

# PT magazine

OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

MAY 2000



## Florence Kendall Turns 90

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## PTmagazine

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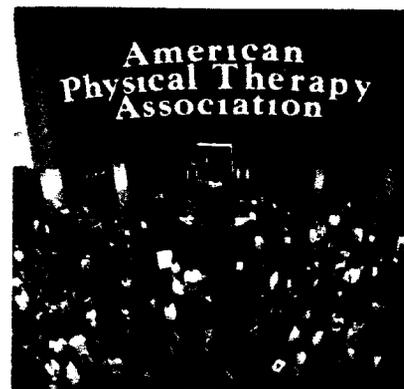
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# Florence Kendall:

## What a Wonderful Journey

by Lucie P Lawrence

Several years ago, while visiting her youngest daughter and granddaughter in Baltimore, Florence Peterson Kendall, PT, FAPTA, spent an afternoon autographing bookplates to send to a graduating class of physical therapists.

"I walked into the kitchen where my 7-year-old granddaughter, Quinn, was having an after-school snack," recalls Kendall. "Exhausted, I sat down next to my daughter and told her I had just finished signing 60 bookplates. Quinn looked up at her mother, a very puzzled expression on her face, and asked, 'Who would want grandma's autograph?'"

Today, 10 years later, Quinn no longer needs to ask this question. Her grandmother, who turns 90 this month, is not your typical grandmother. After all, how many grandmothers have received four honorary doctoral degrees; coauthored seven books and numerous articles and pamphlets; presented commencement addresses; conducted more than 350 workshops throughout the United States—and influenced an entire profession?



Dressed in green slacks and a black, wool blazer, Kendall is sitting in the bright, airy living room of the Severna Park, Maryland, home of her oldest daughter Susan and son-in-law Charlie, which she has shared for the past 22 years. Behind her, large picture windows frame a spectacular view of Cattail Creek, which flows into the Magothy River and the Chesapeake Bay.

When asked how it feels to be referred to as a “living legend,” Kendall laughs. “Somebody asked me about that the other day,” she says. “But I can’t answer. I’m not exactly sure what a living legend is. I’ll have to look it up.”

There are hints of Kendall’s many achievements scattered around the living room, kitchen, and foyer. For this interview, she has gathered these items from her “archives”—currently located in the attic, garage, and in closets—to give some insight into her long and amazing career.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition of *Muscles*:

*Testing and Function* and notebooks from her days treating patients with polio lean against a bookshelf. A hand-held dynamometer, designed by Kendall, lies rusted and wrapped in plastic near the fireplace. Two large, overstuffed binders highlighting the careers of Kendall and her late husband, Henry O Kendall, PT, are stacked on a chair in the foyer.

For more than 6 decades, Florence Kendall has had a profound impact on the physical therapy profession and has been a role model for countless numbers of PTs. Together with her husband, she wrote a groundbreaking textbook that has been through four editions and has been published in eight foreign languages. In addition, the duo were primary contributors to the advancement of physical therapy management in patients with polio, bridged the gap between APTA and private practitioners, and played a major role in legislation regarding the practice of physical therapy in Maryland.

When asked about her greatest accomplishment, Kendall stops and thinks for a moment. “I think that’s something for others to decide. But if I had to pick one thing, it would have to be my wonderful family—including my three daughters, seven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. But that really can’t be my accomplishment, because those in each generation have their own accomplishments.”

After a pause, she adds, “I also consider the *Muscles* book and a lifetime of helping patients as great accomplishments. Physical therapy gives you an avenue for helping others and leads to a lifetime of satisfaction.”

This petite, white-haired woman of 90 still drives a car, travels on her own, and has a perfect memory. She can recall minute details, from the number of safety pins needed to pin the white cuffs and collar to her starched blue uniform at Walter Reed Army Hospital in 1931, to finding a four-leaf clover on the day she met Henry Kendall in 1933.

“I amaze myself that I remember so much,” she says. “I am eternally grateful that I do. This wouldn’t be a fun time for me if I didn’t have my memory.”

