Members Remember
Edward Epstein

Although it's been a few months since Edward Epstein passed away, it is fitting to share the thoughts and words of fellow members. There have been shared with Ghita, Edward's devoted wife and partner.

The last time I saw Teddy was at an ASCRS meeting in Seattle and his rounded shoulders and slowed gait hinted to me that he was not long for this world. I realized then that ophthalmology was not only to lose a giant but a beautiful humble man of great esteem.

I first met Teddy in the old days and knew he had invented the lens later copied and called the "Copeland Lens." He personally told me all about what happened. It was stolen from him because he was on the other side of the world and could do nothing about it. And he wouldn't have made a stink anyway. Though the Epstein Cross lens was not the real answer, he continued to labor in the field of invention and was the second, after Keiki Mehta of Bombay in the 1970s, to make IOLs out of silicone. Mazzocone picked up on his work and the rest is history. He was a sweet and generous man.

In 1983, I dedicated each of my exam rooms at St. Mary's Eye Center to Ridley, Binkhorst, Choyce, Fyodorov, Kelman and Epstein. One of my joys was the photo of him, Keiki Mehta and Tom Mazzocone with me after my Binkhorst Lecture. I will personally never forget him and am sad to see him join the rest of the many IOL pioneers I was privileged to have known. The next generation is next.

May Ghita have peace in knowing how many people around the world appreciated the both of them. - Kenneth Hoffer

I envy all of those who did have a special relationship with Dr. Epstein. I had only brief encounters with him in recent years. It is a pity that I don't have thoughts or stories to share, but I have appreciated learning of his nature through what has been written. I extend my condolences.

- Samuel Masket

Just a few words to express my most sincere condolelence for the bereavement of your husband Edward Epstein. Although I did not know him personally, he made great contributions to the field of ophthalmology and will remain in our memories as a most eminent ophthalmologist, an example to all.

- Jorge Alío

I was honored to have been chosen to give the Epstein Lecture at the biannual SASCRS Congress in Durban, South Africa in August, 2005, and spent time with Teddy and Ghita there. I will always be grateful for their friendship over the years.

If one were asked to name the leading ophthalmologists of the 20th century, the name of Edward Epstein of Johannesburg, would certainly be among the leaders. Dr. Epstein made significant contributions to ophthalmology in South Africa and the world.

Dr. Epstein was one of the first to implant intraocular lenses, implanting early Ridley lenses, although he was at first most interested in intraocular lenses in children with unilateral cataracts. He made continuous design improvements throughout the 1950s and 1960s, developing the "collar stud" and Maltese Cross lenses, as well as a technique for transscleral fixation of intraocular lenses via the ciliary sulcus. His early work with different lens materials also led to the development of hydrogel and silicone lenses.

In the 1970s, Epstein was one of the seven ophthalmologists in the world given honorary life membership status by the American Intraocular Implant Society scientific advisory board because of his leading role in the development of the intraocular lens. He also gave the ASCRS Binkhorst Medal Lecture in 1984 entitled "The Changing Face of Implants" at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

Despite the isolation of his practice in a part of the world not thought of as leading in innovation by many in Europe and America, he explored new ways of doing many things. He has been described by colleagues as intelligent, scientific, ethical, honest, and modest. Edward Epstein set an example in innovation and advancement of knowledge, and is among the giants in the world of ophthalmology upon whose shoulders we stand.

- Spencer Thornton

It is always sad to hear such news, unfortunately life is so. I met with Dr Epstein especially during our retreat meeting in Cape Town. He was one of my teachers and I admire what he has done for the development of ophthalmology. I will keep him in my heart.

- Pavel Roszival
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Teddy Epstein’s death has been a personal loss and also an end to a wonderful era in our mutual search for the perfection of pseudophakia. Some 25 years ago, I initiated the formation of a South African Cataract Society and Dr. Epstein was one of my greatest supporters and helped with his usual enthusiasm as member of the first executive council of the SASCRS to launch our Society which, in the years to follow, held numerous international congresses in South Africa and helped to link our SASCRS to the ASCRS, IIIC, ESCRS and numerous cataract societies worldwide.

