carolina Board exam. He picked me up the next morning in his sleek Rolls Royce Silver Cloud.

South Carolina in 1964 had zero applicants to take their optometry board exam. This was surprising because it was common practice back then to take exams in adjoining states. Both Dr. Gilbert and I passed and shortly afterwards received our lovely signed certificates of licensure to practice in the state of South Carolina. I was the only new graduate to be licensed there in 1964 and my license number was 432. All of the members of South Carolina board at that time, including Dr. Bill Ezell, are now deceased. I paid my out-of-state dues for more than 30 years and left that framed license on my office wall the entire time.

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