

# IN MEMORIAM

## A TRIBUTE TO MOLLY LEVY FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY FOR PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

**K**ate Molly Levy (nee Limerick) began her life work with the Society in February 1948, when she joined the then Central Executive Committee of the South African Society of Physiotherapists, having previously run a private practice and taught at the University of the Witwatersrand School of Physiotherapy for a number of years. In 1949 she became Assistant General Secretary, changing to Honorary General Secretary in 1955, this being the year in which the new Constitution was adopted and the Society first had an active Chairman with the format of Vice Presidents and different branches.

Molly served as First Vice-Chairman from 1969 until 1973, and National Chairman from 1973 until 1979 when she was elected President.

From 1973 until 1978 she served as a member and Vice Chairman of the Professional Board for Physiotherapy, becoming Chairman of the Board in 1978, a position she held until 1988. Concomitant with these positions, Molly was the voting delegate of the SASP at the World Confederation of Physical Therapy from 1959 until 1974, when she became a member of the Executive Committee of WCPT, a position held until 1978.

In 1987, an eponymous Molly Levy Lecture was instituted by the Society in recognition of the unique contribution she had made to the physiotherapy profession.

Molly devoted herself to the development of her profession, recognising that the road to excellence required a sound organisational infrastructure to promote, secure and safeguard high educational and clinical standards. In doing so, she worked full time in an honorary capacity



as general secretary. As Chairman she spent every day at the office, continuing to do so when she became President and the Chair was occupied by chairmen holding full time University or Hospital appointments. For this total involvement she received a modest honorarium to cover incidental expenses; only in the latter years was she re-imbursed for travel expenses incurred in representing the Society nationally or internationally. She gave unstintingly of herself, and expected thoroughness and attention to detail from others. By observing protocol and correct procedures for formal meetings she prepared us for participation in activities to develop our profession, and in future negotiations affecting our profession in the field of health care.

By encouraging and facilitating lecture tours by prominent overseas physiotherapists she ensured continuing education in clinical and educational fields, throughout the years of national isolation. Her constant concern was that the small branches not be neglected. She was determined to have all physiotherapists involved in their professional Society, and to this end established the National Committee of Representatives, which met twice yearly.

Molly is remembered by those who worked with her for her integrity, exactitude, knowledge and wisdom. She added another dimension to our lives in leading us to professional independence; long before administration and management became buzz words, she was putting them into practise in the running of the Society and in the establishment of the Professional Board. She was a subtle, astute politician, a charming, wily negotiator when advancing our interests.

During the years of national isolation it was Molly's wide friendships, strong influence, and the esteem in which she was held by physiotherapists throughout the world which ensured that the Society was not expelled from the World Confederation for Physical Therapy.

Molly was a multi-dimensional person to whom her family was all important. In sharing the world of her family, we in the Society were enriched in many ways. We wish to acknowledge our indebtedness and express our gratitude to them for the many years of sharing.

Molly was our colleague, teacher, friend and mentor. We remember her with admiration, gratitude, and much affection.

## MOLLY LEVY AND THE WORLD CONFEDERATION FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY

When I went to my first WCPT meeting, in 1987, I discovered that to most of the members of WCPT, Molly Levy was the SASP and the SASP was Molly Levy. She must surely have been, over the early years of WCPT, one of the best-loved representatives at the General Meetings of the world body. This is hardly surprising. She was there with Jean Blair at the inaugural meeting of the WCPT, at which South Africa became one of the founder members. South Africa was represented on the Executive Committee of WCPT from 1963 until 1970, and although it was Jean Blair who was Third Vice-President from 1967-1970, it was very often Molly who represented the SASP at General meetings, who would give a respected opinion and whose humour came to the fore once the business of the day was over.

When we travelled together to my first WCPT meeting in Australia in 1987, humour was not in the air. Sweden was calling for our expulsion from the world body and we had been called to appear before a disciplinary hearing of the Executive Committee. Molly's calm appraisal of the facts and reasoned disposition won the day, and when she left me to defend South Africa two days later at the General meeting I had the confidence to do so, knowing that she had taught me well. Between those two meetings, humour could once again emerge – and emerge it did at a rousing Australian evening hosted by the Australian Physiotherapy Association, at which Molly square-danced with the best of them, to the delight of her old friends from many countries.

Molly's last WCPT Meeting was the Special meeting in London in 1988 – a

meeting made necessary because some countries had boycotted the 1987 meeting due to our presence. In 1988 we finally won the support of the other member-organisations, and Molly bowed out of the international scene. We missed her presence in London in 1991 – we no longer had our mentor and guide and had to stand on our own feet. I missed her even more in Washington in 1995, when the evening of line-dancing brought back memories of her kicking her heels amongst the straw bales of the dance floor in Australia.

