**Summary of Interview**

To help the Maryland Occupational Therapy Association’s (MOTA) historical board better understand the history of occupational therapy, Cassidy Chambers interviewed Maureen Peterson at September 18, 2018 at Starbucks. Maureen Peterson started her occupational therapy career at Virginia Commonwealth University in 1971 when she decided that she did not want to be a nurse or a physical therapist. Although she did not know in 1971, or even when she graduated college in 1975 that she had a calling to be an occupational therapist (OT), she now knows she was always meant to be an OT.

Maureen started working in 1975 thinking she was going to be in the pediatrics field. However, her lack of experience in pediatrics led her to Massachusetts Rehabilitation Center with patients that had strokes, brain and spinal cord injuries, cardiac problems, and orthopedic necessities. I started out in Boston, Massachusetts. It is Spaulding Rehab now but it was Mass Rehab when I started there. I started in rehab and it was one of those huge rehabs centers and it was one of those places where you rotated through, you had strokes, brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, cardiac rehab, orthopedic stuff. Of course, back then if you had stroke you were in the hospital in rehab for 3 months. They got you independent before you walked out of that facility. Total knees, total hips were probably in for 3-4 weeks. Again, they were totally independent before they left. Now of course they changed surgery techniques so people can be independent the next day. But back then that was not the case. We had a very different approach with rehab in that the length of time you had to spend with every individual with whom you worked was much longer. It was wonderful, I am grateful and thankful for that experience.

After clinical practice Massachusetts Rehab, she began the administrative track of her career by directing occupational therapy departments at a hospital in Virginia, Charlotte Rehabilitation Hospital in Charlotte, N.C., and at Magee Rehabilitation Hospital in Philadelphia, PA. After her experience at Magee, Maureen attended Thomas Jefferson University to obtain her master’s degree in occupational therapy. From there, Maureen then became director of occupational therapy and executive director of ambulatory services at National Rehabilitation Hospital in Washington, D.C. She next went to Manor Care Health as director of MedBridge operations and Holy Cross Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Montgomery County MD, as program director, where she was one of many fired due to the financial impact of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. However, this led her to become a director of the wound care center at Curative Health. Finally, in 2000 she began the last eighteen years of her career as Chief Professional Affairs Officer at the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

Maureen’s time at the AOTA was the highlight of her career. She had set her goal of working for the AOTA when she was twenty-five. She slowly worked towards that goal throughout her whole career by volunteering to be on committees while working at other jobs. Maureen believes that it is an OTs duty to join the AOTA and that there should not even be a second thought as to whether one should join given that the AOTA guides our profession. However, younger generations do question joining the AOTA and have trouble recognizing that service to the AOTA is a source of pride and commitment. Maureen proposes that the best way to solve this problem is by having professors of occupational therapy students discuss their roles within the association and how their duty to the profession has provided them with gratitude.

As a member of the executive leadership team, Maureen was able to directly see her influence on the AOTA. She was able to interact with other branches of occupational therapy and health-related professions which enabled her to have great influence when doing strategic planning with the team. Her role was to help decide what the AOTA really need to focus on, get more information on, or spend more money on, which allowed Maureen to have a big impact on occupational therapy practice. “I have had several, and I have been very lucky to have several. I think when I was younger it was probably some of my peers, but very quickly when I started being a director after I had the job where I was a chief for about 6 years and then I went to Charlotte and I was a director and then I came up to Magee Rehab and then I was a director there for 7 years and then I came down to National Rehab and was a director for about 7 years and I was also executive director at the outpatient center for all those different places so there has been a lot of people who I have been very lucky to learn from. Early on I think I learned the most from my peers who had more experience than I in administration, management, and all those things there were several local people. I was the president for DCOTA for i think for 2 years, either one year or two years, and I was vice president either one year or two years. But there was a woman named Anne Kuntavanish, who was definitely a mentor. There was another woman Rosalie, I think Rosalie Injenito. They were really wonderful to me as an upcoming leader and someone in the administrative part. By the time I got to AOTA, I was there for 17 years, I had the privilege of supporting all the vice presidents and that gave me entre to work on certain projects with the presidents and I have learned something from each and every one of them. I have been very lucky, the presidents and vice presidents that I have worked with are Carolyn Baum, Penelope

Moyers-Cleveland, Florence Clark, Ginny Stoffel, Amy Lamb, so I have had some really great leaders that I have worked with supported, learned from, helped, collaborated with, so I have been very lucky. Carolyn really helped me stretch and understand that I could stretch even though by the time I met her I was coming up to 50 years old and she really helped me stretch and make me feel like I could do more things than I really thought I could do. And I am very lucky in that regard. These women, mostly women, who have ended up being leaders in our profession, each brought such a wealth of overall experience with them, a really deep understanding of the profession and its roots. It’s just really unbelievable. The other person that was a defining moment for me, it was about the early 80s because I think I was at Magee, I went to a 3-week clinical reasoning course taught by Cheryl Mattingly and Maureen Fleming. It was unbelievable, best educational course I had ever been to in my entire life. The people I met in the course have all stayed in touch since then, but that whole clinical reasoning concept really solidified my thinking as an OT relative to the clinic, not so much as a manager, leader, administrator, but as a clinician. Cheryl Mattingly and Maureen Fleming and my other friends Maureen Neistadt and Ellen Cone, are the pioneers in really understanding clinical reasoning and putting words to clinical reasoning, so some of the things you may take for granted in your classes now, they are the ones, and I was really privileged to learn directly from them.”

Although Maureen’s experience with the AOTA was her end goal, her most memorable moment was when she worked with a postpartum patient who had a stroke and the goal of treatment was all about caring for her baby. The techniques used in her experience with this patient were even published in a clinical reasoning book by Cheryl Mattingly and Maureen Fleming when she took their course on clinical reasoning, which is still taught in OT courses today.

Overall, Maureen has had a very fulfilling career that was more than she could have ever imagined. Although she did not feel she was worn out by occupational therapy when she entered retirement, she wanted to leave the career on a positive note. In spite of the fact that her career as an OT has ended, she ensures that her OT heart will never leave her. Her advice to students:

“It is so easy to be in the AOTA, the first thing you should do is go to the Student Conclave, that is where students from all over the country come and it is a conference just for students. The leaders, the elected leaders will be there doing lectures and individual talking, there will be experts from all different areas of OT to talk about what it is like really in the field. And then they do mock interviews and resume reviews with leaders. You may sit down with Amy Lamb and have her look at your resume. You will also meet all the student leaders, a lot of the people elected as the ASD, they all will be there too. Getting involved in AOTA now, even if it is just a little bit, I think it is absolutely wonderful. Don't settle. When it is time for you to get a job, don’t settle. Be very sure and just follow your heart. After you go into you field work, what really speaks to you, just try to get a job in that area and do not just pick any job. Try to make sure you feel that it is a fit, it fits you, your personality, your goals for your career. Make sure all those things come together. Don't just do any job it is not worth it. You want to get a job that you can thrive at and develop. You do not have to stay there forever but those first 2 or 3 years are so critical to laying your foundation for how you're going to be the rest of your career.”