

# The First Twenty Five Years of the Ophthalmic Photographers' Society: A Presidential Perspective

## Historical Perspectives by Past Presidents Compiled by

Patrick J. Same, M.Ed., CRA

*Davis Duehr Eye Associates, Madison, Wisconsin*

### Introduction

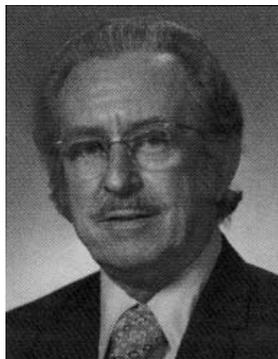
Twenty five years is both a very long time and a very short time. The OPS has seen many innovations—in technique as well as technology. At the same time, some things seem like they won't ever change. Our Society was conceived by Johnny Justice, Jr. (in the Spring of 1969 during a meeting in Sarasota, Florida); and Johnny is still a very active member!

This paper is a reminiscence. Each of the twelve past Presidents were asked to describe the Society during their years of leadership. (*A list of activities was prepared for those who were unable to respond.*) As you read through their recollections, take some time to recall your own experiences. How did you become involved with the Society? On which Society projects have you worked? Who are the colleagues and friends that you most remember? How have you grown in the last 25 years? How will you make the next 25 years better than the last?

### Lee Allen

1969, 1970

Thank you for asking me about my term as President of the OPS. Frankly, it was over 20 years ago and I am not able to remember all of the details. Undoubtedly, all the younger men and women who got together in Ogden Frazier's hotel room *fat the Palmer House in Chicago on October 15, 1969* will remember best. I think there were nine of us. Johnny Justice, who lit the fire that led to a Society, Earl Choromokos, Ogden Frazier, Yvonne Magli, Mary Manella, Terry Tomer, Anna Wiley, Don Wong, and a medical illustrator, Bill Stenstrom (who didn't become a member). My 83 year old mind stops there today.



We actually agreed to form the Society and Johnny Justice suggested I be named Interim President. During the '69-'70 year we corresponded, forming and incorporating the organization. Everyone was asked to pitch in \$5.00 to cover mailing costs. Membership dues were later set at \$25. We were incorporated in the state of Florida on July 13, 1970. We invited other photographers to meet at the time of the next year's Academy of Ophthalmology meeting.

The first Annual OPS Meeting was held at the International Hotel in Las Vegas *on October 4 from 2pm to 7pm in Room 17*. Forty seven people attended. At that meeting the "members" gave me an official Presidency. I responded with a Presidential speech ("Ophthalmic Photography and Its Potential") in which I tried to set a course for the Society—for the membership up to that point were mainly retinal photographers—to encompass photography of all areas of the eye.

I'll close by saying I am not going to attend the meeting in November. 'just don't think I could take the stress of the crowds and all the activities in which I would be expected to take part. Remember, I would need to divide my time with the American Society of Ocularists and possibly the Academy. I would appreciate it if you would give the members my greetings and best wishes.

### Johnny Justice, Jr., CØ, FOPS

1971

It was an exciting time to participate in the rapidly growing field of ophthalmic photography and to be a part of the group that founded the Ophthalmic Photographers' Society. Our membership was growing at a rapid pace. Within the first year we had a membership of 52 members and a terrific response from several future international members. I can remember how helpful and supportive my friends—Terry Tomer, Earl Choromokos, and especially Don Wong—were in those critical early days.

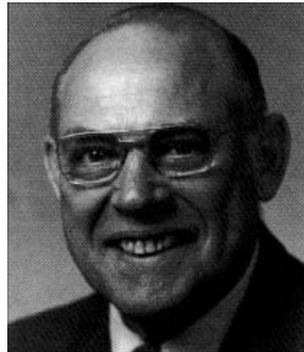
We met our initial goal of providing education in ophthalmic photography at the Society's First Annual Meeting at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. Lee Allen invited Ira A. Abrahamson, M.D., a specialist in external

eye photography, to be our first guest speaker. The Society was still too young for differences to develop between fellow officers, board members, and the general membership. Important ideas such as producing our own journal and developing a certification program (both suggested by Don Wong) were the order of the day.

All in all, there was a wonderful feeling of electricity in the air. I can only equate this to the enthusiasm which was generated by the faculty and staff of the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute in the early days of their remarkable growth.

