

**TOTA 1936-2006**  
**In Celebration of our 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
**By Esther Bell**

History provides a “look back” to our roots and this view enriches our present and helps us plan for the future. The occupational therapists who preceded us set the stage for what we are able to do today. And each of us is creating the history for future therapists to build upon. History serves a vital role in the life of our profession and our association.

For the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association, Grace Gilkeson provided us with a valuable booklet outlining key historical events that she had researched. Much of the following article is from her booklet. Esther Bell has done further research into the history and has added to it. So enjoy our history in this, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association.

**THE BEGINNINGS**

The Texas Occupational Therapy Association has a rich history that starts with dedicated therapists who wanted to further the cause of occupational therapy. This group saw a need to gather together and eventually form an Association, which was one of just a few in the country.

According to the first American Occupational Therapy Registry of 1931-32 the first occupational therapist to work in Texas was Pearl Jones Tennyson. She was employed at the Galveston Psychopathic Hospital which was part of the University of Texas Medical School at that time. Other therapists gradually started to work in Texas and in 1932 the first meeting of interested occupational therapist was held. For each of the next three years these informal gatherings brought together a slowly growing number of indomitable occupational therapist.

**THE FIRST TEXAS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION MEETING**

It was in April 1936 in Dallas, Texas, that five occupational therapists convened the first official meeting of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association (TOTA) at the Melrose Hotel. The idea had been growing and interest heightening since 1932 among the therapists living and working in Texas. Now the time had arrived to actually become an organization and begin to work together. The annual state conference is considered to have begun with this meeting in 1936, and the numbering of subsequent annual state conferences commenced from that year.

The purpose of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association was contained in four statements in July 1936

1. Educate our medical profession and general public in the value of occupational therapy and the necessity of thoroughly trained therapists in each department.

2. Interest every member of our profession in establishing a high standard for every department in the state.
3. Register in our National Registry every therapist qualified to do so, And stimulate those who do not qualify, to secure necessary training, that they may register.
4. Create in our membership a desire for greater and more diversified application of occupational therapy.

Since its formation all activities and efforts of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association have sought to continuously lead the occupational therapists of Texas to be the best that they can be by providing the highest quality health care services possible. Many fine occupational therapists have contributed to this ongoing effort, and the results of their hard work is clearly evident in today's outstanding organization.

Quotes from minutes of the early meetings reflect the times in which they were working and their efforts in striving to build a professional association.

“A monthly round robin letter is to be sent to each member, containing reviews of articles to be found in recent publication pertinent to our work craft suggestions, publicity suggestions for our various committee.” 1936

“There are, as far as we have been able to determine, twenty-one therapists in the State, and though only three are registered, we hope to have that number greatly increased in 1937” 1936

“Investigation of a pamphlet on occupational therapy be made” 1937

“A motion was made to allow occupational therapy attendants to join the State Association as Associate member.” 1941

“At ten AM the members met in Room 4 for roll call and a display of new craft ideas.” 1944

“Signs at present indicate occupational therapy as a profession is slipping, instead of leaping forward as other allied professions are doing and as we hoped at the beginning of the war. Undoubtedly we are too placid....Let's get together and discuss the problems, arrive at conclusion and send in resolutions to our national board members” 1944

### **THE FIRST TOTA OFFICERS**

Most of the five founding members were graduates of the Mississippi School of Occupational Therapy. Jane Myers, OTR, Director of Occupational Therapy at Scottish Rite Hospital was the first president. Vice-President was Marjorie Woodward, OTR, Director of Occupational Therapy at Austin State Hospital, while the position of secretary was assumed by Olga Wheeler, OTR, Director of Occupational Therapy at Baylor University Medical Center. Pearl Tennyson, OTR of Galveston and Alice Eads, OTR of Kerrville completed the founding group. Jane Myers was reelected as president in 1937.

Following in the footsteps of these founding officers, many occupational therapists have been called to serve.

