

Power Move

Bill Sioulas, excels as a father, athlete, Greek folk dance instructor and real estate executive — and leaves little to chance. So after giving Laser Vision Correction a long, hard look he chose Intralase SBK.

By Jo Ann Chiasson

Look over there: see that 49-year-old man practicing karate? That's Bill Sioulas and today he'll train for four, maybe five hours with instructors and other athletes. What's going on here is intense: the athletes are on Canada's national team, and they're headed to the World Karate Championships in 2010.

If you could sneak up and look into Bill's eyes, you'd see one thing: total focus. "When a guy's fist is coming at you at 130-miles-an-hour," he says later, with a smile, "you can't afford not to be!"



Bill Sioulas with his kids, Stefanos & Alexandra.

"I'd say the improvement is 100 per cent," says karate expert and 'sensei' Bill Sioulas."

To say Bill Sioulas is a busy guy is a major understatement. "Let's do it! Get it done!" seems to be his mantra for living and, characteristically, he tends to jump into things head-first. But last year, he did a lot of thinking before having Laser Vision Correction (LVC). His research directed him to Focus Eye Centre, and indicated the serious potential for realizing great results.

Still, he says, "I waited for a few friends to have [LVC] just to see their reaction, their recovery time. And my own karate trainer did his laser surgery at Focus. He was very happy with the process and the results, and that really built my confidence for having it done."

Last spring, Bill had an Intralase SBK procedure with Wavefront for Monovision and today, life is a whole lot different. "I'd say the improvement is 100 per cent," Bill says.

Two weeks before we interviewed Bill, he was sitting with his kids, Alexandra, 18, and Stefanos, 17, looking at old photographs. Bill's daughter inherited her father's go for it attitude ("She's a social butterfly but she's also the one, if there are any problems at school, who's in the middle of things trying to break things up," he says, with a laugh). Alexandra — who along with her brother has a black belt in karate — is not the type to be thrown for a loop. But she was caught off guard when, that day, she came across one particular photograph of her father.

"I forgot! You used to wear glasses!" she said.



Bill Sioulas: Real estate exec by day, karate sensei (teacher) by night.

Bill used to wear glasses to give his eyes a break from contacts. But neither glasses nor contacts slowed him down much: Bill covers more ground in one year than most of us do in five. One friend even calls Bill a renaissance man. Bill's not sure the label fits, but admits he's "always been active."

Take dance, for example. Bill didn't just take a dance class. He ended up as a Greek Folk Dance instructor. He has taught over 14,000 students in the last two decades, danced over 1200 performances across Canada and in the U.S. with Montreal and Ottawa based dance troupes, is a member of the Paris-based International Dance Council.

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Mother Knows Best

After more than 30 years with glasses, Hilda Benton reveled in the freedom LVC affords. Then the retired teacher and mother decided to share the 'gift of vision' with her three children.

Hilda Benton called it her "Millennium Project".

The year was 2000 and she was about to turn 50. She decided she'd had enough of the glasses she had worn for years as school teacher, wife and mother. It was time to treat herself to Laser Vision Correction. Although the matriarch of the Benton family couldn't have known it at the time, her decision created a cascade of change.

An elementary teacher who spent 32 years in front of the blackboard, Hilda isn't the type of person to leap before she's taken a good hard look at the subject. LVC was no exception. "I do a lot of research on these things," she chuckles during a telephone interview from her home in Monkland, Ontario.

In fact, Hilda talked about LVC for years before she actually went ahead with it.

The tipping point may have come when she overheard an acquaintance say she had recommended Focus Eye Centre to a friend. Hilda asked whether the referral resulted in surgery and got this reply: 'Oh, yes, he's having it done.'

"Some people go on 7-day cruises, but this is far more memorable."

As Hilda points out, "Word of mouth is a powerful advertiser."

In fact, Hilda's interest was piqued enough that she finally called and made an appointment for a consultation. "Some people go on 7-day cruises [when they turn 50], but this is far more memorable," she recalls of that decision-making time.

Before Hilda went ahead with the surgery, though, she ran into another LVC patient. This time it was someone who'd not had their procedure at Focus and, when hearing what Hilda was about to pay for her procedure, questioned her choice. "'Oh Hilda, I had it done for much less than that,'" the person said. What this informal advisor didn't readily admit was that she'd actually undergone two procedures at the other clinic: one for the initial correction, and again for a "re-treatment".

