



"It's a pleasure to please you."

NEWS FROM ROBERTSON OPTICAL LABORATORIES, INC.

SERVING THE EYE CARE INDUSTRY SINCE 1958

SPRING 2008

# the Lens Leader

## Robertson Optical Laboratories Celebrates 50 Years

"When Jack Robertson started in the optical trade in the 1920s, little did he know the number of lives he would impact in the industry for future generations," says Calvin Robertson, Jr., secretary of Robertson Optical of Atlanta (Loganville) and president of Robertson Optical of Columbia and Greenville, SC.



ATLANTA, GA – The first Robertson Optical lab

By the 1950s, Jack had become quite an entrepreneur in the industry, and on April 14, 1958, he founded and opened the first office of Robertson Optical Laboratories, Inc. in downtown Atlanta. Robertson Optical's 11 employees serviced 22 prescriptions that first day and 149 the first week.

50 years later, Robertson Optical celebrates unprecedented success, having more than 120 employees, fills more than 7,000 prescriptions a week, and serves customers throughout the southeastern and central states. Through the years, Robertson Optical has owned labs in Atlanta, GA; Greenville, SC; Columbia, SC; Charlotte, NC; Albany, GA; Orlando, FL; and Chattanooga, TN. In total, the company has occupied at least 15 buildings. Robertson Optical has filled hundreds of thousands of lens prescriptions, sold a multitude of eye glass frames, sold contact lenses, developed the first one-step fining pad for grinding plastic lenses, and started a separate company that designed and sold jumbo lens trays and Frame-o-Flex frame drawer dividers. *Adjacent is a timeline of key events.* ■



ATLANTA, GA – In the early 1960s, Robertson Optical customer service and sales representative Georgeanna Frazier often found creative ways to promote Robertson Optical. Frazier designed and made this skirt which included Robertson Optical logos, corporate colors, and eyeglasses sewn to the garment.

### 50 Years of Robertson Optical Laboratories, Inc.: April 14, 1958 – April 14, 2008

**1920s** – Jack Robertson was employed by J. H. Spratling, OD of Macon, GA, and later by Southeastern Optical Company in Atlanta, GA, where he worked in surface and finishing, then customer service for several years. It is believed that Jack ground the first slab-off lens in Atlanta.



Jack Robertson  
Founder

**1946** – Dean Cummins and Jack Robertson opened a wholesale lab in Atlanta called Cummins-Robertson Optical Laboratory, Inc. by purchasing a small lab in the Healy Building in downtown Atlanta. Over the next 12 years, additional Cummins-Robertson locations opened.

**1958** – Jack Robertson resigned from Cummins-Robertson and purchased the Atlanta office of Wren Optical to open the first location of Robertson Optical Laboratories, Inc. (ROL). He started the company with his son Calvin, Ralph Barr and some others from Cummins-Robertson. When opened, Jack said, "If we can receive 50 prescriptions a day, I'll be happy." This was achieved within the first six months.

**1958** – To vie with other labs, ROL gave high quality, ceramic ashtrays to customers as promo items for several years. The original ceramic ashtray displayed a series of vignettes familiar to ECPs, followed by smaller ashtrays, some which showed various diagrams of the eye.



Ceramic ashtrays, 1950s and 1960s

**1959** – Richard Robertson joined his father and brother with ROL Atlanta. Prior to that, he worked as an optometrist in Charlotte, NC with his in-laws, Jimmy Palmer, OD and Belle Palmer, OD.

### In Memory ...

#### Gordon Scott, Sr., Co-Founder and Vice President Robertson Optical Laboratories of Columbia



Gordon Scott, Sr.

**COLUMBIA, SC** – Robertson Optical Laboratories pays tribute to Gordon Scott, co-founder of Robertson Optical of Columbia, who died February 24. He served as vice-president and co-owner of the Columbia location for 44 years.

During Scott's term, business increased significantly. Robertson of Columbia started with four employees and currently has 47. In 1963, he opened the first Columbia location of Robertson, and by 1968 moved into a larger building. By 2005, more space was needed, and lab owners recognized the need to offer in-house AR coating, along with other state-of-the-art services. Thus, in 2007, Robertson of Columbia opened a 12,500 sq. ft. building, for which Scott spear-headed the planning and oversight.

"Gordon was a beautiful person, had a great sense of humor, and was a very likeable guy," said Richard Robertson, secretary/treasurer of Robertson Optical of Columbia. "It was always a joyful time when he was present. As a business man, he was the best. It was an honor to be associated with Gordon and to continue to be associated with his family. We all will miss him."

Calvin Robertson, Jr., president of Robertson Optical of Columbia, said, "Not only was Gordon a business partner, but he was a real friend to my family and me. We all will miss him greatly."

