

## Summary of Interview

Blair Willey interviewed Roxanne Castaneda on October 5, 2018 at the Colombia Mall in Colombia, MD. The purpose of the interview was to understand Castenda's experience with occupational therapy and her relationship to the Maryland Occupational Therapy Association (MOTA) as well as important people and clients that have influenced her career.

Castaneda has been an occupational therapist for approximately 40 years. She has spent 29 years teaching part time at Towson OT/OS department. She has worked specifically in mental health for her entire career in many different nontraditional jobs. She worked in forensics where she helped alleged criminals with mental illness by aiding them in moving back into the community. Currently, she is working at the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) where she is a Public Health Advisor and Grants Project Officer. Her duties include program development and monitoring, implementation recommendations, and operational suggestions to grant recipients. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the operational division within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

Castaneda discovered occupational therapy (OT) by accident; she heard about it through a career counsellor. She was drawn to OT because of its creativity and working with patients and families. She received her OT degree in the Philippines. "In the Philippines, which is where I got my OT degree, you had to observe and write a paper before you got into OT school as part of your interview package. I chose to observe at a veterans' hospital." Ms. Castaneda met a man

who had Parkinson's disease. She said he was a very sweet man with a very fixed expression, so it was difficult to tell his mood. On her last day, he presented her with an orange. It was a very expensive gift given that oranges don't grow in the Philippines. "That was it. This is what I want to do" Because she is a US citizen she had to take her board exam in the US. She faced obstacles when moving from the Philippines because she had no prior experience with the advanced technology in the US. Luckily, her boss, Mary K Bailey OTR, arranged for her to shadow at a physical disability OT practice under the supervision of Fran Silverstein OTR, before she took the board exam. This greatly eased her anxiety about not having exposure to new technologies involved in physical disability practice.

When asked about people who have influenced her career, Castaneda mentioned the Shulmans as mentors and stated that Dr. Alfred J Shulman gave her very important advice that when in doubt, always be human. She also recognized Janie B. Scott as a great influence and the person who recruited her into the MOTA. She mentioned Maggie Reitz, Dr. Sonia Lawson, a Nancy Blake and Marie Louise Blount as individuals who influenced her teaching career.

One outstanding experience involved a student, Andrew Meyer whom Castaneda described as "a born leader, amazing with school work, but just an amazing person" (personal communication, October 5, 2018). When he graduated, he received the most outstanding student award. Unknowingly to Roxanne, he had a plaque made for her as well in which he presented her for being his greatest mentor. Castaneda also discussed when she got the opportunity to run the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) national conference as co-chair for the local conference committee, with over 6,000 people in attendance. She said both experiences were amazing and rewarding.

When discussing MOTA and AOTA, Castaneda emphasized the importance of getting involved with community associations because they are the ones that “keep the professional organization alive” (R. Castaneda, personal communication, October 5, 2018). These organizations have improved greatly over the years due to technology. Technology has increased the ability to communicate throughout the state. Messages can be delivered faster and clearer to all state regional groups. Being involved with these organization are sources of pride and commitment because these groups help the OT profession thrive. Legislation is a big part in being involved with these organizations because the lobbyists who are “intercepting and talking to everybody involved in the process including those that may or may not include us in bills that can dictate whether we’re going to get paid or not”.

“Outreach technology, having a viable website, having committees that are geared towards that global communication is important. In the past, everything was face to face, so it took time for people to travel to meetings across the state. We had a lot of regional groups which made it hard to get the message across to everybody. Now it is easy, we have teleconferences, we can do work on the website and over the internet. I think that’s a great improvement. It’s hard being in the same state as AOTA, because you get a lot of people saying, ‘why should I be a member of MOTA when I can be an AOTA member instead.’ You have to remember that AOTA does the national OT look, and MOTA fights for your continued presence in the state of Maryland.”

(R. Castaneda, personal communication, October 5, 2018).

Castaneda additionally discussed the practice changing over the years. It has become more conscious of nontraditional roles that are available to occupational therapists. She is

concerned about the decline in mental health practice. “We’re down to 2% of practitioners in mental health, and there are some schools that are removing the mental health track from their educational program and they’re saying it’s part of general education and students will experience when they practice with patients with physical disabilities who become depressed, but that’s not the same thing, so I worry about that too. She is also concerned about the **elimination** of OT assistants and the movement to change over to PhDs. She acknowledges the importance of remaining competitive in the market with other professions in order to avoid being left behind.

Lastly, Castaneda discussed her love for OT and the satisfaction it brings her. She loves creativity and abstract thinking required for OT. Her greatest accomplishment was being one of 1,500 out of 65,000 who received a Fellow of the American Occupational Therapy Association fellowship. I was nominated by my mentor Janie B. Scott. It was a feather in my cap. She ended the interview with advice to a future OT, “stay involved, pay your professional dues... try different parts of the field,” (R. Castaneda, personal communication, Oct 5, 2018). A big piece of me has stayed involved in AOTA doing volunteer work. I have always surrounded myself in things that have OT in it. I haven’t gotten bored yet. There’s so many different things you can get involved in.”