



The International Federation of Societies of Hand Therapists (IFSHT) honours the memory of Ms. Evelyn J. Mackin, PT. Many describe her as “the mother of hand therapy.”

Born in Jersey City, N.J. USA, Evelyn Mackin had early dreams of becoming an architect; she wanted to build bridges.

She earned her degree in Physical Therapy at the University of Pennsylvania in 1944 and after working as a physical therapist with children and veterans, and raising her son Glenn, in 1967 Ms. Mackin began working with Dr. James Hunter at

Thomas Jefferson University. Ms. Mackin, Dr. Hunter, and Dr. Lawrence Schneider dreamed



of providing complete care of the hand patient, including preparing them to return to work. This dream became reality when they established the Philadelphia Hand Center, (now named Philadelphia Hand to Shoulder Center) which over the ensuing years has become a model training center for countless therapists and surgeons, including those who have visited from other countries.

During her clinical years at the hand center, Ms. Mackin delivered more than 112 lectures in the United States and made 53 trips to 21 different countries to lecture while she also authored 11 individual works and 33 works jointly with others.

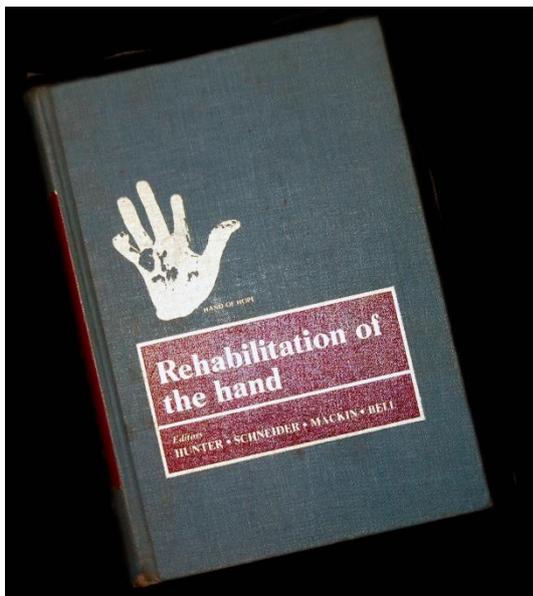
Additionally, she participated in five clinical research studies.



Evelyn Mackin (front row, third from left) with her staff at the Philadelphia Hand Rehabilitation Center (date unknown)

To assure hand therapy knowledge was shared as widely as possible, in 1976 she was instrumental in organizing the first Philadelphia meeting entitled “Surgery and Rehabilitation of the Hand,” which is now in its 46th year and remains one of the

largest educational meetings for hand therapists in the world. Ms. Mackin always set aside funds to sponsor at least one foreign therapist to attend the meeting. [The Hand Rehabilitation Foundation](#) in Philadelphia has sponsored the meeting, for many years. As a board member and then its Executive Director, Ms. Mackin supported endless educational opportunities for both hand therapists and hand surgeons.



First edition of *Rehabilitation of the Hand*

In 1976 Ms. Mackin spearheaded the creation of the first edition of the book, *Rehabilitation of the Hand*, serving as one of the editors for the first five editions. Well recognized as the core text on hand rehabilitation, it is now a two-volume book entitled *Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity*, soon to be in its 7th edition and well known to all. Additionally, Ms. Mackin was a co-editor with Dr. Hunter and Dr. Schneider, and Mackin for two editions of *Tendon Surgery in the Hand* published in 1987 and 1997.

Always actively involved, in 1977 she met with a group of six hand therapists at a hand



Ms. Mackin showing the first edition of the Journal of Hand Therapy at the first editorial board meeting

surgery meeting in the United States. These six therapists became the core founding members of American Society of Hand Therapists and Ms. Mackin served as president in 1982. During her tenure as president, she launched a newsletter entitled the *International Network*, to assure dialogue with hand therapists worldwide. Due to Ms. Mackin's contacts in the publishing world because of her editorship of *Rehabilitation of the Hand*, she was instrumental in establishing the *Journal of Hand Therapy* in 1987 and serving as its first editor until 1998.

In 1980, Ms. Mackin encouraged numerous therapists to informally meet in Rotterdam during the first Congress of the International Society for Surgery of the Hand. (IFSSH). It was at this meeting that the seed was planted for an international hand therapy society. Then during the French Hand Surgery and Hand Therapy Societies meetings in 1986 in Paris, France, Ms. Mackin led a group to form an international hand therapy society. The



Ms. Mackin speaking with therapists at the First IFSSH Congress, Rotterdam, 1980



International Federation of Societies for Hand Therapy (IFSHT) was founded in 1987 and Ms. Mackin served as the first President. The inaugural IFSHT congress was held in Tel Aviv in 1989 with a small number of founding member countries. IFSHT currently has 36 active member countries, seven associate member countries and ten corresponding member countries, representing roughly 8,500 therapists worldwide.



