FROM THE EDITOR: THEME ISSUE ON OPTOMETRY IN THE U.S. MILITARY AND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The July, 2020 issue of *Hindsight* presented four memoirs of optometrists who served in the U.S. military in various challenging and important roles. This issue continues the theme of military optometry with interesting and inspiring reviews of the history of optometry in the U.S. military and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The articles in this issue illustrate how optometry struggled for recognition and then how it became an integral part of the care for service men and women and veterans.

An example of how far the status of optometry in the military has progressed can be seen in an editorial in the October 1, 1943, issue of *Optical Journal and Review of Optometry*. It was written in the midst of World War II and was titled "With retinoscope and floor-mop." It pointed out that: "Army commissions are now given to bacteriologists, pharmacists, chemists, physiotherapists and nutritionists. In many cases optometrists doing

refractions are privates and corporals and frequently are outranked by file clerks. These optometrists...are usually termed 'Assistant Refractionists,' being considered assistants to the medical officer in command, who signs every prescription whether or not he knows anything about eye work." The article highlighted the case of an optometrist who was expected to sweep and mop the hospital floors after his day's work as a refractionist. The optometrist objected because he "was not merely suffering personal dignity but his professional competence and the importance of his work were suffering in the eyes of the men."

The articles in this issue demonstrate how far optometry has come since then. One of the lessons of history is that the optometrists who made it possible for optometry to have the status and the opportunities to contribute that it has today should have our admiration and gratitude.

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