OSA Highlights Its History

OSA history is highlighted in 161 photographs that are on display at the headquarters building in Washington, D.C. The project, which was completed earlier this year, includes framed photos of all of OSA’s presidents, key OSA meetings, honorary members, OSA employees, notable people in optics and physics, optical equipment and memorable moments in the Society’s 88-year history.

The photos occupy several meeting spaces and hallways on the first floor of the building.

"OSA headquarters is our members’ professional home,” says OSA Executive Director Elizabeth Rogan. “The archived photos give staff and visitors an intimate view of the many individuals who invested time and effort to grow the Society into what it is today. We’re grateful for their contributions.”

Mark Your Calendars

Fourier Transform Spectroscopy (FTS)
Pre-registration deadline: Jan. 10
www.osa.org/fts

Hyperspectral Imaging and Sounding of the Environment (HISE)
(formerly Optical Remote Sensing)
Pre-registration deadline: Jan. 10
www.osa.org/hise

Congratulations!

The Inter-Society Color Council (ISCC) has presented Louis D. Silverstein with its Macbeth Award. Silverstein, who has been a member of OSA since 1991, was honored for his work on color-rendering through liquid-crystal technology in electronic displays and image capturing devices. Silverstein received his doctorate in psychophysics from the University of Florida. He currently serves as chief scientist of his company, VCD Sciences Inc., a consulting firm specializing in applied vision, color sciences and display technology.

The award was established in 1970 in memory of Norman Macbeth, who identified the need to use simulated standardized daylight to make accurate visual color judgments. The award honors current or former members of the ISCC for recent significant contributions to the science of color.

OSA Welcomes Students in China …

The new OSA student chapter at Huazhong University (HUST) in Wuhan, China, plans to organize tours of local optics companies and collaborate on a new magazine with members of the university’s Student Society of Laser Technology.

… and in Michigan.

Members of the University of Michigan’s new OSA student chapter gather around a statue of Claude Shannon, a 1936 University of Michigan graduate considered the founding father of the electronic communications age. The chapter held a picnic in July to raise awareness of its programs.
Who’s Who on OSA’s Board of Directors

Where are you from?
I was born in Rochester, N.Y., of all places. My father came here to be a graduate student in physics and my mother came to the Eastman School of Music. My mom had a piece of music that she needed transcribed into a different key, and she gave it to a friend of hers who didn’t have time to do it. So he gave it to his roommate, and that was my dad. It’s not surprising, then, that I became a scientist who’s also a musician.

When did you become interested in science?
I’m lucky that I survived my childhood considering the kinds of experiments I did. My dad used to bring home old equipment from the physics department and my brothers and I would tear the things to pieces. We had a fantastic basement. We were always building and rebuilding things. We probably built half of the items in the Heathkit catalog, from garage door openers to color televisions. It was “doing it” science, and it was really fun.

Why optics?
I went to the Rochester Institute of Technology my freshman year, and while I was there I took an optics course that was taught by a University of Rochester graduate. I got very excited about optics, and for my summer job I was hired at the Laboratory for Laser Energetics. They immediately put me to work on big projects building lasers. At that point I realized that I had a real interest in optics, so I transferred to the University of Rochester.

Describe a challenging experience.
When I graduated, my advisor told me there’s only one place for you to go: Bell Labs. I moved up through the ranks there, eventually becoming department head of the advanced photonics research group. I left Bell Labs in 2001 and a lot of people said I had good timing in terms of getting out of there. But I think I had good timing in coming here. In 2000 and 2001, a lot of faculty members were leaving to start companies; very strong market forces were causing people to move around. We were seeing rapid transitions in the optics industry, which continue today.

Moving from the industrial to the university environment was a real challenge. It was like changing all 21 gears at the same time. But how successful you are depends a lot on your attitude, and I always really enjoyed mentoring people. On any given day, I’m teaching Optics 101; guiding advanced graduate students through an experiment or paper; helping junior faculty members through the tenure process; addressing some issue related to grants, proposals or contracts for senior faculty; recruiting new faculty; and meeting with architects to discuss our new $30 million optics and biomedical engineering building expansion project that’s underway.

What does it mean to you to be part of the institute’s 75th anniversary?
It’s a great honor and pleasure. It’s also a big responsibility. The optics education business is getting quite competitive. It’s great to be able to say we are the oldest U.S. optics program, but we also have to continually innovate in optics education.

Where is your favorite place?
Hawaii. It’s a beautiful place. My wife, Victoria Visiko, is a professional Hawaiian dancer. She has a Hawaiian dance studio here in Rochester. I help out as DJ, and I’m learning the slack key guitar style that originated in Hawaii in the early 1800s.

When you’re not working, what do you enjoy doing?
I have fun with my family. I met my wife in high school and we’ve been married 28 years. We have six children between the ages of 2 and 24; a dog, two cats and 14 ducks. I’m also a musician. I studied flute at the Eastman school, and learned how to play the bass guitar, classical guitar and lute. As a graduate student I played in a number of local jazz clubs.

What should the Society be focusing on in the 21st century?
The Society should sign up as many student members as possible. OSA has played a very important role in my career, and I think OSA could play a bigger role in helping people manage their careers.

— Kim Douglass