

1982

The Story of the "Gentle Doctor"

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/iowastate_veterinarian



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Veterinary Medicine Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(1982) "The Story of the "Gentle Doctor"," *Iowa State University Veterinarian*: Vol. 44 : Iss. 2 , Article 11.

Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/iowastate_veterinarian/vol44/iss2/11

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Iowa State University Veterinarian by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

times, he becomes directly involved in the production of these items.

A successful illustrator is one who is versatile in more than one technique or medium. Therefore, it is my goal to raise the students' level of understanding and have them become skilled in working with acrylic, watercolor, airbrush or oil painting techniques. Their proficiency in the use of mechanical drawing instruments, lettering and transfer sheets, or other commercial or drafting techniques is essential. Since publication limitations confine most work to the traditional black and white line or tone methods, I primarily concentrate on work with pen and ink, brush and ink, graphite and carbon pencil, or carbon dust. Since most illustrations are published, the students are given

general knowledge of the printing and photographic processes by which the finished product will be reproduced.

One course is by no means a curriculum, but it is a beginning and an exposure to an old, but rapidly expanding profession. Despite the progress of the camera and other recording devices, it is still the artist, with his talent and intelligence, who can bring the different disciplines of science and art into visual focus. There is a creative and elevating beauty that flows from brain-to-hand-to-image. It allows the artist to conceptualize and visualize what machine does not approach. Medical illustrators are artists in the service of much more than science; they are artists in the service of human understanding.

The Story of the “Gentle Doctor”



Christian Petersen's "Gentle Doctor" statue stood in the Veterinary Medicine Quadrangle of the Iowa State University campus until the College of Veterinary Medicine moved into new facilities on the South Campus in 1976. Time and weather had taken its toll on the terra cotta "Gentle Doctor" and the statue was moved into the Scheman Continuing Education Building to prevent further deterioration. A full size replica was cast in bronze and now stands on the Plaza of the College of Veterinary Medicine.

In an address to the College of Veterinary Medicine Faculty on September 20, 1972, Mrs. Christian Petersen recounted Christian's early days on the Iowa State campus.

"As many of you may know, Christian came to the Iowa State University campus in the Fall of 1934 to finish some sculptures in the Dairy Court Annex. His first appointments were only for three months at a time; however, after two years he was appointed as an instructor and given a studio in the Home Economics Building. Later, about 1936, a magical thing happened. He was moved across the street into the old horse stalls of the veterinary quadrangle which was later to become the area for the Anatomy Department.

At the time, Dr. C. H. Stange was Dean of the Veterinary College, and on a trip to Europe in 1930 he was greatly impressed by

the art he saw on their veterinary buildings, and so it became his desire to see art connected with the veterinary school.

From the day that Christian entered the horse stalls and set up his studio, it was destined to become the rendezvous of students, professors and the friendly people. Christian was always pleased when the veterinary students came in to introduce themselves and stayed to watch him work and ask him questions. A rapport was there that was much appreciated and truly a delight.

While working and teaching in this setting, Christian was asked why he had chosen the Midwest as his spiritual and physical home. He said, 'I figured I could reach people here. . . . I have always tried to go my own way and to bring what I could to the people here where we could start a culture. I have always maintained that if we wanted to have a true American art it had to start in the Midwest, and that was my reason for staying.'

The veterinary profs stopped into his studio frequently to chat and they constantly prodded him to make a replica of the "Gentle Doctor" statue in the veterinary courtyard. Christian eventually made the model and the statuette

has become a memento and a symbol of the veterinary profession."

After thousands of statuettes, Christian Petersen's mold became unusable. In 1982, the College of Veterinary Medicine commissioned artist Herman L. Deaton to create a replica of the "Gentle Doctor". A native of rural Newton, Iowa, Mr. Deaton was raised on a farm during the depression years of the 1930's. Material luxuries were few so imagination came into play at an early age—drawing, sketching and modeling in clay. Today he has his own studio in his hometown of Newton, is a member of the Society of Animal Artists, and produces work mainly for the private collector.

Mr. Ronald Fisher of the Fisher Casting Studio in Marshalltown, Iowa, has reproduced Mr. Deaton's replica in cold cast bronze. This technique uses bronze powder mixed in a resin to produce a finished product which resembles a bronze casting.

The "Gentle Doctor" cold cast bronze statuette stands approximately 9½ inches high. This beautiful statuette is copyrighted and is only available from the College of Veterinary Medicine, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 500011.



Photograph by Denise Sofranko.