In Memoriam: Beverly Petterson Bishop (1922–2008)
Rebecca L Craik, Susan Harris and Paul J Helders
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In Memoriam:
Beverly Petterson Bishop (1922–2008)

PTJ does not usually publish tributes, as there are so many physical therapists who have given so much to their profession and to rehabilitation science. We make an exception in this case because of the direct impact that Dr Beverly Bishop has had on PTJ’s Editorial Board over the years.

Born in Corning, NY, Bishop earned a bachelor of science degree in mathematics from Syracuse University in 1944, a master of science degree in experimental psychology at the University of Rochester in 1946, and a PhD in physiology at the University of Buffalo in 1957. She was a State University of New York (SUNY) Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Buffalo and also received the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching. Her teaching career spanned more than 50 years, during which she taught neurophysiology to almost 40 cohorts of physical therapist students. She also authored more than 150 scholarly articles, many in PTJ1–19; edited 4 books; and produced seminal monographs and book chapters in the area of neurophysiology. Her research interests included the identification and analysis of motor control in humans and animals.

An honorary member of APTA, Bishop was very much involved with the profession of physical therapy. Not only did she passionately teach neurophysiology to physical therapist students, but she published a series of ground-breaking articles on neuroplasticity1–4 in the pages of this journal in the early 1980s. Through that series, she demonstrated powerfully why it was so important for all physical therapists to understand the need to investigate the scientific basis for intervention. She made us aware of the potential relationship between therapeutic interventions and plasticity in the brain. In fact, Bishop was one of the pioneers in searching for scientific research that examined the efficacy of physical therapy. She kept in close touch with research developments within our profession.

Personal Comments

Dr Paul Helders: Whenever I visited Beverly in her self-designed home in Amherst, NY, PTJ was always visible somewhere in her house. One of her most remarkable traits was her youthful and creative spirit. Science and teaching truly fascinated her. These were 2 things she couldn’t let go of. Her enthusiasm and the true pleasure she found in using technology in teaching was remarkable. She loved preparing PowerPoint presentations and the possibilities they created for the transfer of knowledge. Just this past spring, she e-mailed me that she was revising her course in neurophysiology for the 50th time.

At the last Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA)–APTA Joint Congress in Toronto, Ontario, in 1994, Bishop hosted an open house in her hotel suite for her former students in physiology. That was typical Beverly. She loved to stay in touch with her former students. She stimulated many of them to pursue a PhD or a scientific career. She enjoyed their successes, especially achievements within the field of neurophysiology. Because of her stimulating and supportive engagement, she was indirectly involved with many publications, which I was fortunate to experience myself.
I have had the privilege of knowing Beverly and her husband, Charles, since the late 1970s. I was always thrilled to learn of their travels and flights with their Cessna 210 all over the United States and Canada. Whenever I visited them, we flew out to see Niagara Falls and adjacent areas, enjoying the freedom of flight.

**Dr Susan Harris:** As a master's degree student in special education at the University of Washington in the late 1970s, I was required to write a proposal for a research project as part of my degree requirements. As a pediatric physical therapist, I decided to propose examining the effects of vibratory stimulation applied to the backs of infants with Down syndrome to determine whether that intervention could enhance antigravity back extension when lying in the prone position. And, of course, the first important references I came across were articles by Bishop. With some trepidation about writing to such a famous person, I typed a formal cover letter, enclosed a copy of my proposal draft, and asked if she would critique it for me and give me any pearls of wisdom.

It was several months before I got a letter of response, in which Bishop was apologetic for having taken so long to get back to me (me, a mere master's degree student who, at the time, had never published anything!). Beverly was incredibly warm, gracious, and helpful in her response to me. I never forgot that gift.

In the late 1980s, when I was a university professor myself, I finally got to meet Beverly at an APTA conference. I introduced myself to her and told her again how much her response had meant to me at the time. I told her then—and I have kept this promise now for more than 30 years—that her kindness in responding to me had motivated me to always respond to any request I received, be it from a colleague, a student, or a parent or family member of a child with a disability. She truly was a wonderful role model for me very early in my career and became a lifelong friend.

**Final Comments From the Editor in Chief**

Beverly Bishop passed away on September 20th. APTA, CPA, and the profession of physical therapy have lost one of their greatest ambassadors. In our opinion, she was among the first neuroscientists who understood the need to investigate the relationship between physical therapist intervention and the potential for change within the nervous system. Beverly’s involvement, her passion for science, and her commitment to young students remain an example to all of us. As the editors and Editorial Boards of PTJ and Physiotherapy Canada contemplate the beginning of another new year, Dr Bishop motivates us once more to be curious, to focus on evidence, and to be responsive both to each other and to our patients and their families.

**Rebecca L Craik, PT, PhD, FAPTA**
Editor in Chief

**Susan Harris, PT, PhD, FAPTA**
Editor in Chief, Physiotherapy Canada
Editorial Board Member (1990–1995), PTJ

**Paul J Helders, PT, PhD, PCS**
Editorial Board Member, PTJ
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