

Late 1980s

Reverse-geometry lens designs are introduced for post-RK patients.

Dr. Korb invents Soothe, a metastable oil-in-water emulsion that has been shown to more than double the thickness of the lipid layer. It is now marketed and sold by Alimera Sciences.

# Leaders of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

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Following the introduction of contact lenses in the 1940s and 1950s and the rapid proliferation throughout the 1970s of new lens materials and designs, the first true contact lens specialty practices began to emerge.

In Part III of our series on pioneers in the contact lens field, we examine the groundbreaking practitioners who first eschewed spectacles to establish contact lens-only practices. Many of these individuals had an early interest in contact lenses and had been fitting rigid PMMA lenses since their introduction. So few doctors were fitting contact lenses at all that they rapidly became the recognized experts in their own communities, the educators of their peers and consultants to industry. And their practices flourished. Many are still considered leading practices today.

## [ LAYING THE FOUNDATION ]

**Harold E. Davis, O.D.**, opened his practice in an industrial area near the Chicago stockyards and slaughterhouses in 1945. A -12:00D myope who wore contact lenses himself, Dr. Davis often spent his lunch hour talking shop with his friends **George N. Jessen, O.D.**, and **Newton K. Wesley, O.D.**, whose Wesley Jessen Plastic Contact Lens Company was located about 15 minutes away. “The science of contact lenses just embraced me,” Dr. Davis said. By the late 1950s, his practice was dedicated to them.

He continues to practice full-time at Davis Eyecare Associates, along with his son, **Robert L. Davis, O.D.** “Although we have been successful, economics did not and still does not drive us,” said Dr. Harold Davis. “If you try to do the best you can for your patient, the rest

will follow. That’s always the answer.”

The same year that Dr. Davis launched his practice in Chicago, **Charles “Ted” Bayshore, O.D.**, was opening his doors in Orlando, Florida. An early fitter of PMMA corneal lenses, Dr. Bayshore developed his own system of fitting and lectured about it around the world. By the early 1950s, his was a contact lens-only practice, as well. But, in addition to an interest in lens technology, Dr. Bayshore—who had run a Naval hospital in World War II—brought military organization to his civilian practice. He put a recall system in place, established state-of-the-art communication systems, and was one of the first to inventory and market his lenses, according to **Jack Joseph Yager, O.D.**, who joined the practice in 1973 and now owns it.

Further up the East Coast, **Paul Farkas, O.D.**, and **Theodore W. Kassalow, O.D.**, established one of the nation’s premiere, high-end optometric practices in New York City in 1958. The partners long ago decided not to accept third-party insurance (other than Medicare) and still don’t.

They situated their practice on the second floor because ground level was considered “too commercial,” but Farkas & Kassalow was among the first practices to strike a middle ground between the business-oriented practice and the purely professional practice to form an

organization that sought to be profitable by providing the best professional care for each and every patient.

Key to the practice's long-term success, says **Barry Farkas, O.D.**, nephew of the founder, is having the flexibility to grow and change with the market, but always maintaining a specialist mentality. "That requires one to get involved early with the newest technologies to figure out who they work for and who they don't," he said. "And you can't just rely on one or two favored lenses. We work with well over 300 different contact lenses, including many RGP lenses, daily disposables, multifocals, toric lenses, and specialty lenses for patients with keratoconus and other challenges." The practice has evolved considerably as the younger generation joined—first Dr. Barry Farkas, followed by Theodore's son **Jordan Kassalow, O.D.**, and **Susan Resnick, O.D.**

In St. Louis, another optometrist who had started dabbling in contact lenses early was **Robert Koetting, O.D.**, the grandson of an optician and son of an optometrist. "In 1962, I began to take contact lenses seriously and limited my practice to them," he said. He decided early on that his key market was affluent presbyopes, and did whatever it took to reach that market segment, including advertising in airline magazines for business travelers, hiring a PR agency, and becoming an arts patron.

"Koetting and the other early contact lens practices converted a novelty into a successful specialty practice and showed the way for the rest of us," said **Carmen F. Castellano, O.D.**, who now owns Koetting Associates. "The way I practice today is all based on Koetting's

philosophy of going above and beyond the standard," he said.

Another of Dr. Koetting's lasting contributions was the concept of the contact lens technician. He was one of the first to utilize technical assistants and multiple exam rooms to see more patients in a day. It was a concept that **N. Rex Ghormley, O.D.**, refined in his own practice. He opened Vision Care

Consultants in St. Louis in 1970, after working for Dr. Koetting for a few years, and focused exclusively on contact lenses for the next two decades. Whereas a typical practitioner at the time might have seen seven or eight patients in a day, Dr. Ghormley would see 30.

"I think we helped to educate people about how best to make use of technical staff and advanced, automated equipment in a professional practice," he said.

