



Mary Louise Snider Efron - *Business, Industry and Professions*

Was born in Wheeling Hospital on November 18, 1926. She graduated from Mount De Chantal Academy; had a scholarship to Barnard College where she received her BA Degree, and graduated with honors from Harvard Medical School. She married Robert Efron, also a medical doctor and had three children, Carol, Paul, and Sonni.

She gained laboratory experience in human metabolism at University College Hospital at Queens Square in London, in the laboratory of Professor C.D. Dent, where she investigated the urinary excretion of amino acids. In the two years she went there, she mastered all the laboratory techniques, contributed considerably to the development of new methods and she learned to understand the significance of the results she obtained.

After she left London, Mary Efron became a research associate in Neurology at Harvard Medical School and an assistant in Neurology at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

In the Joseph P. Kennedy laboratory, which was assigned to her, she was able to exploit new methodologies for detection of disorders of amino acids. She soon became a leading researcher in the field of mental retardation and children diseases. A book published by Little, Brown and Company, "The Massachusetts General Hospital 1955 - 1980," contains the following "...her laboratory had become a national center, extremely productive in finding new diseases and treatments,..."

Dr. Efron and her associates developed programs in Massachusetts for the mass screening of newborn infants, at birth, to detect amino acid deficiencies and PKU (a rare inherited metabolic disease that results in mental retardation and other neurological problems - brain damage - when treatment is not started within the first few weeks of life.) This is done with a simple test performed from a drop of blood from the baby -- by pricking the heel. This screening process is now required and performed throughout the United States and the world for up to 10 serious disorders.

Dr. Mary Louise Snider Efron died on September 2, 1967 at the age of 40 years from Lupus. Her work had been so important to the field of neurological medicine that the American Medical Association caused to be published in January of 1969 a memorial issue "Diseases of Children" dedicated to Mary Efron.

A tribute containing therein by Dr. Raymond D. Adams of Boston summarizes her life:

"Once in every generation or so there looms over the medical firmament a personality that shines forth like a meteor, to briefly illumine its environment and thereafter to be remember by all who beheld it. "...she was able in a short time to open up new possibilities in the study of nervous disease. These skills, the new diseases which she discovered, and the old ones which she elucidated would have alone have assured her place in medical history,..." At the same time she exemplified the other attribute of a teacher...her ability to encourage clever pupils. She was surrounded by them; her laboratory was a mecca for young scientists. She was in touch with everyone in the world w h o shared her interest in the study of metabolic diseases of the nervous system. ..."The degree to which she has helped others will never be known, but some idea of the high esteem in which she was held in the world of medical science and the debt many owed to her is attested by the eagerness of gifted investigators from all over the world to contribute to this volume."

"It was Mary Efron's destiny as a gifted woman scientist to leave neurological medicine different than she found it, and every person who came to know her blithe spirit has been left a slightly better person."