**#SundayWiMIN23 Week Dr Madoline O'Connell (1915-2013)**

Madoline O’Connell grew up at Lacaduv House on the Lee Road in Cork, where she enjoyed a charmed childhood with her three brothers. Her maternal grandfather was Sir Bertram Windle, President of UCC. Her paternal grandfather was Michael J Horgan, solicitor and election agent for Charles Stewart Parnell; her father was the solicitor, writer and coroner John J Horgan, who pronounced the verdict of murder against the kaiser at the inquest on the victims of the Lusitania, which was torpedoed off the Cork coast in 1915. Madoline had a clear recollection of being brought by her father to watch the city burn during the turbulent occupation by the Black and Tan forces. Madoline’s parents and the elder Fleischmann family were close friends, and her father was instrumental in securing the release of Aloys Fleischmann Snr from captivity when he was held by government order during World War I.

Soon after graduating from UCC in 1939, the young Madoline Horgan went to find work in England and the laboratory at Harefield Hospital. There she was interviewed by Alexander Fleming: “The day I went to meet him he could hardly talk to me. I never saw him again until the day I went to tell him I was retiring – and again, he could hardly look at me.

“He was a little, shy man, and nobody at the time thought he was anything special. We didn’t have time, you just had to get on with it.”

Without dismissing the immense importance of Fleming’s discovery of penicillin, O’Connell was anxious not to overplay what she sees as a fleeting link: “I happened to be there, I happened to meet the man, it was no more than that.”

She left to work in Liverpool close to the hospital where her future husband, St John O’Connell, worked as an orthopaedic surgeon throughout the second World War, including the Battle of Britain and the “Blitz”. On their return to Ireland in the early 1950s, he became the consultant to St Mary’s orthopaedic hospital in Cork which served Munster, the first such appointment outside of Dublin. She continued working professionally in pathology until the responsibilities of a young family prevailed.

Based first in Blackrock and later moving to Mallow, where St. John developed his stud farm (Scarteen Stud) and his profile as a breeder of horses for flat racing. He became Chairman, and later President, of the Irish Flat Breeders Association in the 1970s.After St John’s death in 1996, Madoline returned to Cork city. Her daughter, Kate Horgan, remained near Mallow to continue her international role with the Irish Showjumping Association, which included stewarding equestrian competitions at the London Olympics

Dr O’Connell found a renewed life in Cork among old friends and colleagues in the world of art. A widely praised exhibition of her work, entitled Passing the Torch, was held at UCC in 2012 to illustrate the university’s policy of using art to enhance the observational skills of students in medicine. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8enmybyNT8

That she lived a life less ordinary was reflected in the homily of her daughter, Kate, who described a mother who was both “interesting and interested, frugal but generous, sporty and artistic, proud but sociable, formidable and bossy, a texter and silver surfer, a bridge between generations, a speedster and intolerant driver!”