

Opticians.



● Rolf Harris drew this self-portrait in support of the Optical Information Council's "Design a Poster" competition.

Care for children

THE Optical Information Council (established in 1951) is an impartial optical organisation. Its advice does not represent the interest of any individual manufacturer or practitioner.

POPULAR entertainer and cartoonist Rolf Harris is concerned at finding out that as many as one child in four may have a sight defect. So he's giving his support to a competition organised by the Optical Information Council to help bring home the importance, to everyone, of regular eyecare.

The statistic about children's eyesight came out of research done by the Council some time ago, and is confirmed by Moorfields Eye Hospital as still valid today.

Three vision faults are significantly involved: myopia — "short sight," muscular imbalance — a tendency to squint, and monocular vision — a weakness or apparent blindness of one eye whilst the other eye does most or all of the work.

In many cases, it seems, poor vision has gone unnoticed by parents. Children are unlikely to complain of poor vision, since we cannot compare our eyes with someone else's, so it is advisable for every child to have a regular full eye examination by an optometrist or ophthalmic medical practitioner.

Many of us take good eyesight for granted — especially in children. But since uncorrected vision faults can hold back a child's social and educational development, it's vital that everyone, including children, is aware of the importance of caring for eyes.

Now Rolf is supporting

the Council's children's poster design competition. The theme, "Care For Your Sight," is aimed at publicising the importance of regular eyecare.

Campaign

It's planned that the winning posters from two age groups, 7-8 and 9-11 years, will be used in a nationwide eyecare awareness campaign during 1989.

The prizes are eye-catching too — a choice of BMX bike donated by Raleigh Ltd. or a personal computer, for the winners, plus a year's supply of art and

craft equipment donated by Dryad Ltd. for their school art departments.

And there'll be impressive certificates, signed by Rolf Harris, for the winners and runners-up.

Schoolteachers are invited to submit designs on their pupils' behalf (the closing date is November 11) and a comprehensive information pack with full entry details is available to them from the following address: OIC Poster Competition, c/o CPM Sales Promotion, Aylesbury Road, Thame, Oxon. OX9 3PG.

Focus on change in the optical profession

HAVE you noticed that some people we once called "Opticians" are now calling themselves "Optometrists"? An Optometrist is, in fact, an Ophthalmic Optician — the person who is trained to examine eyes, test sight and, if necessary, to prescribe spectacles or contact lenses.

In the past, people have tended to use the title Optician to describe both the Ophthalmic Optician and

the Dispensing Optician. And that has caused quite a lot of confusion, because the Dispensing Optician cannot examine eyes and test sight.

The Dispensing Optician dispenses glasses and contact lenses to a prescription supplied by the Optometrist (Ophthalmic Optician) or Ophthalmic Medical Practitioner.

The problem of deciding which "Optician" can examine your eyes and

which one just gives you glasses or contact lenses is even more confusing now that the government has said that anyone can sell glasses (not examine eyes) so long as they make it clear that they are not registered with the General Optical Council.

So, the introduction of the title "Optometrist" is not a flight of fancy, but an attempt by the Ophthalmic Opticians to help the public identify the people who are qualified to examine their eyes.

The eye examination is the prime function of the Optometrist. This can also lead to the early detection of disease, for the Optometrist is trained to recognise patients showing signs of abnormality, such as glaucoma or early cataract.

A regular eye examination is a very sensible general health care check. It costs absolutely nothing under the National Health Service, takes between 20 and 30 minutes and is quite painless.

But apart from being sensible, there are certain times in one's life when an eye examination is particularly important and certain jobs and leisure pursuits where less than good vision can be a definite drawback.

Checking the retina

THE retina is the layer at the back of the eye that has millions of light sensitive nerve cells connecting to the brain via the optic nerve. The retina acts like the film in a video camera transmitting the pictures seen to the brain.

Certain groups of people, including diabetics, and the very short sighted and some people who have had cataract surgery are particularly vulnerable to detached retinas and should be aware of the symptoms.

The most obvious symptoms of a completely detached retina can best be described as a curtain being drawn across part of the vision in one eye.

An early symptom has been described as being like a persistent white flashing light at the edges of vision, even when the eyes are shut.

This flashing effect increases if the head is moved quickly.

Many people notice a marked increase in the number of floaters they see; others notice a grey area at the edge of vision but may not see any flashing lights.

Anyone experiencing such symptoms should go to their doctor, a hospital or to an optometrist immediately they notice something is wrong.

If treated promptly, the retina can usually be re-attached. It is usually highly successful and the sufferer may not notice visual problems afterwards.

Severely short sighted people and those with a family history of detached retina should have a regular eye examination by an optometrist.