Thank you Molly – for ensuring that South Africa took its place amongst the member-organisations of WCPT, for ensuring that those of us who followed you had a sound grounding, and for making it all fun.

*SHEENA IRWIN-CARRUTHERS*

## MARGARET BEATTIE: CHAIRMAN - PROFESSIONAL BOARD

I learned to know Molly Levy when I began serving on the National Executive Committee of the South African Society of Physiotherapists (SASP) in the mid sixties. In 1967 we attended the WCPT congress in Melbourne, Australia and it was there that I witnessed the respect that the world physiotherapy community had for Molly. Molly was there to help me in this unknown world and after congress and some travelling in Australia, Molly and I met up for a few days in Sydney prior to the long flight home.

My task is to write about Molly and her association with and work carried out on the Professional Board of Physiotherapy. The Society campaigned vigorously to have a professional board established and Molly served on the Supplementary Health Services committee of the Medical and Dental Council for many years prior to the establishment of a Board for Physiotherapy. The first Professional Board was established after the due voting processes, in 1973. Physiotherapy was the first Board constituted. Molly served as vice-chairperson on this Board and Jean Blair was the chairperson. The aims of this first Board were to get compulsory registration of all physiotherapists practising in South Africa (before this, registration with the South African and Medical and Dental Council (SAMDC) was on a voluntary basis). It was also to establish a gazetted Scope of Physiotherapy under the

SAMDC legislation of the country. Initially only certain areas and magisterial districts of the country could be proclaimed as areas in which physiotherapists practising had to be registered and it was only in the early eighties that it became compulsory for all physiotherapists working in South Africa to be registered.

During the second and third tenures of the Professional Board, 1978 to 1988, Molly was elected as chairperson of the Board and firstly Margaret Emslie and then I served as vice-chairperson. Molly worked tirelessly in this capacity and many innovations were brought to the Professional Board during those years. The principle of maintenance of standards by the inspection of training and the gazettement of registrable qualifications were amongst the major tasks achieved during the early years. The processes of the institution of disciplinary procedures were also instituted and tested and inroads made into the establishment and implementation of ethical codes of practice. In all, an excellent foundation was laid in these first years of the existence of the Professional Board.

At the Medical Council meetings Molly, as chairperson of the Board, presented the report of the activities of the Board during that particular period. This also gave her the opportunity to meet many health professional colleagues and to network extensively with these colleagues. In this capacity she was highly

esteemed and respected. When I occasionally stood in for her at such a meeting I was overwhelmed by the number of medical colleagues asking after her and singing her praises. It gave me a warm glow and a pride in our profession.

Over the years I served on many committees with Molly and remember her for always being 120% prepared for the meetings and for working behind the scenes to ensure they flowed more smoothly, yet firmly expressed the profession's point of view. She also had the ability to inject humour to lighten up the proceedings. She strongly supported the profession on the many committees on which she served, at the same time conveying a professional yet feminine image.

I will always remember Molly as being ethical in all her dealings, and for working so tirelessly for the physiotherapy profession (and putting it on the medical map). I will also remember her for writing thank you letters conveying the right message so promptly and so efficiently, for being a gracious hostess and for acting with decorum and dignity.

I consider myself privileged to have known Molly, to have worked with her and to have had a colleague who did so much to promote the image and standing of the physiotherapy profession in the medical world in South Africa.

I will miss her and convey my sympathies to her family, friends and colleagues.

*MARGARET BEATTIE*

## MOLLY LEVY'S FAMILY MEMBERS

The South African Society of Physiotherapy and our lives have been intertwined for so many years that it is hard to recall a time when they were not. We, as a family, lived in the world of physiotherapy, a world of which we have many wonderful and happy memories.

Molly's dedication to physiotherapy and to the South African Society of Physiotherapy, in particular, (the "Physio Society" as it was fondly called) inspired us as a family and we all became involved to some extent in her activities as a member, Secretary, Overseas Representative, Chairman and President of the Society. Bridget and Colin could probably say "physiotherapy" before they could walk!

We recall how the Society functioned from our home in those very early days. Some of the National Executive meetings took place around our dining room table and all the office equipment, including a very temperamental old duplicating machine, was kept in our study. Jimmy was frequently called upon to fix the duplicating machine - a very inky, dirty task! The children remember having to collate pages and pages of papers for council meetings, by walking endlessly round the dining room table. In those days the Society staff consisted of a part-time typist/secretary, Edna Carroll, who is today still a close family friend.

