

# LASIK, LADY GAGA, AND THE RACE TRACK

Five minutes with Noel Alpins, AM, FRANZCO, FRCOphth.



Dr. Alpins takes his car out for laps at Calder Park Raceway in Melbourne.

## Has a particular patient had a lasting effect on you?

I remember one refractive surgery patient around 10 years ago who had severe astigmatism in both eyes and suffered emotionally from her bespectacled appearance, dependence, and visual handicap. Immediately after her LASIK procedure, she sat up, looked around the surgery room for a few seconds, and then cried uncontrollably for 10 minutes out of relief and gratitude for the change.

## What would you be if you could not have been an ophthalmologist?

In my dreams, a professional golfer or Formula One driver, but I am still looking for a sponsor. In reality, I would have chosen a profession orientated toward numbers such as an actuary or engineer.

## How has a book or piece of music challenged your perspective?

The *Godfather* movies and Billy Joel's *Nylon Curtain* album made me realize that violence and war are best avoided when possible. I have seen the Beatles' movie *Eight Days a*

*Week* three times, since it portrays an age of discovery before I started my medical career. A visit to The Cavern Club in Liverpool brings it all to life and reality. The song "Imagine" brings to mind John Lennon's tragic death and the resultant lost opportunities.

## What would people be surprised to learn about you?

Music is a must when I am performing cataract surgery, and Lady Gaga is at the top of my playlist!

## What do you know now that you wish you had known at the beginning of your career?

Don't believe everything you are told. If you think someone is wrong, you are probably right. Follow your instincts, and see if you can do it better. If so, then publish it. ■

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