

## **University of Oregon Announces Retirement Two Esteemed Long-Time Faculty**

### Margit Mayr-McGaughey

Margit Mayr-McGaughey has worked in the field of speech-language pathology since she graduated with her first degree from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, in 1976. Her first jobs as a speech therapist (called *Logopädin* in German) were in Southern Germany, and over the course of her 39-year career her job has taken her halfway around the world. In the 1990's, Margit earned her master's and then her doctorate degree at the University of Oregon. She then taught at a school for speech therapy in Germany, worked for almost eight years at Salem Hospital, and then spent another year in Germany where she worked as *Logopädin* before she became a clinical supervisor and the director of clinical education in the Communication Disorders and Sciences program at the UO. Below is an interview with Margit conducted by one of her current graduate student mentees, Colleen Douglas. Margit shares the highlights of her career, offers advice to future SLPs and reminds everyone to be flexible and welcoming of new challenges.

***What are your plans for retirement?*** Celebrating! My husband and I are moving to Germany in the summer. He is American, but we met in Germany and have a small place there. We are looking forward to a slower pace of life, to downsizing, not owning a car and being able to walk to the grocery store. Before we will really settle in though, we will visit my sister in Sydney, Australia this fall. We also plan to come back to the US regularly to visit family; two of our three daughters, as well as many friends, live here.

***What are your favorite memories from your teaching career at University of Oregon?*** There have been many; it is hard to think of just one. Maybe the most favorite memories I have are seeing you - the students - grow. You all come in nervous, a little bit panicky, like deers in headlights. And then you grow. You leave here with so much knowledge, you are more confident and you end up being skilled SLPs.

I also have appreciated being in a program where the academic and clinical aspects are so well meshed and where people are collaborating. I have worked with a fabulous team of professors and supervisors over the years. In addition, I have enjoyed working with the SLPs in the field, who accept and host our students for externships. These SLPs help mold our students into confident clinicians, and in this way, they are helping shape the future of the profession.

***What is the highlight of your entire career working as an SLP?*** I would say that the diversity of my career is something that sticks out to me. I have worked in so many different settings - home health, private practice, clinics, university settings, and hospitals. I have worked with infants up to a patient who was 103 years old, and everything in between! I have worked with so many types of people with different disorders. Overall, I think meeting people from many different walks of life through my work and seeing patients make progress has been my highlight.

***Personally, what do you feel is your greatest achievement?*** I cannot say there is one greatest achievement. But I like to look back and think of the role I played, together with so many others, in shaping future SLPs here in Oregon - instilling in them a sense of curiosity and passion for this wonderful profession.

***Do you foresee any big changes in the field of speech-language pathology?*** Yeah. When I first graduated in 1976, the concept of evidence-based practice was non-existent, at least in Switzerland and Germany. Much of what we did was driven by expert opinion, anecdotal evidence and what you felt worked. So one of the biggest changes that is already happening is the move towards evidence-based research. In the future, I foresee this will play an even bigger role in shaping how therapy will be delivered. And of course technology will continue to change how we provide therapy. Technology will lead to many positive changes, but it will cause some

challenges along the way as well. I think, what is important to remember is that technology is a means and not an end. Speech-language therapy is always about the client, not about the new cool device or the new app. It is about making positive changes in a person's communication and life. One other change I can see is that SLPs will need to move to more of a team-oriented approach, learning from and with other professions, consulting and closely collaborating with each other.

**Is there anything you wish you could have done in your career that you have not had the chance to do? Setting? Population?** You know, I really consider myself a generalist. I have worked in all kinds of settings and with all sorts of disorders. I truly enjoyed this variety, but I sometimes wish I could have specialized in one area and done some clinical research. But I have no regrets at all! I've enjoyed all of the different kinds of work I have done.

**As a future SLP, I am very curious if you have recommendations for people entering the field?** Ha ha ha. You can probably guess from my own career what I will say. Be open to new challenges and don't be afraid of changes. Keep moving, literally and figuratively!

**What about advice to SLPs who are looking forward to retirement, since you are retiring do you have any sage advice or recommendations on retirement planning?** Ha, ha, ha. I am not an expert on retirement planning. Make sure that when you apply for jobs you ask your employer about retirement benefits, these things are important, that is for sure. Be flexible in your plans. Your retirement will probably not look like what you once thought it would. Make sure you develop lifelong interests and passions.

**Finally, my last question. Do you plan on staying involved in the profession in some way?** Yes, eventually. First my husband and I will travel and settle into our new home. But eventually I want to see what opportunities are available in Germany to work there a few more years. I would like to teach in some capacity or work clinically, but I am not thinking about that quite yet. (chuckle)

*Interviewed by Colleen Douglas, a graduate student clinician in the Communication Disorders and Sciences Program, at the University of Oregon.*