

## What's in a Handicap? —Ask P.T.

An inevitable result of the rapid expansion of facilities here at Duke Hospital in the past few years has been the loss of a feeling of closeness among all its employees. In days gone by most employees had a fair notion of what their fellow workers in other departments did, but now we are so big a family that this is no longer possible.

The Physical Therapy Department is, according to Miss Helen Kaiser, Director and Associate Professor of Physical Therapy, thought by many to be the place where the patients go to have a pleasant half hour when they feel tired! How far from the truth is this description of a department so active in the care and rehabilitation of patients and in the training of graduate students.

Duke's staff of 11 physical therapists, 22 graduate students, a secretary, two maids and an orderly carry out the physicians' prescriptions for care of from 70 to 90 patients per day. Just what does the physical therapist do for the patient at Duke? The therapist's jobs range from conducting the pre-natal and post-natal exercise classes to the important training given to amputees in the Amputee Clinic.

This work with amputees is among the physical therapist's most important and rewarding because it calls into play the dual nature of the therapist's job of training and teaching the amputee to learn new skills and of encouraging him to have confidence and be at ease with his artificial limb, or prosthesis.



The physical therapist is, therefore, both a friend and teacher to the hundreds of patients who come from all over the state to be followed weekly in our Amputee Clinic. Here they receive special pre-prosthetic training to help make the physical and emotional transition to their artificial arm or leg easier. Once the patient is fitted with his prosthesis, the Clinic then teaches him the use of it before discharge. These weekly training visits last from three to four weeks with simple problems to a period of years in patients like little four-year old Vonnie. Obviously one of the pets of the physical therapists, Vonnie has been under the supervision of Mrs. Grace Horton (shown above with another of her favorite patients) for over two years. This saucy little red-

head was born without arms. Her training started before she was two when she learned to use her feet with as much dexterity as a 2-year old usually commands from his hands. Then came a period when she wore shoulder pads to accustom herself to the feeling of wearing some type of harness. Then at about age 2 Vonnie acquired "Bessie," her new right arm, and from that time on the emphasis shifted to training her to use the arm and hand. This spunky little redhead is quite a young lady to observe. She is unspoiled, unselfconscious of "Bessie" and quite capable—thanks to the many hours spent with Mrs. Horton in training her toward self-sufficiency.

Much of the physical therapists' (Continued on page 6)