

Ellen Foot Neuman

February 23, 1913 — May 11, 1945

The death of Dr. Ellen Foot on May 11, 1945 brought to a close a career of great promise and a happy and productive life. She was born in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, February 23, 1913, the daughter of Nathan Chandler Foot and Emma May Foot and from both sides inherited the tradition of academic medicine in which she herself entered and was coming to play an important part. Receiving her elementary and secondary education in private schools in Milton, Mass. and in Cincinnati, she attended Smith College, graduating in 1934, A. B.-*magna cum laude*. She entered Cornell Medical College the same year and made an outstanding record, graduating second in her class with election to Alpha Omega Alpha and receiving a John Metcalf Polk prize for general efficiency and a Gustav Seligmann prize for efficiency in Obstetrics. After an internship in Medicine in the New York Hospital she went into anesthesia and took a position as interne in this department in the Massachusetts General Hospital. From 1941 to 1944 she was Resident in anesthesia in the Presbyterian Hospital in New York City and in the latter year became Anesthetist-in-chief in the New York Hospital and Assistant Professor of Surgery-Anesthesia in Cornell University Medical College. It was particularly gratifying to those concerned that Dr. Ellen Foot could be obtained to develop a full time sub-department of anesthesia and she brought to this task not only a splendid background of training and experience but a quiet enthusiasm and energy which produced striking results despite the handicaps imposed by a war time shortage of personnel. She at once increased and greatly broadened the teaching of anesthesia to medical students and both by consultation and practical demonstration gave to the members of the resident staff a wider understanding of the choice of anesthetic agents and of the effects which these might be expected to produce. She was very popular as a teacher and the suspension of her regular exercises due to illness brought many inquiries as to when they would be resumed. The plans which she drew up for the future development of the department showed a keen grasp of the field and projected a program of investigations which could only have been very fruitful. Dr. Foot was a member of the American Society of Anesthetists and of the N. Y. County Medical Society, and with Dr. Virginia Apgar was co-author of the section of anesthesiology in Nelson's Loose Leaf System of Medicine. She was a diplomate of the American Board of Anesthesiology and of the National Board of Medical Examiners and in the latter examination stood first in the country in Pharmacology.

On July 15, 1940 she was married to Dr. Charles G. Neumann and among their common interests was the development of ideas for lines of investigation in problems of concern both to surgery and the field of anesthesia. A son was born about two weeks before her death.

Dr. Foot had a mind which showed great capabilities and a wide variety of interests. Throughout her scholastic years from secondary school on she was the recipient of honors for scholarship, and with these she combined an interest in sports, language, music and the student activities, being chosen president of her house in college and a member of the Student Council. Her intellectual curiosity and interest in research were stimulated no doubt by her work with her father in his laboratory during the summer of 1931 which produced a paper entitled "A Technic of silver impregnation for general laboratory purposes" published in the American Journal of Pathology, vol. 8, p. 245-1932. This describes the staining method which bears both their names. Having acquired her medical training and experience in anesthesia she came to her new department with an enthusiastic outlook and interests which, while including the technics of the various anesthetic methods, looked beyond these in the direction of improvements in anesthesia as an aid to surgery and of studies of the basic physiology of the anesthetized patient. It is to be hoped that the influence of her tragically brief tenure may be felt for some time to come.

Dr. Foot's personality was characterized by quiet, genuine pleasantness and by thoughtfulness for others. Even under stress she appeared unruffled and in command of the situation, and this was due, it seems, to a basic philosophical outlook which never failed her. One cannot forbear to comment on the way in which during the closing days of her life when, facing with quiet courage the end which she fully recognized, she bent her efforts to relieve those near her and to put at ease those who inquired anxiously about her. The breadth of the feeling which swept the institution at her loss is a tribute to the effects of her brief career here.