Vale Dr. Judith Farrell

Dr Judith Marsham Farrell passed away in April.

Judith’s roles in WFOT included:
- Australian Delegate to the Council of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (1966-1972)
- Member of the WFOT Education Committee (1966-1974)
- Secretary of the WFOT (1974-1980)
- Vice President WFOT (1980-1984)
- Appointed as a WFOT Honorary fellow in 1986 and WFOT Advisory Fellow in 1995.

Judith was held in high regard internationally, and example of which was her award of the United Kingdom’s DR ELIZABETH CASSON MEMORIAL LECTURE 1982 (http://www.cot.co.uk/sites/default/files/publications/public/Casson-Lectures.pdf). At this time, Judith was Head of the Occupational Therapy Department at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

WFOT acknowledges Judith’s significant contribution to the Federation and to the profession over a 50 year period.

Occupational Therapy Australia acknowledges Judith’s passing
Dr Judith Marsham Farrell died earlier this month. Judith was a pioneer and leader in occupational therapy. Her 50 year career included leadership roles in the profession at state, national and international level.

Judith’s work supported the development of research and practice, especially in relation to rehabilitation of injured workers. During her professional career she was president of the Victorian Association, national president, Australian delegate to the World Federation of Occupational Therapists and Vice President of the WFOT. Judith also practiced in South Africa during the 1970's and 80's and was active in the South African Association.

Detail of Judith's career will appear in the June edition of the (Occupational Therapy Australia) Connections magazine.

Judith is sadly missed.

Colleagues in South Africa pay tribute to Judith
When Vona du Toit met Judith Farrell in Australia in 1968, both were representing their own countries as delegates to WFOT. They shared many interests; and Vona saw an opportunity to develop vocational rehabilitation in South Africa (SA) by harnessing Judith's expertise in this area. Judith spent six months in South Africa, setting up a work rehabilitation unit attached to an academic training hospital in Pretoria; and while back in Melbourne, decided to return to SA, where she remained for 15 years. She became the Principal of the Vona du Toit College of Occupational Therapy in Pretoria after Vona died. She was also an active member of the association and an elected member of the Professional Board for Occupational Therapy of the then, Medical and Dental Council.

When Judith first visited SA she was the WFOT delegate for Australia, a position she later relinquished as she was now living in another country. However, in 1974 she was the secretary-treasurer elect; and then held the position as secretary-treasurer until 1980. She held the position as one of the Vice presidents of WFOT, until 1984.
Judith had endless energy in completing a task and focussing on the end point, despite many obstacles. During the WFOT Council meeting in 1978 in Israel, the person who was hired as the minute secretary struggled to keep up with the proceedings; and a substitute was sought. However, this person also found it difficult to cope with, especially the English language, in which the proceedings were conducted. Although tape recordings were made during the proceeding, Judith realised that the minutes were not going to be adequate; and undertook during the following few nights and days, to sift through the tape recordings and the written minutes. She had the minutes completed by the time the conference was over.

It is to be remembered that in those days, pre-computers and pre-e-mail, all correspondence was typed, proof-read, corrected and then posted to all delegates. Although WFOT did not budget for clerical assistance, Judith managed to persuade the WFOT Executive to appoint a paid typist to assist her with WFOT business. This was a pioneering move in the right direction, which made the WFOT communication much more effective.

Judith had a big influence on the type of activities in which WFOT was engaged. For example she had the dream that occupational therapist through their training would have reciprocity in the WFOT member countries. To achieve this WFOT needed to ensure that the WFOT Educational standards were being met in the member countries. She therefore inaugurated visits by education committee members to various countries, the purpose of which was to monitor the training against the WFOT standards. At the same time she initiated a project which looked at the “state of the profession” in member countries which was linked to the educational standards. All this was designed to improve the standards of occupational therapy practice world wide.

As a foreigner living and working in South Africa during the apartheid years she was able to evaluate without bias the occupational therapy service given by occupational therapists to all the peoples of South Africa. She quickly came to realise that, in spite of apartheid, South African occupational therapists were delivering quality services to all the people of the country including the black population. This insight was extremely helpful when WFOT discussed the position of the South African association and its continued membership of WFOT.

Judith was a person with unending energy and drive which coupled with her belief in the profession led to her taking a leading role in the development of the profession in SA during the 15 years that she lived here. When she left SA to return to Australia, because of her mother’s illness, her clarity of thought, work ethic and innovative thinking as well as loyal friendship was sorely missed by the profession and her close friends. Not only was she all the things already described but she was fun to be with and some of us had interesting, different (such as a week spent in Brittany on a horse and cart!) and very enjoyable trips with Judith.

Estelle Shipham