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Fun Through the Ages:
The Life and Times of the Washington State University
College of Veterinary Medicine

Ghery D. Pettit, DVM
Professor Emeritus, Veterinary Surgery

Thank you for that kind introduction. And thanks to each of you for braving a snowstorm to help celebrate the centennial of the College of Veterinary Medicine. I am pleased to be able to share a few stories about the people and the events that brought us with pride to this 100th anniversary celebration.

In 1890, just four months after Washington became a state, the Legislature created The State Agricultural College and School of Science, under the terms of the Morrill Act of 1862 that provided for the so-called Land Grant Colleges. In 1905, the school's name was changed to the State College of Washington (WSC), and in 1959 it was changed again to Washington State University (WSU).

The Morrill Act specified that one of the major subjects to be taught was Veterinary Art. Dr. Sofus B. Nelson, who was a native of Denmark, an Iowa State College graduate, and a Spokane practitioner, was hired as Professor of Veterinary Science and State Veterinarian. We know that Dr. Nelson was a dedicated veterinarian because the title of an inspirational address he gave at an all-campus convocation was "Scours in Baby Pigs."

In 1893, Dr. E.A. Bryan, for whom this building is named, became president. In 1892, the first classes were held in a one-story building. There were five faculty members and 60 students. In 1895, the Board of Regents authorized President Bryan to construct a shed for the veterinary department, for a cost not to exceed \$60.

We celebrate our centennial this year because the School of Veterinary Science was made a major division of the college and the first class of three students was admitted to a new three-year professional curriculum in 1899. The first admission requirements were two years of high school with one year of Latin.

That 1899 date makes this the fifth oldest existing veterinary school in the United States. In case you wonder, the world's first veterinary college was opened in 1762 in Lyon, France, at the time of Louis XV. The first veterinary college in North America was in Mexico City (1853), and the second was the Ontario Veterinary College in Canada (1862). The four American schools older than WSU are Iowa State (1879), the University of Pennsylvania (1884), Ohio State (1885) and Cornell (1896).

Much of what I know about this school came from Dr. Paul Klavano, former Chairman of the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology. Dr. Klavano came to Pullman as a student in 1936, earned his DVM degree in 1944, and remained on the faculty until he retired in 1983. He has a wealth of stories about the people and events that helped shape the school.

I was really impressed when I came to WSU and found that Professor Klavano not only lectured about anesthesia, he cheerfully served as the anesthetist for critical clinical cases. Thank you, Paul, for your friendship and for all of your help through the years.

And we all are indebted to the late Dr. Lavon Koger, Class of 1942, whose Diamond Jubilee History of the College of Veterinary Medicine in 1974 was a rich source of information for Peter Harriman and me as we wrote the Centennial History book and as I prepared this talk.

Classes, labs and the hospital were moved from that \$60 shed to the newly completed Science Hall, a building later called Arts Hall and which is now part of the Edward R. Murrow Communications Center. The clinic began as a free service, one day

a week only. Some sick animals were temporarily pastured on the lawns of the campus.

Two of the first three students graduated in 1902: Charles Philips and John Woods. Dr. Philips practiced in Mt. Vernon, Washington, until his mid-80s, and died in 1974 at the age of 96. In 1953, he was selected as the veterinary school's first "Alumnus of the Year." His son, Dr. Stanley Philips, graduated in 1934 and practiced in Medford, Oregon --- where he treated my grandfather's dog. Stanley Philips was one of the first veterinary ophthalmologists. Stanley's son, Douglas (class of 1958), who is here this evening, was our first third-generation graduate. Doug's son, a fourth-generation Cougar, graduated in 1990 --- in psychology. It's too bad he broke the chain of what was already a rare, if not unique, family sequence.

From 1902 to 1908, graduating classes varied from 0 to 5. The operating room in Science Hall contained a spectator's gallery on the opposite side of the room. One photograph shows 20 men, which was probably the entire student body and faculty, watching an operation on a horse.

