

## Gary S. Hafner

Gary Stuart Hafner, Ph.D., professor of optometry and adjunct professor of anatomy at Indiana University, is, in the words of medical educator Louis Flexner, an “anatomist’s anatomist.” Gary’s teaching, research, and service run the scope of structural biology, from macromolecules in visual cells to the whole human body. He is among the world’s authorities on the evolution and development of the crayfish eye. Indeed, his most recent publication (in *Arthropod Structure and Development*, in press), co-authored with the German zoologist Steffen Harzsch, examines a pivotal issue in the evolution of invertebrates.

In the School of Optometry his main courses have been ocular anatomy and gross anatomy. Along with other major innovations, he introduced human cadavers into instruction for IU optometry students. During the past three years his teaching included one-third of the neuroscience course for medical students in the Medical Sciences Program.

Gary was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1943. His family moved to Illinois where he “grew up on the north shore of Chicago.” The Hafners moved again, this time to Indianapolis, where Gary completed the eighth grade and went on to pitch baseball for and graduate from Broad Ripple High School. He earned an A.B. from Hanover College in 1965, majoring in biology and chemistry and winning a letter in, of course, baseball. (Years later he would occasionally enjoy playing catch on Sunday mornings with friend and academic role model Professor Emeritus Conrad Mueller.)

After receiving an M.A. in biology at Drake University in 1967, Gary pursued a Ph.D. at IU in what was then the Department of Anatomy and Physiology. Concentrating on cytology and neuroanatomy, and assisting in various basic medical science courses, he earned his doctorate in 1972. He had conducted his dissertation research under C. B. G. (Boyd) Campbell and H. D. (Dave) Potter.

Before undertaking postdoctoral training, Gary returned to his alma mater, Hanover College, during the fall of 1972 as an assistant professor. In his semester there the newly minted cytologist and neuroanatomist taught not his specialties, but comparative anatomy and general biology (again, Flexner’s anatomist’s anatomist).

Gary initiated postdoctoral research at IU in January 1973 with five months in Ray Murray’s lab. In May 1973 he “went west” for 18 months in UCLA’s Jules Stein Eye Institute. There he collaborated with one of neurobiology’s up-and-coming luminaries, Dean Bok. Gary returned to Bloomington and IU in the autumn of 1974, for an associateship with his former mentor, Dave Potter.

In 1976 an outstanding lecture to the optometry faculty on the ultrastructure of the crayfish eye contributed significantly to Gary’s successful competition to fill a vacancy created with the retirement of Stanley Rafalco, who had taught ocular and general anatomy from early in the history of the optometric curriculum at IU. Gary was expected to modernize and offer those courses, as well as develop instruction for graduate students. In addition, he was charged with renovating optometry’s barely functional electron microscope laboratory and maintaining a “high-tech” microscopy facility to support the research and teaching of others in the school. To operate the new lab, Gary brought in Tom Tokarski, whom he had known since graduate school. Although Tom did not hold a doctorate, Gary treated him as a colleague. They co-authored 11 papers. At Gary’s encouraging, Tom also undertook projects of his own and even published with others. Tom is now retired. As for Gary, he was tenured on schedule, voted teacher of the year for 1976–1977, and promoted to full professor in 1993.

How did he treat students? Consider the words of Tiffenie Harris: “I first met Dr. Hafner in 1987 . . . [in] a summer program for undergraduate minority students. [He] was

very patient . . . and taught me how to make frozen sections . . . of the crayfish retina." Tiffenie would eventually earn an O.D. degree. Now a member of the optometry faculty herself, she adds, "His anatomy courses laid the foundation for us to become competent optometrists, well-versed in ocular disease and its systemic associations."

David Goss, professor of optometry and a colleague of Gary's, sat in on ocular anatomy while pursuing his Ph.D. He still remembers the course as, "well done, well organized, and authoritative." Douglas Freeman, head optometry librarian and optometry's director of technology volunteers, recalls: "Dr. Hafner was one of the first people in the school to embrace electronic technologies for instructional purposes. He introduced specialized software for teaching . . . and revolutionized the learning experience for optometry students."

Gary married Jane Clay in 1978. They had both attended Broad Ripple High but only got to know each other while she was completing a Ph.D. at IU. Jane is now a retired plant scientist.

In 1994, while helping with a neighbor's renovation project, Gary sustained a major injury to his right leg. After a prolonged but futile battle against infection, his lower leg had to be amputated. But, fitted with a prosthetic foot, and able to walk without a cane, he soon was back on the job cheerfully, teaching, doing research, and performing service.

Service to the university as well as the community represented an essential obligation for Gary. Among other things, he was on Monroe County's Planning Commission. In addition to several significant school and university assignments, he chaired optometry's tenure and promotions committee from 1983 to 1990. Dave Goss, who served with Gary, had this to say: "He approached the work of the committee with objectivity and common sense."

In retirement, would he and Jane travel? "Some," he replied. But he intends to put his ocular anatomy teaching materials into electronic form. He also has an interest in woodworking and collecting old hand tools. But, given the free time, he especially wants "to restore a 1949 Chevy pickup truck."

The Hafner Era now closes in the School of Optometry, in tangible ways. Of course, Gary Hafner will be missed, day-to-day. But his impact will always exist in the character and conduct of his students, his colleagues, and their intellectual descendants.

*Paul Pietsch*