

A black and white portrait of Maureen Winifred Cazalet, an elderly woman with short, curly hair, smiling and resting her chin on her hand. The background is dark, and she is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, top.

Maureen Winifred Cazalet MBBS (Lahore)

29 February 1920 – 6 July 2015

Maureen Cazalet was born in the city of Ahmednagar in the state of Maharashtra about 100 km northeast of Poona. She was delivered by her father James Cazalet, then a 23-year-old doctor. Her mother was Emmeline Gotting. Maureen weighed in at a colossal 12lbs. Basil was born the next year and Alexander in 1930.

Maureen had a happy childhood and developed a love for horses. When she turned six she was sent to boarding school in faraway Kashmir. This was the norm for children of the upper classes.

Maureen was an avid reader, an enthusiastic dancer and a bright student who matriculated when she was 16 years old, two years before she was old enough to be accepted into the Lady Hardinge Medical College in Delhi. This was a medical college set up by the wife of the then Viceroy, Charles Hardinge, to enable women to study medicine. Maureen was the only Christian among 250 Muslim and Hindu students. She elected to study comparative religions as part of her medical degree.

In 1944 the Lady Hardinge Medical College was affiliated to Punjab University. Maureen and her fellow students had to travel 1500 km to Lahore to sit for their final MBBS examination. They competed against students from Punjab University and this acted as a form of quality control of the standard of the Lady Hardinge Medical College, hence why Maureen's medical degree was MBBS (Lahore). In 1950 the Lady Hardinge Medical College made the more geographically sensible affiliation with the University of Delhi.

In her final year of medical school Maureen was selected to be a 'handmaiden in attendance' on Mahatma Gandhi when he addressed a large rally in Delhi. She was deeply affected by the man and his beliefs.

By the time of her graduation her father had risen to be civil surgeon to the Viceroy, first Lord Willingdon, then Lord Louis Mountbatten. This ensured that Maureen moved in exalted circles. She was present at a dinner when Muhammad Ali Jinnah arrived to argue with Prime Minister Nehru and Lord Mountbatten about the vexed problem of the timing of independence.

This was a time of social turmoil and sectarian violence that Maureen saw first-hand and which threatened her and her family's lives. On one occasion she fainted after witnessing the disembowelling of a pregnant girl.

Her father arranged to move to Perth but he was unwilling to allow Maureen to remain alone as an unmarried woman even though she was working at the Lady Hardinge Hospital in Delhi. Maureen solved this problem by falling in love with Henry Randolph 'Randy' Knowlton Jr, a handsome pilot from New York. They married and Maureen obtained a medical scholarship to study in New York for a postgraduate degree in ophthalmology. Her pregnancy and a move to California prevented her from realising this ambition.

Maureen was unaware that she had joined one of New York's oldest established families. The New York social pages introduced her with the headline, *Randy's Back*

with *Indian Bride*. Maureen, in her colourful saris and able to hold her own in any company, was a hit on the social scene. She was invited to tea with Eleanor Roosevelt, dined with Paul Getty and Edgar Snow and partied with Dorothy Parker. Her life was a whirl, but her marriage was beginning to unravel. A move to Bel Air, California, after the birth of her son, did not relieve the increasing family and marital tensions and in 1951, late in her second pregnancy, she decided to leave Randy and rejoin her family in Perth. Randy never remarried and died in New York in 1978.

Postgraduate medical training

After doing her internship Maureen worked in a general practice in Delhi. It was not a practice as we would know it. She had to deal with the butchery of Muslims on the railway platform in Delhi. She learned how to open and close an abdomen, take out tonsils and perform cataract operations.

After the birth of her daughter, Maureen had a financial need for work. She joined her father in opening a surgery at her parent's home in the Perth suburb of Applecross. She learned to be a good Australian GP on the job.

Despite some early racial antipathy her practice quickly flourished – her medical skills, sparkling personality, work ethic and high-heeled shoes, guaranteed her success.

She ran three surgeries a day – 9.00 am to 12.00 pm, 2.00 pm to 4.30 pm and 6.00 pm to 9.00 pm. The last often ended at 10.30 pm. When she had a junior partner she would take Tuesday and Thursday afternoons off. She did five to ten home visits a day, all her own night calls and delivered about 50 babies a year. Her fee for antenatal care and delivery was fifteen Guineas!