**Ogden Frazier, FOPS 1972**

- *The Third Annual OPS Meeting was held on September 29 in the Stephen F Austin Room of the Sheraton-Dallas Hotel. It attracted 61 attendees.*
- *Johnny Justice was appointed chair of the OPS Exhibit Committee.*
- *Terry Tomer was appointed chair of the OPS Course of Instruction (The Educational Program).*
- *Bill Ludwick organized the Southern California Chapter.*
- *John Johnson was the Society's 'Official Photographer' and soon became the Newsletter Editor.*



**Don Wong, RBP, FOP 1973**

Though I assumed the Presidency of the Society in its fifth year, there was still great excitement in the air. The Society was growing stronger by the year, not only in numbers of members on the rolls, but in the recognition that our program was getting from the ophthalmic community.

The Board of Directors received the first of a number of formal invitations from JCAHPO to consider some form of affiliation with their organization. After some deliberation,



Don Wong teaching in a Fundus Photography Workshop, 1974

I agreed to attend their next Annual Business Meeting, scheduled to be held in New Orleans in February 1974. This was the first time the Society funded a member's trip on behalf of the Society.

At the last Annual Board Meeting, outgoing President Frazier established an Editorial Board, appointing me as Chair. He charged me with the task of exploring the feasibility of the Society publishing its own journal. I invited John Johnson, the newly appointed Editor of the OPS Newsletter and Roger Lancaster to collaborate with me on this project. The Journal finally become a reality in 1978.

**Earl Choromokos, FOPS 1974**

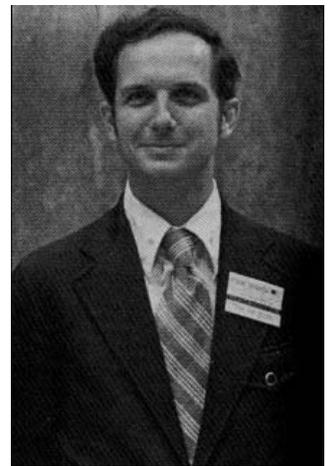
The OPS met for its 5th Annual Meeting in Dallas, Texas. It was there that the first Society financed Academy Scientific Exhibit was displayed (with the help of Bruce Busse and John Johnson). Dr. Donaldson was honored with the Society's first Outstanding Contribution Award. Carl Kittelson organized the first officially sanctioned OPS Regional Course at Devers Memorial Clinic in Portland, Oregon.

While I enjoyed my term as President, I am most proud of my efforts as the Chair of the Board of Certification (BOC). (Curiously, during my tenure as President, the first proposal for establishing a Board of Certification was rejected!) During the 1980's, I helped the BOC move our program toward standardization and national recognition, as well as spearheading (with Terry Tomer) the effort to establish the COPRA examination. The BOC became a member of NOCA (National Organization for Competency Assurance) in 1988.

I look with fondness on all of the photographers I have seen complete the certification process. They have made both a contribution and a commitment to their profession.

**Thomas C. Van Cader 1975**

Professional ophthalmic photographers began to flex their muscles during this period. Regional chapters were forming. The OPS Constitution and By-Laws were rewritten (under the leadership of Terry Tomer) and enacted. Several regional educational programs were conducted by members across the country (by Carl Kittelson in Portland, Don Wong in New York, and Earl Choromokos in Chicago). Lee Allen was presented with an OPS Honorary Life Membership. The Board of Directors was active establishing new fiscal policies, a Certification Committee, reestablishing the Society's tax exempt status, and laying the groundwork for this journal. Educational institutions began to recognize the contributions made by ophthalmic photographers by awarding Johnny Justice, Jr. an Assistant Professorship—the first of many to follow.



The 6th Annual Meeting was held at the Dallas Sheraton in the William B. Travis Room. The educational program was extended to include hands-on workshops to encompass every form of ophthalmic imaging available at that time. Slit lamp photography became a serious part of the educational menu. The first OPS sponsored Scientific Exhibit with juried illustrations was assembled. Our colleagues from Japan asked to be

recognized and submitted articles on the profession in their country. At the end of this term the Fellowship Committee began its existence.

So many of the names you read again and again in this article participated in each of the events mentioned above. During a lull in the business meeting during my term, it was noted by a new member that the same ten to twelve people seemed to be getting all the credit and the choicest appointments. I remember telling the person to stand up and be heard whenever he had an opinion. He did just that, and in so doing became a very active and contributing OPS member. So to everyone reading this article my final contribution is this: The OPS is your professional society, take an active part in it. Even though I no longer have the honor and privilege of practicing in the field, I think of ophthalmic photography as my roots, and fondly miss the patient contact and camaraderie of each of you.

