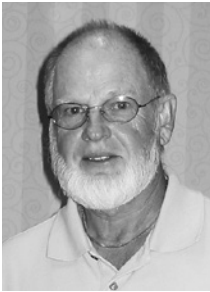


ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Terrance L. Tomer, CRA, FOPS
Timothy J. Bennett, CRA, FOPS
Paula F. Morris, CRA, FOPS

243 Hogan Court
Wilmington, NC 28412
tltomer@bellsouth.net

Arthur J. Bedell, MD and the Origins of the Fellows of Ophthalmic Photographers' Society

In the early days of the OPS, the leadership of the Society felt the need to create a method of recognizing important contributions to the profession of ophthalmic photography. There were discussions about multiple tiers of membership in the OPS based on a member's level of participation and effort on behalf of the organization.¹ A point system was briefly proposed to create an objective measure of contributions to the fledgling society. As the OPS leadership struggled with how to recognize the important contributions of both photographers and physicians, the numerous honorary awards bestowed upon ophthalmologist Arthur J. Bedell, MD became the primary inspiration and model for the establishment of the Honorary Life Member and Fellow of the Ophthalmic Photographers' Society (FOPS) designations.

Arthur Bedell is an important figure in the history of ophthalmic photography. He was one of the first practitioners to adopt and master the Zeiss Nordenson fundus camera soon after its introduction in 1925 and published an important atlas of fundus photographs in 1929.² He was a pioneer in stereo fundus photography and was arguably the first ophthalmologist to recognize the value of serial photographic documentation of retinal diseases.^{3,4} He published a number of cases that were photographed over several years, including a case of retinitis punctata albescens recorded with fundus photographs for a period of forty years.^{5,6}

Throughout his career, Bedell was a prominent leader in several medical societies including the Medical Society of Albany County, the Medical Society of the State of New York, the American Medical Association and the British Medical Association. He received honorary degrees from St Bonaventure College, Hobart College, University of Colorado, and the University of the South. He was an honorary Fellow of the International College of Surgeons, Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, and a Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine. He was a member of numerous medical and ophthalmological societies throughout the world including England, France,

Germany, India, Greece, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Mexico, and Cuba.

Bedell received the Silver Medal for scientific exhibition from the AMA in 1928, the Herman Knapp Gold Medal of the Eye Section from the AMA in 1929 and a Gold Medal for Outstanding Work in Ophthalmology from the AMA in 1952. He was a five-time recipient of the Lucien Howe



Figure 1: Arthur J. Bedell, MD

prize from the New York State Medical Society as well as both Lucien Howe Medals (University of Buffalo, and the American Ophthalmological Society). The majority of these awards were based on his significant accomplishments in advancing the understanding of retinal diseases through the use of fundus photography. Throughout a long career he amassed a vast collection of fundus photographs that became legendary because of the quality, educational value, and sheer volume of the images.

Charles Perera wrote of Bedell, "He loved to pull out a batch of Kodachrome slides at meetings and ask the fascinated viewers of his art to describe the chorioretinal changes demonstrated over the passage of time, to interpret what they saw, and to draw conclusions."⁷

Dr. Bedell's reputation was deservedly larger than life in many circles, including the Wills Eye Hospital where OPS founding members Johnny Justice Jr (1966-1968) and Terry Tomer (1968-1998) worked during the formative years of the OPS. Bedell completed his ophthalmology residency at Wills following graduation from the Albany Medical College in 1901. He returned to Albany to practice and teach ophthalmology and soon became recognized throughout the world for his pioneer achievements in fundus photography. It wasn't just his technical and medical expertise that garnered him such universal

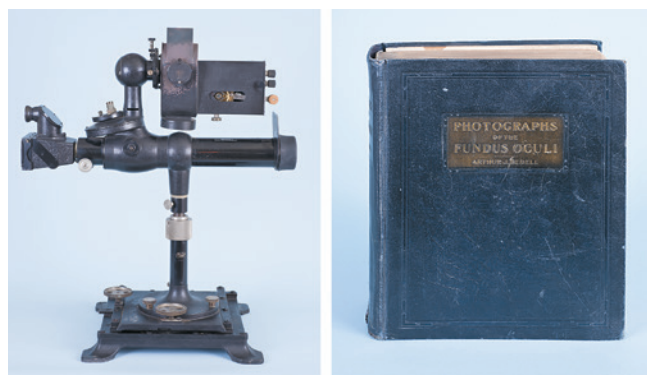


Figure 2: (a and b) Nordenson carbon arc fundus camera, serial #75, c1925 used by Arthur Bedell to create the first atlas of "Photographs of the Fundus Oculi". Camera and Atlas were gifted to the AAO Museum of Vision by Csaba and Elnajean Martonyi. *Images courtesy of Csaba Martonyi, CRA, FOPS.*

acclaim, but his relentless advocacy for the value of fundus photography. When he retired, Bedell donated his vast slide collection to Wills as a teaching collection for the residents in training. The annual Bedell Lectureship was established in 1949 by the Program Committee of the Wills Eye Alumni Society and continues today.