Her pace is quick and shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. On this day in late January, her appointment calendar is booked through the spring. There’s a guest lecture at the University of Maryland’s Physical Therapy Department coming up; a conference call with the Catherine Worthingham Fellows Committee; parliamentary work for a local community group; several workshops; a weekend with the Iowa Chapter, which is producing a video on Kendall’s contributions to physical therapy; a dedication ceremony for a new Kendall Library at the University of Maryland School of Medicine; and, of course, her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.

As a child, her father called her “flug whin,” which translates from Swedish to “flying skin.” Today, her family calls her the “white tornado” for her boundless energy. “My motto is if it can be done, I can do it,” Kendall says. “My daughter Betsy translates that to mean, if it can be done, Mother can do it.”

## What a Wonderful Journey



Two-year-old Florence Peterson on the family farm.



In the summer of 1882, Charles August Peterson left Sweden and sailed to America, paying \$52 for his ticket. He worked on farms in Iowa before settling in Minneapolis in 1888. Two years later, Mathilda Kruse, age 16, arrived in Minneapolis from Sweden. She met Charles in church, and they were married in 1892. They had 14 children; 3 died in infancy.

The eleventh of 14, Florence May Peterson was born on May 5, 1910, and grew up on a farm 80 miles north of Minneapolis. In 1920, the Peterson family moved to the town of Mora. Florence completed third and fourth grades in 1 year, finished high school in 3 years, and graduated as valedictorian of her class 1 month after her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

She went on to the University of Minnesota, where she majored in physical education and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1930. Except for the youngest and the two oldest brothers, the entire Peterson family attended the University of Minnesota and graduated

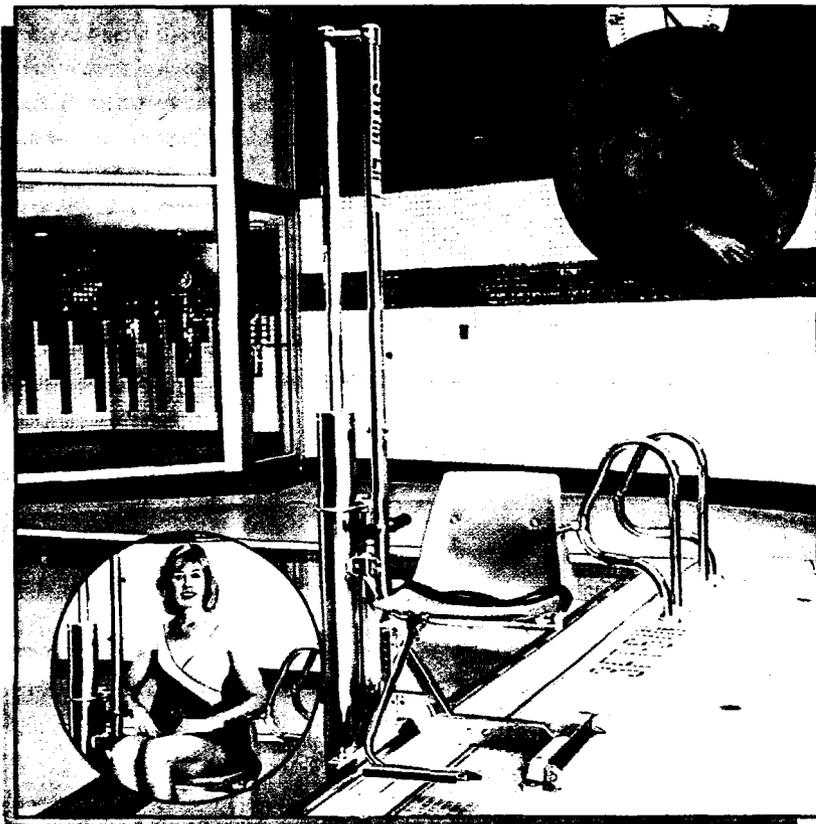
from there, with a total of 15 degrees.