For Hilda, the die was cast: "I'm not going with a fly-by-nighter. This isn't pantyhose we're talking about buying."

Another contributing factor in her decision-making was the service she experienced at Focus, both during her initial consultation and in the period leading up to her procedure. "I was very nervous when I got there," she admits of the



day-of-surgery, "but they [the staff] were very reassuring; I never felt pressured or hurried."

Then came her post-surgery results – immediate and lasting results from a PRK procedure performed almost nine years ago now, but the results of which are still vivid and clear. "Just to open your eyes and see every little detail of the things around you is wonderful," Hilda raves.

The wife-and-mother decided the freedom afforded her by LVC was a gift that had to be shared. She secretly vowed to pay for procedures for each of her three grown children — Krista, Ryan and Maureen — if they wanted it done.

"To be given the incredible opportunity by my mom — to not have to deal with glasses and contacts — was amazing," says Krista St-Jean, a dialysis nurse at Cornwall Community Hospital. "At first she just told me I should go check it out and see if I was even a candidate. I thought 'sure', but didn't realize it was a future event; I had no idea that she was going to give me this surgery as a gift."

The Benton kids — all in their 30s — are saddled with mortgages or other debts, explains their mother, so none of them was likely to splurge on LVC anytime soon. But most of all, there was Hilda's memories of decades spent with lenses acting as a barrier between her and the hundreds of children she taught at school and the three children she raised at home.

"This is not a gift that will be gone or forgotten anytime soon," Hilda says. "Why would I give them a rug or a washing machine when I could give them the gift of vision? You cannot put a price-tag on that." ■

NEXT ISSUE: Each of Hilda Benton's children took their time considering her offer of LVC, before two of them — Krista (PRK with Wavefront, 2007), a dialysis nurse, and Ryan (Intralase SBK with Wavefront, 2009), an R&D specialist — eventually went ahead with their own procedures. Maureen, the sole hold-out in the family, has her reasons for not accepting Mom's kind offer...

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"Things happen to always fall in place (for me)," he says with a laugh. "When I was young and started the dancing, I thought: 'Oh, I might as well learn one or two Greek dances [to] make my parents happy'." When he walked into his first Greek dancing class, there were 26 girls and just six guys; young Bill found his motivation.

The one or two dances became over 300 dances from over 300 Greek villages. Bill now lectures nationally on the history of Greece through dance and music, and has served as choreographer and producer with several Hellenic musical dance and oratory productions in such major venues as Montreal's Place Des Arts.

"Intralase SBK can make a big difference in your life."

He also has a day job: Conundrum Commercial Management Corp. is one of Ottawa's top 10 landlords, managing just less than one million square feet of commercial space, and Bill is its regional director in Ottawa. (In his free time, Bill also fundraises for charities and organizations including the Canadian Cancer Society, Red Cross, Heart Institute and the Multiple Sclerosis Society.)

This past October, he had the pleasure of not having to worry about contact lenses or glasses as he stood to address over 400 real estate executives from across Canada as a guest speaker at the Ottawa Real Estate Forum.

LVC has eliminated the worry, discomfort, inconvenience and irritation of living with glasses and contacts. "I'm very happy," he says. "I always recommend Focus to my friends, [and] tell them to give it try. It can make a big difference in your life!"

For folks like Bill, who pack a lot into a day, LVC can be a small but very powerful move. ■



Give the Gift of Better Vision.
Consider LVC this holiday season.

The Road to Better Vision

Many Kingston patients are travelling to Focus in Ottawa to have an Intralase SBK procedure

At Focus, patient care is top priority. There is so much more involved than just having the procedure. I like to think of it as an equation.

Education + Procedure + Post operative care = Great results and a happy patient

As we move forward with technology, Intralase SBK has become one of the Standards of Care in our Ottawa clinic, along with PRK. Not surprisingly, Kingston patients have heard about the results and recovery times being experienced by Intralase SBK patients and are taking the short trek to Ottawa to be a part of this new and exciting procedure. With the same great results as PRK, Intralase SBK can offer a quicker healing time and minimal discomfort, with some patients getting back to their daily activities inside 24 hours.