I will always honor his pioneering work with his Maltese Cross lens and the whole world should know that his work was carried out under very stressful conditions prevailing at the time, with meager local support. Let it be known that the most respected honorary lecture, the Epstein Lecture, is delivered at a SASCRS International Congress in South Africa only by an ophthalmologist of the highest international esteem.

I say goodbye to a great South African, a great pioneer in ophthalmology, a great personal support and a lifelong friend.  
- Martius Pretorius

Teddy Epstein, a contemporary of Ridley, Choyce and Binkhorst who predeceased him, was a founding member of IIIC and a true pioneer in the field of intraocular lens implantation. His first implant design evolved into the Copeland IOL in the U.S.A. which for a time was very popular after intracapsular cataract extraction. For me, his most unique work focused on the development of the earliest successful hydrophilic acrylic (hydrogel) posterior chamber lens implants utilized after extracapsular cataract extraction. This work intrigued many and he attracted visits from surgeons throughout the world including Michael Blumenthal, Slava Fyodorov, Graham Barrett and myself. He shared his experience and ideas openly and we were all impressed enough to start independent research efforts to develop commercially available hydrophilic acrylic IOLs. Continuing evolution of work in this field has now led to a family of hydrophilic posterior chamber IOLs which have been used successfully in nearly 3,000,000 patients, including one manufactured by Rayner itself, Ridley’s original lens manufacturer. Like Ridley, he persevered in his work on implantology in the face of significant antagonism from his colleagues and was appropriately honored only in his later years of life. It was a pleasure and honor to know him personally and to be present when he was awarded the IIIC Medal. His work and his gentlemanly style influenced me greatly.  
- Richard Lindstrom

I knew Dr Epstein for 26 years having first met him in 1980 at a meeting in Cannes. He had heard from Eric Arnott about my work folding a HEMA lens in rabbits of the same material that he had used in the late 1970’s for ECCE. We quickly established a friendship which was renewed whenever we met all over the planet. I was particularly flattered when he turned out to hear me speak at Johannesburg golf club to local ophthalmologists on my first visit to South Africa in 1998. He was undoubtedly the unsung hero of the battle to get IOLs accepted as a viable approach to the treatment of aphakia as well as a good friend. I shall miss his sense of humor amongst many other things. 
- Richard Packard

I had the honor of meeting Dr. and Mrs. Epstein about a dozen times, at various meetings. Few people would know that he had other interests besides intraocular lenses. He had made excellent dissections of levator palpebrae superiors. I was introduced to him in 1976, when I asked him for a reprint of his article on the subject. He and his wife were always most friendly, as they must be to everyone who passed their way. We have lost a great researcher and an original thinker, and a great friend of the world.  
- Daljit Singh

The first IOL I ever implanted was the Copeland model of the Epstein iris fixated design in 1973. The first dozen went well with ICCE but then came the CME. However, with ECCE, the model succeeded. After the Paris International Congress in 1974 and Binkhorst’s persuasive doctrine of ECCE, our thinking changed and implant surgery began to flourish. Meeting Edward Epstein for the first time in South Africa many years ago and many times at the IIIC meetings I was always struck by his modesty and wisdom. He was a man of subdued charm and profound intellect with a warm and friendly disposition. I feel privileged to have known him and exult in his longevity.  
- Herbert Gould

Teddy was a true pioneer in our field and it was our privilege to know him and mine in particular to honor him with the IIIC Medal at our retreat in Cape Town in 2001. Fortunately, he lived long enough to see the fruits of his imagination become reality. I, like all of us, will miss him and send our sincerest condolences to Ghita.

- Emanuel Rosen

He was really a colorful person and a cornerstone in the South African ophthalmological group. I had long discussion with Ghita about Teddy’s life and philosophies. His wife is doing very well and will welcome any communication from old friends.  
- Jan Talma