A lot of things happened in 1907. Washington's first Veterinary Practice Act was signed into law that year, with a three-man examining board appointed by the governor. Dr. Charles Philips was granted veterinary license No. 4. The members of the examining board held the first three licenses. The only requirement was a diploma from a veterinary school -- or a medical school. Non-graduate veterinarians who had been practicing for at least 10 years were grandfathered in.

The year 1907 also marked the first football game between veterinary students and pharmacy students. The Vet-Pharmic game, as it was called, was a major campus attraction for 50 years, and provocative challenges from each side were widely distributed. The advent of modern protective gear and concern for the players' safety finally saw the contest fade away. The fact that the teams' water buckets usually contained alcohol may have had something to do with it.

In all that time the Pharmics were said to have won only 3 or 4 games. For a few years basketball games took the place of football, but they lacked the same appeal and they disappeared in the 1960s. The Pharmics did better in basketball than they had done in football, but the Vets didn't always take their losses gracefully. After the Pharmics won the 1961 game by 2 points in the last 4 seconds, "Coach" Bill Dickson, who doubled as a physiology professor, was hanged in effigy outside Wegner Hall.

Another lively tradition was the annual Hobo Dance. Male students and faculty grew beards in honor of the dance's namesake, and the celebrations often lasted into the following day. Like the football games, the Hobo Dance became history in 1957 after a particularly raucous occasion also raised concern for student safety.

It was a major advance when the new three-story brick Veterinary Building was occupied in 1909. Known more commonly as the "Vet Shack," it housed the hospital, teaching labs for anatomy, physiology, pharmacology and pathology, one or two faculty offices --- and living quarters for student interns. There was also a wooden hospital barn nearby. The entire student body and faculty, and all of the patients gathered in front of it for an historic picture.

The Veterinary Building contained teaching laboratories for physiology, pharmacology, microbiology and pathology. In the latter two, the ends of the tables were against the windows to provide light for the microscopes because electric substage lights had not been invented, and the table tops were tapered so everyone could have enough light. In 1943, those tables were moved to the library in Wegner Hall, where they served for another 20 years. I wondered why the library tables were such an odd shape when I first arrived on campus.

One faculty office in the Veterinary Building was so well equipped that it must have belonged to the dean. It contained a roll-top desk, a typewriter and a press for

copying letters. There was a sink in the corner, and two bare light bulbs hung over the desk.

There were tie stalls for hospitalized horses on the ground floor. The building has been thoroughly remodeled and is now called the Administration Annex. Dr. Klavano lived in the “Vet Shack” one summer, and he was quite impressed when it was modified for other uses. He said that ridding that old building of its deeply imbedded medicinal and animal odors was a miracle of reconstructive technology.

The reconstruction was obviously successful, because the space for horses is now occupied by offices where people process gifts to the WSU Foundation.

From 1909 to 1923, the veterinary school operated a satellite hospital in Spokane, where students lived during their senior year. Officially named “Hospital No. 2,” it opened the same year as the Veterinary Building in Pullman. Its purpose was to provide more small animal patients than were available in Pullman, and to provide access to packing houses for meat inspection and other public health work. In an arrangement that would raise a few eyebrows today, the land and the two-story brick building were owned by Dean Nelson and leased to the college.

Two railroads and an electric interurban provided transportation, so Dean Nelson was permitted to live in Spokane and divide his time between Spokane and Pullman. Dr. Wegner, who replaced Dean Nelson in 1919, lived in Pullman and traveled to Spokane every Friday afternoon to teach Veterinary Jurisprudence.

I suppose that almost everyone has seen this photograph of the horse-drawn horse ambulance operated by Hospital No. 2 in Spokane. Judging by the size of the load of firewood on the wagon behind the ambulance, that must have been a cold winter.

One of the prominent graduates of that era was Dr. Emerson A. Ehmer, who graduated in 1918. Dr. Ehmer is internationally famous for his innovations in orthopedic surgery. Not only were they state of the art at the time, many have been adapted to

modern procedures. Dr. Ehmer's "sling-cast" for canine pelvic and hip injuries, first described in 1925, was so successful that today almost any flexion bandage of the hind limb is called an "Ehmer sling." Dr. Ehmer is best known for his fracture fixation device, the Kirschner-Ehmer splint. Developed in the 1940s, it was the standard external skeletal fixation device for a half-century.