Kendall says she didn't choose physical therapy; rather, it chose her. "I had never heard of physical therapy until 1931. At that time, I was teaching physical education at Owatonna High School in Owatonna, Minnesota, but I was looking for something else. The school had a large

pool, and one of my duties was to teach swimming. Because I had never had life-saving training, I was very concerned. The responsibility was too great."

Dr Alice Tolg, a professor at the University of Minnesota, suggested Florence write to the Orthopedic Departments at Walter Reed Army Hospital

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# Miami-Marquette Challenge Honors Kendall

**P**hysical therapy students across the country participate in the annual Miami-Marquette Challenge by raising funds for the Foundation for Physical Therapy. This year, PT students are striving to raise \$90,000 in honor of Florence P Kendall's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

"Florence Kendall's name is synonymous with excellence in physical therapy, and we want to be a part of that now and in our professional careers," says Nate Danielson, Miami-Marquette Challenge Student Co-Coordinator. "Because the Miami-Marquette Challenge is student-run, and because as students, we admire and are motivated by all of Florence Kendall's efforts to set the high standards of our profession, we felt it fitting that we honor her in this year's fundraising effort."

Adds Jessica Yurtinus, Miami-Marquette Challenge Student Co-Coordinator. "We feel a strong connection with, and have a great admiration for, Florence Kendall. She is a strong supporter of the Foundation, and she is a great believer in the importance of education. We want people to say 'happy birthday' to Florence Kendall by participating in this year's Miami-Marquette Challenge."

Last year, students at 33 schools raised \$47,000 for the Foundation. The Challenge has raised an aggregate amount of more than \$339,000 since its development in 1989 by the students at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Because of their commitment to the Foundation and their consistently high contributions to the Challenge, the University of Miami became a co-sponsor in 1998.

Donations to the Foundation fund research grants that investigate and assess the efficacy of physical therapy interventions. In addition to supporting a worthy cause, students who compete in the Challenge are eligible to win prizes, such as travel and registration to APTA's annual conference. Miami-Marquette Challenge winners are announced at annual conference.

in Washington, DC, and Children's Hospital in Boston. "I told Dr Tolg I wanted to do hospital work, but I didn't want to be a nurse because I couldn't handle being around very ill and dying people," Kendall recalls. "The Orthopedic Department at Walter Reed turned my letter over to the Physical Therapy Department, and, in September 1931, at the age of 21, I began my PT training. I was overjoyed to get my appointment to Walter Reed."

Her first year at Walter Reed was dedicated to coursework, followed by 1 year in clinical practice and work as an assistant instructor. In the spring of 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt made drastic cuts in military personnel, and civilian employees were among those cut. "At that time, PTs, like some other health professionals, were civilians attached to the Army. One by one, we were relieved of our duties. I was the last one in my class to leave Walter Reed. My date of severance was May 15, 1933."

Earlier that month, on May 5, with colleagues from Walter Reed, Florence attended a lecture at Children's Hospital in Baltimore. There, she was introduced to renowned physical therapist Henry Kendall, who had been directing her treatment of a young boy with poliomyelitis at Walter Reed.

"Josh Evans, the son of a Washington, DC, banker, had been taken to Warm Springs [a polio treatment center in Georgia] for treatment after contracting polio. However, his family wanted him closer to home," Kendall says. "Children's Hospital had a good reputation for treating patients with polio, so the Evans family decided to send Josh there, where Henry Kendall was Director of the PT Department. They also arranged for him to have additional treatment at Walter Reed, where I was assigned to his case. For 9 months, before I ever

met Mr Kendall, I was working with Josh under his direction. Lots of things are meant to be, and this was just one of them."

Shortly after their first meeting at the evening lecture, Florence applied for an open position at Children's Hospital and began working under Henry Kendall's direction. A year and a half later, in 1935, they were married.