Other key early practitioners that laid the groundwork for the modern contact lens practices of today include **Neal Bailey, O.D.**, in Ohio; **Rodger T. Kame, O.D.**, and **Melvin J. Remba, O.D.**, in California; **Robert Kennedy, O.D.**, in Minnesota; **Jack Solomon, O.D.**, in Florida; and **Clarence McEachern, O.D.**, and **Wayne S. Cannon, O.D.**, in South Carolina.

Others made tremendous contributions to contact lens practice through academic research, developing novel devices and identifying corneal anomalies. Many of them, including **Donald Korb, O.D.**, in Boston, **Robert Morrison, O.D.**, in Pennsylvania, **Leonard Seidner, O.D.**, in New York and **Morton Sarver, O.D.**, in California, have been profiled already in this series.

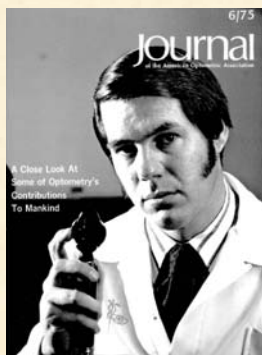
#### [ LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER ]

In addition to establishing their own successful practices, the early contact lens practitioners shared their expertise with each other and with future generations. Many set up study groups specifically to share best practices.

The first of these was spearheaded by Dr. Koetting in the 1960s. He convinced a group of practitioners (Harold Davis, Clarence McEachern, Danny Klaff, Jack Hill, George Bournachal, Bill Fleishman, John Kennedy, Tom Scarborough, Bob Head, Ted Kassalow, Burt Holmes, and himself) to meet and discuss their successes every six months for 40 years. They called themselves the American Society of Contact Lens



Frank D. "Uncle Frank" Fontana, O.D.



N. Rex Ghormley, O.D., on the cover of the AOA journal in 1975, five years after establishing his contact lens specialty practice.

## Early 1990s

Drs. Stone and Mowrey-McKee develop the Complete line of products for Wesley-Jessen (later marketed by Allergan and then AMO).

Specialists but were soon dubbed “The Dirty Dozen,” after the movie by the same name. The doctors in the study group became close friends. They shared tips on business practices, marketing, financials, lenses and solutions, fitting techniques, and personal problems and successes. They would all become prominent authors and sought-after lecturers in the field.



Left to right: Rick Weisbarth, O.D., Richard Hill, O.D., Kenneth Polse, O.D., Donald Korb, O.D., and Robert B. Mandell, O.D., at the 2006 CLCS Awards Reception.

In the 1980s, many other practice management groups modeled themselves after the Dirty Dozen. They had names such as the EyeCare Management Group, the Obscene Thirteen, and the Mustache Group. These three, along with the original Dirty Dozen, and a second-generation spinoff of that group, all came together in the early 1990s for a joint meeting in Phoenix, which they called the Contact Lens and Anterior Segment Society, or CLASS. CLASS was a valuable source of contact lens education until the Attorneys General for Florida and several other states initiated investigations into these types of contact lens meetings.

### [ TODAY'S LEADERS ]

Pioneers in the contact lens field are not hard to identify. Perhaps more challenging is to consider who leads the field today, now that contact lenses are an integral part of nearly every optometric practice. In advance, we offer the caveat that many fine individuals who played major roles in the development of the contact lens specialty have no doubt been left out. The

oversight is our own, and we apologize in advance.

Certainly a good place to start is with the two organizations that have clearly led the way in contact lens practice. The Cornea and Contact Lens Section of the American Academy of Optometry (CLSAAO) was established in 1947 and was the source of nearly all formal contact lens education in the early years of the field. Its members are qualified as contact lens specialists or Diplomates, a distinction that is difficult to earn.

The American Optometric Association's (AOA) Contact Lens and Cornea Section (CLCS) was founded in June of 1981 by **G. Burt Holmes, O.D., James A. Boucher, O.D., M.S., Harold E. Davis, O.D.,** and **Frank D. “Uncle Frank” Fontana, O.D.** They hired **Arthur R. Giroux, O.D.**, a retired Army colonel, to serve as director. “We had 300 members before it even got off the ground,” Dr. Fontana recalled. Today, there are more than 9,000 members, and the CLCS is a major force in educating practitioners, working closely with government agencies and the CLSAAO to protect consumers, and consulting with industry to bring better contact lens devices to market.

The past chairs of CLCS and the CLSAAO are all giants in the field who have helped to shape the contact lens industry over the past 60 years. They are listed on page 22. Following them, we list leading contact lens practitioners, including those in traditional private practice settings, university-based and multiple-specialty practices, academia, and industry. Finally, we add to the list young optometrists who have already demonstrated great abilities and accomplishments in their careers and who will likely be recognized as some of the leaders of the next generation.

We have endeavored to list individuals only once in this article, even though they may fit into several different categories.

### [ SPECIAL THANKS ]

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