

Picton optometrist

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Earl  
Grubin

## Completes 53-year career

PICTON - Although Earl Grubin's job often meant short pay and long hours, the 74-year old optometrist says he has never regretted his choice of careers.

He retired on Friday, after 53 years on the job and it was business as usual in his Main Street office on his last day at work. "I just finished an examination," he said, Friday morning.

Born in Stouffville, Grubin was the son of a watchmaker and jeweller and an early-day optometrist. One of the managers of the Toronto Optical Laboratories suggested that he might consider becoming an optometrist, too. He attended the College of Optometry of Canada, which was affiliated with the University of Toronto and graduated in 1928.

"I looked after a fellow's practice for six weeks in Brampton, after I graduated, then I went to Stouffville and started up for myself."

Grubin said Stouffville was then a small village with a population of about 1,000 and in the Depression years, business there was slow. He asked a traveller for the Toronto Optical Laboratories if he knew of any larger communities where an optometrist was needed and was advised that there were openings in Picton and in Lindsay.

"Picton had just 3,300 people and I didn't want to go to a town of less than 5,000 but I could buy the business here cheaper than the one in Lindsay."

Grubin visited Picton, saw it was a thriving community for its size and made a decision to move his practice. He bought out the business of J.H. Porte, a jeweller who had also worked as an optometrist, in 1931 and in 1937 acquired the building where his offices were located.

When he first began his practice here, there were two other optometrists in business - Matt Knox, who was a jeweller and W.H. Wilkins.

"I bought some of my instruments for \$100 apiece. Now it would cost \$25,000 to get what I have," said Grubin.

He recalled that in the early days of his practice his office often remained open until 11 or 12 o'clock on Saturday nights. On one occasion, it was 2 a.m., when he locked the door. Gradually, he began to close earlier and finally quitting time came at the close of the afternoon.

Grubin said "the big curse" of his work became the variety of frames available. American and Canadian manufacturers neglected to keep up with the styles and most of the frames now sold are foreign-made.

"Frames made me decide to ease out of my work. Two years ago, I sold that part of my business to Picton Optical. There is such a variety of frames and most of them are foreign. I ordered some samples once and they were discontinued before they arrived."

The quality of American and Canadian frames is superior to that of foreign frames but changes must be made if they are to become

competitive said Grubin.

The optometrist said he has looked after as many as four generations of one family, in his lengthy career and would have continued in his job, except that he would require annual refresher courses in college to keep abreast of new concepts and techniques.

Grubin has no special retirement plans but he and his wife, Beatrice, do intend to visit their son, Vernon and his family, next summer. The future of his practice is still indefinite. A medical eye specialist is now coming to his office on a weekly basis but future arrangements are uncertain.

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"There is OHIP now to cover the cost of examinations but over the years I've lost thousands of dollars," he said, recalling that some patients failed to pay at a time when there was no covering health plan.

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