

In Memory of Anne Benson

By now, all of you who read this will know that N.P.A.P. lost another distinguished member, Anne Bensen. Bob Mollinger asked me to write a few lines about Anne, and although I agreed to do it, I must say I find the task more difficult than I expected. In view of this, perhaps you will accept the brevity of these comments: they indicate no lack of appreciation or respect for Anne, but only sorrow.

Anne died peacefully and fully conscious. She had taken care of her patients in terms of selecting therapists for them, and she had responded to the needs of her family. She did this within the remarkably short period of three and one-half weeks, from the time of her knowledge of her terminal illness until her death. In the last weeks of her life, she was generous to those around her, not self-preoccupied; she was genuinely loving in the face of death, not personally outraged. In short, she was a courageous person in the quiet way life calls on us, at times, to be courageous. And, of course, it is a truism to say that the quality of our life is more spoken of by how we come to death than by how many deeds we may (or may not) accomplish.

As analysts, it might be helpful for us to recall that we not only prepare patients for living, but for their dying also. To conduct an analysis as if a patient does not die is similar to pretending that they will not ever face conflicts over aggression or sexual issues. The maturity and peace of Anne's death brought home to me again the awareness that death need not be quietly forgotten, as if it were an unfortunate parameter; rather, it is a final seal to a life dedicated to self-knowledge and truth, despite whatever developmental difficulties lie in the path. I was privileged to see Anne's coming to the end of that path in such a noble way.

-Gerald J. Gargiulo