

From the Senior Editor



Recently I met an 82-year-old man whose recent stroke and subsequent paralysis masked the fact that he was once a strong, vibrant young man. In conversation, he told me about his life and military experience. At age 15, he used his older brother's documents to join the U.S. Marine Corps. However, a cross-check of his identification revealed that his brother was enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the time. This knowledge ended his Marine service prematurely. By age 16, however, this adventurous teenager had enlisted in the U.S. Army. By his eighteenth birthday, he was a three-year veteran of military service and a Purple Heart recipient.

On another day, a woman told me about her childhood in India. Her American parents were missionaries there during the years of British rule. She told me about her experiences riding elephants and learning about Indian culture. She also recalled Gandhi's rise to power and how this occurrence changed her life.

While both of these people wore prosthetic eyes, what is most interesting about them has nothing to do with eye loss or prosthetics. Consider that they never see themselves solely as prosthetic eye-wearers. While they may not be typical of the patients in an ophthalmologist's office, they do represent the diverse population with whom ophthalmologists work. Eye loss is not limited to an age group or other demographic data. My patients are like those in most ophthalmology practices: husbands, wives, children, firefighters, lawyers, nurses, physicians (including several ophthalmologists and a Nobel Laureate), and immigrants. All have countless inspiring stories to tell.

Viewing these snapshots of patients' lives is an aspect of ophthalmology I treasure. My colleague, ophthalmologist Clyde Andrews, said of those he cared for: "I only wish I could have met [them] under different circumstances." I believe we can agree ophthalmologists are in a position to affect people's lives. What may not be as obvious is that our patients affect us. I have learned a great deal from my patients. My life is much richer because of their experiences.

It is my hope that this year's *Journal* affects our readers' lives and professions. The information shared here is meant to inspire, inform, and improve all those who care for the patients they treat. We need to see them as individuals, first of all, and then help them to overcome their prosthetic issues.

My final story is about the many individuals who have joined to create this year's *Journal*, including Beverly Woltman (advertising), Art Brown (our publisher at ABI Professional Publications), outgoing ASO President Maureen Maloney-Schou, and, of course, our writers. I again wish to acknowledge Maria Castillo and Neill Hughes for assistance in typing and assembling this year's *Journal of Ophthalmic Prosthetics*.

Michael O. Hughes, B.C.O.
Senior Editor, *Journal of Ophthalmic Prosthetics*