In 1921, Dr. Ehmer opened the first small animal hospital in Seattle. Many new graduates obtained their first experience in practice by working for Dr. Ehmer. Among the ones I know about are Joe Gidley, Class of 1940, Jim Kraft, Class of 1941, and Eugene Curnow, Class of 1955. Dr. Ehmer's remodeled building still functions as an emergency veterinary hospital.

The college's first African-American student, Winfred Jordan, graduated in 1920. Like several other students, he had transferred to Washington State from the private San Francisco Veterinary College, which closed in 1918. From 1918 until the School of Veterinary Medicine at U.C. Davis graduated its first class in 1952, Washington State was the only veterinary school west of the Rocky Mountains and it supplied most of the practitioners on the West Coast.

Dr. Myron Thom, Class of 1929, was a pioneer in the use of x-rays for treatment as well as for diagnosis. While in private practice, he investigated proper dosage, methods of restraint and anesthesia, and protective measures for human personnel. For that, he received the veterinary school's Distinguished Alumnus Award.

Another milestone was reached when our first female student, Catherine Elizabeth Roberts, graduated in 1933. Dr. Roberts became the first woman veterinarian licensed in California, and she was one of only 12 female veterinarians in the nation at that time.

In 1934, the college's second woman graduate, Dr. Patricia Henno, became the second woman veterinarian in California and was the first woman accepted by the Bay

Counties Veterinary Medical Association in San Francisco. It was not until the 1970s that the enrollment of women surpassed that of men.

The next big development came in 1942 and 1943, when the school moved to these new buildings, McCoy Hall and Wegner Hall. They were the first University buildings on that side of Stadium Way. Construction began shortly before war was declared in 1941 and most of the materials were on hand. However, a slight shortage delayed completion of the third floor of Wegner Hall.

McCoy Hall contained the Clinics and the Anatomy Department, and Wegner contained everything else. Large animals were housed in a wooden barn behind McCoy Hall. At that time, large animal surgery occupied a two-story space at the north end of McCoy Hall. A large balcony made it a popular site for surgical demonstrations during veterinary conferences. Small animal surgery, at the other end of the building, was up to date at the time, but scrub sinks in the same room and an absence of caps, masks and long sleeves indicated that aseptic technique in 1943 was not up to today's standards.

The actual move from the Vet Shack was made primarily by veterinary students, since the war was in progress and they were believed to be the only able-bodied men on campus. The faculty did help, though. One participant recalled seeing Professor Ernest McCulloch with his arms full of laboratory equipment, falling on a steep icy slope in front of Troy Hall and sliding to the bottom of the hill. I'm sure that Dr. McCulloch would rather be remembered as the author in 1936 of the first textbook written by an active member of the college faculty.

Wegner Hall was named for Dr. Earl E. Wegner, who was one of the college's most important alumni. Dr. Wegner graduated in 1908, when classes were still held in Science Hall. He joined the faculty a year later and remained until 1950. As dean from 1919 to 1947, he guided the college through some of its most difficult and formative years. Dr. Wegner took his cue from Dean Nelson and tried to establish veterinary medicine as a true medical profession rather than just an adjunct to agriculture.

McCoy Hall was named for perhaps the most popular and admired clinician and teacher the school ever had, Dr. John E. McCoy. He was on the faculty from 1923 to 1952. Shortly before his death in 1958, Western Veterinarian, an annual research journal and yearbook produced by veterinary students, was dedicated to Dr. McCoy. The editors wrote, "During his stay at WSC there was never a better loved faculty member. His vast knowledge and total dedication to his students put him high in the esteem of faculty and students alike. It was said at one time that if Dr. McCoy could not teach someone veterinary medicine it was impossible for that person to learn."

