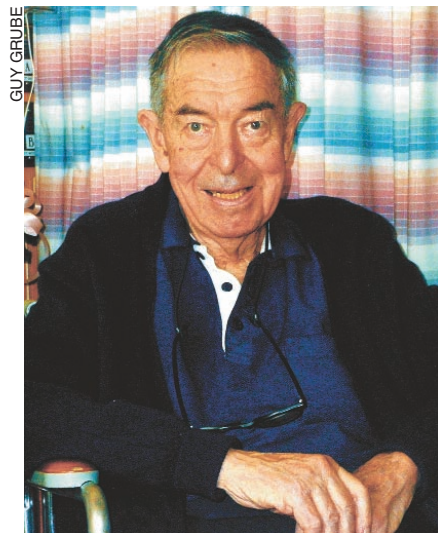




Walter Lewis Hyde

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Walter Lewis Hyde, former president of the Optical Society of America (OSA), an inventive optical instrument designer, and a creative educational administrator, died following a heart attack on 9 January 2003 in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Lem was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on 30 May 1919. Having taken the entrance exam without his family's knowledge, he entered Harvard College (now Harvard University) in 1937. He was graduated in 1941 with an AB in physics. Lem then taught physics at Amherst College for a year before joining the research staff at Polaroid Corp in Cambridge to work on war-related research. In 1945, he returned to Harvard as a graduate student and received his PhD in physics in 1949. His dissertation on far-infrared spectroscopy was done under the supervision of E. Bright Wilson Jr.

In 1948, Lem became assistant director of research at Baird Associates, an instrument and consulting firm in Cambridge. There, he designed an instrument for daytime star-tracking; the principles of that instrument were later used in the tracking portion of the Sidewinder air-to-air missile. He left Baird in 1950 to become a scientific liaison officer at the London branch of the US Office of Naval Research. While in Europe, he helped revitalize the International Commission for Optics. Three years later, Lem joined the American Optical Company in Southbridge, Massachusetts, and later became director of development for its J. W. Fecker division, a manufacturer of large optical instruments in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Lem held patents on a range of optical instruments, including the air-puff tonometer, designed to test for

glaucoma by measuring the eye's intraocular pressure without mechanically touching the eye. The instrument enabled optometrists—then forbidden from using anaesthetizing drugs—to make the measurement. While at Fecker in the late 1950s, he also invented a periscope to help pilots to look forward and another periscope to help drivers to look backward. The key innovation was to use cylindrical optics at unit magnification. Although the backward-looking periscope invention was licensed to an automobile mirror company, it was never commercialized.

Having joined the University of Rochester's Institute of Optics in 1963, first as a professor, Lem subsequently became director of the institute and associate dean of the College of Engineering and Applied Science in 1965. He had an avocational interest in old optical instruments and, using a large number of instruments as examples, gave a very popular course on instrument design. He also organized the first International Lens Design Contest in 1966, a competition that continues today.

In 1968, Lem became provost of New York University's University Heights campus, which included the Engineering School as well as the up-town College of Arts and Science. It was a pleasant campus of 35 acres in the Bronx, with a sweeping view of the Hudson River and the Palisades beyond. The late 1960s were a particularly turbulent time to be a university administrator. However, Lem's administrative skills and, above all, his wonderful sense of humor, enabled him to manage on-campus racial tensions, student demonstrations, and opposition to the ROTC (Reserve

Officer Training Corps) sufficiently well to avoid the problems many other universities faced at that time. However, NYU's overall financial problems during that period, combined with the recruitment challenges of a campus in the Bronx, were too great. In 1972, NYU sold its uptown campus to New York City to be used as the site of Bronx Community College.

Lem then moved to Connecticut, where he served first as executive director of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges from 1972 to 1979 and then as head of the central staff of the Connecticut State Technical College system from 1979 to 1985.

Following his retirement in 1985, Lem worked in the Soviet Union with scientists from the Vavilov State Optical Institute, a large military-controlled research facility in what is now St. Petersburg. He published articles on the optical institute's scientific advancements, arranged for a US distributor for the institute's microscopes, and helped some of the scientists there to relocate to the US.

Lem was an active participant in OSA. From 1963 until 1965, he was a member of the society's board of directors, and from 1968 until 1971, he was a member of the presidential sequence. He served as president from 1969 to 1970 and guided the society through a difficult change in management during that period. On retirement, he and his wife of more than 60 years, Betty, regularly went to OSA headquarters in Washington, DC, to help organize the OSA library. In addition to his service to OSA, Lem was elected as a vice president of the International Commission for Optics in 1962 and was secretary-treasurer from 1966 to 1969.

Lem was an omnivorous reader and a prolific writer. He wrote newspaper articles and gave speeches on an enormous range of topics. In his lecture entitled "Where is Massachusetts?" he reviewed the still unresolved problems caused by late 18th-century surveyors who had strayed off their course to spend a night with a very friendly innkeeper's widow. He also wrote a monthly newsletter to his family and friends to inform them which of the several books he was reading that month were worth their while. In one of Lem's last newsletters, he wrote, "We drove out this afternoon to a mountain called Sugarloaf. Sure enough, except for the size, color, and shape, it is exactly like a loaf of sugar."

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