Maureen found everyone interesting, listened intently, was invariably good humoured and her patients held her in high esteem. She was vivacious and charming and quickly built professional relations with a wide circle of good dependable specialists. Maureen readily acknowledged her medical shortcomings, especially with biochemical and neurological problems. She had no pretence about being a 'clever doctor'. In later years Maureen was appalled at the casual way she and other doctors handled the adoption of unwanted babies. In the early days she continued to do tonsillectomies and appendectomies, dilation and curettage for miscarriages and diagnosis of bleeding, but the pressure of time, as well as the ascendancy of specialists in hospitals steered her more and more towards counselling. Professor Riley welcomed her to his psychiatric clinic in Fremantle and for many years she worked a couple of sessions a week with him.

Maureen quickly gained the respect and admiration of her colleagues.

She later entered into a medical partnership with Charles Greenacre and Lyndon Forbes Smith in new purpose built premises at Riseley Street, Applecross.

She joined the AMA and represented them on adoption services, as well as providing medical services to the Ngala home for mothers and children.

Maureen always enjoyed attending refresher weekends as well as drug-sponsored lectures and because of the loneliness of her failed marriage she attended every event she possibly could. Even in her eighties she was *au fait* with the latest trends and developments.

Maureen fell in love again and in 1957 married the charismatic dermatologist and accomplished jazz pianist, Ian Thomson. They shared a love of music, books, fine wine, good conversation and their home became a magnet for all manner of arty and art-loving people. Maureen became secretary of The University International Society, and hosted many notable visitors. She and Ian were silent partners in Lautrec's Restaurant in East Perth and were devoted to chef Jos van Damme, and his actor friends Edgar Metcalfe, Ray Omodei and Steven Porter.

In 1958 she became one of the 18 foundation members (and one of only two female doctors) of the Western Australian faculty of the then Australian College of General Practitioners. She was elected assistant honorary secretary for 1976–7 and remained a member of the faculty until well into her eighties. She was a busy lady and never set aside the time to study for and sit the FRACGP examination, but she did become an RACGP life member in 1998.

By 1962 Maureen was exhausted from her heavy workload and sold her practice. In 1967 she was invited to open the new general practice clinic at Royal Perth Hospital. Maureen adored this work and the clinic prospered, but she was stricken with rheumatoid arthritis that affected her hands so badly that she had to resign.

Her marriage to Ian Thomson ended in the early 1980s and her father died in 1988. She continued his work of caring for the men at the Salvation Army Hostel in Northbridge for many years.

In 1976 she joined Dr Maurice Ferri in Garden City House in Booragoon. In 1988 she moved to Attadale Hospital where she worked until her retirement in 2009.

Maureen was a friend and a doctor like no other. She could charm anybody. She was once caught speeding at night going to a delivery, said she was lost and the policeman escorted her to the hospital. Her obligatory

driving test when she turned 85 years of age ended with the instructor making a medical appointment to see her. She had the ability to establish rapport with patients of all ages and social standing. People were drawn to her. She listened. She was truly a person who, in Kipling's words, 'Could walk with the crowd or with kings and not lose the common touch'.

Her medical partner and friend, Dr Maurice Ferri, remarked that Maureen taught him the value of touch – a gentle pressure on the hand or arm or even an embrace to show acceptance and understanding.

Maureen possessed the invaluable instinct of being able to recognise a seriously ill patient. Her early diagnosis of malignancies gained her the respect of many specialist colleagues. Always confident, Maureen was never shy, but she was modest, never sought to dominate and had no conceits. She was generous, enjoyed helping and sharing and was always on for a party, dance, or glass of red wine.

Maureen was naive in business matters. Fortunately her devoted stockbroker friend, Geoff Cambridge, looked after her affairs, as well as faithfully tending to her garden. She believed in God but belonged to no church. She also believed in telepathy and often remarked that a patient on her mind would later that day show up in her rooms. Her mother instilled in Maureen the necessity to contribute – 'to sing for my supper', she said.

Life dealt Maureen some great cards that she played to the limit, but also some nasty ones. The stress of two ultimately difficult marriages, severe family illnesses, her battle with arthritis and latterly dementia, would have demoralised a lesser person. But she never gave in, never complained, other than to lament her ugly hands. As for singing for her supper, no-one ever sang better.

She was, as her friends, Vivien and Gavin Silbert, wrote in a notice in *The West Australian*, 'A bonne vivante, raconteuse extraordinaire, physician and lover of life'.

Maureen is survived by a son and a daughter and her youngest brother, Alexander.

Maurice Ferri, Alec Cazalet, Max Kamien