

BARBARA BREESE WINBIGLER 1927-2021

Barbara Breese Winbigler was born in Cleveland in the fall of 1927 to Dr. Alvin Oliver Breese and Stella Waddell Breese. Shortly after she was born, her father moved his osteopathic practice to the West Side of Cleveland and she and her brother (John Breese) were raised and attended schools in Lakewood.

After graduating from Lakewood High School, she attended Ohio Wesleyan University. There her childhood interest in art grew and she received both a Bachelor and Masters Degree in Fine Arts. Painting and the creative process became life-long passions.

A few years after college, she met Robert Frank Winbigler (originally a resident of Mansfield Ohio, a talented athlete and a WWII veteran) at the Jack and Jill Dude Ranch in Michigan. She loved to say that when she first saw him across the room, he was apparently being very silly and she asked her friend “who is that good-looking jerk?” They quickly found they had a lot in common, and enjoyed telling the story that on their first date they played golf, a tale that very few couples their age could tell. They eventually married and moved to Marietta, Ohio where Mrs. Winbigler worked in the admissions office at Marietta College and Mr. Winbigler worked for CCC Trucking company as a junior manager. Their first two children (Kristin and Steven) were born during their time in Marietta.

Mr. Winbigler was promoted and transferred to Worthington Ohio where they lived for a number of years and where their third child (Scott) was born. Eventually a few years later Mr. Winbigler was again promoted and the family moved to the Cleveland area, purchasing a beautiful century house that abutted the Cleveland Metropolitan Park in Berea.

The Berea home was a dream in many ways and became “center” for all kinds of sports, for games, for holiday celebrations, for horseback riding and for many, many parties. Mrs. Winbigler, who passion for painting and the arts constantly expanded, continued to create all kinds of paintings on a regular basis. She also became involved in the Berea Summer Theatre and the Berea Little Theatre where she performed in countless plays and musicals including Oliver, Cabaret, The Lion in Winter, The Gin Game, Harvey, Fiddler on the Roof, Zorba the Greek, and Applause. Friends that she made during this time became life-long companions and admirers, and her home was the location for almost every cast party ever held!

Her involvement with BST created numerous connections to Baldwin Wallace, and when an opening arose for a temporary position teaching Speech, she applied and was chosen. She continued teaching at BW for more than 35 years, helping students conquer their fears of presenting before an audience, and eventually achieving tenure, full professor and professor emeritus.

After retirement, she kept herself busy with gardening, reading, participating in a church choir, walking her dog “Summer”, reconnecting with old friends (including many from Lakewood High School), and hosting neighborhood gatherings. Neighbors referred to her as the “Baroness of Barrett Road”. Her interest in history led her to join discussions with the Civil War Round Table (Cleveland chapter). To no one’s surprise, painting remained a primary passion and she created many new pieces of art, including paintings of Ohio barns (which she felt “might no longer exist” in the future) and furniture with historical themes such as the Berea Quarries, the Metro Parks and the Civil War. Many of these pieces have been exhibited at a variety of venues in the Cleveland area.

Mrs. Winbigler passed away at Riverview Pointe Care Center on September 25, just a few days shy of her 94th birthday. She is survived by her daughter Kristin Winbigler (of Stamford, CT), her sons Steven Breese (of Norfolk, VA), and Scott Winbigler (of Streetsboro, Ohio), and two grandchildren, Rachel Berkrot and Sam Berkrot.

A celebration of life ceremony will be held in Mrs. Winbigler's honor at the Baldwin Wallace University Chapel on Saturday, November 6 at 5:00, after which there will be a reception in the Chapel's Lounge. It is the Chapel's policy that all attendees wear face masks. In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting donations to the Barbara Winbigler Fund at Baldwin Wallace University, Center for Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement, 275 Eastland Road, Berea, Ohio 44017, or you can contact Danelle Baker-Miller at dbakermi@bw.edu. All donations will be used to fund student scholarships.