### Terry Tomer, FOPS, COPRA 1976

My year as President was a traumatic experience - I felt as if I had been thrust into the limelight. Previously all of my efforts had been in the background. I helped write the By-Laws and organized the first Educational Program.

This was the year that the OPS was to first learn the value of diplomacy. As with any young organization, we were experiencing growing pains. There were some conflicts involving the New York Chapter and challenges in the well intended but volatile business meetings. Robert's rules played an important part in my becoming 'diplomatically assertive.'

Honorary Life Membership was bestowed upon a British ophthalmologist - Emanuel S. Rosen, M.D. and a Scottish ophthalmologist—William M. Raining, M.D.

All in all, the year ended better than it began. The members and officers better understood the Importance of building bridges and working together to attain our common goals. I am proud to be a part of the OPS' tradition and hope to continue helping it be the voice of our profession,

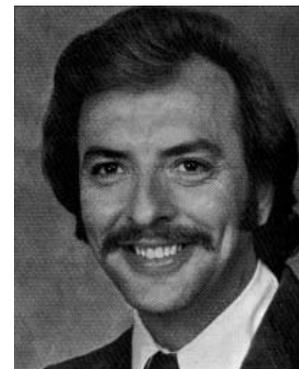
### Johnny Justice, Jr., CRA, FOPS 1977

By 1976, the Society was growing even more rapidly. I was asked by Ron Kacizak and other prominent members to run for a second term as president. Many of the problems that concerned us were solved or simply disappeared during this term.

That "wonderful feeling of electricity" was not present in my second term. Simply stated, being president had become a more complicated task — one which was to become even more difficult as our Society grew larger and more complex. Paul Montague's genius with computer eased the management of our membership to a great extent.

I "take my hat off to the other Past-Presidents who are being honored in this issue of our OPS Journal and to the other members, too numerous to list, who have come forward to serve and to contribute to our growth. I am especially proud of our solid reputation. From a gender standpoint, our membership is statistically split between men and women. When compared to other para-medical groups, we are well compensated for our efforts.

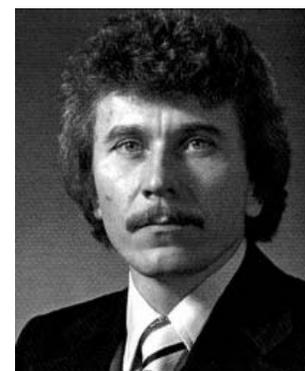
I am very proud of the acceptance of our Society by the American Academy of Ophthalmology and by academic and front-line ophthalmologists worldwide. I am also extremely pleased to have been honored by the Society as its Principal Founding Member.



### Csaba L Martonyi, FOPS, COPRA 1978-1979

Reflecting on my term, now seemingly so long ago, it is with a mixture of emotions that I put pen to paper to indulge in this brief retrospective. It harkens back to a time of great intensity, excitement, volatile disagreements tempered with unbound enthusiasm, and a sustained expenditure of energy that I have not experienced since. A time when offense was taken simply because I wore a tie (of course, it had nothing to do with my consistently sunny disposition); when lecturing in worn jeans was by some considered *de rigueur*. It was also a time when I had the privilege of forming strong friendships that have weathered well the passing years.

It was clearly my "heyday" with simultaneous responsibilities for the Board of Directors, Certification, and Education. Having earlier sat through meetings of the Certification Committee, where much discussion and time was expended on secondary and tertiary issues, I was convinced that holding the reins of all six horses was better than just holding one. Thus I did my best to position ourselves to "Fast-Track" certification as *the* priority agenda item. (Don Wong, the first Chairman of the Education and Certification



Committee', began this process in the December 1972 issue of the OPS Newsletter, offering an initial proposal for an education and certification process. The Society at the time was not quite ready.)

Our successes were the result of the intelligence and labor of many. And I personally, and the Members of the Society collectively, owe those many a debt of gratitude for their contributions. Whether we considered some to have been "on the fast track" or "barking up the wrong tree," each contributed to the winnowing of possible mechanisms leading to the one which serves us best today.

