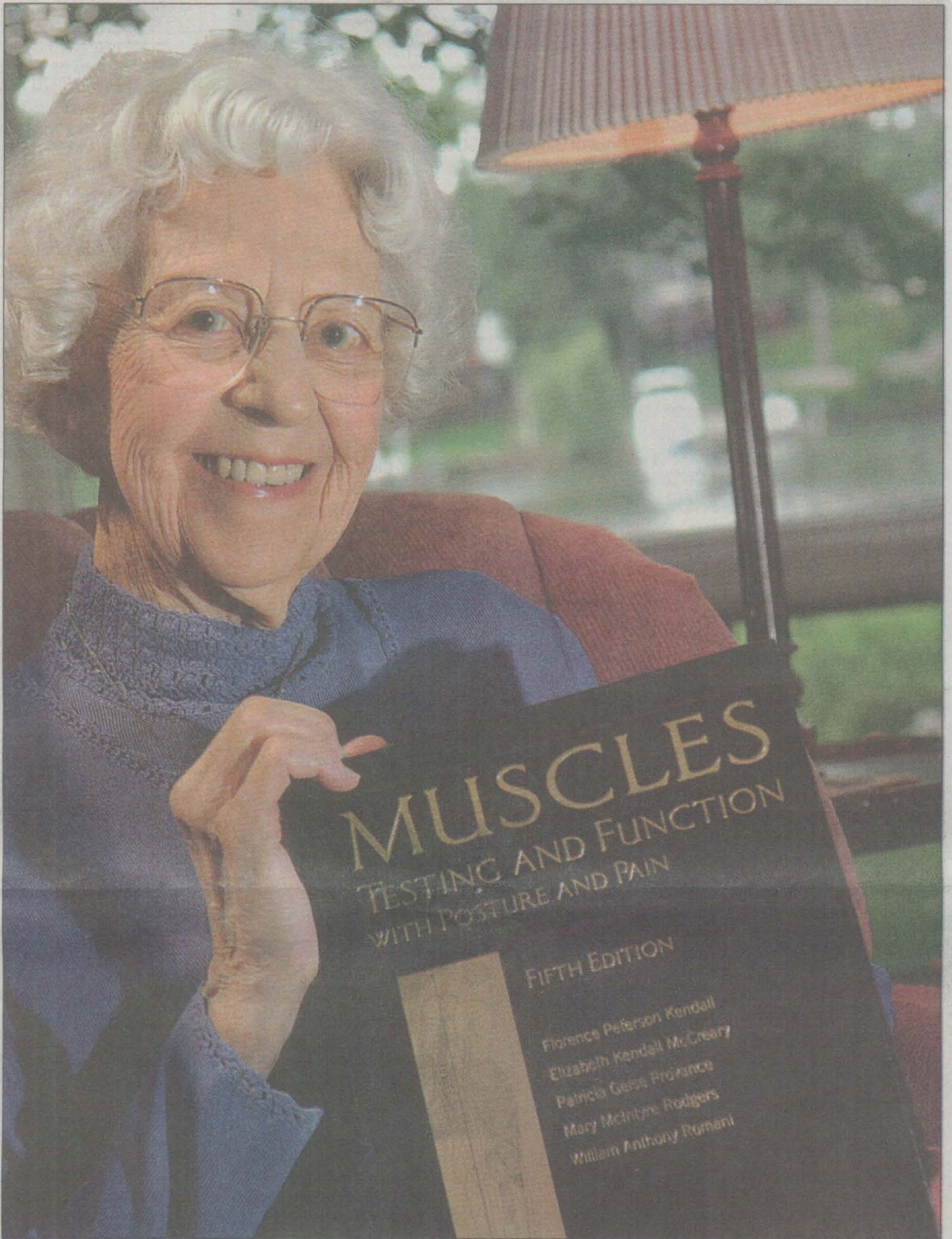


“Every physical therapist knows of Florence Kendall and has studied her work.”

Jeannie Hines, physical therapist, Veterans Affairs Medical Center, White River Junction, Vt.



GENE SWEENEY JR. : SUN STAFF PHOTOS
Florence Kendall, 95, shows off the book she and her husband worked on in 1949, now considered a must-have in most physical therapy classrooms. It has been published in five editions and nine languages.

*A physical therapist's
inspiring body of work*

A physical therapist's inspiring body of work

By JONI GUHNE
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

Trailblazer: Florence Kendall, 95, recognized as one of the top people in physical therapy, has always challenged the field she's now known for.

Florence Peterson Kendall has had a lifelong love affair with the human body. The 11th child of Swedish immigrants, raised on a farm in Minnesota, she vaulted from academically talented young athlete — high school valedictorian and graduate with a bachelor of science degree in physical education from the University of Minnesota — to one of the nation's most celebrated women in the field of physical therapy.

In 2002, the Maryland Chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association named Kendall Physical Therapist of the Century.

