

The Life and Work of Lorna Jean King

By Kathleen Morris, MS, CCC/SLP

Excellence

After publishing *S.I. Focus* for three years now, I have had the opportunity to meet, correspond and speak with a number of outstanding people within the sensory world. These people may be therapists, clinic owners, or teachers coming from a variety of backgrounds. Each has a unique story, facility, or idea that I would like to share with our readers.

Their dedication and work is what makes their immediate community better. Hopefully, sharing their story will inspire others to begin, continue, or persevere in their own endeavors, in their own community.

This new *S.I. Focus* department called “Excellence in Service” will appear once or twice per year. You are welcome to submit the name of a person or facility that you feel exhibits exceptional dedication in this area.

The first recipient of this award is Lorna Jean King. I am pleased to pay tribute to a lovely, committed, dedicated clinician exuding all the qualities that define “excellence.” It was my sincere pleasure to speak with her by phone twice last year. Having read some of her writings and being aware of her stellar reputation, I sought her input while preparing a workshop presentation of my own. Lorna shared her passion with me regarding “purposeful activity,” with which I wholeheartedly agreed. In our first conversation, she agreed to write an article for *S.I. Focus* as soon as her health improved.

That day never came. During the planning of this tribute, Lorna Jean King passed away on November 4, 2006. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to her family, friends, colleagues, and the families she served. Although she will not be able to read these words of tribute, they will introduce some people to her and her work, remind others of her life, and inspire still others to seek out her writings and benefit from this amazing woman who served so many with excellence.



**Lorna Jean King, OTR, FAOTA
1923-2006**

Lorna Jean King, founder of the Children’s Center for Neurodevelopmental Studies in Glendale, Arizona, and pioneer in the field of Occupational Therapy and Sensory Integration, passed away on November 4, 2006. To the thousands of lives she touched, she was a loved and respected therapist, teacher, leader, and friend — one who inspired action and brought hope — one whose life will live on.

Lorna Jean King was born on May 17, 1923 in Denver, CO. She completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Occupational Therapy from the Milwaukee-Downer College in 1944. She also completed graduate studies at the University of Southern California from 1948

to 1950 and at the University of Arizona from 1957 to 1958.

King initiated her career in occupational therapy as an instructor in occupational therapy at USC from 1945-1947. Following her time at USC she worked as a staff therapist at the Brentwood Veteran's Administration Hospital in Los Angeles, California, from 1947-1949. King then worked with delinquent and emotionally disturbed adolescents as a staff therapist at the Downey School for Girls in California from 1949-1950. She moved

to Arizona and became the Director of Occupational Therapy at the Square and Compass Crippled Children's Clinic in Tucson from 1950-1953. King then moved to Phoenix, Arizona, where she resided for the remainder of her life.

From 1964 to 1966, Lorna Jean King was employed as a staff therapist at the Arizona State Hospital in Phoenix and later became the Director of Rehabilitative Therapies for Arizona State Hospital until 1974. It was here that she began the research, which led to her life's work: the development of sensory integration techniques. While at the State Hospital, she found sensory integration techniques were remarkably successful with adults with chronic schizophrenia. King and her colleagues documented their research, which attracted a great deal of interest in the mental health community and was later published. After 10 years at the State Hospital, King resigned and began consulting and lecturing while continuing to further refine sensory integrative techniques.

King was inducted into the Roster of Fellows of the American Occupational Therapy Association in 1973. She was awarded the Eleanor Clarke Slagle

Lectureship Award in 1978 with the title of her lecture, "Towards a Science of Adaptive Responses."

In 1978, King founded The Children's Center for Neurodevelopmental Studies, a state-certified, non-profit school and therapy center for children with autism and other developmental delays. King again utilized a sensory integration framework in her work with these students, finding dramatic results. She was considered a pioneer in the use of sensory integration with individuals with autism, and quickly was

recognized as an authority in the area. As a result of King's efforts, The Children's Center became internationally known for its unique and effective therapeutic approach to education. Beginning with just one student, one teacher and one therapist, the Center now serves over 60 students daily while utilizing staff from a variety of specialties. King was the director and CEO of the center for many years. Following several attempts at "retirement," King continued to direct the Center as late as 2004.

Lorna Jean King's legacy will live on, not only in the U.S. but also around the world. Thousands worldwide attended her lectures

about sensory integrative techniques as an integral part of occupational therapy. Those who heard her passionate discussions on the use of sensory integration are forever changed by the experience.

We can all be encouraged by a quote from Lorna: "Try and try again until at last you succeed!" ♦

For a complete list of Lorna Jean King's publications please refer to the last page of this pdf document.

"Although we have lost a wonderful inspiring teacher, mentor and friend, her passion for education, for pursuing research and for providing opportunities for families to receive therapy services emphasizing sensory integration will remain with us forever. Her legacy will continue to inspire us all."

—Diana Henry, MS, OTR/L



Lorna Jean King, OTR, FAOTA

1923-2006



Publications

Cabay, M., King, L.J., and Wojten, C. (1999). The efficacy of sensory integration-based occupational therapy on conceptual development and academic readiness in preschoolers. *Occupational Therapy Practice*, 4(2): 55.

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King, L.J. (1980). Creative caring. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 34:522-528.

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Quotes from Those Who Knew Her

"Lorna King is the person most responsible for my career. It was her generosity in sharing her observations and insights (and her gentle prodding) that set me on the path to earn my doctorate and become a researcher in sensory integration. That alone would have been enough, but she was also my friend- advising, accepting, fostering and loving me throughout our 34-year friendship. I will miss her terribly."

— Judith Reisman

"Although we have lost a wonderful inspiring teacher, mentor and friend, her passion for education, for pursuing research and for providing opportunities for families to receive therapy services emphasizing sensory integration will remain with us forever. As we must move forward, her legacy will continue to inspire us all.

Lorna has been a mentor to many around the world. She is the reason I became an OT and she instilled my passion for wanting to know more about sensory integration."

— Diana Henry, MS, OTR/L

"Try and try again until at last you succeed!"

— Lorna Jean King, OTR (shared by her daughter, Kay Marie King)