EDITORIAL

“Looking Back” Revived

In the October 1982 AJOT we introduced “Did You Know—Do You Remember?” a section of the journal in which articles pertaining to occupational therapy history could be published. At that time, our profession was 65 years old. That number of years seemed a healthy accumulation. It earned us a past and a history. Much as the retirement age of 65 years in the world of workers marks a developmental period where one has opportunities to reflect upon and examine the past, 65 years of occupational therapy provide a vantage point from which to examine the profession’s past. And from the wisdom gained from repeated examinations, we might cast some predictions about the profession’s future.

In June 1983 we published another short piece in the history section. By that time the section was retitled “Looking Back.” Those two articles, written by Kathlyn Reed and Haru Hiram, respectively, were modest contributions, consisting of a chronology of dates. Unfortunately, the intent to illustrate that current concerns about issues in the field had historical antecedents was not realized. No other articles were submitted for the history section.

In this occupational therapy’s 70th year, and in this issue on page 248, we are reviving the Looking Back department with an article by Ruth Levine. We hope to schedule the department twice a year. In the period between 1982 and 1987 we learned that to sustain a department in the journal requires more than an invitation to readers to submit material; it requires a formal structure to aid in the procurement of articles. The Written History Forum presented at each AOTA conference since 1983 provides such a structure. The forum has served to increase an interest both in matters pertaining to the profession’s history and in historical method, the process historians use to analyze history.

For good history captures more than a chronology. Good history reviews the events that influenced the evolution of a movement or profession. Good history examines the acquired traditions of our past so that we will not blindly continue those that, by their proven poverty, will bankrupt our trust of knowledge and so that we will instead firmly reaffirm and expand on those that, by their richness, will accumulate value for future generations in the profession. It is from understanding that we can avoid fulfilling the historical prophecy that those who do not learn from their mistakes are condemned to repeat them. Finally, good history is often a good story. It can capture our attention, delight us, and instill pride by helping us appreciate our place in the connectedness of events.

You will see other reminders of our history this year. Occupational Therapy News will continue its historical vignettes in each monthly issue. OT Week, in its first issue (Jan. 12, 1987), mentioned that the Association has grown in its 70 years from a group of 26 to the current 44,000. The 1987 calendar, The World of Occupational Therapy, celebrates our history through old photographs. And, at the AOTA Conference on April 5, the Written History Forum again will host several presentations.

We are also introducing a computer software review department in this issue. It was felt that such a department would be timely and useful because many occupational therapists are using microcomputers in their practice and because the cost associated with purchasing software is high. Your contributions to these “new” departments, as well as to the Case Report, Brief or New, and The Issue Is departments, will make the journal more useful to its readers.

Elaine Viseltear, Editor