Inaugural Meeting of IFSHT in Tel Aviv. Front Row L to R: Corrienne Van Velze (South Africa), Dominique Thomas & Jean-Claude Rouzaud (France), Evelyn Mackin & Judy Leonard (USA) Carolyn Miekle (New Zealand). Second Row L to R: Helena Hae-Shya Ma (Taiwan), observer; Barbara Somekh & Rosalie Kupfer-Halstuch (Israel) Sue Boardman & Victoria Frampton (UK); Rosemary Prosser (Australia); Rosa Bolotta (Italy). Third Row L to R: Harry Knops, observer (Holland), Paul Van Lede & Jacques Ottier (Belgium); Philippe Charmagne (France)

Ms. Mackin has been recognized by numerous organizations for her many contributions. In 1986, she was awarded the first Nathalie Barr Lectureship by ASHT. The Hand Rehabilitation Foundation in Philadelphia has established the [Evelyn J. Mackin Hand Therapy Fellowship](#) to promote clinical training in hand management and patient care. The American Hand Therapy Foundation has established the [Evelyn Mackin Grant for Education by a Traveling Hand Therapist](#). The [Evelyn Mackin Triennial Award](#) given by IFSHT supports therapists from developing countries to attend the Triennial IFSHT Congress.



Ms. Mackin (5th from left) with other IFSHT past-presidents in India; 2013

At the 9th IFSHT Triennial Congress and 12th IFSSH Triennial Congress in 2013, Ms. Mackin traveled to New Delhi, India at the age of 90 to be

honored as a Legend in The Field of Hand Therapy where she gave [her last official address](#) to the IFSHT and IFSSH community. Ms. Mackin reflected on her career and the growth of hand therapy from the informal gathering in Rotterdam to the establishment and growth of the IFSHT. She described her memories as a tapestry of her life, reflective of the people she had met, the surgeons and therapists who influenced her, and the places she had visited.

Ms. Mackin served as a role model for hand therapists both professionally and personally as she believed life should be balanced. She concluded by saying: “I urge all of you to keep that passion for life, for your profession, and for your personal life as well, because I truly believe you need a balance.”

Through the following reflections by IFSHT past presidents, the IFSHT is adding to this tapestry of memories of Evelyn J. Mackin, PT.

Jean-Claude Rouzaud, (France) IFSHT President 1992 to 1995

I met Evelyn in 1986 in Paris during the French Society for Surgery of the Hand (GEM) Congress with a group of therapists at a restaurant at the Palais des Congrès. During our discussion, Evelyn shared her idea to establish an international society for the rehabilitation of the hand. This dream of the International Federation of Societies for Hand Therapy (IFSHT) took shape against all odds and continues to be successful.

I was fortunate to be chosen to be a part of this visionary society to serve as the first Secretary General of the IFSHT. I can never thank Evelyn enough; I am indebted to her for the opportunity she gave me to grow both personally and professionally.

Her quiet strength and great determination gave us the courage to better ourselves. All who worked with her had the greatest respect for her; hand therapists owe her a lot. Her intelligence and persistence allowed her to change preconceptions and break down barriers. She remained an honorary guest in France for many years. It is with great sorrow that I say goodbye to her.

Victoria Frampton, (United Kingdom) IFSHT President 1995 to 1998

I met Evelyn in 1979 when she came to visit Dr Wynn Parry at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in the United Kingdom. We spent a week together and my lasting memory is the feeling she gave me that we had been friends for a long time instead of just a

few days. She had a warm generous nature, happy to share what ever knowledge she had with others. She promoted and encouraged those who were keen to learn and had a gift of being able to recruit others to join her in her ventures, myself included, to the IFSHT, one of the many projects she inspired. Not many people could claim the huge international friend and colleague network Evelyn had; she was our figurehead, mentor and friend and will be remembered always.

Corrienne van Velze, (South Africa) IFSHT President 1998 to 2001

I first met Evelyn in 1989 in Tel Aviv, at the first IFSHT Congress. It was one of those special moments in my life – meeting Evelyn, with whom I had corresponded (by snail mail) and whose book, the *Rehabilitation of the Hand (1st ed)*, I referred to often. She was incredibly warm and kind and made me feel so welcome in the family of hand therapists.

A meeting was held with the representatives from all the countries who attended the congress and a committee was established. I volunteered for the position of Historian and together with Evelyn (President) and Jean-Claude (Secretary-General), we formed the first executive committee.

Evelyn shared her knowledge and skills with everyone, all over the globe. She spread the word far and wide and emphasised cooperation and sharing of knowledge and ideas not only among hand therapists, but also with hand surgeons. She made sure that hand therapists were respected by hand surgeons and encouraged us all to work together. Her motto was “*Pass it on*” and through doing this we do our bit to make sure that Evelyn’s legacy lives on.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Evelyn for her caring, enthusiasm for her work and the example she set for us all. May she rest in peace.

