

Life History of Maggie Butler, COTA/L

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Introduction

The life history of Maggie Butler was one of 31 life history interviews conducted as a part of a larger project of *Life Histories of Individuals Who Have Been Influential in Developing Occupational Therapy (OT) in North Dakota and Wyoming*. The purpose of the Life History is to gather information about the history and evolution of the OT practice from individuals like Maggie Butler who have been influential in developing OT in these two states.

A life history is a powerful way to provide current and future generations of occupational therapists a view of the history of how OT practice has evolved from its inception to current practice. The life history of Maggie Butler is a case study that is guided by the Kawa Model to examine her life as a COTA practitioner.

Description of Participant

Before pursuing occupational therapy, Maggie received an Associate's degree in Health Science. She then attended and graduated from Casper College's Occupational Therapy Assistant Program in December of 2017.

- Maggie acquired certifications in Gerontology and Assistive Technology.
- During her time in the COTA program, Maggie served as the Student Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) President.
- Upon graduation, Maggie was employed as an COTA at Goshen Care Center in Torrington, WY.
- Within her first year of employment was appointed as the Director of Rehabilitation.

Literature Review

The following are some of the key events in the evolution of COTA's in occupational therapy:

- In 1964 and 1965, the first two COTA programs in two-year colleges began (Cottrell, 2000).
- Assistant practitioners work in diverse settings in which they encounter a range of complex health and social issues (Nancarrow & Mackey, 2005).
- The Occupational Therapy Assistant program at Casper College began offering class in 1996 and graduated its first class in 1997. Initial accreditation was obtained in 1997 (Casper College OTA, 2018).
- In regards to supervision of an occupational therapy assistant (OTA or COTA). As of August 15, 2018 supervision is dependent on the level of experience an OTA or COTA (Wyoming Board of Occupational Therapy, 2018).

Methodology

This qualitative study used a life history approach. Maggie was assigned from a list developed by the project directors through purposive sampling method. There were no relevant gatekeeper issues.

- Initial contact was made by project directors, and consent was given.
- One, one-hour interview was conducted and recorded using Zoom, an online recording device.
- A semi-structured interview was used and an interview schedule prepared by the course instructors was used as a guide. The questions on the schedule were designed to be used with all the individuals interviewed as part of the larger project. The researchers were allowed to modify or add interview questions.
- The interview was transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

- Transcription was coded and the data organized into three categories, highlighting various themes where a final assertion was created.
- Categories that emerged from the codes of the transcription are based on the different components of the Kawa Model, such as Maggie's life flow, environmental factors, and driftwood as influencing factors.
- The emerging categories comprised from the data analysis are: path to COTA, professional development, and creating a meaningful career.
- The categories were further analyzed into themes to gain a better understanding of Maggie's experience in the OT profession.
- From here a final assertion was created.