Although Dr. McCoy is seldom remembered for his research, he often had one or two projects underway. In 1930, he and Dr. G.W. McNutt introduced bulla osteotomy, an operation to drain infections of the middle ear in dogs. In 1942, he and his students developed an animal blood bank that attracted worldwide attention.

By 1943, most veterinary students joined the enlisted reserve corps and were assigned to duty in the Army Specialized Training Program, the ASTP. Freshmen and sophomores were quartered in the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity house, while juniors and seniors were in the Theta Chi house. Later, some were housed at Sigma Phi Epsilon and some were in a university residence, Ferry Hall.

The gulf between the veterinary students in the ASTP and the rest of the military services was not lost on the students. They were marched regularly to and from classes, and one of their marching refrains was "Take down your service flag, mother. Your son's in the ASTP."

Drs. Al McCurdy, Arturs Vitums and Bob Worthman arrived after World War II to make the Anatomy Department one of the best in the country. I believe that because their students were extremely well prepared when they came to my surgery class. Dr. Worthman dissected, painted and labeled freeze-dried specimens to help students

understand regional anatomy and selected surgical procedures. The Robert P. Worthman Anatomy Museum in Wegner Hall is named for him.

In 1948, the first graduate degree ever awarded by the veterinary college was earned by one of its alumni, John R. Gorham. Dr. Gorham earned his Master of Science degree in pathology under Dr. Donald Cordy. They later went on to discover the rickettsia that causes salmon disease in dogs and foxes. Dr. Gorham earned a PhD at the University of Wisconsin and returned to Pullman, where he was Research Leader of the USDA Animal Disease Research Unit. In a career spanning more than 50 years, Dr. Gorham's wide ranging research into viral and parasitic diseases of cattle, sheep, goats and fur animals made him a pioneer in establishing animal models for human diseases. Among his many awards was the WSU Regent's Distinguished Alumnus Award, the highest honor WSU bestows on its graduates. The only other recipients of that award from the College of Veterinary Medicine have been the long-time director of the San Diego Zoo, Dr. Charles Schroeder, and Dean Leo Bustad.

A lot of things happened in 1952. The WSU chapter of the veterinary honor society, Phi Zeta, received its charter. Phi Zeta draws members from the top 10% of the junior class, the top 25% of the senior class that is not already members, and selected members of the faculty. There are a lot of familiar names on that charter: Gordon Keown, Jon A. McCurdy, G. Roger Spencer, Ernest C. Stone, Robert Leader, Orville Frost. It reads like a Who's Who of the Veterinary School. And it was.

I am especially pleased to recognize the undergraduate members of Phi Zeta this evening, since they are hosting the reception to follow this talk. We thank you for that, and congratulate you for your academic achievement.

1952 was also the year that Ernie Stone became dean of the college. The school had languished a bit after Dr. Wegner retired in 1947. Dr. Stone, who had been chairman

of the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology, restored morale and presided over an era of significant growth in personnel and facilities. He believed that any dean would accomplish all he was going to accomplish in 10 years, so he resigned in 1961 and went to Pakistan to help create a veterinary school in Lyallapur.

Leptospirosis was of particular concern to livestock producers in the 1950s, so the college set out to understand and treat the disease. The “Lepto Barn,” which could house 50 animals, was completed in 1954. Among the faculty members who participated in the leptospirosis research were Drs. Frank Bracken, Russell Gillespie, Leif Ringen and Sam Kenzy. The work with leptospirosis represented some of the college’s best research in that era and helped establish the foundation upon which our research reputation rests today.

Dr. Robert Leader, who was one of those Phi Zeta seniors, was on our faculty from 1955 to 1965. He obtained the first training grant to develop animal models of human diseases. The concept of comparative medicine gradually took hold and today, WSU is prominent in that field. Others who have contributed significantly in comparative medicine research include Drs. Travis McGuire, Lance Perryman, Class of 1970, George Padgett, Linda Cork and Timothy Crawford.

