

EDITORIAL

BOB KRASKIN — OPTOMETRIC LEADER

A leader challenges, guides, and inspires. During his 45 years in Optometry, Dr. Robert A. Kraskin was a leader in every sense of the word. OEP and the optometric community were saddened to hear of his passing on May 14, 1996. He is survived by his wife, Marion and sons Stephen and Jeffrey. Dr. Kraskin practiced with Jeffrey in Washington, D.C. He was 68.

Dr. Kraskin's contributions to OEP and the profession were many and varied. He served as the Chair of the Invitational Skeffington Symposium on Vision from its inception in 1955. Over those 41 years, virtually every leader in the history of OEP and behavioral vision care shared the podium and sat in the gallery. In the unique format of the Symposium, all challenged and all were challenged. Countless practitioners were first introduced to the behavioral concepts at the Symposium. Dr. Kraskin's guidance and inspiration drove the young optometrist who attended the Skeffington to seek knowledge and find answers.

Always willing to share his insights, experience and knowledge, Dr. Kraskin lectured extensively in the United States and internationally. He authored several books, including five series in OEP's Curriculum II. His papers are the most sought of all OEP curriculum publications. Distribution reaches well into the tens of thousands and continues even though the original series, *Visual Training in Action*, was first published in 1965. His second series, *Lens Power in Action*, began in 1981.

Two other manuscripts were in progress when he was stricken with an unknown, debilitating illness several months ago.



Dr. Kraskin speaking at the First International Congress of Behavioral Optometry, 1990, Monte Carlo.

Dr. Kraskin's book, *You Can Improve Your Vision*, was published by Doubleday and Co. in 1968. A copy in the Skeffington Library is inscribed to OEP Founder, Dr. E.B. Alexander. It reads:

To Dr. E.B. Alexander-Alex, this book is not alone the result of my writing it; it represents, throughout its pages, your dream and ultimate realization to which you have dedicated your life - the growth and development of a profession - optometry.

With great affection and admiration,
Robert Kraskin, O.D.
10/18/68

His inscription is the epitome of Dr. Kraskin's life-long commitment to his profession. His dedication to the profession was recognized by his alma mater, the Pennsylvania College of Optometry, in 1995 when he was honored with the President's Medal at PCO's 75th Anniversary celebration.

In further testimony to his contributions to the profession and the patients he served, a scholarship was established in 1995 at PCO by Mr. Kirk Perrow, a long-time patient of Dr. Kraskin. The Robert A. Kraskin Behavioral Vision Award will perpetuate his life's mission, sharing the behavioral concept of vision, with all who have the desire to learn and understand.

Dr. Kraskin touched the lives of thousands during his life. Many have expressed their feelings in notes and letters to OEP in recent days.

His long-time friend and partner at the Skeffington Invitational, Dr. Paul Lewis of Silver Spring, Md., wrote: "After Bob's graduation from Pennsylvania College of Optometry, he came into my office to gain clinical insights into the value of visual training as a treatment program for central problems of vision. I was then his mentor. A very short time later, Bob became my mentor—and has been for over 40 years.

"Bob Kraskin was the smartest optometrist I ever knew. Any of us would be in a state of exaltation if we could add a trickle to the river of our collective knowledge...Bob Kraskin added a torrent. He was my colleague and my dear friend. I will miss him for the rest of my life."

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OEP President Joseph Sullivan, O.D., Wichita, Kan., remembers Dr. Kraskin, "as a real supporter of the Foundation, through his writing, lecturing and his questioning. Bob contributed to OEP as much by raising issues that the Board needed to be aware of and consider as through other means. His questions challenged the Board to constantly evaluate our Mission and our Goals. On more than one occasion the Board reconsidered a point because of a comment from Dr. Kraskin. We will miss his counsel as much as we will miss his educational contributions."

"My closest friend, my most esteemed colleague, my mentor, my lecturing partner: I was fortunate to tell him how much I cared about him in his lifetime," Harold Wiener, O.D., North Arlington, N.J.

Amiel Francke, Washington, D.C., writes, "Bob Kraskin introduced me to developmental optometry. He was my friend and mentor. I am grateful for the opportunity to have known and worked with him."

From COVD President Dr. Donald Janiuk, Poway, Calif., "Dr. Kraskin was a pioneer in behavioral optometry and will be missed by all. COVD recognized his accomplishments early in our organization's history. He received the G.N. Getman Award in 1973 and the A.M. Skeffington Award in 1984. Dr. Kraskin was a mentor to many of our members and was responsible for many entering into vision therapy and developmental vision. On behalf of the Board of Directors and membership of COVD, I offer my condolences to the Kraskin family."

"Bob Kraskin was a person who influenced many lives, including mine. When I was contemplating starting a vision therapy practice many years ago, I called Bob, who did not know me, and expressed the doubts and reservations I was experiencing. He not only encouraged me but graciously insisted that I visit his office and observe his mode of practice. I accepted gratefully and without his input and continuing encouragement, I doubt whether I would have embarked on my practice. Through the years he was unfailingly available for

consultation and advice. The entire profession will sorely miss Bob and personally there is a deep void in my life," Sid Groffman, O.D., New York, N.Y.

