

William DeWitt Andrus

February 28, 1896 — January 20, 1951

At the peak of a brilliant and distinguished career, Dr. William DeWitt Andrus died at his home in Bronxville, New York on January 20, 1951 following an illness of over a year. He was 55 years of age and one of the outstanding men in American surgery. At the time of his death he held the positions of Attending Surgeon at The New York Hospital, Professor of Clinical Surgery at Cornell University Medical College, and Director of the Second (Cornell) Surgical Division at Bellevue Hospital.

Dr. Andrus was eminent as a progressive, courageous and well balanced surgeon. His ability first to evaluate carefully a complex surgical problem and then quickly to think through its possible course was part of his unusual clinical acumen. Continually and untiringly he pursued his quest for better methods to improve the end result. He was always the clinical surgeon in the operating room, and, keeping the overall problem ever before him, he followed his objective with courage and dexterity. The good surgeon is also the good physician. That he was always such is evidenced by his devotion to his patients and his concern for their welfare regardless of their status in life, his recognition of the need to treat the whole patient, mind and heart as well as body, and his attention to the development of the young men who were working with him. Although he was particularly known for his accomplishments in thoracic surgery, to which he made many contributions, he was also renowned for his work in vascular surgery and for his competence as a general surgeon.

It might be said that Dr. Andrus' principal interest, teaching, began with the medical students. He was singularly successful in the various phases of their instruction in surgery throughout his entire career at The New York Hospital—Cornell Medical Center, from 1932 to 1951. Instruction and direction of the house staff through their graduated training program under the resident system was a continuation of his work with the undergraduates. This work culminated in his responsibilities as a member of the American Board of Surgery, for in reviewing and examining candidates for certification by the Board he had an opportunity to evaluate the results of his own efforts and to compare them with those of other surgical training programs throughout the country. This experience was the basis of his often stated conviction that facilities for the training of surgeons in this country were inadequate and that more residencies were needed. He emphasized the importance of maintaining high standards for such residencies and decried the tendency of many hospitals to claim a resident program that was such in name only. He never failed to stress the importance of maintaining not only facilities for the complete care of patients, but

also the necessity of providing opportunity for research into clinical problems and the development and testing of new methods of treatment.

William DeWitt Andrus possessed more of the admirable traits desirable in a man than it is usual to find in one individual. He was a man of unique character and presence, sincere, honest, and generous. Frank and forthright in his everyday dealings with people, he sometimes evoked an adverse reaction, but usually it was shortly transformed into unequivocal support. Working in close association with Dr. George J. Heuer over the years placed upon him direct responsibility for a large number of medical students and young men in surgical training, the residents and assistant residents. Such a group can be quite ruthless in their demands. Yet throughout his entire service at The New York Hospital his sound teaching and personal guidance reaped for him only gratitude, respect, loyalty, and admiration. The burden of the day's work which he carried so well over the years at The New York Hospital is known best to the resident staff and has become legend in the annals of the institution.

Dr. Andrus was born at Saugerties, New York on February 28, 1896, the son of Reverend Jonathan Cowles Andrus and Margaret DeWitt Andrus. He is survived by his wife, Lucy Huber Andrus, four children, Margaret Lucy, William DeWitt Jr., Carl Huber, and Elizabeth Anne, and by his sister, Dr. Ruth Andrus (Ph.D.) of Saugerties, and his brother, Dr. E. Cowles Andrus of Baltimore, Maryland. No account of his life would be complete without mention of his family interests. He valued the love of his family and participated in the activities of each member to a far greater extent than many surgeons are able to do. His position on the school board of Bronxville and his interest in his summer place at Lake Memphremagog attest to his clear vision and sound investment for his children's future. Believing as he did that life should be lived as a game as well as a challenge, he felt that humor and fun were necessities, and thus his family possess a memory that is rich in the happy experiences of the life they shared.

In 1916 Dr. Andrus received his A. B. degree from Oberlin College. In 1941 he returned there to receive an honorary degree of D. Sc. He was graduated from Johns Hopkins Medical School in 1921, where he was a member of Alpha Omega Alpha and Sigma Xi fraternities. He began his surgical training as an intern in surgery on the service of the late Dr. William S. Halsted at Johns Hopkins. The following year, at the invitation of Dr. Heuer, he joined the resident surgical staff at the Cincinnati General Hospital and was resident surgeon in 1925. Thereafter he held various senior staff positions there until 1931. During 1931 and 1932 he travelled extensively in Europe and devoted considerable time to the study of surgery in Berlin and Vienna. In 1932, when The New York Hospital—Cornell Medical Center opened its doors at its present address, he joined the staff here as Associate Professor of Surgery

and Attending Surgeon. In this dual capacity he played a leading role in the development of the Department of Surgery in both clinical and investigative work. During World War II he carried a major share of the heavy and demanding responsibilities of this large surgical service. On Dr. Heuer's retirement, he became acting head of the Department until the formal appointment of the present incumbent. In 1947 he was advanced to Professor of Clinical Surgery and in 1949 he was appointed Director of the Second (Cornell) Division at Bellevue Hospital. He was also Consulting Surgeon to the Lawrence Hospital in Bronxville and St. John's Riverside Hospital in Yonkers.

Dr. Andrus was president of the New York Society of Thoracic Surgery in 1946 and at the time of his death he was vice-president of the New York Surgical Society. He was also a member of the American Surgical Association, the Society of Clinical Surgery, a Founder Member and Member of the American Board of Surgery, and a Founder Member of the Board of Thoracic Surgery. He was a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons and the New York Academy of Medicine, a member of the Southern Surgical Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Association for Thoracic Surgery, the Harvey Society, the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine, the New York County Medical Society, and the New York Society for Cardiovascular Surgery.

He published a large number of papers on the physiology and surgery of the chest, surgery of the arteries, the heart, the sympathetic nervous system, and of the thyroid. His experimental investigations were concerned chiefly with wound healing and with substances affecting the growth of tissue hemorrhagic disease and the physiology of the gastrointestinal tract.

Dr. Andrus was also a member of the Century Association of New York, the Siwanoy Country Club of Bronxville, the Board of Education from 1937 to 1943, and president of the Bronxville Public Schools from 1941 to 1943.

Frank Glenn