

LAVINIA FREEBOROUGH

General Practitioner. Born 9th September 1927. Qualified MB ChB 1950. Died 13th April 2017.

Lavinia Freeborough was born in Liverpool on 9th September 1927, the elder child and only daughter of Police Superintendent and Mrs Freeborough. Lavinia inherited her splendid name from her grandmother's sister, and, as she once said, "gradually got used to it".

Throughout her life she was devoted to her family. She lived with her parents in their house in Oakhill Park, Old Swan, looking after them in their old age, and she remained very close to her younger brother Robert Charles Freeborough (1934-2007) and his wife Marie. To their three children, Julia, David and Helen, she was the most marvelous, indeed magical, aunt they could have wished for.

She was educated at Aigburth Vale High School from 1938 to 1945. During the war she was briefly evacuated to Burscough and showed early signs of the resilience and determination that would characterise her later as a doctor by getting herself to school in Liverpool every day by a combination of bicycle and steam train. Having passed the necessary High School Certificate subjects she went straight into her second year at Liverpool University Medical School in 1945. Her year contained a larger proportion of women students than usual, and also many ex-Servicemen, so that the combination of clever, ambitious women and dedicated war veterans (all of 3 or 4 years older than those newly out of school) made competition intense.

After qualification in 1950, she had house jobs at Broadgreen Hospital, Mill Road, and Birkenhead Children's Hospital, specialising in obstetrics and paediatrics. In 1952 she joined Drs. Nora Stoupe and Nora Taggart in general practice at Old Swan, where she stayed for 28 years, until the practice moved into a new purpose-built Health Centre nearby in St. Oswald Street, in November 1980. Here, she enjoyed the stimulation of contact with other GP colleagues and the daily interaction with the district nurses, midwives and health visitors. She retired after a total of 40 years' service but continued her caring role by helping voluntarily every week at the St Joseph's Residential home in Broadgreen. Highly regarded by her colleagues for her conscientiousness, kindness and dedication, and loved by her patients, she was awarded a life membership of the Liverpool Medical Society in 1990.

Lavinia was an active person who made full use of her time and energy, and she had many interests outside her work. Well before the days of mass tourism she was an indefatigable traveler, visiting faraway places such as India, Egypt, or the Seychelles, before these were easily accessible. In the early days she would go accompanied by one or two of her lifelong friends from medical school - Margaret Baron, Sheila Fairweather, Jean Naylor, Pat Oldham, or Marguerite Clark – and later she took her nephew and nieces with her, in their words “opening their eyes to new cultures and the magic of the world”. She was particularly fond of island destinations - the Canaries, Crete, Madeira, Majorca, Malta, Rhodes - because if there was one thing she adored it was the sea, walking by it and swimming in it. Closer to home, she loved to stroll by the Mersey Estuary at Otterspool, and along the promenade at Morecambe Bay, whenever she visited her brother's family.

Throughout her life she was keen on sport and on keeping fit. At University she won a full colour for the netball team and also enjoyed tennis: indeed she remained a keen fan of Federer and Nadal even during her last weeks at the Sutton Grange Nursing Home! After she moved from Old Swan to near Calderstones Park in 2007, she became a member of Woolton Golf Club and played there twice weekly until well into her 80s, when a stiff hip finally forced her to give up. She continued swimming, her favourite sport, even longer, and used to go to the University pool several times a week until 2013. Another of her hobbies was bridge. Typically, she taught herself to play from books, but it was her brother, an expert at the game, who gave her a passion for it and helped take her to another

level. In 1992, during a particularly rainy summer holiday in Mojacar, Spain, they turned adversity to advantage by practising almost constantly. She enjoyed playing at the Golf Club at first, and then in later years used to host games in her own home in Cromptons' Court. Her other hobbies included birdwatching and history, and she loved to go on organised holidays to share these interests with other enthusiasts. She was also a keen reader, particularly delighting in crime fiction.

Lavinia was a kind, dignified, strong and generous person. She was a very private person too. She rarely talked about herself or her own life or work, far less complained, but was always discrete, considerate and attentive to others. Throughout her long final illness, she maintained her dignity and her calm, still appreciating the little things of life, and making an effort with her many visitors, and she died peacefully in bed on 13th April 2017. Her friends and family remember her with pride, respect and love. To her nieces and nephew, she will always be a great inspiration. The words of her niece Helen, after her funeral, capture the affection and admiration – indeed, enchantment - that many of those who knew her feel.

As a very small child I have an overwhelming memory of her sheer glamour - beautifully dressed, sky high heels, and the smell of Chanel No.5, the first perfume I ever remember. I marvelled at these things: she was exotic and went to places we only dreamt of! I'm glad I went on holiday with her as an adult too, interacting on a different level. She was adventurous and had a zest for life: even in recent years in her 80's she was still loving sunshine, walking and dressing up for dinner. Julia and I went to Mallorca with her about 7 years ago, for her 83rd birthday I think, and even then she had a different dress for dinner every night, and I have a great memory of the waiters making an enormous fuss of her on her birthday dinner, outside of course, with a sea view! She was that old-fashioned thing, a true lady.

David Freeborough
Nephew