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College of Optometrists in  
Vision Development  
215 W. Garfield Road  
Suite 200  
Aurora, OH 44202  
888.268.3770 or  
330.995.0718 (voice)  
330.995.0719 (fax)  
[info@covd.org](mailto:info@covd.org)  
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

David A. Damari, OD, FCOVD, FAAO



### HOMAGE TO HAROLD SOLAN

I had already turned in an editorial for this issue. It was very exciting — an eye-opening piece about strategic planning that would have kept you mesmerized. But then I received the news from Irwin Suchoff that one of my mentors, Harold Solan, had died. Suddenly, the topic of strategic plans lost all its charm.

Harold Solan was truly one of our greats. He arguably did more to bring awareness of optometry and optometric vision therapy to educational professionals than anyone before or since. A search of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) online database shows fourteen publications with Harold as an author, most of them in the *Journal of Learning Disabilities*. A search of PubMed reveals forty-seven (47!) published articles by Harold (this includes the articles also listed in ERIC) from 1950 all the way through to 2007. That means that Harold was a productive scientist and author in six different decades! Yes, he would get stuck once in a while on certain themes in his publications (simultaneous vs. sequential processing, blue light and magnocellular processing in “dyslexics”) but so do many of the most prolific authors. Yet Harold’s writing always took our profession

down paths that were on the cutting edge of educational theory. The value that these publications had in conveying the legitimacy of our profession in the world of education cannot be overstated. When I would discuss these issues with other professionals, citing Harold’s studies, the medical people in the room would be left with only one rejoinder: “Well, that was written by an optometrist.” Thus, the true motivation behind the medical criticisms of learning-related vision disorders was exposed for what it always was and always will be — a baseless attack on the independent profession of optometry.

Harold was also a staunch champion of standardized testing in optometry. I learned a great deal from Harold during my time as a student and VT resident at SUNY, and during my short tenure on the clinical faculty there, but I would have to say the major thing I learned from him was the value of recognized, standardized tests in communicating our findings to other professionals. As I have previously written on these pages, our profession has a traditional bias toward conversation and observation as diagnostic tools, and this bias makes us strong clinicians in our patients’ eyes. But what gives us respect among *other professionals* is hard data derived from good standardization and legitimate normative studies, and no one drove that point home better than Harold.

What I admired most about Harold, though, was that his primary concern was always for the children. In conversations with him, in his lectures, and even in his articles, you got the sense that Harold had substantial empathy for the child struggling in the classroom. To Harold, every child who was not succeeding academically was a failure of the educational and healthcare system. I distinctly remember him teaching us to watch for the class clown. Behind the easy laughs was a child seeking to escape from the strictures of a classroom designed to reward skills he may not have: accurate saccades,

*(continued on page 2)*

**THRILLA IN MANILA • BY DR. LYNN HELLERSTEIN**


*Dr. Lynn Hellerstein speaking in Manila.*

Do you remember the Thrilla in Manila that took place in October 1975? This article is not about the final boxing match for the Heavyweight Boxing Championship of the World between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier. Rather, this story is about my personal “Thrilla in Manila.”

The Republic of The Philippines, as it is officially known, is a sovereign country in Southeast Asia in the western Pacific Ocean, east of Vietnam across the South China Sea. With a population of more than 92 million people, The Philippines is the 12th most populated

country in the world. Multiple ethnicities and cultures are found throughout the over 7100 islands in the Philippines. The weather is hot and humid as May starts the monsoon season.

What a treat to have been asked to represent COVID at the 36th Annual Integrated Philippine Association of Optometrists Inc. (IPAO) convention in Manila, the capital of The Philippines. The theme of the National Convention was, “Emerging Trends in Vision Science.” The convention, May 25-27, 2012, was attended by approximately 300 optometrists. I was the guest lecturer for what they called “COVID Pediatric Optometry Module on Vision Development.”

Speaking at the convention was great, but learning about the Filipino people and the state of optometry was fascinating. There is a strong core of optometrists who are working to upgrade the field of optometry in the Philippines. These courageous optometrists are confronted by many challenges. After hearing their state of optometry, it took me back over 30 years when I first started optometry. There are challenges with credibility, delivering full-scope vision care, battles with expanding laws to use drugs and medications, and more.

The optometric program in the Philippines is now a 6 year college program, awarding an O.D. degree. The ODs can't prescribe therapeutic drugs. Many ODs and “pseudo-optometrists” don't provide comprehensive vision exams. The “eye exams” are mainly simple refractions, provided free or with minimal charge. This eye-care model still promotes glasses sales, not professional vision services.

My hostess, Dr. Tess Yambot, MAEd, MSO, FPAO, an International Associate member of COVID, is the leader of bringing developmental vision into her country. She has been a dean of an optometry school, involved in the Philippine's optometric board, and is now consulting with the Dept. of Education on the importance of vision and learning.

Dr. Yambot is also doing research in a clinic in a hospital, sponsored by Civitan, a non-profit foundation whose mission is to help children with special needs. Dr. Yambot and Civitan have collaborated to bring improved education and vision care to children in Asia. Civitan, with its headquarters in Alabama, has a large presence in the Southern United States, Asia and many other countries worldwide. It is part of the Civitan Philippine program to educate their optometrist to improve vision care, which ultimately will impact children's ability to learn.

The Philippine optometrists are requesting more education in developmental vision and vision therapy. Many are hoping to apply for COVID Fellow Certification. The travel distance (about 25 hours of flight travel time) makes it difficult to attend many of the USA education programs. They are looking to bring more optometrists to teach in the Philippines.



*Dr. Lynn Hellerstein and Tessa Yambot*

The Filipino people are beautiful, generous and extraordinary hosts. My husband, Bruce, and I want to express our deepest gratitude to COVID, IPAO Board, Dr. Yambot, and Civitan for making this extraordinary trip such a memorable one.

COVID is truly an international organization. COVID continues to spread the developmental vision message around the world! Now that's what I call a Thrilla!

*Lynn F. Hellerstein, OD, FCOVD, FAAO, is a COVID Past President, co-owner of Hellerstein & Brenner Vision Center in Centennial, Colorado, and Author of See It. Say It. Do It! The Parent's & Teacher's Action Guide to Creating Successful Students & Confident Kids.*