To this day, Kendall often refers to her husband as "Mr Kendall." "His family wanted to name him Robert, but one of his cousins was already named Robert, so his parents named him



"I was overjoyed to get my appointment to Walter Reed," says Kendall, pictured in her "physiotherapist" uniform in December 1931.

Henry Otis and called him Bob. Henry Kendall and Bob are one and the same. As my boss at Children's Hospital, I knew him as Mr Kendall, and I couldn't stop calling him that—even for a while after we were married. It didn't feel right to me to call him Henry. To me, he was Mr Kendall. At work in the same department, that was the proper way to address him when talking with patients and doctors. But at home and with friends and family, I soon got used to calling him Bob."

## What a Wonderful Journey



And so began the collaboration of the dynamic duo that revolutionized the field of musculoskeletal evaluation and treatment. In addition to treating patients with polio, the Kendalls worked closely on numerous publications and film projects.<sup>1</sup>

At the request of Dr James P Leake, Surgeon General, US Public Health Service, they wrote the US Public Health Bulletin #242, Care During the Recovery Period of Paralytic Poliomyelitis, which was published in 1938. They coauthored pamphlets on muscle imbalance in low back pain (1936) and lower-extremity amputations (1946). Together, they produced a 16-mm, 5-reel silent movie, "Moving Picture Demonstration of the Examination, Protection, and Treatment of Convalescent Poliomyelitis Cases" (1936), and three other films on posture, scoliosis, and exercise.

In addition to being prolific authors, the Kendalls devoted a great deal of time to teaching and mentoring. They taught body mechanics at The Johns Hopkins Hospital School of Nursing (1943-1961), and Florence was a part-time faculty member at the University of Maryland Department of Physical Therapy from 1957 to 1971 and again in 1988.<sup>1</sup>

According to Kendall, she and her husband were a unique team and a very good pair. "By the time I arrived at Children's Hospital, Mr Kendall had already established himself in the field with his treatment of patients with polio and low back pain. Our work did not evolve out of ambition, but more out of a sense of responsibility. When people referred to us as mentors and role models, I always considered it a privilege to serve in these roles."

In 1934, Florence became a member of the American Physiotherapy Association. "Later on, people began nominating me



Henry and Florence Kendall with their first child, Susan, in 1938.

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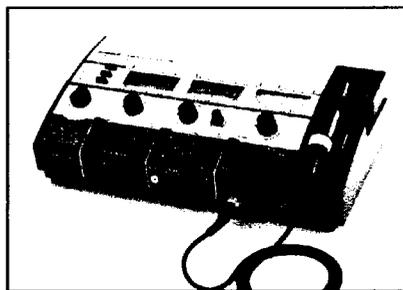


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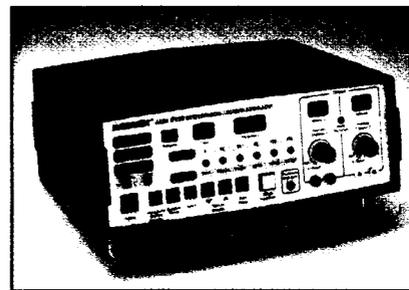


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for positions on the national level, but I had to turn them down. I was working, I had a family, and I was my husband's chauffeur. Mr Kendall lost his right eye while in France during World War I. Temporarily blind in the left eye, he gradually regained partial vision, but not enough to drive a car. I had my priorities...but I did become very involved at the chapter level."

The national office wrote to Henry and Florence in 1934 and asked them to organize a chapter in Maryland. At that time, there were just four APA members in Maryland. The other two declined the request, leaving just Henry and Florence. They were not ready to commit to organizing a chapter on their own.

"But in May of 1939, we did organize a chapter," says Kendall. "Members decided I should be president, but I said I couldn't—I was pregnant with my second daughter at the time. However, they insisted, and I became the first president of the Maryland Chapter. Back then, dues were \$1.00! Can you believe it?"

