



# Intercom

duke university medical center

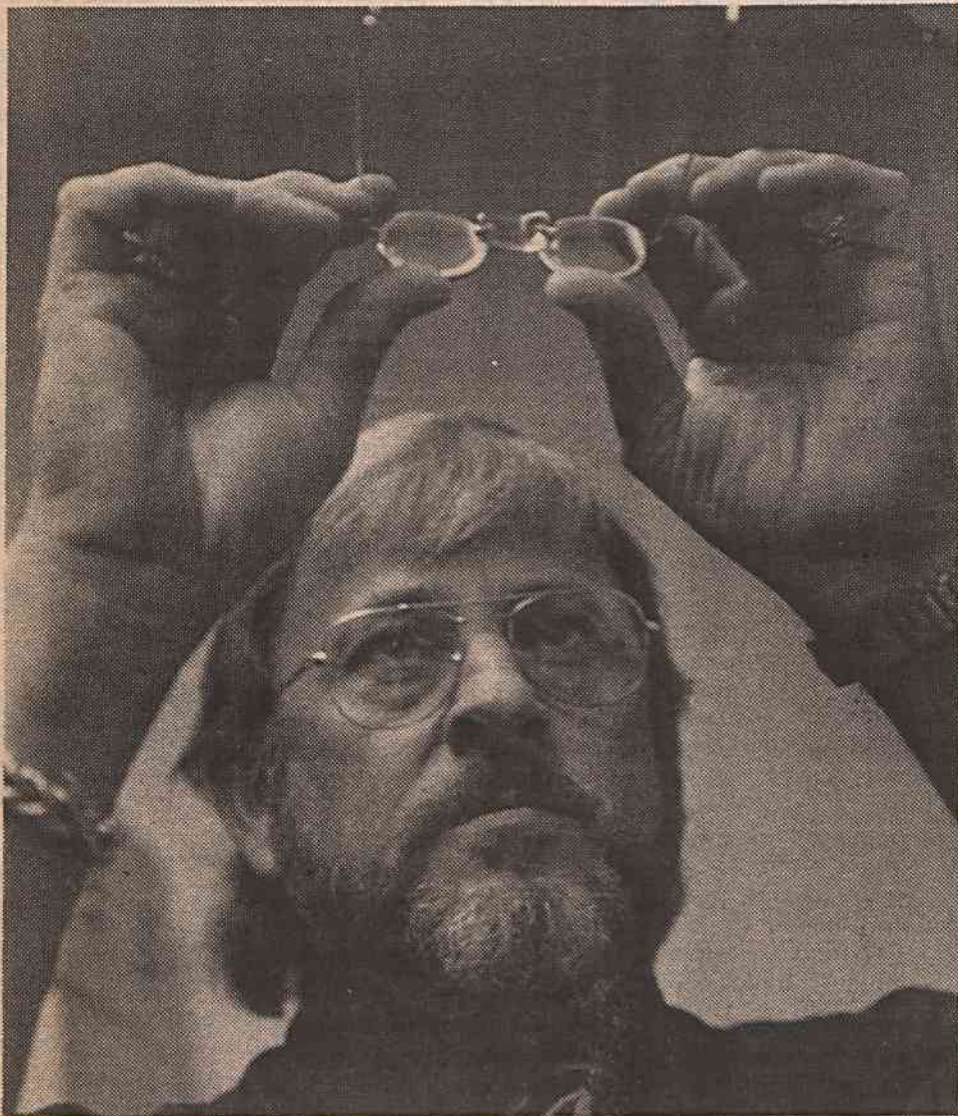
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DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

## Master Craftsman Richard Hamilton

# Duke Optician Creates 'Special' Visual Aids



**LOOKS PRETTY GOOD**—Richard Hamilton, manager of the Eye Center's Optical Dispensary, examines a pair of glasses he made for a two-year-old child. Each lens is about the size of a nickel. Hamilton, a master optician, said he enjoys making custom visual aids for patients with special problems. (Photo by Jim Wallace)

By David Williamson

For most Americans, buying a new pair of glasses is almost as easy as purchasing a pair of shoes.

For a less fortunate few with special eye problems, however, just finding an optician who can construct the sophisticated visual aids they require is a difficult task in itself.

Richard Hamilton, manager of the Optical Dispensary at the medical center, belongs to a small group of optical craftsmen across the nation who have developed a talent for helping these patients with "special" needs.

