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Spring 2013

**Dr. Lyla Spelbring**

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## Recommended Citation

"Dr. Lyla Spelbring" (2013). *OJOT Sponsor Profiles*. 3.  
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Lyla Spelbring, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA (1922-2011) is the featured profile of this issue of *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*, and is sponsored by Fred Sammons. Dr. Sammons indicated that he wanted to feature Dr. Spelbring because she was a foundational member of the occupational therapy (OT) profession. Dr. Spelbring received a Bachelor's degree in Occupational Therapy from Western Michigan University in 1951 and a Master's degree in 1959. She went on to earn a PhD from the University of Michigan in Medical Care Organization in 1981.

Prior to beginning a career in OT, Dr. Spelbring served in the U.S. military. Inspired by her father's military service, Dr. Spelbring joined the U.S. Marine Corps as a young woman. Her 27 years of military service began with 6 years in the Marine Corps and another 21 years in the U.S. Army. Dr. Spelbring served during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. She aided in the transportation of supplies and troops at military bases on the Hawaiian Islands during WWII. While on inactive service she worked at a reformatory for women and earned her OT degree at Western Michigan University. She transitioned back to active duty as a second lieutenant of the U.S. Army Women's Medical Specialist Corps during the Korean War, working with returned service members in newly established facilities, such as the North Carolina Psychiatric Clinic for War Veterans. Additionally, her military service included teaching other service members. During the time that Dr. Spelbring served in the military, female service members were unique. After retiring in 1982 from the U.S. Army reserves at the rank of colonel, she continued to display her love of country by speaking to students about her experiences and supporting women's military groups in her retirement.

Just as she contributed to the U.S. military service in unique ways, Dr. Spelbring also contributed tremendously to the OT profession. Her leadership skills, honed through military service experiences, contributed to success in leading OT practitioners both in clinical and academic settings. She was the director of OT services for the University of Michigan Medical Center for 13 years. From 1974-1984 she was head of the Department of Associated Health Professions at Eastern Michigan University. Her numerous publications include research about OT education and OT practitioner roles. In Anne G. Fisher's 1998 Eleanor Clark Slagle Lecture, Dr. Fisher recognized Dr. Spelbring's contribution to her own learning with the following quote: "Spelbring seemed to be saying that, throughout our involvement, our focus should be on enhancing occupational performance and not the remediation of underlying impairments" (Fisher, 1998), emphasizing Dr. Spelbring's focus on occupational functioning.

Others who had the pleasure of working with Dr. Spelbring describe her leadership style as "no-nonsense." Dr. Ben Atchison, PhD, OTR/L, Interim Chairperson of the Western Michigan University Occupational Therapy Department, assumed his first faculty position under Dr. Spelbring's leadership at Eastern Michigan University. In a recent interview he referred to Dr. Spelbring as "multi-talented, creative, and tough." He indicated that she focused on research, practical experience, and curricular improvements in the department. Dr. Atchison also recalls the high standards and expectations Dr. Spelbring had for both faculty and students.

Dr. Spelbring's commitments to the profession of OT, military service, and educating new practitioners have been recognized with many awards. She was a Professor Emeriti in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Eastern Michigan University and was honored with an annual lectureship initiated in her name: the Lyla M. Spelbring Lectureship in Occupational Therapy. Dr. Spelbring was a fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association and in 1971 received the AOTA Award of Merit. She was a Member of the Michigan Occupational Therapy Association and was recognized with an Honorary Lifetime Membership. Additionally, she was a member of the American Public Health Association. Servicing the community, she was a member of the advisory committee of the Michigan Cerebral Palsy Association and the Michigan Genealogical Council.

## References

*Biography. Lyla M. Spelbring Collection.* Eastern Michigan University Archives.

Fisher, A. G. (1998). Uniting Practice and Theory in an Occupational Framework. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 52(7), 509-521. doi: 10.5014/ajot.52.7.509

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*The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy, Volume 1, Issue 3, Spring 2013*