During the 1940s, Kendall served as the supervisor of physical therapy for the Maryland State Department of Health. She traveled throughout the state, supervising therapists who practiced at orthopedic free clinics developed for patients recovering from polio. "It was a very difficult time because nobody knew what caused polio. We didn't know if children could catch it at the beach, at school, through the food they ate," recalls Kendall. "It was especially hard for Mr Kendall and me. After treating children with polio at the hospital all day, we didn't know if we were exposing our own children to the disease. We lived with constant concern."

The Kendalls played a major role in drafting the original bill that was enacted into law in 1947, legally establishing the practice of physical therapy in Maryland. "It was a labor of love, with the only compensation being the satisfaction of helping attain standards for the quality of physical therapy in the health field. We were very

involved in writing this bill and spent a lot of time on it."

She adds, "I remember being in the car with my kids one afternoon. I told them I had to stop by the auto mechanic's shop to see about a bill. My oldest daughter got upset and said, 'Oh no, Mom! Not again!' because she thought I was referring to the PT bill in the Maryland legislature."



Given the Kendalls' extensive work with polio, it was inevitable that they would go on to write a book. The techniques and summaries of their research were incorporated into the first edition of *Muscles: Testing and Function*, published in 1949. The companion publication, *Posture and Pain*, was published in 1952. The second edition of *Muscles* followed in 1971, the third edition in 1983, and the fourth edition in 1993. This timeless classic was reprinted yet again when 1,000 copies of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition were printed last year.<sup>1</sup>

"We didn't write the books to be famous. We wanted to share with others what we had learned in all our work with polio, posture, and painful conditions, especially low back pain," Kendall says. "With both of us working full time, it was not an easy task to write a book; however, it had to be done. It was bigger than either of us, but we were dedicated to sharing what we had learned."

A considerable amount of time and commitment was required by the entire Kendall family during the production of that first book. The Kendall daughters recall the hours their parents spent writing and reviewing photographs before selecting the optimal pose to illustrate each of the detailed evaluation and treatment techniques. Their meticulous attention to every detail required Henry and the subjects to patiently pose for photos while Florence peered into the camera's viewfinder to ensure that each photo would be perfect.<sup>1</sup>

Betsy, the Kendall's middle daughter—who was 7 years old at the time work on the first edition began—remembers sitting quietly under a card table not saying a word while her parents sat writing and rewriting for hours. "There were blankets over their laps and a small electric heater nearby. I listened to them, happy to be so close to them," she recalls. "I listened to them talk, analyzing and rewording the text. Sometimes, my father would struggle to articulate what he intuitively knew. Finally, carefully chosen words would fall into place to express the desired meaning. Words like 'hamstring' and 'hip flexors' became familiar to me."

Susan and Betsy were models for the facial muscle tests in the first edition. When *Posture and Pain* was being prepared for publication, Kendall's youngest daughter, Florencie, was 6 years old. "At the time the galley-proof was being reviewed, she came to me one day and, putting her left hand on the seat of a chair and pointing with her right hand to her left side, she said, 'Mommy, could you use this muscle in a book?' I knew then that my youngest daughter felt left out," says Kendall. "So, I took one posture picture out of the set of proofs and replaced it with an adorable picture of Florencie when she was 18 months old."

Three years after publication of their groundbreaking textbook, the Kendalls made the very difficult decision to leave Children's Hospital and go into private practice. "This was a rare move at that time, because APTA and physicians were opposed to private practice for PTs," Kendall says. "But the salaries at the hospital were so low. Mr Kendall was making only about \$4,000 a year—and with three kids, we needed to look to the future."

Kendall adds, "It's unbelievable when I think about it now. It was an absolutely wrenching decision for my husband to leave the hospital. He had been there for more than 30 years; it was all he had ever known. There were no guarantees that we could make it in private practice, but we had a lot of faith."

## What a Wonderful Journey



Above: The Kendall family, December 1999.  
Right: Kendall enjoys her four great-grandchildren at a recent family reunion.

Their faith paid off. In the first year of operation, they had referrals for more than 1,300 new patients. "Because my husband was well known and respected in Baltimore, we received a large number of referrals. It was a huge step, and I think we helped pave the way for other private practitioners."

