



Go Blue! Marc (left) with his sons, Zachary (center) and Maxwell (right).

Up Close

with MARC R. BLOOMENSTEIN, OD, FAAO

Was optometry your first career choice?

No. The irony of my career choice is that I had one eye examination as a teenager, and it was not memorable at all. In fact, the OD sat across the room reading a paper and was as interested in my exam as I was in the Iran gas shortage. I worked at a Sizzler restaurant—I still miss that cheesy bread and all-you-can-eat shrimp—and, at that time, working in hospitality seemed more my speed. When I went to college, I was immersed in the sciences. I volunteered at the UCLA Medical Center, and I followed the race for an AIDS vaccine with great interest. I actually spoke to my bio-chem professor about research, and she said, “I don’t think your personality is cut out for a lab.” It was not until I was rejected by my chem lab partner who had said she was studying to be an optometrist that I realized I was destined to work with the eyes.

What about the profession interested you most? When did you know it was the right path for you?

Optometry in the mid-1980s was starting to gain therapeutic prescribing rights nationwide, expanding the scope of the profession and allowing optometrists to practice to their educational heights. I wanted to work with the public and yet not be tethered to a hospital. Thinking back, I remember speaking with a few ODs who worked in both corporate and private practices. The consensus was that this is a great profession. Patients leave the office—especially contact lens patients—with tangible improvements in their vision. I wanted to feel that I was making a living but also making a difference. I try to use every patient encounter to do just that: to create a sense of worth for both me and the patient.

Many people know you for your Collaborative Corner vlog on Eyetube. What do you enjoy most about making those videos?

I have always felt you can’t take anything too seriously; I try to take that tone in the vlog, and I approach encounters with patients in a similar vein. We need to demonstrate professionalism while still being relatable. Making these videos is a way for me to try to bring some of my own personality into the day-to-day activities we all encounter. You see me on my Peloton sweating like a long-tailed cat in a room with my wife (she loves cats so they are nervous she may hug them to death), socially distancing from my patients with my digital phoropter, talking about how ridiculous using a sock with rice for a heating pad is, drinking my daily celery juice—all representative of what my patients see and hear from me. One of the first videos I did was comparing our crystalline lens to M&Ms—a great analogy. I say that every day! These videos are me, so it is fun to try to outdo myself. I just hope others gain some knowledge and entertainment from my tomfoolery.

You are a founding member of the Optometric Council on Refractive Technology. Tell us how you got involved.

The OCRT—now the Optometric Corneal, Cataract and Refractive Society (OCCRS)—was started in the kitchen of Lou Phillips, OD, attended by Paul Karpecki, OD. Folklore has it that Lou was schooling Paul on the finer wines of Pittsburgh and lamenting the myopic decision, by both the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery and the American Academy of Ophthalmology,

to exclude optometrists from attending their meetings as registered doctors. This association was started in response to the need to arm optometrists with the most current research, surgical techniques, products, and management protocols for refractive surgery patients. Having worked in an extremely progressive refractive and cataract surgery center, I knew firsthand the role that optometry can and does play in the care of these patients. The OCCRS continues to be a group of like-minded ODs who understand our very important role in our patients’ success with surgery.

If someone were to make a movie about Schwartz Laser Eye Center, what actor would play you?

Just yesterday my wife, Jill, was asked to name the title of her life movie to this point. I suggested her motto—“Don’t tread on the Crabbo or you will get the stabbo”—but I never gave any thought to who should play her in the movie. What is funny to me is when people say, “You know who you remind me of?” and I say, “I don’t care,” because inevitably I am sure it will be disappointing. For example, I have been told I remind people of David Cross. Really? That is bald-stereotyping! Years ago, I had a patient say I look like George Clooney; turns out she actually meant Nathan Lane. So, who should star as me? I would say Zach Braff. And if he is not available, Andy Garcia. ■

MARC R. BLOOMENSTEIN, OD, FAAO

- Optometrist, Schwartz Laser Eye Center, Scottsdale, Arizona
- Member, *Modern Optometry* Editorial Advisory Board
- mbloomenstein@gmail.com
- Financial disclosure: None