The group of diseases called spongiform encephalopathy, which includes “Mad Cow Disease,” affects many species. WSU has become a national leader in studying the one in sheep called Scrapie. Just last year, the first practical preclinical test for Scrapie was developed by Drs. Katherine O’Rourke, Timothy Baszler, and Steve Parish, Class of 1973, and Donald Knowles, the USDA Research Unit leader who succeeded John Gorham.

In the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, Dr. Patrick Gavin, Class of 1971, is studying an experimental form of cancer treatment called “boron neutron capture therapy.” As part of his studies, Dr. Gavin treats spontaneously occurring brain tumors in

dogs. Since 1987, the U.S. Department of Energy has provided more than \$4,000,000 for that project. Human clinical trials are now underway.

Dr. Richard Ott, who graduated in 1945, came back to WSC in 1949 to head the Small Animal Clinic. From 1955 to 1973 he was chairman of the clinical department, and from 1973 until his retirement in 1983 he was Associate Dean for Public Programs.

Dr. Ott was one of the country's most brilliant clinicians and a teacher most students held in awe. To be recognized by his cheerful insult of "You idiot" was almost a compliment, and those who were not so honored sometimes felt overlooked. One student finally gave him a "You Idiot" rubber stamp so he could reach more students and mark their papers more efficiently.

Dr. Ott was a prolific researcher. He received international recognition and many awards for his research on canine distemper and feline leukemia.

In 1960, Dr. Ott oversaw a major renovation of McCoy Hall and secured a large grant from the U.S. Public Health Service to make that project possible. In contrast to the \$115,000 it had cost to build McCoy Hall in 1942, the reconstruction 18 years later ran to \$1.6 million. The commitment to modern facilities embodied in that project helped secure full accreditation for the college.

A new large animal hospital was constructed along the back and south end of McCoy Hall, and a north wing was added for faculty offices, living quarters for student interns, and a garage for the ambulatory trucks.

The first floor of the building was gutted and an up-to-date small animal hospital was created. The operating rooms were modernized, with much new equipment for both small animals and large animals.

Dr. Ott died of a heart attack on his way home from the Rose Bowl game last year. It probably isn't going to happen, but a number of us would like to see the new teaching hospital named for him.

In 1955, under the direction of George Stabenfeldt, Class of 1956, the junior class

of veterinary students entered the annual campus songfest. They won the men's division with an original score titled "Dystocia." In the following years the choir was expanded to include students from all four classes. Choir directors who followed Dr. Stabenfeldt included Jack Stevens, Doug Philips, Mark Keyes, and Joe Ladley.

Having become ineligible for further competition in the men's division, the veterinary students joined women from Wilmer Hall and won the mixed division. The songfest's organizers finally barred the veterinary students from any further competition, claiming it was a contest solely for living groups.

I first came to Pullman in the spring of 1961, to be a speaker at the conference at which completion of the new hospital facilities was celebrated. I had no idea that six months later I would be making one of the most significant changes in my life by starting what turned out to be 34 years on the WSU faculty.

There were only three small animal clinicians in those days: Dick Ott, Hugh Butler and me. There were five large animal clinicians. Mr. Fred Williams doubled as the hospital pharmacist and x-ray technician. Our first radiologist was Dr. Jack Alexander, who arrived from Ontario Veterinary College in 1962.

Until the 1960s, veterinary medicine was primarily a man's profession, and it was not until the 1970s that enrollment of women students exceeded that of men. Now, two-thirds of the veterinary students are women.

Dr. Shirley Johnston, Class of 1974, returned to the Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences as our first woman department chair in 1997, but she left the next year to become the first woman dean of a veterinary school, a school being planned at Western University in southern California.

Dr. Leo K. Bustad, Class of 1949, was dean of the college from 1973 to 1984. As dean, Dr. Bustad became best known for his fascination with the human-animal bond.

He was a founder of the Delta Society and as a result of his interest, the college established the People-Pet Partnership. He spoke eloquently and often about compassion and morality.

Dean Bustad reorganized the college from five departments to three. The Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (WADDL) was established in 1974. In 1979, creation of the Washington, Oregon and Idaho Regional Program in Veterinary Medical Education (called WOI for short) concluded seven years of discussion, negotiation, compromise and interim agreements.