On October 21, 1978, I began serving the first two-year term of office (a newly adopted change to the by-laws). My first official act as President was to present Johnny Justice, Jr. with a special award recognizing him as the "Society's Principal Founding Member" and for his many "Outstanding Contributions to Ophthalmic Photography" at the Awards Banquet at the Granada Royale Hotel in Kansas City.

Marshall Tyler's motion for our "No Smoking" policy was adopted by the General Assembly at the October 25th Business Meeting.

On February 3, 1979, a mid-year BOD Meeting was held in Houston, Texas, at the home of Carol and Johnny Justice, Jr.. There we established criteria for selecting individuals (proposed by Don Wong), and formed the first complete Board of Certification.

At the same meeting, provisional approval was granted for the formation of the Great Lakes Chapter of the OPS.

In April, the first "Job Description and Requirements" for Certified Retinal Angiographer (CRA) was published.

From June 13 through 16, the OPS conducted its first Comprehensive Educational Program in Erie, PA. It was structured to teach the fundamentals of fundus photography and fluorescein angiography. Barrett Walker, Coordinator for Education, was chiefly responsible for its design, and Chris Moore and Barry Stamm, M.D., both of the Hamot Medical Center in Erie, were local hosts and coordinators.

On June 17, 1979 the first examination for CRA was administered to 57 applicants. A special plaque commemorates the Hamot Medical Center as the first Certification Site of the OPS.

In August of that year, Glen L. Stepper was successful in producing ocular fundus photographs of a 474 lb. patient.

The Missouri Chapter of the OPS was formed the same month, with John Dears as President, Tom Steele, as Vice-President, and Mary Dobbs, as Secretary.

On September 26, 1979, Dong Wong and I accepted an invitation from Robert Hugh Monahan, M.D., Executive Vice-President of JCAHPO to represent the OPS at a special meeting of their newly formed "Ad Hoc Committee to Establish Dialogue with Other Allied Health Groups in Ophthalmology." Considerable pressure was brought to bear on the OPS to come under the JCAHPO umbrella. When I asked where, exactly, the Certified Ophthalmic Photographer would fall in the hierarchy, we were told that, since the description of

Ophthalmic Assistant (the lowest level certified by JCAHPO) already included Ophthalmic Photography, the individual certified in Ophthalmic Photography alone would necessarily be considered at a level several steps below the COA. My single-minded pursuit of an autonomous certification process for our profession was thus vindicated. If there were doubts before, none remained (at least in my mind) after that meeting. Don Wong and I came back with a renewed conviction to see our program to completion. The goal was to complete and present our certification program for accreditation by the National Commission for Allied Health Certifying Agencies. (That would place us on par with JCAHPO as a nationally recognized certifying body.) In 1978 Gary Barnes and I attended the Constitutional Convention of NCAHCA and I campaigned ever since for membership. In 1988, that goal was realized through accreditation by that Commission (today known as NCCA).

Another long-term agenda item was JCAHPO affiliation. While publicly I discouraged affiliation at the time, I also encouraged both Boards to think favorably about ultimately forming an alliance with JCAHPO, but as a peer certifying agency, with our own proven, autonomous program of certification in place.

The 10th Annual Meeting (November 4-9, 1979, San Francisco) was the first to boast an educational program conducted on two timelines. It was designed to provide for the needs of CRA candidates as well as more advanced individuals.

The Society's first decade closed with the publication of a list of 33 individuals who, having completed all requirements, become the first Certified Retinal Angiographers in the known history of our planet.

The second decade opened with the Awards Banquet where I had the great privilege of presenting our guest speaker, J. Donald M. Gass, M.D. with a plaque recognizing his many "Outstanding Contributions to Ophthalmic Photography."

Marlene Fishman edited the first "Ophthalmic Photography Index" in November of that year.

January, 1980 saw the first CRA Study Guide published. In August a detailed Protocol for the conduct of the CRA examination was established. CRA examinations were hosted in 1980 in Cincinnati by Earl Choromokos, in Tampa by Tom Van Cader, in Portland, Ore. by Carl A. Kittelson, and in Philadelphia by Terry Tomer.

My last official function as President was as Master of Ceremonies, Awards Banquet, November 1980, 11th Annual Meeting, Congress Hotel, Chicago, IL.