In 1955, 3 years after the Kendalls began their private practice, APTA created a committee to explore establishing the Self-Employed Section (now known as the Private Practice Section). "Mr Kendall was asked to serve on the committee, but he requested that I serve instead," Kendall says. "With two of our children, we boarded a Vista Dome train for San Francisco and traveled cross-country." The proposal for the development of the new section was presented to APTA's House of Delegates, and the section was approved.

Last year, the Private Practice Section honored Kendall with the Robert G Dicus Award, an award named in honor of the first chair of the Self-Employed Section. The Section's most distinguished award recognizes Kendall for her service as a founding member of the Private Practice Section and for her support of private practice physical therapy.



To honor the Kendalls for their excellence in clinical practice, the Maryland Chapter established the Henry O and Florence P Kendall Award for Outstanding Achievement in Clinical Practice in 1976. From 1981 to 1992, a national award was presented through the Foundation for Physical Therapy. In 1992, APTA adopted the Kendall award criteria as the Association's first award dedicated to clinical practice, and renamed it the Henry O and Florence P Kendall Practice Award, with the first one awarded in 1993.

"I can remember sitting at a Maryland Chapter meeting when they were developing criteria for the award," Kendall says. "Somebody suggested that I should present the award annually, but it was struck down by another member. When asked why the idea was struck down, the member said, 'Well, look at her gray hair. Can't you see the reason why?' What's funny is that, today, that member has retired—and I haven't."



After 50 years of clinical practice, Henry O Kendall retired in 1971, and the Kendalls decided to officially close their practice. On May 3, 1979, after a lengthy illness, Henry passed away.

Florence Kendall has continued to be professionally active. She has produced "Florence Kendall's Muscle Testing Video Library," a 5-part videotape series on musculoskeletal assessment; produced a reference on parliamentary procedure; coauthored *Golfers: Take Care of Your Back* with Sue Carpenter, PT; worked on revising the third and fourth editions of *Muscles*; and produced *Peterson Family Tree, Roots and Branches*, a published family history.

Kendall has served as consultant to the Surgeon General of the US Army and to the Maryland State Board of Physical Therapy Examiners. She is a registered parliamentarian and has assisted with drafting bylaws and procedures at the state

and national levels of APTA. Known as "the watchdog of APTA's bylaws," Kendall is sometimes accused of being "too picky" about language and meaning. She prefers the term "precise."

Kendall can still recall receiving each of her awards as if it were yesterday. "The first one was the Lucy Blair Service Award in 1971. Then I gave the 1980 Mary McMillan Lecture in Phoenix. My entire family attended the lecture and sat along the front row of the auditorium. What a wonderful experience for me."

In addition, Kendall was named a Catherine Worthingham Fellow in 1986; received the first Outstanding Alumni Award from the US Army, Physical Therapy Division; and delivered APTA's 1997 John H P Maley Lecture to a packed house. Between 1989 and 1999, she received four honorary doctorates: from the University of Indianapolis, Philadelphia College of

## Celebrating a Very Special Birthday

**T**he Foundation for Physical Therapy is throwing Florence Kendall a birthday bash at PT 2000 on Tuesday, June 13, from 7:30 to 10 pm at the Westin Indianapolis Hotel. Tickets cost \$90. To purchase tickets, contact the Foundation at 800/875-1378, by June 6. On June 12 and 13, tickets will be available at the Foundation information table outside the Grand Ballroom in the Westin Indianapolis.

Kendall will be presented with a book of personal messages at the party. If you are interested in contributing a personal birthday message for this special book, pages are available for your inscription. For more details and to order a page for \$100, call the Foundation by May 19.

Can't attend the birthday party? Stop by the Foundation's information table in the Indiana Convention Center during PT 2000 to bid on memorabilia from Kendall's personal collection, including copies of her books; signed name badges and ribbons she wore at conferences and workshops; and abstracts of research she conducted with her late husband, Henry O Kendall. All items will be available for bidding from June 13 to June 16. Winning bids will be announced on the afternoon of June 16.

