

# Elizabeth Florence Focht

*November 7, 1914 — July 26, 1969*

Elizabeth Florence Focht, Ph.D., attending radiation physicist to The New York Hospital and assistant professor of radiology at Cornell University Medical College, was killed in a tragic accident July 26, 1969, at the age of 55 years. Doctor Focht, an experienced rider and well known horse fancier, was killed instantly when a horse she was exercising suddenly reared and fell backwards, crushing her beneath.

Doctor Focht was born November 7, 1914, in Hoboken, New Jersey. She received a B.A. degree from Barnard College in 1935 and a Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1964. Soon after graduation from college Doctor Focht became associated with Dr. Edith Quimby and Dr. Leonidas Marinelli in the physics department of the old Memorial Hospital, which was located at 106th Street and 8th Avenue. She was a member of the physics department of that institution until January 1, 1958, when she became a full-time member of the staff of the Department of Radiology of The New York Hospital, where she held the title of attending radiation physicist. She was a diplomate of the American Board of Radiology in radiological physics, a consultant to the Hospital for Special Surgery, a consultant to the Space Radiation Study Panel of the Space Science Board, and she held membership in the American Physics Society, American Radium Society, New York Roentgen Society and the American College of Radiology.

Doctor Focht was a highly respected radiation physicist who was a world authority on the effects of ionizing radiations on the structures of the eye. This was the subject of a long-term research program in collaboration with Dr. George Merriam of the Ophthalmology Institute of the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center and it resulted in a number of significant publications dealing with experimental cataract induction. Her work on survival from whole body radiation, an analysis of 575 patients and accident victims, was incorporated in *Evaluation of Potential Radiation Hazards in Manned Space Flight Operations*, published by the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council.

Doctor Focht for many years had competed in horse shows, frequently riding her own entries. She was an annual participant in the Madison Square Garden show and was the recipient of numerous prizes both in New York City and in other regional events.

Betty Focht had a warm friendly personality and was always ready to help in any problem within her particular sphere of competence. She helped many generations of radiology residents understand the physical foundations of radiology and generously devoted many hours of her time to tutorial sessions on this subject. Her untimely death

came as a shock to her many friends and professional colleagues and is a sad loss to the Radiology Department and to the entire scientific community of this Center.

She is survived by Mr. Eugene Cahill, an uncle with whom she lived for many years.

*John A. Evans, M.D.*