

Tribute page

Helen J. Hislop, PT, PhD, FAPTA — A Tribute

In 2013 the physical therapy profession lost one of the brightest beacons it had ever known. Helen Hislop was an extraordinary woman who changed the course of our profession, in part by implementing heightened standards of academic success and by creating the DPT and PhD degrees during her tenure at the University of Southern California. She also took the editorship of *Physical Therapy*, the professional journal of the American Physical Therapy Association, and transformed it from an anecdotal “how to” magazine into a scientific journal with genuine credibility in the medical community. The sheer magnitude of her contributions is probably beyond that of any physical therapist in the history of our profession.

One of the most notable achievements in Helen's repertoire was her authorship of four editions of the classic text, *Daniels and Worthingham's Muscle Testing: Techniques of Manual Examination*. First published in 1946, the original Daniels, Williams, and Worthingham book was a “how to” manual for testing the patient with poliomyelitis. Although the book was modified to some extent over the next 30 years, the practice of physical therapy changed considerably during that time span and the earlier muscle testing book did not reflect the expansion of the profession to include the testing of neurological patients, the testing of men and women with orthopedic injuries and joint replacements, and contending with the burgeoning older adult population. Helen became involved in shepherding the book to a more contemporary text beginning with the 6th edition, and when the book was published in 1995, it reflected a sea change. Beautiful anatomical drawings produced under Helen's direction were incorporated, the testing of new patient populations was added, and there was the inclusion of new muscle tests that had evolved from clinical practice that were far more accurate than those described in previous texts, such as the 25× heel rise. Although these changes were the product of Helen's vision, the contributions of her coauthor, Jacqueline Montgomery, MA, PT, were of tremendous importance as Jackie was a clinician with her finger on the pulse of clinical practice.

In 2010, Helen called to ask if I would become a contributor to the 9th edition, and I agreed. After multiple trips to Helen's home in North Carolina it became apparent that her declining health was going to preclude completion of the book without a great deal more help. We worked for another year, but with looming deadlines and the need for a move away from “manual” muscle testing, and the inclusion of functional testing, it became necessary to enlist additional help. Dale Avers, PT, DPT, PhD, FAPTA, was asked to be an author and edition 9 continued to evolve in response to changing practice.

Even with multiple hospitalizations and further declines in health, Helen continued to be a vital contributor to edition 9. At all times she was “in charge.” Her fortitude was extraordinary; once a vision was planted in her brain, there was no dissuading her from the task at hand. She never saw the final completed copy of edition 9 but she contributed to each and every one of the enormous changes brought forth in the new book. Even though Helen is gone, her contributions will persist through many more iterations of this text.

Wherever Helen may be, there is no question she is lustily singing Gilbert and Sullivan tunes, engaging those around her in lively and insightful conversation, regaling anyone who will listen with tales of Scottish history, and making people laugh. Hopefully, too, she has caught the “big fish” that eluded her for her entire 84 years.

Rest in peace, dear friend.

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