All proceeds from Florence Kendall's birthday activities will support the Henry O and Florence P Kendall Endowment Fund, which provides scholarships to physical therapists through the Foundation's Doctoral Opportunities for Clinicians and Scholars scholarship program. The Kendalls established this fund to contribute to the overall development of physical therapy as a caring profession.



"It's a privilege to serve as a role model and mentor," Kendall says, meeting a physical therapist at APTA's annual conference.

Pharmacy and Science, Shenandoah University, and the University of Maryland.

Kendall stays healthy by "keeping very busy." Recently, Steven Tepper, PT, PhD, Associate Professor of Physical Therapy at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia, and several students worked with Kendall to test her fitness level.

"Steven and four of his students came to my house, hooked me up to a bunch of machines, and tested me for everything. At one point, I was walking around my living room in circles, while the machines monitored my endurance level."

A second visit to Kendall's home followed, and then a day at Shenandoah for students to present their findings. "They concluded that I was in great shape for being 89, but suggested I start a walking program," she says. "I told them a walking program was unlikely. After all, I'm on the go all the time, walking everywhere and keeping up with my grandchildren and great-grandchildren."

Today, Kendall spends as much time as she can with her family. "I used to worry about my girls growing up with two working parents," recalls Kendall. "At that time, there were very few dual-income families

in the US. Working moms were a rarity. My daughters missed having me at home, but they didn't feel neglected."

Kendall says she would have been happy if her daughters had decided to pursue physical therapy, but she understood why they chose not to. "They grew up with PT as part of their lives. They were so inundated with it, with both parents active in clinical practice and legislative efforts. My daughters, as well as several of my grandchildren, were also subjects for photographs. Sometimes willingly, sometimes reluctantly, but apparently always pleased to play a role."

With the third edition of *Muscles*, the opportunity arose for one daughter, Betsy, to become more involved. Living in Hawaii, Betsy took courses in anatomy, neurophysiology, and exercise physiology. Because of her interest and her writing abilities, Kendall asked Betsy to be a coauthor for the third and fourth editions of *Muscles*.

"I wanted the book, which was my and my husband's life's work, to stay in the family," Kendall says. "I couldn't stand the idea of that book leaving our family. When plans were underway for a fourth edition,

## What a Wonderful Journey

the publishers suggested that there should be another younger author, so I invited Patricia Provance, a former student, an experienced physical therapist, and a friend, to join us."



As one of this country's foremost PTs, Kendall is frequently asked about the current state of physical therapy.

"There was a time when physical therapy was a dedicated profession, but now it seems to be turning into a business. Mr Kendall and I would take all the time we needed for evaluations and allowed ample time for treatments. PTs were scheduled for half-hour visits, but room time for patients was close to one hour, which we

used if needed. We never rushed. We took our time with patients. Now you hear about physical therapists having to wear stopwatches. It's not right."

She adds, "Our average annual earnings for the 19 years we had our private practice was \$8,500 for each of us. We were not on the road to riches, but had the great reward of being able to help patients. And the opportunity to help patients was the reason we became physical therapists. Today, many dedicated physical therapists bemoan the fact that they are not allowed the time to provide adequate treatment."