It was a busy two years and I loved or hated every minute of it. It was for me a great opportunity to set in motion a program that runs well today. We had 51 CRAB at the end of my term and many more on their way. (I declined a second nomination to the presidency to continue as Chairman of the Board of Certification. My great attachment to the program kept me in the trenches for another three years.) In drafting Article Ten (the amendment of the By-Laws which legalized the creation of a Board of Certification) I deliberately

precluded a possible perpetuation of the "dictatorship" that we had functioned under for the two years of my presidency. That separation of responsibilities was an essential step in preparing for the ultimate autonomy of the BOC and BOE, necessary for membership in NCCA. That was accomplished through the efforts of my successors, Earl Choromokos and Terrance Tomer. My thanks.

**Bruce W. Morris CRA, FOPS 1980-1982**

- *The OPS membership grew to 477.*
- *Over 100 photographers had become Certified Retinal Angiographers.*
- *The Board of Directors began regular mid-year board meetings.*
- *The first color Journal cover was produced by Don Wong, the Editor of the Journal.*
- *Standing rules and operating procedures were established.*

**Terry George, RBP, FOPS 1982-1984**

- *The Annual Meeting registration exceeded 350 and our active membership grew to over 800 members.*
- *Dennis Makes coordinated our first Midyear Meeting at Park City in Utah.*
- *Work began on the 1986 Rome Meeting with Marlene Fishman and Don Wong as Co-Chairs.*
- *The OPS purchased its first computer and Paul Montague used it to computerize our membership rolls.*
- *In 1984, the AAO awarded first place to the OPS Scientific Exhibit.*
- *Alan Frohlichstein organized the first Chicago Regional Chapter meeting.*

**Paul R. Montague, CRA, FOPS 1984-1986  
1986-1988**

- *In 1986 Jim Stoutenburg, our Membership Chair, reported that our membership had increased to 946 members. By 1988, our membership was 1160.*
- *The OPS held its first 'COP (International Congress on Ophthalmic Photography) meeting in Rome in 1986. Ophthalmic photographers from over 20 countries attended.*
- *Planning for the 1992 'COP in Singapore began with Larry Merin and Ben Szirth.*
- *The question of JCAHPO affiliation was hotly debated during our business and board meetings.*
- *In 1984 Mark Maio became the Newsletter Editor. Colleen Eardly-Mulder replaced him in 1987.*
- *The Board of Education was created in 1988 with*

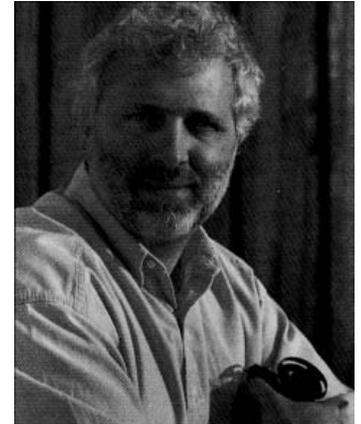
*Emory Billings appointed as its first Chair.*

**Mark Maio, FOPS**

**1988-1990  
1990-1992**

I was the first of the "new" generation of ophthalmic photographers to be elected President. After learning ophthalmic photography from some of the original members of our society, I was put in the position of helping run the organization they started. How could I possibly know more than them about the OPS and how it should be run? The need to be the communication facilitator between the "old" and "new" groups of ophthalmic photographers involved in the OPS proved to be the greatest challenge of my four years as President.

In my first term, the Board of Directors continued with the process of refining the operating budget of the Society which had been started by Paul Montague. We attempted to accurately predict, control, and account for all the money being spent by the Society. At the beginning of my first term, we had less than \$10,000 in the bank. By the end of my first two years, through the effort of everyone involved in the Society making a conscious decision to practice fiscal responsibility, our Treasury was over \$100,000. This \$100,000 buffer has remained in the treasury since I left office in November of 1992.



Through a by-laws amendment during my first term, the Society's educational responsibilities were separated from the Board of Certification and a new Board of Education was created. Up to this time in our history, a small group of people were responsible for all aspects of running the organization. With the creation of another Board and the need to expand board membership, different people became involved in making decisions which affect the Society. I found my energy being directed towards helping the transition between the old and the new. This was one of the most time-consuming and unexpected duties of being President.

With the Board of Education responsible for planning the educational courses offered at our meetings, the Board of Directors became more active in the financial planning of the meeting. With Mike Coppinger as Vice-President and chair of our annual meeting, we were able to conduct a cost effective, quality, educational program. The profits helped solidify our positive financial position. Other OPS educational programs, including the two Rochester meetings I ran as chairman during my first term as President, were both educationally and financially successful.