### **Presidents of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association**

Jane Myers 1936-1938

Margie Woodward 1939-1940

Beatrice Cooney 1940-1942

Edna Vehlow 1943-1945

Lenore Brannon 1946-1948

Lucile Lacy 1949-1951

Mary Britton 1951-1953

Dorothy Sniffin 1953-1955

Irene Greer 1955-1958

Mary Alice Coombs 1958-1961

Louise McMillan 1961-1962

Mary Lee Kaylor 1962-1964

Pat King 1964-1966

Mary Joyce Newsome 1966-1970

Robert K. Bing 1970-1974

Patricia Ramm 1974-1976

Joy Boone 1976-1978

Georgiann Laseter 1978-1980

Cynthia Jones 1980-1984

Don Davidson 1984-1987

Rita Handley 1987-1990

Cary Westhause 1990-1994

Paul Ellsworth 1994

Esther Bell 1994-1998

Sheree Jarrell 1998-2000

Gary Wade 2000

Evelyn Harness 2000-2004

Mack Ivy 2004 –

The Texas Occupational Therapy Association grew and thrived. In the early 70s the value of incorporation for the Association was explored. In the Spring of 1973 the proposed Articles of Incorporation were presented to the membership. Article Four identified the Purpose:

“The purpose or purposes for which the corporation is organized are:

To insure that the breadth and quality of occupational therapy services adequately and appropriately meet the needs of the society it served through furtherance of high standards of education, training and practice. To achieve this purpose the objectives of the corporation shall be:

- (1) Improve and advance the practice of occupational therapy
- (2) Improve and advance education and qualification for providers of occupational therapy:
- (3) Foster research and study of occupational therapy;
- (4) Engage in other activities to further dissemination of knowledge about occupational therapy.”

The number of directors constituting the initial board of directors of the corporation were identified in Article Six. After completion of the incorporation process the Association was known as The Texas Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. and it remains an incorporated body to the present.

### **The Texas Occupational Therapy Association's relationship with AOTA**

TOTA was one of the early association recognized by AOTA and members of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association have continued to play a dominant role in AOTA. On June 6, 1937 Miss Jane Myers became the first TOTA representative to AOTA. TOTA was among only 16 state associations at that time. The following year saw the first meeting of the House of Delegates and Jane Myers served as a delegate to that House of Delegates. She was also elected as a representative from the House of Delegates to the Board of Management (later known as Executive Board). For nearly 20 years, she and those that followed paid their own travel expenses to meetings. It wasn't until September 6, 1956 that the TOTA Board voted to pay the delegates' travel expense for this journey. By 1956, the delegates were receiving reimbursement of \$16.00 a day

The following is a list of TOTA delegates/representatives to AOTA

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1938-1940 | Jane Myers  |
| 1941-1945 | Edna Vehlow   |
| 1941-1946 | Lenore Brannon  |
| 1946-1950 | Fannie B. Vanderkooi  |
| 1951-1954 | Cornelia Ann Watson   |
| 1955-1957 | Lucile Lacy   |
| 1957-1960 | Irene Robertson   |
| 1960-1964 | Hope Keeney   |
| 1964-1968 | Melva Jo Shelton  |
| 1969-1971 | Cruz Mattei (alternate completing term of Shelton)                                |
| 1971-1977 | Esther Bell   |
| 1977-1980 | Nancy Griffin   |
| 1980-1983 | Grace Gilkeson  |
| 1983-1985 | Virginia Chandler<br>Becky Baber  |
| 1985-1986 | Virginia Chandler<br>Regina Michael Campbell (alternate completing term of Baber) |
| 1986-1992 | Regina Campbell   |
| 1992-1995 | Joy Danches   |
| 1995-2000 | Diane Puccetti  |
| 2000-2004 | Kitty Reed  |
| 2004 -    | Mary Frances Baxter   |

Many Texas Occupational Therapy Association members have served in leadership roles in AOTA following in the footsteps of Jane Myers who was elected to the Board of Management of AOTA in the early years of the association between TOTA and the AOTA. Some of the others who have served or are currently serving:

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Robert K. Bing       | President of AOTA                                  |
| Charles Christiansen | Vice President of AOTA                             |
| Esther Bell          | Secretary of AOTA and Commission on Practice chair |
| Reggie Campbell      | Speaker of the Representative Assembly of AOTA and |

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Diane Puccetti    | served on Executive Board<br>Vice Speaker of the Representative Assembly and served on<br>Executive Board |
| Georgiann Laseter | Chair of the Committee of State Association Presidents of<br>AOTA and served on the Executive Board       |
| Cindy Jones       | Chair of the Committee of State Association Presidents of<br>AOTA and served on the Executive Board       |
| Pat Ramm          | Chair of Standards Review Committee of AOTA   |
| Hope Keeney       | Chair of Nominating Committee AOTA  |
| Kitty Reed        | Chair of Ethics Commission of AOTA  |

And many others have served in Commission and committee positions in AOTA.

To be Continued in the next Revista