

Give this doctor a hand for how he uses his hands

By Tom Gear
staff writer

Dr. Michael Lipson, a Farmington Hills optometrist, didn't perform the cataract surgery on Nannie Hamilton's eye one recent morning in Madison Heights.

He was present during the operation at Madison Community Hospital, however, and he found plenty to do with his hands.

Lipson used hand sign language to communicate instructions and support to Hamilton, who is deaf, before and after the surgery.

"I was basically an interpreter," said the 31-year-old Lipson. "There were certain things she had to do in preparation for the surgery. I guess I played a support role, too."

Mary Ezmerlian, who's involved with a support group for people with cataract problems, agreed with Lipson's assessment — especially the support part.

"When he got here this morning, she (Hamilton) just lit up," said Ezmerlian, herself a former cataract patient. "She knew he could communicate with her."

Lipson, who learned the American Sign Language in an Oakland Community College course, sees several deaf patients in his practice.

"Somebody told me it (sign language) was the fourth most used language in the United States," Lipson said. "For an optometrist, it's a natural. For us to examine somebody who's deaf would be like me trying to examine or treat a patient who speaks no English."

"The patients seem to appreciate it. They like it that you've taken the trouble to learn their language."

CATARACTS, the leading cause of blindness in the United States, happen when an eye's lens becomes clouded and discolored, keeping light away from the retina, a nerve which transmits the sight image to the brain.

"The normal aging process is the most common cause of cataracts, and if you live long enough you will develop one," wrote Dr. Henry Spiro, a Bloomfield Hills specialist who operated on Hamilton, in a pamphlet "The Modern Way to Cataract Surgery."

Resident of Hamilton, a 67-year-old Redford Township resident, and other cataract patients includes removing the lens and replacing it with a specially-made intra ocular lens implant.

'Even now when I get into my car and it's cloudy or overcast, I panic. That's how a cataract person sees. It's like seeing through a dirty window or fog.'

—Mary Ezmerlian

Constructed of a plastic substance called polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA), the implants cost \$300 to \$400.

There are two major advantages in having the lenses," Lipson said. "Vision is very normal and recovery is very quick."

Added Ezmerlian, who has a lens implanted in each eye, "Our patients are here for about 3 1/2 hours and then they're home in their own comfortable environment."

The implant technology had its beginnings in World War II. Surgeons noticed that the human body did not always reject pieces of clear plastic from airplane canopies which were forced into fliers' during an aerial battle.

The middle-aged Ezmerlian, who developed her cataract problem at age 14, recalled — without much fondness — her life before the implants.

"I was legally blind," she said. "I hadn't driven a car in 20 years. Now I'm 20-20 in both eyes. But even now when I get into my car and it's cloudy or overcast, I panic."

"That's how a cataract person sees. It's like seeing through a dirty window or fog."

AS A MEMBER of the Cataract Support Group, Ezmerlian assists Spiro and others in the operations at Madison Community. Spiro estimated that more than 1,000 cataract operations a year are performed at the hospital.

"Our group feels that no one should be blind from cataracts," Ezmerlian said. "No one is too old for the gift of sight."

The Cataract Support Group maintains a 24-hour hotline — 646-4185 — for people concerned with the problem.

Spiro is the director of the non-profit Cataract and Eye Care Institute, which sustains the support group.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Dr. Michael Lipson explains the upcoming cataract surgery by signing with patient Nannie Hamilton while Dr. Henry Spiro, who will perform the surgery, looks on.

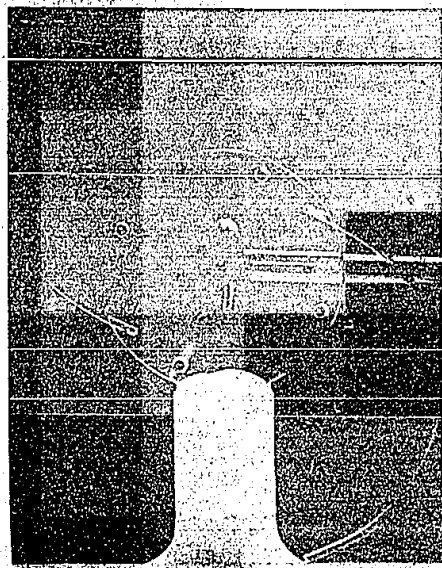


Patients need to understand the treatments they undergo and Lipson acts as a translator for those who would be otherwise unable to communicate with their physicians.



Although Dr. Spiro doesn't understand all sign language, he manages the International OK sign for patient Hamilton.