Findings

Path to OTA

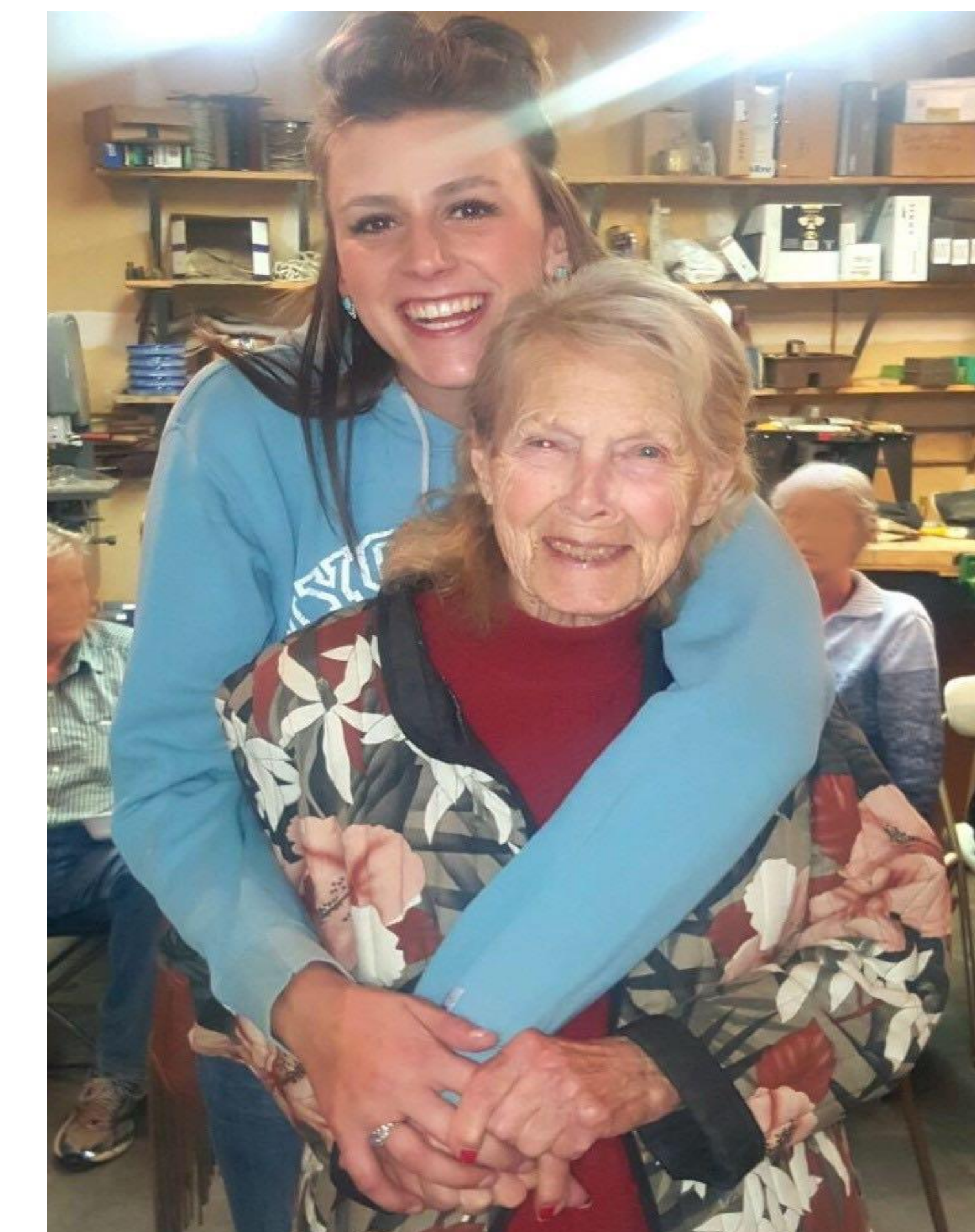
- Maggie emphasized the importance of having a school life balance that has now carried over to her career.
- Due to Maggie's involvement in extracurricular opportunities she was able to have a more well-rounded educational experience.
- Maggie's personal experiences with her grandma and nephew influenced her path to peruse a COTA career.

Professional Development

- Maggie identified the importance of the therapeutic relationship with her co-workers and clients.
- Maggie has experienced barriers, but overcoming them has helped her to develop both personally and professionally.
- The advancement Maggie has experienced early in her career has created additional responsibilities that have heightened her personal awareness of the occupational therapy profession.

Creating a meaningful career

- Maggie is aware of the goals she wants to reach in her future.
- Maggie feels that it is highly important to provide care in rural settings.



Picture provided by Maggie and includes Maggie's grandma who was indicated to be a motivating factor for her to pursue a career as a COTA.

"I think it's a great profession, and I've really been able to grow as a person in my field and learn about who I am through being passionate and caring to other people, and helping people receive the best quality of life"

Conclusion

Final Assertion: Being a COTA with only one year's experience, in a rural setting has its challenges, but has also proven to be rewarding for Maggie by allowing advancement both personally and professionally.

- This is evident by the passion Maggie displays in every day work as a COTA.
- Maggie's life experiences, and contributions to the COTA profession were represented in relation to the Kawa Model (Teoh and Iwama, 2015).
- Maggie has impacted the Goshen Care Center's community over the last year by stepping in as their Director of Rehabilitation and ensuring all residents receive the best possible care to promote their health and well-being.

References

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