Martin Birnbaum, O.D., of New Hyde Park, N.Y., writes, "Memories of Bob: The encouragement he gave me as a young practitioner trying to learn vision therapy...the formative effect that his OEP Series had upon me in those early years...his hospitality when I visited his office as a young practitioner...his genuine warmth, friendliness, and caring about people...his presence...his ability to make you feel comfortable in his presence...the hospitality he showed our residents, the impact he had on them...the way in which he had control over his life...his friendship...the happy times we spent together. He left the world a better place for his having been here, and me a better person for having known him."

Another New Yorker and Journal of Behavioral Optometry Editor-in-Chief, Irwin Suchoff adds, "Perhaps the most impressive of Bob Kraskin's accomplishments in optometry was that of being a teacher. He instructed by his words, both spoken and written, and by the example he set as a human being. As a teacher, he took a special interest in the residents in vision therapy at SUNY College of Optometry. For some 20 years he acted as host, mentor and teacher to these individuals at the Skeffington Invitational Meeting in Washington, D.C., each year. They returned to the program filled with new knowledge, another point of view, richer for the experience, and with a little bit of Bob. He provided a highlight to the residency and will be more than missed."

"Bob Kraskin defined optometry for a generation of optometrists. He also defined kindness and caring. Bob was a special human being whom we loved for making each of us feel special. To some of us, he was our mentor and colleague, but most of all he was our friend. He will be missed," offers Dr. Joseph Miele, Middletown, N.J., member of the OEP Board of Directors.

Long letters were received from several colleagues and friends from around the world. Excerpts are included here. The entire text of these notes will be car-

ried in the next issue of *Behavioral Clinical Insights*.

Former President of the OEP Board of Directors, James Cox, O.D., Bellflower, Calif., in a note to Marion and Bob's wife and son/partner, Jeffrey, says, "I have known you and Bob all my professional life and have always tried to remember the little things he did for his patients and for the profession...Bob gave me the fundamental use of lenses...prevention, protection, remediation, compensation and enhancement. For these and many, many more reasons...he will never be forgotten... time will show that Bob Kraskin had good judgement and made significant contributions toward a better tomorrow. Claudia and I will never forget him."

"He was a citizen of the world," stated European Society of Optometry President Ugo Frescura. "We had the benefit of his participation at both International Congress, first in Monte Carlo and then in Sydney. His very presence added prestige to the Congress. Optometry, worldwide, will miss him."

Al and Lorraine Sutton write, "Bob Kraskin was a friend, doctor, benefactor, teacher and communicator to many... all over the world. Our loss is beyond words, but we know that his spirit will guide all who continue our search. Bob, you will be missed, but we know you stand beside your mentor, Skeffington, and that you will always be there to guide us to greater achievements in optometry and in life."

One of his more recent students, Steen Saust, Roskilde, Denmark, Director, OEP Europe, remembers Dr. Kraskin. "Bob Kraskin will always be a legend in behavioral optometry. He refused to call himself a behavioral optometrist. He saw himself as a general optometrist who did his utmost to help his patients meet their visual needs....What you do is what counts. Bob Kraskin taught us to share ... and he shared his wisdom with us...[around the world]."

Long-time colleagues and friends, Dr. Harry and Ruth Wachs write, "Marion and Bob—Always! Bob and Marion—Always! You and your countless contributions will be remembered — always and forever. Bob was a

leader, a teacher, a confidant, a coach — a benevolent Patrone —and he did it all with class and dignity. This is what set him apart...." Ruth states that "after 20 years I got to know the real Bob Kraskin — lover of life, kindness personified. How much he cared for others..."

From Paul Harris, O.D., Timonium, Md., "You were the catalyst of my behavioral life...In the beginning I wondered from where you came, in the end I knew my life's mission was to follow wherever [you lead]... How many lives have we shared together, as master and pupil together...You have touched my heart and you have touched by mind...."

Beverly Roberts, Immediate Past President of the Australasian College of Behavioural Optometry remembers Dr. Kraskin: "Helping and sharing. This was the lifestyle by which Bob Kraskin, with the help of Marion, lived... He was very supportive of behavioural optometry at all levels. His support during the time of the formation of ACBO was greatly appreciated and indicative of his support for behavioural optometry on an international level... To his family, we send our thoughts and love. Bob, you will be missed."

Time and time again the same words and feeling come through these heartfelt reflections from those who knew, worked, laughed and cried with Dr. Kraskin:

Leader
Teacher
Mentor
Colleague
Friend
Caring
Kindness

His contributions were great; his influence on those who came into contact with him is immeasurable. We are all greater for having known him. We are lesser that he is gone. To Marion and the family, we share your loss as you shared his life with us.

To Bob, may God speed,

The officers and staff of the OEP Foundation