During my first term, I opened a dialogue with the Biological Photographic Association through its President Don Patton. Discussion between our organizations had been virtually non-existent since 1969 - the year the OPS was formed. This exchange ended after Dan's term expired and the new BPA President saw no need to continue it. Some of the good ideas to come out of our discussions included the OPS information booth (which I had made and exhibited for three years as President) and the establishment of an OPS Director of Publications (ensuring that all official publications would meet official Society policies).

During my second term, Marlene Fishman resigned as Editor of the Journal. The production of the JOP had suffered from an irregular schedule. The Board of Directors decided to hire a freelance production editor who split the Journal responsibilities with an OPS managing editor. Since this change, the JOP has been produced on time with a contributor-friendly attitude. The Journal now contains many new and interesting articles and is changing its production process to desk top publishing.

The one thing that always surprised me during my four years as President was how many of our members thought I (or other members of the Boards), got paid to hold office in the OPS. It comes as a shock to most of our members that we volunteer many hours of our personal as well as paid job time doing work for the OPS. In my case, I easily spent 21/21 doing OPS business. Everyone else I worked with on all three Boards has spent similar amounts of their week doing the same. I want to thank them (and their employers!) again, for all they gave of themselves, often without much recognition, so the OPS looked like a fairly smooth running 'business'. In my case I would also like to thank the membership for allowing me to serve as their President for four years. While I worked hard for them, I also learned a lot about myself and grew as a person. Thanks for the opportunity!

**Patrick J. Same, M.Ed, CRA 1992-1994**

As a previous Vice-President and an OPS member who had been active for 10 years, I hoped to clear up a number of 'loose ends' during my term as President. An important By-Laws change (which would make updating the By-Laws realistically possible) had been defeated in two previous elections. The vote had been overwhelmingly in favor of the change, but the response was less than the required 50% of membership. The OPS undertook a phone campaign in which we contacted each member and let them know how important this matter was. Members of all three Boards (the BOD, BOC, and BOE) worked together to help this By-Laws change pass in a special election.

The OPS had been discussing our relationship with JCAHPO since the mid-seventies and tabling it regularly during business meetings. I thought it was important to remove it from old business by objectively informing the membership about affiliation and then letting the membership make a decision. Paul

Montague and I attended a full commission meeting and generated detailed reports. There was discussion in the Newsletter, a special JCAHPO Informational Forum during our Annual Educational Program, and discussion at the Business Meeting. The last ballot of my Presidency will help resolve this issue.

During my Vice-Presidency, I recognized that we were overloading volunteers with responsibilities - and consequently not running the OPS as efficiently as it could be. I resolved during my presidency to institute a Central OPS Office. Mark Maio was instrumental in helping the Board respond with a definition of an Executive Secretary's goals and responsibilities. The Board helped pave the way fiscally by increasing the dues and holding the line on expenditures. At our last mid-year Board of Directors meeting, we voted to fund a Central Office. I am confident that implementation will be a joint effort between this and the next President and Board of Directors.

Local chapters expanded from two (Chicago and Wisconsin) to eight (Chicago, Wisconsin, Philadelphia, New England, Northern California, Southern California, New England, and North Carolina).

A few of the members who stood out included Larry Merin (who published a chapter on Ophthalmic Photography in Biomedical Photography by J.P. Vetter) and Dennis Thayer (whose photograph appeared on the cover of the National Geographic). Csaba Martonyi's ophthalmic photography was the subject of an exhibition at the Jesse Besser Museum of Art, History, and Science. Denice Barsness organized the Annual Educational Meetings with aplomb, Terry Tomer led the BOC, and Paula Morris led the BOE. Ben Szirth organized our third international meeting, ICOP 94.



An interesting historical aside: my presidency almost didn't begin. There was a single vote difference between J. Michael Coppinger (a good friend and valued OPS member) and myself. My term ended with a gala 25th Anniversary celebration at our Annual Educational Program.

**Conclusion**

This history of the OPS can be interpreted in two different ways. After reading this reminiscence, you may be focused backwards in time: recalling the experiences you have had with the Society and its members. Another option is to look forward. This article should challenge you to build on the success of past members. It is an open invitation for you to make the next 25 years of the Ophthalmic Photographers' Society even better.