

The KRAFFS

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EXERTING INFLUENCE

BY MANUS C. KRAFF, MD

It is with great humility and pride that I write about my experience helping to teach and work with two of my children in my chosen profession. From their earliest days, I must have projected my love for ophthalmology and consciously tried to influence them. My oldest two children are 15 months apart in age, and I would bring them to the hospital on weekends when making rounds. I recall taking Colman when he was about 8 years old on a Saturday afternoon to observe me performing a corneal transplantation. We would discuss my work over dinner in the evening. I am sure this influenced their career decisions.

As a sophomore in high school, my daughter Cheryl wrote a paper about glaucoma, and by that time, Coby was already hooked (Figures 1 and 2). By college, they were both premed students, and in medical school, they were considering ophthalmology residencies. Both trained at The University of Illinois under Morton Goldberg, MD.

Cheryl entered our practice in 1987 and Coby in 1990 after completing a corneal fellowship. By that time, we needed more physical space and acquired a second office location in the Chicago loop from two retiring ophthalmologists. At about that time (1990), we became very interested in laser vision correction. Having been involved early in clinical investigations of phacoemulsification, IOL implantation, IOL calculation formulas, and nonsteroidal ocular drug applications, I found it natural to become an investigator for the Visx Excimer Laser Corporation in the

laser's FDA clinical studies in 1991. Coby became a principal investigator for Visx and is still functioning in that capacity today for Abbott.

Having the opportunity to work intimately with a son and daughter adds another dimension besides being parent, teacher, and friend—colleague. Continually working on these constantly changing roles is very rewarding.

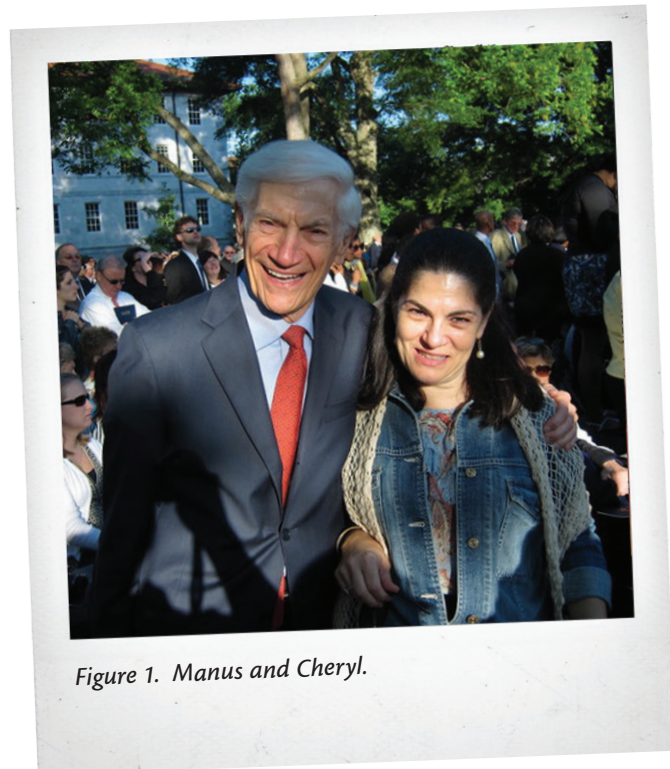


Figure 1. Manus and Cheryl.

CONTINUAL MEDICAL EDUCATION

BY COLMAN R. KRAFF, MD

I vividly remember playing with some friends in front of my house one Saturday afternoon when my mother walked out and told me to get in the car. As we were driving on the expressway, I asked her where she was taking me. “You are going to watch your father perform a corneal transplant,” she responded. I asked, “What is a corneal transplant?” It was 1968, and I was 8 years old. The car pulled up to the back door of the hospital, and a nurse met me and sneaked me into the OR. The scrubs were huge on me. I stood silently and watched my father meticulously perform this amazing procedure with a pair of loupes (there were no operating microscopes back then). From that moment on, there was never a doubt that I would pursue a career in ophthalmology.

LIFELONG LEARNING

I have been fortunate to have my father as a role model, teacher, and mentor. Whether it was watching endless hours of cataract surgery on video as an adolescent, spending my summers scrubbing in with him as his scrub technician in high school, or performing cataract surgery in China and India during my residency with him at my side critiquing my technique, it has been a constant learning experience that continues for me today as his partner for the past 26 years.

A SHARED PHILOSOPHY

Now at 57, I look back and realize how much influence my father has had on every aspect of my life. I have been

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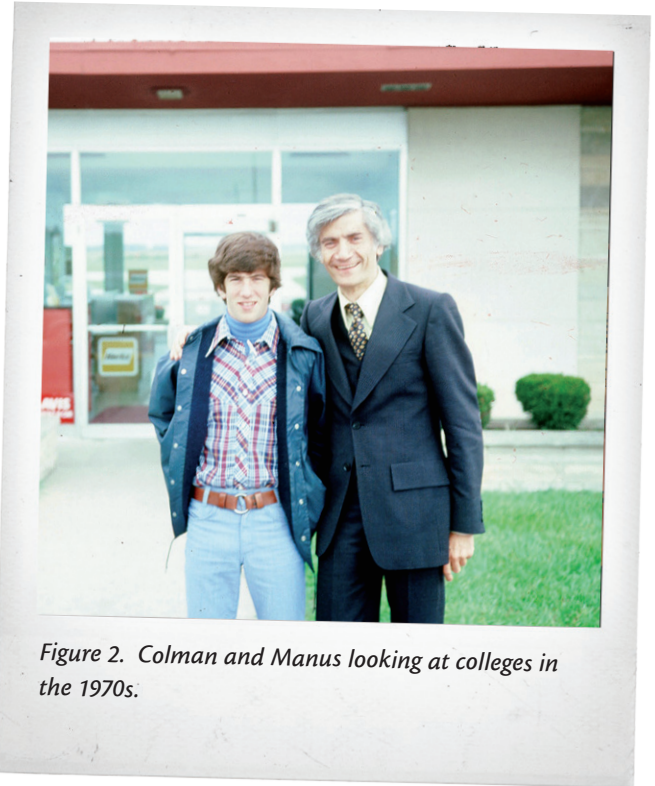


Figure 2. Colman and Manus looking at colleges in the 1970s.

lucky also to practice with my older sister, Cheryl, who likewise followed in our dad’s footsteps. We have a unique family business that continues to thrive today because of the basic philosophy that my father has instilled in us: put patients first, stay on the cutting edge of technology, and do not be afraid to take a risk or two in order to stay ahead of the competition.

A father-son relationship can be complex and, at times, challenging—especially when your father is your business partner and an icon in your profession. A healthy relationship requires tremendous work and compromise. We are proud that we have been successful for so long, and I am grateful for the opportunities I have had because of this relationship and what my dad has taught me.

FINAL EXAM OF A LIFETIME

It was around 7 o’clock on a Friday morning last February. The OR was so quiet that I could have heard a pin drop. As I looked through the operating microscope on my first and only cataract procedure of the day, I paused to reflect on all my training and how I had gotten to this point in my life. I took a deep breath and said to myself, “I can do this. I’ve been taught by one of the masters of cataract surgery.” My heart rate began to rise as I started the phacoemulsification of my father’s cataract. It was the ultimate final exam of a life in ophthalmology and a great tribute that my father paid to me. I passed! ■