In the opening remarks of the 1972 Bedell Lecture, Lorenz Zimmerman stated: "It seems to me that he (Bedell) must have been one of the first to promote the concept, 'have slides, will travel,' and we are indebted to him for having advanced so very far, almost single-handedly, the art and science of fundus photography and its contributions to the study and teaching of diseases of the ocular fundus."⁸ These remarks are echoed again and again by the notable ophthalmologists who've been invited to deliver the prestigious lecture.⁹⁻¹⁰

Bedell's stature in the ophthalmic community cast a long shadow that had a major impact on the profession of ophthalmic photography, and indirectly, the newly formed professional society. Because of the strong connection to Wills, Terry Tomer and Johnny Justice were well aware of Bedell's acclaim and recognition. Collectively, his numerous honorary awards and titles offered a blueprint for organizational recognition of members and non-members who contributed to the success of the profession and the Society.

In 1972, the first Honorary Life Member designation was bestowed on four individuals: G.W. Crock, MD, Jessica Eichrodt, J. Donald M. Gass, MD, and Koichi Shimizu, MD. This designation was included in the original OPS bylaws as a category of membership and over the years this honor has mostly been reserved for physicians or other non-photographers who have supported the profession and society. The idea of a Fellow designation followed a few years later after much deliberation on how they would be selected. This new member type required an organizational bylaws amendment before Fellows could be officially designated. New OPS bylaws that included this new member type were adopted on August 2, 1976. The following year, the ten original founding members of the Society were the first individuals recognized as Fellows



Figure 3: Color fundus image taken with Bedell's Nordenson camera. Note the distinctive central reflex that was eliminated in later model cameras by the addition of the Allen Dot. *Image courtesy of Csaba Martonyi, CRA, FOPS.*

of the Ophthalmic Photographers' Society (FOPS).

The OPS bylaws state that the Fellows are a group of OPS members who have been selected by their peers to be recognized for their service to the Society. They are chosen and elected by members of the Fellowship Committee for their dedication and contributions to the OPS and to the field of ophthalmic photography. The committee is comprised of all current Fellows and all past presidents of the OPS. Since the induction of the first class of Fellows in 1977, the ranks have expanded to over 80 individuals recognized for their passion and commitment to the profession. Collectively they represent the spirit of volunteerism that drives the success of the Ophthalmic Photographers' Society.

REFERENCES

1. Johnson JL. Should there be another type of membership for OPS? *OPS News*. 1977 Feb;7:1
2. Bedell AJ. *Photographs of the Fundus Oculi – A Photographic Study of Normal and Pathological Changes Seen with the Ophthalmoscope*. Davis, Philadelphia 1929.
3. Bedell AJ. *Atlas of Stereoscopic Photographs of the Fundus Oculi*. Davis, Philadelphia 1929.
4. Bedell AJ. Stereoscopic fundus photography. *JAMA* 1935; 105:15002-1505.
5. Bedell AJ. Progressive bilateral chorioretinitis: Kodachrome record for 18 years. *Trans Am Ophthalmol Soc*. 1960; 58:238-244.
6. Bedell AJ. Ophthalmoscopically visible small spots in the ocular fundus. *Trans Am Ophthalmol Soc*. 1957; 57:48-52.
7. Perera CA. Arthur J. Bedell, MD. *Trans Am Ophthalmol Soc*. 1974;72:3-5
8. Zimmerman LE. Problems in the diagnosis of malignant melanomas of the choroid and ciliary body. The 1972 Arthur J. Bedell Lecture. *Am J Ophthalmol*. 1973 Jun;75(6):917-29.
9. McLean JM. Management of the primary glaucomas: the Arthur J. Bedell Lecture. *Am J Ophthalmol*. 1957; Sep;44(3):323-34.
10. Reese AB. The treatment of expanding lesions of the orbit with particular regard to those arising in the lacrimal gland; the seventh Arthur J. Bedell Lecture. *Am J Ophthalmol*. 1956 Jan;41(1):3-11.