

Katherine J. Newman

July 7, 1923 — October 9, 2004

Katherine Newman was born July 7, 1923 in Manhattan, Kansas, the daughter of Porter and Nellie Newman. She had three brothers, whom she frequently challenged as she was growing up with her curiosity and questions about natural phenomena, such as why strawberries are red and beans green in the same garden area. She graduated from high school in 1940 and enrolled at Kansas State College in Home Economics, though her primary interest was in the biological sciences. By combining summer school and extra classes at the university, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree. Working at part-time jobs to help pay her way through the university gave her valuable experience in a variety of disciplines. From 1943–46 she was a full time Research Assistant under Dr. Stearns in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Iowa, and obtained an M.S. degree in Biochemistry in 1946. Following this, she was an Instructor in the Department of Home Economics at Iowa University where she taught elementary nutrition. In 1947, she joined the staff of the research laboratory of the Children's Fund of Michigan, where she participated in studies on maternal and child health and nutritional status with Dr. Icie Macy Hoobler.

In 1949, she joined the faculty of the Department of Food and Nutrition at Cornell as an Instructor, using summers to continue further graduate study. She completed her doctorate in 1956 at the University of Iowa, was appointed Assistant Professor at Cornell that year, and in 1960, was promoted to Associate Professor. With her expertise and unique training in nutrition, in growth and development of children, and in the biochemical aspects of nutrition, she added a valuable resource to the program. She taught courses in Maternal and Child Nutrition, in Nutrition of Growth, and assisted in teaching the advanced course in nutrition and the graduate seminar. Personnel having advanced training in nutrition with specialization in the area of child and maternal nutrition were very limited in number. Part of her responsibilities related to nutritional aspects of the noon lunch for children in the College Nursery Program, in which capacity she supervised the work of a graduate student who planned the meals. She was also available for consultation concerning feeding the baby in the homemaking apartments, though this decreased markedly with program changes. She served on a wide range of college and department committees, including interdisciplinary programs, student-faculty committees, Interdisciplinary Research Group on Poverty, and the High School Natural Science Program. She was also a member of the steering committee for the Ghana program.

Professor Newman was exceptionally well informed in nutrition in general, and in her area of specialization, the nutrition of growth. She was always ready to help students and had an interesting way of challenging them and stimulating them to investigate related areas. Professor Newman worked with both graduate and undergraduate students. She served as Graduate Field Representative and at times as advisor in the Honors program, an option open for senior undergraduates. In both of these roles, she assisted students in identifying research areas they might pursue. She read widely in related areas in both nutrition and growth, and had the knack of discussing the subject matter in new ways, challenging students on the impact of factors other than food on nutritional status. She had several graduate students at both the Master's and Doctoral levels, and these students were encouraged by the informal discussions of the opportunities for investigation in the interaction of nutrition and related areas. Professor Newman's various contributions for the department's programs were always highly valued by the department.

She had a wide interest in many aspects of nutrition, their relationship to a wide range of problems and the approaches needed to solve them. In 1968, she took a sabbatic leave to gain an understanding of sociological theory and some experience in the analysis of sociological data as these might be utilized to enhance the effectiveness of applied nutrition programs. Since this direction for her interests involved a new discipline, and changes were occurring in the department structure, it is perhaps not surprising that she chose an early retirement in 1973 in order to continue her studies independently.

In addition to her contributions to students and the program at Cornell, Katy will be remembered for her ability to converse on a wide range of subjects, and her genuine interest in and concern for others. She resided in Ithaca until two to three years before her death, when she moved to Omaha to be near family members. She was predeceased by her parents and two brothers and is survived by her brother, Robert; several nieces and nephews; and three sisters-in-law. She is buried in Manhattan, Kansas next to her mother and father.

Henry N. Ricciuti, Mary A. Morrison