

Editorial ► How Do You Thank Someone Who Has Given Everything He Has???

Despite the pleas to keep teaching, Bob Hohendorf has decided to retire this year. As he takes a less active part in optometry, it is without a doubt time to reflect on his example and to thank him for his contributions by noting a few highlights of his career and hearing from some of those who worked with him.

One of the Bob's most significant and far-reaching contributions has been through his work with the Optometric Extension Program Foundation in developing and presenting the Clinical Curriculum.

We first met at the very first Joint Conference on Theoretical and Clinical Optometry in 1986 and realized that we had much in common. Each of us had a busy VT practice and had been approached by a number of optometrists asking to learn to do VT. We all did our best to help these individuals, but it seemed like there should be somewhere that optometrists could go to learn what was needed to make VT and the behavioral perspective part of their practices.

It didn't take long for Paul to go into action to meet the need. Paul developed a series of four core courses based on successful VT outcomes in his own office. These four courses were the basis of what grew and became the OEPP Clinical Curriculum that is now presented to optometrists worldwide.

Bob and Rob were asked to help oversee the new courses and assure that the quality was high. All three of us were there from the earliest formation and attended some of the earliest courses in the early 1990s. When the courses began, Paul taught from a one-page minimalist outline. (Remember, this was still in the days of overheads and audio recordings.)

As the courses became more successful, it became apparent that more instructors would be needed. Both Bob and Rob agreed to commit themselves to adopting the curriculum and the course materials to their practices so that the courses would be standardized between instructors.

Standardizing the courses is a good example of how Bob demonstrated his dedication. If the courses were to be standardized, the material needed a cogent outline for each course to help ensure course-to-course and instructor-to-instructor consistency. Bob took at least three audio recordings of each course and carefully

annotated and collated the four core courses. Listening through the material just one time consumed nearly 400 hours! Bob noticed that the various courses, while having much the same core, had significant variations in both the order of material and in content, so he produced individual outlines for each course. One outline for a 5-day course was 40 single-spaced pages! Without Bob's incredible effort and dedication near the beginning, the courses could never have become what they are today.

If this heroic effort was all Bob had done, many lives would have been changed for the better, and he would be worthy of high praise. The thing is, the remarkable effort outlined above is not at all unusual for Bob. He went from being the president of The Baltimore Academy of Behavioral Vision (BABO), the group charged with supporting the courses, to being the chairman of the OEPP Curriculum Committee after BABO merged with OEPP in 2002. He has done that job now for nearly 15 years.



The Curriculum Committee, under Bob's guidance, has been responsible for the resurgence of the Regional Clinical Seminar program, from a moribund state in 2006, to where 10 years later, the RCS is again a thriving part of OEPP's international educational offerings, with over 200 attendees last year. This is due in no small

part to Bob's careful, patient guidance of the presenters and the hosts, coupled with his dedication to a quality experience for presenter, host, and attendee alike.

No matter what Bob has turned his hand to in optometry, from being a private practitioner of exemplary quality, including being a great vision therapist, to being a teacher who has not only taught himself, but has made it possible for others to become teachers, he has established a history of continued excellence. He has not only worked to develop his own skill, he has dedicated himself to helping others do the same.



Bob didn't just do the work. He continually helped others get the work done. He provided a meeting place for the instructors to get together and share. His home, Hotel Hohendorf, was where Bob and his wife Sue housed, fed, and put up with the three original instructors, as we met to codify the foundations of the courses and worked continually to improve the content of the ever-evolving course work.

Not only does Bob contribute to the content and direction of the courses themselves; the mission, goals, and objectives of BABO were written and accepted on his dining table, making the merger between OEPPF and BABO possible. Without Bob's hard work and giving attitude, it is unlikely that the courses would have become the success they have, that the merger would have taken place, or that either of us would have been asked to serve on the OEPPF board, much less become Presidents of the Foundation.

Through Bob's involvement in his practice and his contributions with the OEPPF, thousands of lives have been changed for the better, and more will be. Not only has Bob helped those he served as patients, he has empowered others to serve their patients better, and still others to take his place in teaching and carrying behavioral optometry forward into the future as instructors. These will in their turn not only help their patients, but develop those who will carry on after them. In this way, Bob has not only changed lives but will continue to change lives into the future.

It seems fitting that those of us whose lives Bob has already changed for the better should thank him now and reward his efforts by continuing to make similar efforts ourselves.