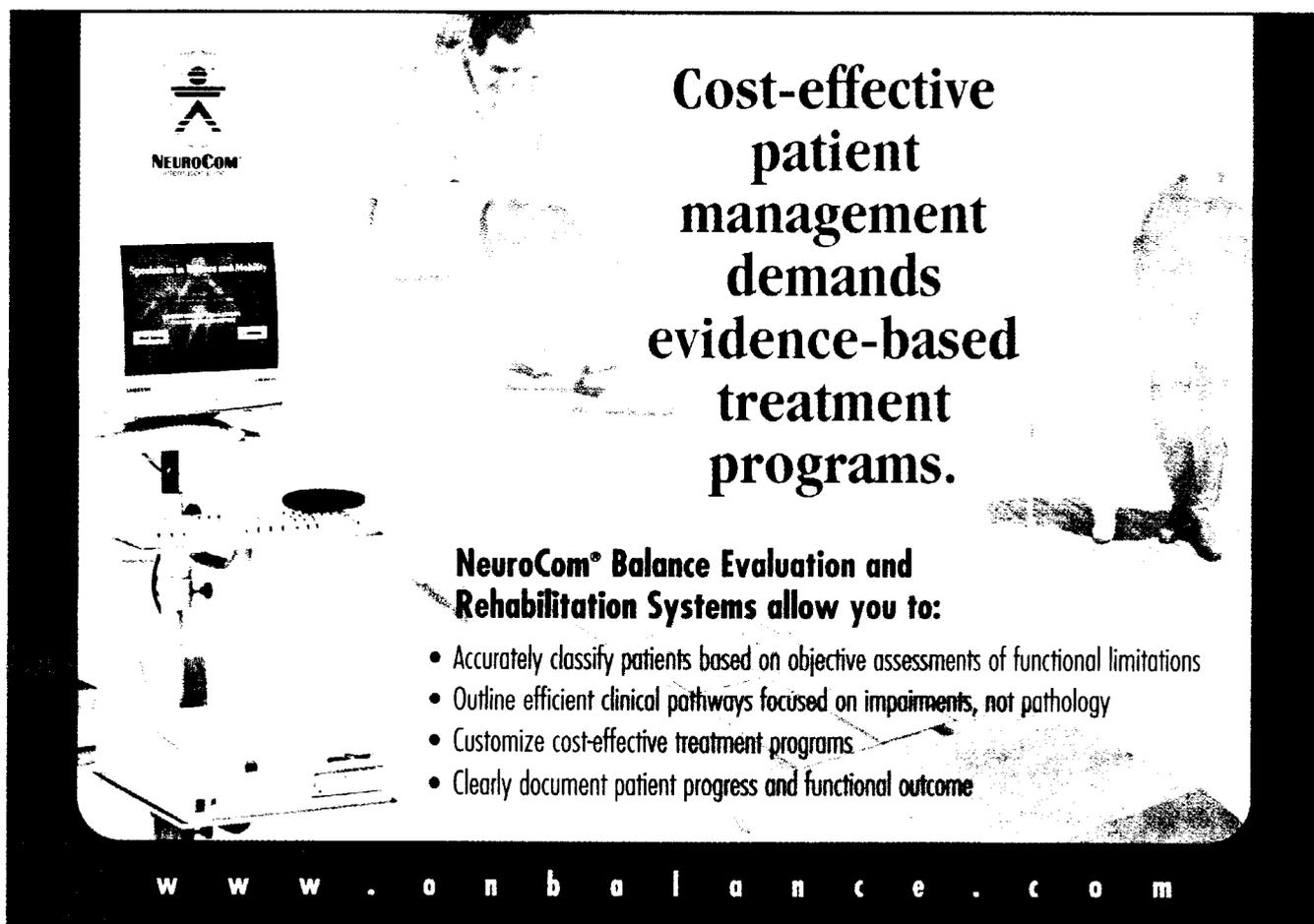
Having just turned 90, Florence Kendall today finds herself enjoying the current state of her life. This PT has no plans to change her lifestyle one bit. "Spending time with my family, teaching workshops, continuing my involvement in physical therapy, writing, and

baking keeps me busy and happy. I'm growing old with enthusiasm, and I wouldn't change anything." 

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### Reference

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**Cost-effective  
patient  
management  
demands  
evidence-based  
treatment  
programs.**

**NeuroCom® Balance Evaluation and Rehabilitation Systems allow you to:**

- Accurately classify patients based on objective assessments of functional limitations
- Outline efficient clinical pathways focused on impairments, not pathology
- Customize cost-effective treatment programs
- Clearly document patient progress and functional outcome

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