

## Matthew Novak, PhD, 2005



### **What influenced your decision to attend graduate school at OSC?**

I was from a cold climate (Pittsburgh, PA) and was deciding between the University of Rochester and the University of Arizona. The warmth sounded good, not to mention the reputation of OSC.

### **Was there an individual (professor, advisor, staff, friend, family member) who played a particularly important role in your education?**

I had my interest sparked in optics because of a great physics professor, Guy Indebetouw, whom I learned from at Virginia Tech. I then had so many great professors during my time at OSC (1995 to 1997 and again from 2003 to 2005). I was fortunate to learn from Jack Gaskill, Bob Shannon, Angus Macleod, and the late Roland Shack and Jim Palmer—as well as work on my MS with Jose

Sasian and on my PhD under supervision from Jim Wyant, and support as well from Russell Chipman. It is humbling to think about the opportunities these people, and so many others, enabled me to have in my life.

### **What was your research while attending OSC?**

I received my MS degree in 1997 with Jose Sasian on lens design related research for aberrations corrections with conformal optical systems; and my PhD in 2005 with Jim Wyant for interferometry related research dealing with polarization-based dynamic interferometry.

### **What was the cost of rent in Tucson while you were in school?**

My apartment rent in 1995 was \$400/month, including utilities (even central AC, which was great because when I arrived in the summer of 1995, Tucson was experiencing record high temperatures, including one day of 114 F/46 C).

### **If you owned a car during graduate school, what year and model was it?**

1985 Honda Civic.

### **What was your favorite restaurant/student hangout near campus?**

Zachary's Pizza (sadly, no longer in business).

### **What did you do for fun during your time in graduate school?**

Golf, the student rec center for racquetball, weights, swimming, and happy hours with friends on University Blvd. and Fourth Avenue or at Bob Dobbs.

### **What was most memorable about your commencement ceremony?**

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend.

### **At the time of your graduation, what were the most sought-after jobs/most popular industries/most popular companies?**

Many graduates were finding work doing lens design or optical engineering and modeling work, in a wide range of industries. It was a fortunate time for careers in optics.

### **What was your first job after graduation?**

I worked for the Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena, California, starting in 1997.

### **What was the most significant world event during your time in graduate school. How were you affected by this event?**

This is difficult to say. I think at this time (1995), we learned about a huge earthquake in Japan which killed several thousand people, and a nerve gas attack in Tokyo. These were significant and scary events for many, many people.

### **Was there a campus or community event in Tucson that was especially important to you?**

I enjoyed the Saguaro National Park Labor Day Race around the 8-mile loop in Saguaro East National Park. A lot of fun!

**What advice would you give to this year's graduating class?**

Be open to a wide range of opportunities, and learn from everyone you encounter in your work and in your life. There is so much in the world to learn and experience, both in optics and in general!