—Robin Lewis, Paul A. Harris

Bob has been a strong influence on my approach to optometry. He has an incredible depth of knowledge and experience, and he is able to share that in a way that is done with humour and in a way that is easily understood. Our kids love having Bob hang out when he is here teaching; such is his ability to connect with people of all ages and backgrounds. It has been an absolute privilege to learn from and to work with Bob.

—Paul Graham

When I first met Bob Hohendorf more than twenty-five years ago, he was a handlebar-moustached maverick, and Paul Harris wanted him to teach courses for the Baltimore Academy for Behavioral Optometry. Oh! I wondered. As I got to know Bob better, I realized he would turn out to become a wonderful teacher and a treasured mentor for optometrists around the world. Bob's easy-going style has endeared him to many. He is like an old shoe: easy and comfortable. He is like your grandfather. You enjoy sitting next to him and discussing whatever comes to mind.

I have worked with Bob in many different capacities over the years and have always found him to be wonderful to work with. Bob's sense of humor is one of his special qualities. He always said that anyone older than he was old. I objected, because I am older than Bob. He then qualified his statement by saying that anyone older than me was old. I guess since Bob is retiring, he must think he is getting old. I know that many people in the optometric community will miss him. I know that I sure miss working with Bob since my retirement.

I wish you the best of everything in your retirement, Bob, and may your travels be safe and enriching.

—Theresa Krejci

I came across behavioural optometry approximately 8 years ago. I was enrolled in the OEP Arts and Science course being held at Dr. Bob Hohendorf's office. Honestly, I was really there just to "put in the time" so that my office manager, Jen, could do the VT 1 course in Pomona, CA (which was going on concurrently ... don't ask me how I got Michigan in November and she got California). Anyhow, there were 5 ODs enrolled for the 5-day course, and of course, I had my OMG moments.

Bob was educating Steen Ahlberg to be an instructor during this course, and the two of them did a fabulous job. I admired Bob's way of coaching and teaching ... not only the attendees but also the future instructor-to-be.

So now, having completed all of the OEP courses, numerous RCS, ICBO, BOAF, ramping up VT in my office and Canada, I can now look to see how great the VT education is that I have received and continue to receive. As part of the OEP board, I now get to see behind the scenes the commitment, the passion, and the sacrifice that occurs. I find out that Bob Hohendorf is one of the instructors that declines his honorarium if the enrollment is low...just for the sake of providing the education to those that have enrolled. That was ME!!! I would NOT have had this VT education if that course was cancelled...and the domino effect is quite evident. (THANK YOU, BOB)

Working with OEP, I also see how much work that Bob puts in as education committee head. I cannot do justice with any comments to the amount of work, time, and dedication that Bob puts towards this. May I only state that it is a pleasure working with Bob on any project that comes across the table. He is humble and kind, and you learn something new without even realizing it half the time. Bob was tremendously supportive of a lecture I provided at NW Congress in 2016. He knows how to inspire people without having to elevate himself or deflate the other person.

Bob is a true teacher. I have been honoured and blessed to have been part of a very short journey of his illustrative life of VT.

—Trish Fink

I first met Bob Hohendorf just a short 10 years ago. I was new to the OEP Clinical Curriculum, and even newer to my motherhood journey. As I write this, I can't help but think it seems like more than 10 years. Over that time, Bob has had an enormous impact on my professional development and encouraged me greatly, all whilst sharing in a level of bemusement at my children – and perhaps my parenting, too! His unwavering dedication to his patients is matched by his dedication as a mentor. His teachings are made all the more relevant and meaningful by his practical approach and his sense of humour. We share a love of optometry, of laughs, and of sarcasm, and we owe a love of olives to "Mr Bob," who has also opened our eyes to the wonders of Michigan maple syrup, for which we frequently toast him on a Sunday morning over pancakes. My journey, courtesy of OEP, has been life-changing for myself and my patients, and my gratitude to Bob as part of the Clinical Curriculum faculty is immense. I wish him and his wife, Sue, a retirement that is as satisfying and rewarding as his career in optometry.

—Meredith Graham

I first met Bob during my residency. I was lucky enough to take Arts & Sciences, and even though he does not recall it, I was a real pain in the tuchus. I challenged Bob on pretty much everything he said and spent most of the course shaking my head; this guy had no idea what he was talking about. Most of what he was saying went against what I was taught. Bob, the consummate gentleman, answered my questions and fought off my barbs with aplomb. As they say, you can only lead the horse to water. Well, it took years for me to digest what Bob said, but I eventually got there and am still on my journey. I consider Bob a mentor and teacher extraordinaire and wish him well on the rest of his journey. I am sure that our paths will continue to cross!

—Marc Taub

