

TOTA 1936-2006
In Celebration of our 70th 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 60th 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 70th 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 therapists was held. For each of the next three years these informal gatherings brought together a slowly growing number of indomitable occupational therapists.

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 applications 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 result 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 publications pertinent to our work craft suggestions, publicity suggestions for our various committees.” 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 members.” 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 conclusions 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 re-elected 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	2004-2008
Lynda Jennings	2008-present

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 ensure 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 was 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 associations 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 who followed paid their own travel expenses to meetings. It was not 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
1938-1941	Edna Vehlow
1941-1945	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
	Becky Baber
1985-1986	Virginia Chandler
	Regina Michael Campbell (alternate completing term of Baber)
1986-1992	Regina Campbell
1992-1995	Joy Danches
1995-2000	Diane Puccetti
2000-2004	Kitty Reed
2004-2008	Mary Frances Baxter

2008-2010

Susan McDuff

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 served on Executive Board
Diane Puccetti	Vice Speaker of the Representative Assembly and served on Executive Board
Georgiann Laseter	Chair of the Committee of State Association Presidents of AOTA and served on the Executive Board
Cindy Jones	Chair of the Committee of State Association Presidents of 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
Shirley Wells	Chair of Standards and Ethics Commission

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

FROM CRAFTS TO RESEARCH

As the Texas Occupational Therapy Association was developing it was obvious that the founders felt that some kind of education was a necessary part of a TOTA meeting and from this the annual conferences developed. The changing face of occupational therapy can be illuminated by studying the conference programs from the earliest days to today.

In the minutes of the third meeting of the Texas State Occupational Therapy Association, held on February 28, 1937, it was stated “Inter-changing of craft ideas was discussed and it was agreed that a presentation of crafts at our meetings would be a favorable way to carry out this idea.”

Early “conferences” were held in people’s homes or a banquet room in a hotel. By 1938 the meetings of the Texas Occupational Therapy Association were linked to the Texas Hospital Association meetings. This pattern persisted until 1948 when we met with other groups for two years and then in 1950 launched out on our own.

Early conference presenters were largely doctors, or hospital administrators.

In 1940 some of the conference topics presented by these doctors or administrators were:

“Value of Well-Trained Therapists in Mental Health”

“The Work of Occupational Therapy with Mentally Deficient Children”

In 1949 a key talk was given by Dr. Brandon Carrel, chief surgeon of Scottish Rite Hospital. It was entitled: *“The Value to Crippled Children of Occupational Therapy with its Combination of Psychological and Physical.”*

By 1952 the first full conference program and brochure was developed. The brochure was an 8 ½ by 11 inch piece of paper folded over but inside there were many activities listed. There were committee meetings on Friday, a full day of presentations on Saturday (two sessions in the morning and two in the afternoon) and a breakfast on Sunday. The program topics on Saturday were mostly by doctors with topics such as:

“Problems and Progress in the Treatment of the Drug Addict”

“Steps in Rehabilitation”

“The Doctor Takes a Look at Occupational Therapy”

The last session in the afternoon featured a panel of occupational therapists addressing the topic of *“Occupational Therapists Answer the Challenge.”*

By 1954 close to half of the presentations were by occupational therapists with topics such as:

“Problems Encountered in Training Students of Occupational Therapy”

“Assistive Devices in Functional Rehabilitation of Upper Extremity Disabilities”

“The Science and Philosophy of Muscles over Thirty Years of Age”

Through the late 50s and the 60s most of the programs focused on treatment of a diagnosis with a gradually diminishing inclusion of programs on mental health but with more programs on rehabilitation of the physically disabled. It was not until 1971 that topics such as: *“Problems in Legislation and Licensure”* and *“The Occupational Therapist as a Health Consultant in the Community”* found their way into the TOTA conference. By 1973 *“Developmental Techniques of the Neurologically Involved Child”* was one of the programs and by 1974 *“O.T. in the Public Schools”* was first presented and from then on school based therapy was a common conference topic. In 1977 *“Legal Issues – Labor Relations and Malpractice”* and *“Medicare, Medicaid and Texas Blue Cross”* were important conference sessions and legislative and reimbursement issues continued from then on as conference sessions.

As the 70s rolled into the 80s fewer and fewer doctors made any presentations at conferences. Occupational Therapists and other professionals such as educators and psychologists were the presenters. The conference program by this time for a full size sheet, multipage, bound booklet. One research presentation was made in the 70s. By the 80s research took its place at conference with a presentation by Grace Gilkeson entitled: *“Following the Trail: Or How to Take a Research Idea from Conception to Completion”* and in 1981 a *“Research Forum”* and from then on research was a common conference theme. “Breakfast with a Scholar” became a regular feature of conference in the 90s. And in the 2000’s, as anyone who attended last year knows, the education offerings were many and varied and there over 70 exhibitors compared to eight exhibitors in 1964.

Our pioneers helped forge the changes that led to the growth of occupational therapy by presenting new and challenging directions in each annual conference. Accept the challenge of being a part of new directions in occupational therapy by attending conference this year.

Revised by Mary Hennigan
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