Dr. John Cheung, Medical Director in Kingston, is impressed enough by the post-surgical data to be heading to Ottawa on a regular basis to

partake in Intralase SBK (patients are seen back in Kingston for their 24 hour post-op). Likewise, patients tell me that going up to Ottawa for their procedure was well worth the trip.

"I chose to have Intralase SBK for two main reasons," says one patient with whom I spoke. "Firstly, my constant frustration of trying to remember where I had left any one of my multiple pairs of 'see-up-close' glasses. Secondly, I had become a definite danger to myself and others while driving and flipping my glasses on and off my face," adds the woman who had her procedure in September. "Just moments after my procedure, I was shocked to realize my sight was perfect!"



As PRK with Wavefront has been the Standard of Care for many years, I also like to check in with these patients to see how they are doing. Here is what they have to share:

Monique (Wavefront PRK/Monovision, 2005): "It has been a few years since my eye surgery and I am more than thrilled with the results. I have done away with worries of losing or breaking expensive glasses. The constant shifting from regular glasses to sunglasses and having to carry around two pairs is gone. I also feel that in the long run I have saved myself a lot of money and frustration, so thank you for the freedom it has given me."

Gerald (Wavefront PRK / Monovision, 2006): "I have been dependent on glasses since childhood and the first thing I noticed was the freedom it gave me. Living in the Canadian winter the weather can be a real hassle for anyone wearing glasses that likes to ski, skidoo or do any other outdoor sport. I constantly had to wipe off my glasses. Now, I do not even have to give it a second thought. It's been great."

Angela (Wavefront PRK, 2004): "Having laser surgery was one of the best decisions I've ever made. I'm a nurse and mother with a very busy life. I found that having to wear glasses interfered with my work and home activities, especially activities with my daughter. I'm a pretty active person and having to wear glasses was very inconvenient. After the surgery activities like swimming, tennis, and going to the gym were just so much easier and more enjoyable. I like to travel and my first trip south after the laser surgery was fantastic! No more glasses getting in the way of snorkeling! I'm reminded almost daily that I made the right decision. My surgery was over five years ago and my vision is still perfect."

It is a great compliment to Focus to hear from our patients and to know that their decision to have LVC was the right one. It's also nice to hear how excited they are, and compelled to share their stories. If you have a story to share, email: info@focuseye.com.

Warm regards,
Michelle Owen, Manager
Focus Eye Centre, Kingston



Optometrists: A Closer Look at Intralase SBK



Focus was a key sponsor of the 21st Annual Eastern Ontario Regional Meeting of Optometrists, held in Perth, Ont., in September. The event included a presentation from Dr. Edmison to approximately 100 eyecare professionals from communities across Ontario. A golf tournament was also held at the Perth course (founded 1890) the proceeds from which went to the McGarry girls: three young sisters from Perth — Allison, Frances and Michelle. The girls, ages 10-14, were orphaned last March when their father died of a heart attack (their mother passed away from cancer in 2007) and family members in Scotland charged to care for the girls were financially unable to do so.

Join the conversation about Intralase SBK (and your other LVC experiences).

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Thank you to the Focus Eye team for the wonderful service...I was impressed by the friendly staff and how they are knowledgeable about the different procedures. Thank you for making this a very positive experience for me.

— Caroline Girardin, Clear Lens Exchange, 2009

A line or two won't do... I could be the poster child for Focus Eye Centre!

I am at the age where I needed bifocals. I have worn glasses/contact lenses since the age of 12. I was considering having laser vision correction and I spoke to a colleague of mine who had laser vision correction at Focus Eye Centre. On her recommendation, I made an appointment at Focus in Ottawa. Dr. Edmison explained my options and I chose to take advantage of the newest technology and the gentlest procedure: Intralase SBK. I also chose the Monovision

[procedure] because it meant that I would never need reading glasses. The surgery is brief and the medical staff walks you through each step of the procedure. I found that very comforting. There was no pain afterwards, just a bit of sensitivity and tears. I could see perfectly the morning after the procedure. It has been a year since the correction and I am still amazed with the results. This week I went to see a concert and I was so grateful to be able to read the program before the show and to see the faces of the performers from a distance — something I could not do with my contact lenses. Thank you Focus Eye Centre for everything.

— Hélène Paris, Intralase SBK for Monovision, 2008

Do you have a story to share about LVC?

Send your letter, name and daytime contact info to:

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