Prior to serving Robertson, Scott served as branch manager of American Optical Company of Columbia, where he was awarded "National Salesman of the Year".

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Jolly Scott, two sons, two grandsons and one great-granddaughter. ■

#### Hughes Joins Sales Staff of Robertson Optical of Columbia

**COLUMBIA, SC** – Josh Hughes has been named sales representative for Robertson Optical of Columbia. He joins sales manager Larry Patton and vice president Scotty Scott in calling on eye care professionals.

Hughes begins by visiting accounts in the Greater Columbia area and will later expand to other areas. Initially, his primary focus will be on promoting a large variety of frames. Robertson is expanding its inventory and brands of frames. "My goal is to uncover and meet the needs of our customers and prospective customers," said Hughes. "I love working with Robertson. As a former Robertson customer service representative, I built many valuable business relationships. I'm now ready to enhance these, along with developing new ones." ■



Josh Hughes

**1960** – Forrest Bradford was managing Cummins – Robertson in Greenville, SC. He wanted to join Jack and open a ROL location. Cummins sold the Greenville office to Forrest and the Robertsons, and ROL Greenville opened.

**1963** – Gordon Scott, who was managing American Optical Company in Columbia, SC, joined the Robertsons in opening ROL Columbia. Many of Gordon's former employees joined him.

**1963** – Forrest Bradford of ROL Greenville passed away.

**1963** – The Robertsons were referred to Cliff Wiggins, who was working for a retail-wholesale dispensary in Gastonia, NC. After a meeting with him, he became the manager and co-owner of ROL Greenville.

**1965** – Jack Robertson passed away on August 15.



ROL Charlotte, 1969

**1968** – Due to its success, ROL Columbia needed additional space, moved to newer building in Columbia, and later expanded that building to include a lab for plastics.

**1968** – Bill Renfrow and the Robertsons bought Martin Optical Company of Charlotte to open ROL Charlotte.

**1969** – Tom Bentley had been serving as a manager of ROL Atlanta since 1963. After six years with Atlanta, he decided that he wanted to open a ROL location, so the Robertsons and Tom opened ROL Albany.

**1969** – ROL Charlotte moved into a larger building.

**1970** – ROL opened a new location in Orlando, FL, which was co-owned and managed by Billy Parker. ROL Orlando was successful in its first year and continued to be profitable for many years, requiring a larger facility to be built in the Orlando suburbs.

**1973** – Due to continued growth, ROL Atlanta built a new facility in Tucker, GA, a suburb of Atlanta.

**1973** – Bill Renfrow needed more space for ROL Charlotte, so a new building was erected to house the growth.

**1973** – Bill Renfrow conceived the idea of starting a company which made and molded "jumbo lens trays" and "frame drawer dividers". The company was called Tri-R Company (for Robertson, Robertson, and Renfrow). With the popularity of larger lenses and frames, the jumbo lens trays and Frame-o-Flex dividers were sold throughout the US and Canada. Because the Tri-R trays and dividers were in such high demand for stocking oversized lens and frames, this venture proved to be very successful.



ROL Greenville, 1975

**1975** – ROL Greenville moved into a new building.

**1976** – A ROL team, led by Richard Robertson, developed the first one-step fining pad for grinding plastic lenses. The pad was later sold to Titmus, and then sold it throughout the U.S. Eventually, Carl Zeiss Vision sold it throughout Europe.



ROL Atlanta  
(Tucker, GA)  
groundbreaking, 1973

**1979** – Glenn Hollingsworth became general manager of ROL Atlanta.

(continued on back)

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# the Lens Leader

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*Don't miss the inside...*



◉ Robertson Optical Laboratories Celebrates 50 Years

◉ In Memory of Gordon Scott, Sr.

◉ Hughes Joins Sales Staff at ROL Columbia

**The Lens Leader**

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## the Healthy Eye café

### Good Teaming Begins With Identifying Who You Are and What You Do

by Mark Hinton



Mark Hinton, Author  
*A Healthy Eye Office*

What do you do?

Often I hear, "I work for an eye doctor".

In building a great team, it's important to identify your value position.

For example, "I

am the eyewear specialist" or "I am the medical assistant" or "I am the reception coordinator". Why? When you have the responsibility with title within the office value position, there is accountability within the position to oneself and the entire team. This knowledge and understanding is the cornerstone in building pride, ownership, empowerment, great attitude and best teaming.

Words are powerful. The words "employee" and "staff" are exclusive and not inclusive. In order to build consensus and strong teaming, identify the office position with value for each "team partner" and build a healthy eye practice with a healthy team. Team meetings held every week, or every other week, are crucial for best results and team connectivity.

