

OBITUARY

WINIFRED DANARAJ, L.M.S.(Singapore), D.C.H.(London), M.P.H.(summa cum laude, Harvard).

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Winifred Danaraj died on March 16th 1977. She was the Professor of Social and Preventive Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya.

Born August 8th 1916, she graduated as Licentiate of Medicine and Surgery from the King Edward VIIth College of Medicine, Singapore, in 1938. Her postgraduate career was interrupted by the Second World War. During this period she served in various states in Malaysia, including Trengganu. After the war she joined the medical school in Singapore. In 1952 she obtained per postgraduate degree of Master of Public Health (summa cum laude) at the Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, U.S.A. This was followed by the Diploma in Child Health from London. Throughout school and university her strong academic leanings had been obvious and had directed her inevitably to a career in academic medicine. In 1961 she became the first woman to be appointed to a medical chair in the University of Malaya and was also the first local person to be appointed as Professor of Social Medicine and Public Health. In 1964 she accepted the post of Professor of Social and Preventive Medicine in the newly founded medical school in Kuala Lumpur.

Her appointment to the foundation chair in Social and Preventive Medicine in the University of Malaya provided her the opportunity of creating something of lasting value. Her administrative skills and experience gained in Singapore helped her create and build a strong department despite continuous staff shortage. She also played a major role in helping to develop a medical curriculum that was modern and workable within the limitations of financial stringency and staffing difficulties. She never retreated from a task which had to be done nor complained of the effort. She overcame great difficulties in planning and conducting the Master of Public Health course in her department to provide much needed specialists in this field to man the health services in the country. Her enormous stamina for sustained hard work was admired and respected by all.

She loved teaching and will be remembered best by many medical students for her superb lectures which are rich in facts, delivered in carefully chosen grammatical English and tastefully sprinkled with just the right amount of spontaneous wit and humour. She was a teacher all her life and as an educator she had few peers. She loved students and was always attentive to their needs and problems often to the extent of influencing Faculty and University administration to ensure that their academic needs and welfare were well looked after. Her sharpness of mind, accurate memory and acute sense of fair play had often shone like

a beacon in the squalor of confused debate in Faculty and University where speakers had been biased, unreasonable or obstinate.

To those who knew her she was a person of warmth and humour. She had a profound sympathy and was ever helpful to her juniors and anyone who sought her advice and expertise. Her interest in people took her out of the academic setting to help many a poor non-academic staff or student with their financial or social problems. Her staff were her personal friends and her colleagues enjoyed her company both at work and socially.

Throughout the months of her long illness she was fully aware of the nature and extent of her malady. Despite this she could still laugh at the physical misfortunes that accompanied her illness and its treatment. Her sense of humour lifted her above the loneliness of pain and physical misery. She bore this burden better than many friends, students and colleagues who visited her and grieved at her physical disability.

She lived to see the new Medical School transformed from a barren hill to a thriving complex of hospital, faculty and student community. Eventually when the history of these early foundation years is recorded Winifred must receive her share of credit for the success of the Medical School. It is a great loss that her many ideas were not put in print but hopefully some day in the future her students and staff closest to her will correct this omission.

With her death the community has lost a revered medical teacher who had made an important contribution to the development of medical education and community medicine in Malaysia. The medical profession has lost a member of stature and absolute integrity. She touched on many things in her life and work and will always be remembered with affection by those who had the privilege of knowing her. "Qui nullum fere non tetigit, nullum quod tetigit non ornavit." There was little she did not touch, she touched little she did not adorn.

L.K.S.