

Molly Ford Emery

30 November 1924 - 4 October 2010

Mary Carruth Emery (known as professionally as Molly Ford) died in Invercargill in early October, after a fairly short period of rapidly declining health during which she complained that her biggest difficulty was that she couldn't do anything.

Molly had an extensive career in occupational therapy particularly in the lower part of the South Island. She grew up on the Taieri plains out of Dunedin and started her occupational therapy training in October 1950. In her first 20 years she was involved in establishing the occupational therapy services at Kew Hospital in Invercargill, and at Oamaru Hospital, as well as time overseas working in rehabilitation centres in both England and Canada. She returned to Dunedin in 1970 as Charge Occupational Therapist at Wakari Hospital, then Charge Occupational Therapist at Dunedin Hospital, finally becoming Director of Occupational Therapy Services for the Otago Hospital Board, from where she retired in 1985. She consolidated the way the occupational therapy was valued during her many years with the Otago Hospital Board, in the community, in elder care and rheumatology especially. She contributed significantly to the then local branch of the New Zealand Occupational Therapy Association and to the development of younger therapists.

She contributed to the profession nationally as well, serving on the occupational therapy board, the Central Institute of Technology professional advisory committee, and was actively involved in many branch activities including time as its President and convening the committee

organising the highly successful 1984 Dunedin-based conference. She was later accorded the honour of life membership of the Association.

Over her years in practice Molly influenced many new graduates - particularly those who started their careers in Otago and Southland, earning the respect of those whom she often found thought and behaved in very different ways from her. She is also acknowledged and remembered by occupational therapists who returned to practice after a number of years away because of family or child care responsibilities. Molly welcomed their return to practice and gave them the confidence to return not only to occupational therapy practice but to contribute within the profession more broadly, including teaching and leadership of the National Association. Despite the paradigm shifts she encountered across her career in application of theoretical knowledge and skills, and the constant rethinking of occupational therapists role and function during her career, she was always able to keep hold of the core of the profession helping others to make sense of this also.



Her commitment to students, despite her early experiences of finding that teaching at the occupational therapy school in Auckland did not suit her style, remained over her life including finding placements in Dunedin, and the development role of the clinical tutor post in Dunedin. She and Frankie Morgan, appointed to the clinical tutor, provided both good friendship and professional support to each other around both professional and personal issues, including the regular sharing of a gin and tonic together while they endeavoured to come to terms with the profession; of the time and the differences in behaviours and the way they practiced. Molly provided help and support to many new graduate occupational therapists often providing a level of personal, even almost maternal, support that would be surprising to graduates today.

Molly was good at listening, reframing, supporting, challenging, and encouraging people to find their own way, and helped many shape their career.

In retirement Molly stayed in contact with many colleague therapists, and was supportive to the development of the Otago Polytechnic School in the early 90s. She awarded what has become known at Otago Polytechnic as the Ford Emery Trophy for the student who shows the most aptitude for clinical practice.

After her husband George Emery's death, she returned to live in Invercargill. The profession was represented at her funeral there and contributed to the memorial service.

Therapists throughout the country will remember Molly lovingly with that delightful combination of familiarity, friendship and affection that comes from sustained professional respect and contact through a shared occupation.

Those people who wished to acknowledge Molly's contribution to the profession could do so by making a donation in her name to the New Zealand occupational therapy research and education trust.



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