Mary Ezmerlian



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

This is the lens which is implanted into the eye during the operation to improve the sight of a person who has a cataract. The size of the lens is indicated by the small straight pin behind it.

INSIDE ANGLES

Know someone doing something notable? Let us know. Write: Inside Angles, Farmington Observer, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

WILL-O-WAYS Repertory Theatre is now taking requests for theatre parties for its production of Stephen Sondheim's musical "Anyone Can Whistle." The play runs Fridays and Saturdays, July 20 through Sept. 22, in the theatre on Long Lake Road between Telegraph and Lahser. Box office number is 644-4118.

GREGORY S. LAIDLAW, of Farmington Hills, has been awarded a Student Life Scholarship at Oakland University. Greg graduated from Harrison High School in June and will attend OU starting in the fall. The awards are based on records of high school and community activities and high grades. Student Life Scholarship students will live at OU residence halls and help provide leadership for a wide range of campus activities.

AN INDEPENDENCE DAY patriotic medley is played by Christ Church Cranbrook carillon at 4 p.m. for guests on the lawn and will be followed at 5 p.m. by a performance of The First Michigan Colonial Fife and Drum Corps. There is no charge for the Fourth of July celebration on the church grounds on Cranbrook and Lone Pine roads, Birmingham.

PETER BARRBRICK, Keith Kruter and Michael Chelak have been named to the dean's honor roll for Associate Studies at Lawrence Institute of Technology. To be named to the honor roll a student must maintain at least a 3.5 grade point average and be a full-time student.

BARBARA ACHO of Farmington Hills has been awarded the Anton Jacobs Scholarship for the 1984-85 academic year at Madonna College. Barbara is a junior majoring in social work.

DR. KATHLEEN M. BROAD, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Wilson of Farmington, received a doctor of medicine degree from Michigan State University. She is taking residency training in anesthesiology at St. Joseph Hospital in Syracuse, N.Y.

DR. THOMAS S. COWAN, son of Dr. and Mrs. Warren Cowan of Farmington Hills, received a doctor of medicine degree from Michigan State University. He is taking a family medicine residency at Wilson Hospital, Johnson City, N.Y.

TONI L. HALLEN, daughter of Barbara and Michael Hallen of Farmington Hills, received a bachelor's degree at Home, Holyday, College in South Hadley, Mass. A clematis breeder, Toni has been an "Advanced Breeder" for the last two

years. A member of the V-3's, a capella singing group, she traveled to England with the Concert Tour. She is co-coordinator of Women Against Sexual Harassment (W.A.S.H.), a peer counseling organization. In 1983, she was an intern with the Planned Parenthood Federation of America in New York.

ALBION COLLEGE STUDENT volunteers pitched in to help their college this spring during the annual phonathon. The phonathon, coordinated by the college's annual fund office, used student callers to contact about 3,000 Albion College alumni, asking them to support the college's operating budget. Those from the Farmington area were: Matthew Chuba, Barbara Dahl, James Padool, Greg Lemanski, Timothy Smigelski and Kris Witte.


KAREN PURDY, daughter of Lois Purdy of Farmington, was among 23 Adrian College students included in the 1984 edition of "Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges." She was selected by a campus nominating committee and the editors of "Who's Who," based on the student's academic achievement, service to the community, leadership in extracurricular activities and future potential.

CHRISTINE DOSMANN, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Dosmann of Farmington Hills, and a health/fitness major at Springfield College, Springfield, Mass., is completing an internship at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford, Conn. Christine is working in the Cardiac Rehabilitation and Employee Fitness Programs and observes graded exercise tests and electrocardiographs. She also runs a program for overweight children.

DEBBIE LEO of Farmington Hills was named to the dean's list at Oakland Community College for outstanding academic achievement. Debbie, the mother of Nicole, Larry and Tina, is studying nursing.

CONGRATULATIONS to the Farmington-based Omega Film Co. which recently won first place in the Senior Division of the Michigan Student Film Festival. The film company is made up of Farmington residents Jeff McDowen, Thomas Bell, Mark White, Jim Russell and Rick Deloria. They took first place with their science fiction film, "Route 18." The group is currently hard at work with their next film which will be shot in and around the Farmington area.

CAROL HANSEN and Bob Wydra of Farmington Hills have been awarded Michigan Public Community Junior College Scholarships by the University of Michigan. The \$500 merit-based scholarships recognize outstanding achievement of students who intend to transfer to and transfer to the U-M's Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Flint and East Lansing campuses. Carol and Bob attended Oakland Community College.



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