On June 21, 2004, *Advance*, a magazine for physical therapists, published the results of a survey to identify the profession's "giants." Among the most influential people in orthopedic physical therapy, Kendall was No. 3.

The Severna Park resident, who turned 95 in May, graduated from college in 1930, when automobiles were as rare a sight on neighborhood streets as doctors making house calls are today.

Throughout her more than 60-year career, Kendall has made it her business — whether she is treating patients, teaching at the University of Maryland School of Medicine or at the School of Nursing at Johns Hopkins Hospital, or [See *Therapist*, 6G]



Florence Kendall (right), shown with her daughter, Susan Nolte, has been working in physical therapy since 1932 and has been influential in the field.

A therapist's inspiring body of work

(Therapist, from Page 1G)

writing books and journal articles — to practice physical therapy the way the old family doctors practiced medicine, with “compassion and sincerity.”

“It should be hands-on,” she says. “That’s what I tell young physical therapists.”

As degree requirements for physical therapy increase, practitioners are finding it necessary to earn master’s degrees and doctorates.

Kendall is concerned that a therapist with postgraduate degrees will be more inclined to supervise patient care than to remain in touch with patients.

“This is a profession for caring, conscientious and sincere people,” she says.

Kendall is respected by her peers and held in high esteem by more recent graduates.

“Every physical therapist knows of Florence Kendall and has studied her work,” said Jeannie McClellan Hines, 33, a physical therapist at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in White River Junction, Vt.

“Kendall developed the very foundation of muscle testing and posture eval-

uation still used today,” said Hines, a 1989 graduate of Severna Park High School and a 1994 graduate of Northeastern University in Boston. “She is an incredible woman and has long been a leader in the field of physical therapy.”

Muscles: Testing and Function, a textbook that Kendall and her husband, Henry Otis Kendall, wrote more than 50 years ago, has been used by generations of physical therapy students. Since it was first published (it recently went into its fifth publication with updated information and the inclusion of her formerly separate publication *Posture and Pain*), the book has been translated into nine languages and is recognized as the gold standard for musculoskeletal assessment, according to *Advance* magazine.

“She’s an amazing woman,” said Dave Thomas, 46, director of the physical therapist assistant program at Anne Arundel Community College. “She was my teacher at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County in 1982. Her book is a classic textbook used in every P.T. class in the country. Her knowledge of the body floored everybody.”

A year out of college in 1931, Kendall

applied for a training position in the physical therapy department at Walter Reed Hospital in Baltimore. At the time, she says, she didn’t know what physical therapy was, but she wanted to work in the medical field.

The director of the program, noted physical therapist Henry Kendall, liked what he saw in the 21-year-old, and in less than two years, she had earned a spot on the physical therapy staff and had married her boss, beginning a collaboration that led to major changes in the accepted treatment for back pain, the complications of polio and battlefield injuries.

Henry Kendall, who died in 1979, was interested in postwar recuperation. While serving in the Army in World War I, he lost an eye in a landmine explosion and, thought to be blind in the other eye, he didn’t expect to see again, his widow says. But he managed to regain enough sight in his remaining eye to continue his work.

In 1938, the Kendalls, who were by then working at Children’s Hospital in Baltimore, wrote a U.S. Public Health Service bulletin, *Care During the Recovery Period of Paralytic Poliomyelitis*, that was to challenge conserva-

tive medical thinking. Their hypothesis on how muscle testing could indicate signs of improvement in polio patients was later accepted as a key component in post-polio care.

The Kendalls designed the prototype for the C.D. Denison arm sling, a contoured support for the arm that does not put pressure on the neck and shoulder. The couple also were instrumental in organizing the American Physical Therapy Association in 1939.

A decade after they joined forces, Kendall and her husband completed perhaps their greatest accomplishment, the textbook, *Muscles: Testing and Function*. In February, at the mid-winter conference of the American Physical Therapy Association in New Orleans, Kendall autographed hundreds of copies of the updated book.

The year she turned 90, the Kendall Collection, a collection of her writings and films that document much of the history of physical therapy in Maryland, was dedicated in the library at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore.

Kendall holds four honorary degrees: doctor of humane letters from the University of Maryland, May 1999; doctor of

humane letters from Shenandoah University, August 1996; doctor of science from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science, May 1990; and doctor of science from the University of Indianapolis, December 1989.

Her latest book is *Golfers: Take Care of Your Back*. In 2002, she was inducted into the Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame by Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, a previous inductee. The list of her appearances at meetings of doctors, dentists, nurses and physical therapists fills pages in her curriculum vitae.

When Kendall is not on the road to a medical conference or book signing, she is at home in the Severna Park community of Fair Oaks with her daughter and son-in-law, Susan and Charles Nolte, with whom she has lived for 27 years.

With Kendall as a member of the household and the Noltes’ son and his family living up the street, that makes four generations in one neighborhood.

Kendall attributes her longevity, mental acuity and trim figure to her Swedish ancestry.

“I eat anything I want to eat and nothing I don’t want to eat. It must be good genes,” she says, smiling.