Annette Leveridge, (United Kingdom) IFSHT President 2001 to 2004

I first met Evelyn at the French Hand Meeting in Paris in 1986, when Evelyn and a group of American hand therapists were meeting with internationally famed hand surgeons to discuss plans for the future of hand therapy and surgery internationally. Evelyn was poised, eloquent and enthusiastic at all times, as one came to expect. I really got to know Evelyn from 1992 when I was the UK delegate to the IFSHT Council meeting, leading on to my election on the executive committee. It was Evelyn who encouraged me to stand for election as President of the IFSHT and who gave me support and advice throughout my years on the executive committee. She became a very good friend as well as advisor and I welcomed regular letters from her until more recent times. A very generous

person, spontaneous and always willing to encourage me, particularly as I became involved with setting standards for education for therapists across the world. *Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity* has been a wonderful tool and source of knowledge for all who treat conditions of the hand and upper extremity and I shall always remember Evelyn with love, gratitude and respect.

Margareta Persson, (Sweden) IFSHT President 2004 to 2007

Evelyn has meant so much, and still does, as a forerunner in the field of hand therapy. She is such a wonderful example of a strong wise hand therapist full of energy and willingness to share her knowledge, experience and wisdom.

One always felt included in the hand therapy family when she was around. I remember her sweet kindness combined with an almost royal excellence in her approach.

We have such a fine example to follow as hand therapists, thank you Evelyn!

Judy C. Colditz, (USA) IFSHT President 2007 to 2010

No one has had more influence on the development of hand therapy than Evelyn Mackin. Not only did she urge others to write and present information about the evolving science of hand therapy, but she also brought us together to share the information. Not one of us has escaped the benefit of her tireless efforts to pioneer a new medical speciality.

I personally recall the occasional phone call from Evelyn, asking me to contribute in some way. It was impossible to say no to her enthusiasm; she always made it seem it would be such a loss if you did not participate.

Her accomplishments are many, including the conceptualization and birth of IFSHT. One accomplishment of which many may not be aware was her single-handed effort to assure the *Journal of Hand Therapy*, of which she was the first editor, was included in Index Medicus. Without this inclusion, no one would be able to find information in the journal. She made endless phone calls seeking support letters (this was before computers). She was proud of the journal and it being recognized by Index Medicus as one of the speciality sciences within medicine.

Unassuming, gracious, and generous, Evelyn saw the possibility for everyone to contribute and be involved. The most fitting tribute we can make to Evelyn Mackin's memory is just that: contribute to the learning of others whether it be supporting the IFSHT Evelyn Mackin IFSHT Congress Grant, presenting a paper, writing an article, mentoring an

inexperienced therapist, serving on a committee or leading a discussion. As Evelyn encouraged: “*Pass it on.*”

Lynne Feehan, (Canada) IFSHT President 2010 to 2013

There simply are not enough words or ways to state how much Evelyn has done for the international community of hand therapists. I was privileged to spend two days with Evelyn on her 90th birthday when I stayed in her home to film a [video](#) for presentation at the IFSHT congress in India. These are two days in my life I will always remember and cherish. Her passion for a global community of hand therapists that connect and learn from each is inspirational. I know that there are hundreds of therapists and surgeons around the world who have also been touched and inspired by Evelyn to do more and do better. Thank you, Evelyn . . . your passion and love for hand therapy will live on in all of us as we “*Pass it on*” to others.

Sarah Ewald, (Switzerland) IFSHT President 2013 to 2016

Evelyn Mackin was a team player with a vision, her can do attitude and enthusiasm resulted in lasting contributions to the world of hand therapy. As one of the original editors of the classic reference book “*Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity*”, soon to be published in the 7th edition, she along with other pioneers in the field of hand therapy and hand surgery created an enduring legacy of knowledge that benefits countless clinicians and their patients. It was a pleasure and an honor to become personally acquainted with her through the IFSHT. She was an example to us all, inspiring and always encouraging.

Anne Wajon, (Australia) IFSHT President 2016 to 2019

I had the pleasure of meeting Evelyn at the Silent Auction, which I chaired in Delhi in 2013. She offered to support IFSHT by promoting the items for sale and took the opportunity to talk to passing therapists and surgeons.

I subsequently became President of IFSHT in Buenos Aires in 2016. Evelyn was unable to attend this meeting but called to talk to all members of the Executive Committee during our committee meeting. She was interested to discuss IFSHT activities and always took a keen interest in the recipients of the Evelyn Mackin IFSHT Congress Grant; those therapists who IFSHT and IFSSH sponsor to attend the triennial congress. Evelyn’s lifelong passion for hand therapy has been an inspiration for us all.

Compiled by Judy C. Colditz, (USA) IFSHT President 2007 to 2010 & Susan de Klerk, (South Africa) IFSHT Information Officer 2019 – 2022.