

Executive Director's Column

by Patricia S. Lemer, M.Ed., NCC, M.S. Bus.



Honoring the Work of Bernard Rimland and Lorna Jean King

"Be the change you wish to see in the world." Ghandi

Psychology has seen many changes in thinking during the past 30 years since I have been a counselor. Few have had as profound an impact as the work of the late Bernie Rimland and Lorna Jean King. I do not know if these two icons ever collaborated. If they did, I am certain they would have seen eye to eye on the belief that autism is not a psychological disorder. Bernie recognized the nutritional needs and Lorna Jean the sensory needs of individuals with autism. Both believed that the only way to address autism was with a multi-disciplinary approach. It is upon that foundation that DDR was founded.

When DDR co-founders met in 1994, they decided to form a Professional Advisory Board of experts who could keep them informed about the latest treatment options for autism and other developmental delays. Two charter members were Lorna Jean and Bernie.

When DDR co-founders decided to hold their first conference in Washington, DC in 1995, Bernie and Steve Edelson, the new Director of the Autism Research Institute, were keynote speakers. When DDR held a second conference in 1996 in San Diego, Bernie, Steve and Lorna Jean were keynote speakers. Bernie declared the DDR conferences the very best he had ever attended. The old adage says that copying someone's idea is the highest form of flattery. Bernie modeled the now famous DAN! conferences after ours.

"Humble" and "generous" are words that come to mind when remembering Bernie and Lorna Jean. Everything they did was "for the kids," not to feed their own egos. Without regard to status, Bernie considered movie stars and small town parents his friends. He gave them equal time on the phone, seven days a week, often in the middle of the night in his tiny office, where he often fell asleep on the floor. In fact, the celebrity might be kept "on hold" while he completed a conversation with a parent of a newly diagnosed child.

"Fun" was also a part of these pioneer's vocabulary. Lorna Jean thoroughly enjoyed the activities she invented, using everyday items, such as straws. In her last days, she reminisced with occupational therapist Diana Henry, whom she mentored for many years, "We had such fun, didn't we?" Bernie's greatest pleasure came from connecting those who could benefit each other.

Lorna opened her heart, home, center, and school to occupational therapy students and practitioners alike. I was fortunate to visit myself, and was awed by the simplicity. When honored by the highest honor bestowed by the American Occupational Therapy Association, Lorna Jean was uncomfortable with the attention she received after delivering a brilliant lecture on the science of adaptive responses. Her ideas were uncomplicated, yet so profound: use an Ace bandage for deep pressure; set up obstacle courses in the living room for motor planning; place a hula hoop to define a child's space; pile pillows on top of a child and make a "sandwich" for calming.

Neither cared about material possessions. The first time I joined Bernie in a hotel dining room where he sat alone eating breakfast, I noted holes in the soles of both shoes when he crossed his legs. Lorna Jean dressed simply, never wishing to stand out. Neither notoriety nor awards were their goals. While both founded world renowned centers when autism was still called "childhood schizophrenia," they invested time, not money, in their beliefs that individuals with autism had untapped potential, could learn, and could change throughout their lifetimes. They gave families something money could not buy: hope.

An offshoot of DAN! is the "Autism is Treatable" project. Parents whose children improved or recovered because of DAN!-oriented treatment began spreading the word. Rimland made a DVD presenting this philosophy at the 2005 Fall conference in Los Angeles. It showcases some children with Master of Ceremonies Lou Diamond Phillips. Their stories are told in the book, *Recovering Autistic Children*. The DVD and book, along with a treatment manual, entitled *Autism: Effective Biomedical Treatments*, co-authored by Jon Pangborn, PhD and Sidney Baker, MD, are all available from the Autism Research Institute (ARI) at <www.autismresearchinstitute.com>.

DDR thanks the Rimland and King families for sharing their "stars" with the public. Both spouses were private and supportive. Bernie's remarkable wife, Gloria, gracefully handled his crazy schedule, while keeping their home running smoothly. DDR sends its deep condolences to Gloria and the three Rimland children. Lorna Jean's loving husband, Warren, wrote a beautiful poem for Lorna, close to her death:

TO MY LOVING WIFE, LORNA JEAN KING

Go out and look at the night sky
It is a sky with many stars – a dark sky.
It is a sky of starry sensory integration.
The twinkling little lights are happy children
– enlightened children – always twinkling.
The steady light stars are the planets, their parents.
The brilliant, shining stars are the teachers.
They spread their lights all over the heavens.
It is a universe of Sensory Integration
you have helped to create,
And its radiation will shine forever.

In addition to her husband, Lorna leaves two children and three grandchildren.

- To make donations in honor of Bernie, go to the ARI website.
- Lorna Jean can be remembered by donating to the CCNS 5430 W. Glenn Drive, Glendale, AZ 85301

These two wonderful people were the agents of change we all wish for our world. May we have the foresight to continue their important work.