

## **DONALD K. FREEDHEIM, PH.D. (1932–2023)**



*Photograph from the Freedheim family*

### **Early Innovator in Pediatric Psychology and Scholar in Psychotherapy**

by

Michael C. Roberts, Ph.D., ABPP

Society of Pediatric Psychology Co-Historian

**Donald K. Freedheim, Ph.D.**, professor emeritus at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, was a very early and highly innovative contributor to the development of pediatric psychology. He was one of the first, if not *the first*, to implement and describe clinical psychological services provided in a primary pediatric clinic. In an article coauthored with his pediatrician colleagues, Smith, Rome, and Freedheim (1967) described the role of a clinical psychologist incorporated in a pediatrician's office, outlining the arrangement and the advantages, especially in interprofessional communication of psychologist and pediatrician. In some ways, this arrangement followed the concept offered by Kagan (1965) who outlined ideas about the "new marriage of pediatrics and psychology," although Kagan did not make actual implementation. This primary care arrangement was before the establishment of the Society of Pediatric Psychology in 1969, and was concurrently published with descriptive article by Logan Wright (1967) attributed as founding the field.

Dr. Freedheim was included in the very first listing of full members of the Society of Pediatric Psychology in the first issue of the *SPP Newsletter* (March 1969). He later served as member-at-large on the SPP Board of Directors in 1973-76.

After earning an undergraduate degree at the Miami University in Ohio, Dr. Freedheim received his PhD from Duke University and completed clinical internship at Boston Children's Hospital. He then joined the staff at Case Western Reserve University in the Department of Psychology, where he rose through the ranks to full professor. He retired from the University as a professor emeritus in 2001, but continued his career of service and generosity.

Dr. Freedheim was the founding editor of the American Psychological Association journal, *Professional Psychology* (1969-1977) and the longtime editor of the journal, *Psychotherapy* (1983-1993). In addition to participating on a number of boards and committees, he served in the APA Council of Representatives and was elected to the APA Board of Directors (1995-1998) where he took personal interest in facilitating funding for activities in children's mental and physical health (which had often been neglected in APA).

Dr. Freedheim was a scholar, an outstanding editor, and a strong advocate for the psychology profession and clinical services for children and families. He co-founded the Schubert Center for Child Studies in Cleveland, Ohio and served on the Trauma Response Team of the American Red Cross. Noted as hard-working and service-oriented, he was supportive of trainees and colleagues and often credited others for his work. He was known for a gentle, calm demeanor and positive problem-solving approach to issues and personalities.

In addition to his originating work in pediatric psychology, Dr. Freedheim built a full portfolio of accomplishments in other areas including leading the Society for the Advancement of Psychotherapy and editing its journal. He wrote cogent pieces on psychotherapy, including books and chapters, creating videotape and DVD resources. He was a recognized scholar in psychotherapy with children and adolescents. For example, he and his Case Western colleague, Sandra Russ, co-authored chapters on "Psychotherapy with Children" in the *Handbook of Clinical Child Psychology* through its three editions (Walker & Roberts, 1983, 1992, 2001).

The Freedheim family wrote in the online memorial that, "Through the years, he was devoted to civil rights for women, people of color, and LGBTQ." As Norcross and VandenBos (2023) noted in an obituary published recently in the *American Psychologist*: "Throughout his career, Dr. Freedheim manifested a strong commitment to child mental health and pediatric care."