### Source of Pain

Consider the accident victim with no ears or only one ear, or perhaps no nose or one so scarred by burns that glasses resting on its bridge represent a continuing source of pain. Or the child born with eyes farther apart than normal.

"When optical companies manufacture frames and lens, they're shooting for the average," Hamilton said. "Since they're mass producing their goods for a huge market, they can't possibly accommodate the patients who come to us for help."

And since custom work doesn't repay the time which goes into it, most private opticians won't touch it with a 10-foot magnifying glass, Hamilton said.

### Watchmaker

The 49-year-old Hickory, N.C., native, who lives in Raleigh and commutes to Durham daily, said he became interested in the science of optics during World War II when he

served in the Navy. Originally trained as a horologist or watchmaker, he was hired after the war by an instrument research laboratory which was testing aircraft involved in crashes.

The work he performed on cameras and instruments at that laboratory, which is now a part of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, directed him toward opticianry, he said.

In 1948 he joined the Durham Optical Co., and in 1973, after 25 years with that firm, he resigned as vice president to accept the position as head optician at Duke. He said he now prefers to work with ophthalmologists at the "edge" of current eye research.

### Dramatic Reaction

"It's tremendously exciting to see a child see well for the first time," Hamilton admitted. "The reaction is so dramatic."

"I've had small children in the dispensary or on the ward crying and squirming until I got a pair of glasses on them. Then all the fussing stopped," he said. "There was a sudden awareness and a fascination with the world around them."

Hamilton, who is a fellow in the National Academy of Opticianry, pointed out that sight is particularly important during infancy and early childhood because such a large percentage of those years is spent learning. A child who is visually handicapped will develop intellectually at a much slower rate, Hamilton said, so every attempt is made to fit such children with glasses as young as six months.

"There are no good factory-made pediatric frames," he said, "and we have to make many pairs individually." Currently, Hamilton is designing a frame for infants which can be mass produced.

### Venetian Blinds

One of the special devices the

(Continued on page 4)

## Nutrition Bill of Rights Adopted

By Sharon Polisson, R.D.

In line with this year's Bicentennial festivities, the American Dietetic Association has chosen as its theme for National Nutrition Week, March 7-13, "Improving Nutrition for the Nation, 1776-1976."

In 1776, the United States was founded with a Bill of Rights guaranteeing freedom for all. In 1976, a "Nutrition Bill of Rights" has

been adopted by the American Dietetic Association.

The Nutrition Bill of Rights recommends that every American can have the following: "the Right to Health" through improved nutrition; "the Right to Choose" a variety of foods that provide optimal nutrition at competitive prices; and "the Right to Be Informed" through adequate nutrition education as a protection

against food and nutrition misinformation.

The American Dietetic Association is also strongly supporting and encouraging the passage of the National Nutrition Education Act. This act is the initial step in providing programs so that the public can become more knowledgeable about the foods needed in the daily diet.

Dr. Mary Swartz Rose, a pioneer in the science of nutrition, coined the phrase, "ignorance, indifference and poverty" in describing the greatest enemies of nutritional well-being.

The American Dietetic Association is working for: the recognition that nutritional care is basic to health care; funding for nutritional services in preventive care; on-going support for research in the basic science of nutrition; and continuing education activities.

At the medical center, the theme "Improving Nutrition for the Nation" will be displayed and publicized next week in the form of games, table tents, booths in the cafeterias, posters, buttons and other educational materials.

## VIP Produces Retardation Film

A videotape on services for the mentally retarded in Durham has been produced by Duke's Video Interaction Program (VIP) at the request of the Development Disabilities Task Force.

It is designed for showing to professionals in the Durham area who deal with problems of the mentally retarded, and the first showing was at noon today at Department of Pediatrics Grand Rounds.

The Developmental Disabilities Task Force is made up of mental

health professionals and parents. The tape points out a sense of discouragement many parents feel because they believe some physicians are not aware of the services available locally.

The services, as the tape shows, range from evaluation of the developmental disabilities through various training opportunities.

The tape's producer, VIP, is part of the Community Models Division of the Department of Community Health Sciences.

## Forbus Dies, Service Set

A memorial service for Dr. Wiley D. Forbus, who died Wednesday, will be held Sunday at 4 p.m. in Duke University Chapel.

Dr. Forbus, one of the original members of the Duke medical faculty, a world leader in pathology and chairman of Duke's department for 30 years, had entered Duke Hospital Feb. 6. He would have been 82 March 14.

A story dealing with Dr. Forbus' contributions to Duke and the field of pathology will be carried in next week's Intercom.