© 2008 Mark Hinton from Mark's forthcoming book *A Healthy Eye Office*.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR TO SCHEDULE AN ONSITE CONSULTATION, CONTACT [info@robertsonoptical.com](mailto:info@robertsonoptical.com).

### "Just like high definition TV technology ..." SOLA HDV High Definition Lenses Offered by Robertson

"Just like high definition TV technology, High Definition lenses can make an extraordinary difference to patient's visual clarity and comfort," said Christie Cornetta, senior regional marketing manager of Carl Zeiss Vision, about SOLA HDV High Definition lenses, which are offered by all Robertson Optical labs.



"SOLA HDV High Definition lenses, which use state-of-the-art digital technology to give patients the most accurate, vivid and pristine visual experience they ever had in progressive lenses," she continued. Cornetta said that for the first time, HD technology creates the ideal lens performance optimized for each patient's unique prescription. She also noted that SOLA HDV lenses are digitally customized to precisely align progressive viewing zones and maximize clarity in each patient's personal frame choice.

### Vera Bradley Robertson Optical Offering Vera Bradley's 'Uniquely Yours' Optical Collection

Vera Bradley's "Uniquely Yours" optical collection is now available through Robertson Optical Laboratories. VB-3023 is a full rim handmade acetate frame with a rounded rectangle eyes shape. This design features the Mod Floral Pink and Kensington Vera Bradley patterns on the inside of both temples with metal accents and a laser etched Vera Bradley logo on both temple tips. VB-3024 is a semi-rimless metal plastic combination with a shallow rectangle eyes shape. This design features molded floral designs inspired by the Vera Bradley Mod Floral Pink Blue and Kensington patterns. The frame has a laser etched Vera Bradley logo on both temple tips and adjustable nose pads.

### Sydney Love Announces Botanical Butterfly Pattern in Readers and Sunglasses; New Releases in Everyday Eyewear

Sydney Love's new releases for everyday eyewear, along with the new "Botanical" butterfly pattern in readers and sunglasses, are now available through Robertson Optical.

Also, Sydney Love representative Donna Bauman said, "The Sydney Love Stepping Out shoe pattern has been a great success in everyday eyewear, readers and sunglasses."

### Timeline – 50 years of ROL (continued)

1982 – ROL opened Reid Optical in Stone Mountain, GA with Steve and Pattie Reid.

1983 – ROL Charlotte's building had proved to be too small for growth. Thus, a new lab and office was opened at the Arnold Palmer Commercial Center in Charlotte.

1988 – Cliff Wiggins of ROL Greenville retired.

1988 – Bill Renfrow retired, and ROL sold its Charlotte and Reid Optical locations.

1992 – Chip Robertson and Glenn Hollingsworth became vice presidents and partial owners of ROL Greenville, with Chip managing Greenville, and Glenn serving as general manager of ROL Atlanta.

1993 – Kelly Bowling became VP of ROL Atlanta.

1994 – Gordon "Scotty" Scott, Jr. and Jack Howard became VPs and partial owners of ROL Columbia.

1998 – Due to substantial increase in business, ROL Atlanta built a larger facility in Loganville, GA where they are today. Soon after, the Loganville location started producing AR coatings in-house.

2000 – Larry Bentley became a VP and partial owner of ROL Albany.

2006 – Billy Parker, who had managed ROL Orlando, passed away.

2005 – ROL Atlanta opened a full-service anti-reflective (AR) coating lab in their Loganville facility. The Atlanta location had produced in-house AR coatings since 1999, but the new facility gave ROL the ability to produce high quality AR coatings.



ROL Columbia groundbreaking, fall of 2005

2006 – Larry Bentley, VP of ROL Albany retired, with Wahn Vinavong succeeding him as vice-president and co-owner. Wahn had been with ROL for 29 years, working as a lab tech and in customer service. Tom Bentley also continued as vice president.

2007 – By 2005, ROL Columbia had recognized the need to expand, so in February 2007, erected and moved into a new, 12,500 square-ft. building. This gave Columbia the ability to produce the same high quality AR coatings being produced at ROL Atlanta. It was the first optical lab in SC to offer full-service, in-house AR coating. ROL Columbia and Atlanta were the only two independent labs in the Southeast to produce Teflon® Clearcoat lenses in-house.

2008 – In February, Gordon Scott, co-founder of ROL Columbia passed away.



### Robertson Optical of Columbia and Greenville Expand Frames Inventory

The Greenville and Columbia, SC locations of Robertson Optical Laboratories are expanding their inventory and brands of frames, according to Scotty Scott, vice president of Robertson Optical of Columbia, and Chip Robertson, vice president of Robertson of Greenville. The summer issue of *the Lens Leader* will feature a special article about Robertson's frames.