Later, the Society acquired a room in the offices of the National Council for the Care of Cripples in Eton Road, Johannesburg and slowly the beginnings of a proper secretariat developed. The family often helped during times of crisis, such as the establishment of a card index system for members of the Society. Bridget remembers sitting on the floor for hours on end sorting out little piles of cards! The long-serving office secretary, Jean Wells became a friend of the family and kept touch even after she left Johannesburg.

Our wider family, too, were much involved in the profession. Two of Molly's sisters-in-law, Helen and Ruth

Limerick, were both practising physiotherapists. During the time that Molly lectured at the University of the Witwatersrand, her niece, Jill, trained there as a physiotherapist. Molly was well known in our community and, for several years, she ran a successful private practice from home.

One of the bonuses that we as a family had from Molly's involvement in the Society was the host of wonderful people we met, many of whom became dear family friends. We think especially of Jean Blair, Elizabeth Botting, Margaret Emslie, Hazel Baines, Lois Dyer - people who spent many happy hours in our home. There were so many occasions when we entertained physiotherapists from all parts of the country and the globe - Molly was always the perfect hostess and her door was always open. Jimmy often referred to the Society as "his favourite charity"!

Molly was instrumental in organising visits from overseas physiotherapists who came to lecture and present courses in this country. They always spent the first few days with us, finding their feet. We remember the kindly Maria Ebner, the efficient Miss Nielsen, the vivacious Margaret List (who did handstands on the lounge carpet after a few cocktails one evening!), the gentle Joan Cresswell (who was so good to us on a return visit to Australia), the elusive Professor Roodt (who rushed us all over California during a visit there), the charming Barbara Sutcliffe (who entertained us frequently in London) and the professional Geoff Maitland (who hosted us to a wonderful evening in Adelaide).

As the Overseas Voting Delegate for the Society, Molly travelled overseas frequently to congresses. We were so often at the receiving end of wonderful hospitality from physiotherapists who had been to South Africa or whom Molly had met at congresses. During one visit to London, Molly was invited to a function to be attended by the Queen. We anticipated this visit for many months prior to its occurrence and joked frequently of the

cucumber sandwiches that would no doubt be served (and which were served). We dined out on this story for many years!

The friendships which Molly developed with many influential physiotherapists throughout the world stood the Society in good stead during the apartheid years when the Society was in real danger of being isolated from the physiotherapy world.

We remember, too, her keen involvement in the Professional Board for Physiotherapy - how hard she fought for its establishment and the hours she spent nurturing it. She was never more proud than when she attended the Inaugural meeting of that body and later when she became its Chairman.

We, as a family, basked in the glory of Molly's achievements within the world of physiotherapy and in particular within the South African Society of Physiotherapy. We have always been so proud of her - from her election to the Executive Committee of the World Confederation of Physiotherapy to becoming the first Physiotherapist President of the Society, to being made Honorary Life President and to being honoured with an Eponymous Lecture. For us, these were more than her personal achievements - they embraced the whole family.

The loss of Molly Levy, my friend of fifty years, is a sad loss to all physiotherapists. She was part of the group of dedicated physiotherapists (which included Jean Blair, Elizabeth Botting, Fred Rothberg and me, among others) who fought for a high standard in the teaching of physiotherapists and recognition of our profession.

For many years, she had the thankless job of Secretary of the S.A.S.P. and later became Chairman and finally, President. She was also elected to our first Professional Board.

She attended many international congresses and was a great PRO, making friends for us with many overseas physiotherapists. Her sense of humour, warmth and enjoyment of life endeared her to many people.

How fortunate we are that you were with us during those times of battle. We will miss you greatly, dear Molly.

Our deepest sympathy goes to Molly's very supportive husband Jimmy, daughter Bridget, and son Colin and his family. Her family members almost became "honorary physios".

MARGARET EMSLIE

### A TRIBUTE TO MRS M LEVY

'The president of the Council and the Chairman and members of the Professional Board for Physiotherapy, as well as members of the Council's staff are saddened by her death. Molly Levy made a great contribution towards the activities of the Professional Board for Physiotherapy during the period from 1973 to 1988 and particularly from 1978 to 1988 when she was Chairman of the Board. In that capacity she represented the board on the South African Medical and Dental Council with distinction.

We remember her with fondness and respect and pray that her husband, children and family will be strengthened during their days of bereavement.'

J H COETZER