

# Blinded Woman Recovers \$1 Million

Verlee Rauth, 62, lived a quiet, satisfying life as a totally independent woman. She worked for the County tax department. One day at work she noticed a problem with her eyesight and immediately consulted her longtime optometrist. The optometrist instantly recognized that Ms. Rauth had a problem that needed to be attended to by an ophthalmologist specializing in retinal problems. He referred Ms. Rauth to Dr. Peter Lowe. Dr. Lowe diagnosed Ms. Rauth's problem as a macular pucker and scheduled her for surgery at Good Samaritan Hospital.

The surgery went well. Ms. Rauth had some improvement in her vision immediately. Two days later, a severe pain developed in the operated eye and she called Dr. Lowe. It was a Saturday and he did not see her. She talked to him twice that day and was told to increase her pain medication and use eyedrops.

By Monday morning the eye hurt so badly that she was taken to Dr. Lowe's office without an

appointment. An eye examination at that time revealed what was most likely an infection. Dr. Lowe, although well trained in ophthalmology, failed to appropriately treat the infection and, as a result, the eye was completely blinded. Blindness in one eye is a terrible injury, but the worst was yet to come. Ms. Rauth developed a rare complication known as sympathetic ophthalmia. This complication occurs in about one out of 10,000 cases as a result of a penetrating eye injury to the opposite eye. It has been known for centuries in medical literature, historically arising as a result of a war wound. Ms. Rauth became totally blind.

Our law firm's medical consulting service, Palm Beach Medical Consultants, found the best expert in America on retinal cases. Dr. Robert J. Brockhurst has been a professor at Harvard teaching retinal surgery to ophthalmological students for years. As an odd coincidence, Dr. Lowe was his former student. Although Dr. Brockhurst had never testified on behalf of an injured patient be-

**Continued on Page Seven**

## **Blinded Woman...**

*Continued from Page One*

fore, he was willing to do so in this case. Dr. Brockhurst agreed to testify because he was aware that Dr. Lowe had previously experienced a similar problem with another patient who had called him with a complaint. Dr. Brockhurst reviewed the medical records and gave the opinion that Ms. Rauth had received inadequate, below standard medical care from Dr. Lowe.

Due to the preeminence of the medical expert obtained by the law firm, as well as significant assistance from post-injury treating physicians at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, John A. Shipley was able to settle this case for Dr. Lowe's policy limits of \$1,000,000 shortly after the 90-day LOI period expired. Dr. Brockhurst never even had to give a deposition.

Eye infections are extremely dangerous and require prompt, aggressive treatment with antibiotics. This treatment cures infections in the great majority of cases. Ms. Rauth's personal tragedy was totally preventable if the doctor had only used state-of-the-art medicine. ■