

## Turnbull blazed trail for women in profession

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# Optometrist sets sights on retirement

By SANDY MCLEAN  
Special

When Dr. Joan Turnbull graduated from optometry school more than 40 years ago, she was the only woman in her class and one of only a handful of female optometrists in Ontario.

Now she's decided it's time to retire, making room for eager new graduates — of whom about 50 per cent are women.

Turnbull started her own practice in Oshawa after graduating from the College Of Optometry. That's the only way a woman could work in the field at the time, Turnbull said.

"The only way to be autonomous was to have your own practice."

Three years later, she moved to Toronto and taught at the University Of Waterloo School Of Optometry as a clinical supervisor and served on the Council Of The College Of Optometrists — the profession's regulatory body.

"It's a wonderful profession for a woman, I tell you," Turnbull said. "You're seeing people, and there's nothing messy about it, and it's interesting."

She was always attracted by math and sciences and optometry held a special interest for her. That's what spurred her to follow that path, being somewhat of a pioneer for other women.

She still finds it interesting.

Some of her exuberance for optometry must have been contagious because her son is also an optometrist, now practicing in Regina. Her brother-in-law, nephew and daughter-in-law's father are

also optometrists.

Her daughter, however, is a literary agent married to author John Irving.

Turnbull worked out of her home on Applewood Rd. in Mississauga

for several years while raising her two children. She then relocated her practice to Dixie Rd., before joining forces with optometrists Patrick Tracey, Peter Martinello, Martin Falke and Joseph Chan at

101 The Queensway W.

That's where she's practiced for the last seven years.

It was only supposed to be three years, but the merger worked so smoothly, Turnbull stayed an additional four years.

"She's truly a lovely lady, really compassionate," said Falke, who went to optometry school with Turnbull's son. "She has a great rapport with her patients and I guess that's the strength of her practice."

Turnbull contacted her colleagues and proposed a merger as she was contemplating retirement and wanted her clients to be well looked after.

"As I leave, my patient's files are here, so there's a continuation and that's important to me," she said.

Her favorite part of the profession was talking with her patients and figuring out solutions to problems. Turnbull timed her retirement perfectly. Her license expires Dec. 31.

"Our staff is rather sorry she's leaving," Falke said.

Turnbull plans to become more involved in the Mississauga University's Women's Club, of which she is currently a member, the Fitness Institute and Tridelta Women's Fraternity.

She'll also have more time for playing bridge, attending art shows and reading, three of her favorite activities.



Staff photo by Rob Beintema

After 40 years optometrist Joan Turnbull is retiring from the profession in which she was a pioneer. When she graduated optometry school four decades ago she was one of only a handful of women in the profession. She has been mentor to many aspiring optometrists, among them her son, brother-in-law and a nephew.