The veterinary science building later named for Dean Bustad was completed in 1978. To make room for it, a classic dairy barn had to be torn down. Watching them build Bustad Hall kept the campus entertained for three years.

In addition to the auditorium where we heard Dr. James Moore deliver the McCoy Lecture this afternoon, Bustad Hall contains mostly offices for faculty and staff, and labs for teaching and research. As you would expect, the teaching labs are a vast improvement over the ones in the old "Vet Shack."

In 1978, a half-mile oval equine research track --- the Hitchcock Track --- was built just over the ridge from the veterinary school. Privately funded, it was an effective research tool for problems associated with track surface, gait and limb forces. Today, such research has been enhanced by the college's treadmill facilities.

As needs changed through the years, sections of McCoy Hall were renovated and remodeled. In 1971, a second floor was added to the north wing to give Anatomy a seminar room, faculty offices and a new Micro Anatomy lab.

Ten years later, those facilities were replaced by a new small animal surgery suite with 3 well-equipped operating rooms and one of the best surgery teaching labs in the country. In 1989, the large animal surgery suite was extensively remodeled.

In 1980, Wegner Hall was gutted and rebuilt to twice its original size, to accommodate the College of Pharmacy as well as our Department of Veterinary and

Comparative Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology (VCAPP).

Dr. Robert B. Wilson, Class of 1961 and chairman of the Department of Pathology, had the unenviable task of succeeding the revered Leo Bustad as dean. I was chairman of the search committee that identified Dr. Wilson as one of the final candidates, and I was pleased when he was selected for the position.

When the WOI program began in 1979, each of the three schools had its own dean. Idaho's dean was Dr. Floyd Frank, WSU Class of 1951. After Dr. Frank retired in 1984, Dean Wilson served as the director of the Idaho program. Currently, there is an Idaho director and there are deans at WSU and OSU. The WSU dean has direct authority over the Idaho teaching program.

Dr. Borje Gustafsson was dean from 1988 to 1998. Strategic planning to accommodate unprecedented change that began during Dean Wilson's administration was carried forward by Dean Gustafsson. In fact, strategic planning became the hallmark of his tenure as dean. Dean Gustafsson oversaw the most fundamental curriculum reform in the school's history. He also oversaw building the federally funded \$22.7 million Animal Disease Biotechnology Facility and the \$38 million teaching hospital. I regret only that WSU waited until after I retired to open the new hospital's doors.

A Washington law requires that 0.5% of the cost of every new public building must be spent on an art object. For Bustad Hall, most veterinarians wanted something that would have reference to animals and veterinary medicine. They were displeased when the artists on the selection committee chose an object the sculptor called "Tic Tac Toe," but which is generally known as "The Yellow Worm."

When it was time to pick an art object for the rebuilt Wegner Hall, the next committee selected a structure that depicts the myths and rituals of ancient Egypt, Greece and Mesopotamia to recall the genesis of the agricultural sciences, including pharmacy and veterinary medicine. Its structure also reflects the architecture of nearby Wegner and McCoy Halls. Many people don't like that art object, either, but I have learned to

appreciate it. Of all the symbolism it contains, the black and white cobblestones at each archway are the most powerful metaphor. They are mice. The slaves of research. One enters the structure by walking on their backs. I don't take that as criticism of using experimental animals, but as a reminder of their important role in advancing knowledge that is critical to the health and welfare of animals and people alike.

Dr. Bernard Pinckney, Class of 1944, was so upset by those two sculptures that he commissioned Larry Anderson to create a bronze sculpture of a veterinarian giving intravenous fluids to a calf held by its young owner. With the support of other alumni, Dr. Pinckney financed The Caring Call by selling 35 one-pound miniatures. Not the least of his battles was getting permission to have a privately financed object placed on the campus, especially in such a prominent location. Now, of course, it is a favorite of visitors and it has become the symbol of the school and of the importance of the relationship between people and animals. It represents what the last 100 years of the veterinary school has been about.