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A Tribute for Dr. Loren Will

George W. Beran, DVM, PhD, LHD[†]

Dr. Loren Will was laid to rest on June 16, 1998. The service was held at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church in Ames. This eulogy is a portion of that service.

It was just a couple days after Dr. Loren Will had joined Iowa State University. He was going to speak to his first class. It was a big class because in that year we were making an adjustment in our curriculum, and two classes were joined together, so there were approximately two hundred students that sat before him. Loren was wearing a blue and white jacket and a pretty tie and he was ready to share with this big class. His opening words were, "We are here to learn how we can serve human health as veterinarians." If the students had been expecting anything in the opening statement of their new teacher, it was not what he said, "We are here to learn how we can serve human health as veterinarians." And 200 veterinary students more or less fell out of their seats.

This not only set the focus in that class twenty years ago, but throughout his career here, it was his vision to serve human health through veterinary medicine. Through the succeeding years his vision expanded to the health of the whole environment, and another time he said to a class, "We are here to make the world healthy." It is incredible the world view that Dr. Loren Will had—a view of veterinary medicine in service to health worldwide—I have listed eleven countries—I will share these with you later.

We had a student in the Student Chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association who had great theatrical skills. In a performance that he was putting on as entertainment for the Student Chapter one



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Biomedical Communications, ISU

evening he said, "If others won't, Dr. Loren will." To you his family, I can assume you have heard that type of comment time and again when your family name has been Will.

That evening, that student had no idea of the breadth of what he said. "If others won't, Dr. Loren will."

I would like to share with you this morning a number of areas in which we have been involved in conversation for Dr. Will had unique capability of broadening any conversation and bringing in his concepts of veterinary medicine in world service. We were having lunch one day; this was long ago in my office which looks out where the growing landscaping was

taking place and we started out talking about the landscaping, but our conversation went from one focus to another until we were talking about the ecology of health. Can you believe it? Looking out on a couple of young trees over on the grassy area between the building of concrete and the parking lot and we were talking about the ecology of health.

Another time the water fountain wasn't working. I don't know how one thing led to another but the discussion soon centered around the effect of the groundwater pollution in the state of Iowa on animal health.

I will cite more discussion initiators; some are true, and others may have been true, but forgotten; all are characteristics of Loren's unique views and commitment to health. A worker was cleaning an animal facility nearby, and we found ourselves talking about the transmission of disease from animal manure lagoons. Am I sharing an adequate view of the diversity of visions and commitment of Dr. Loren Will?

A dog was present in our view and before the conversation ended Loren had led us to discussing pet facilitated therapy—the role of pets in making people healthy.

A cat coming into the clinic would have led most veterinarians to thoughts about how they would diagnose and treat this cat, but not Dr. Will. He led us into talking about

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the human/animal bond; the bond between animals and people, and what this bond means in the health of people.

At VEISHEA when the equestrian events take place at the College of Veterinary medicine, our discussion centered not on the Kentucky Derby or the Belmont or the Preakness, but around the therapy of horseback riding for those who are handicapped. Dr. Will was a leader in therapy through horseback riding.

My, there are so many visions in Dr. Will's career; I want to actually identify twelve of these. You will see with some surprise the reason why I chose these twelve. A child in view could lead discussion centered around pets in daycare homes and how the pets in those homes help the children to learn and to have a relationship with animals; a very important need.

An 80-year-old woman with a older pet could lead to consideration of helping people to cope with the grief of loss of that pet. And Dr. Will, of course, is the one who originated for Iowa and Iowa State University the ISU Pet Loss Support Hotline where people who have lost pets because of the death of the pet or its having to be put to sleep can come or call and share by telephone or directly in counseling and receive help through the grieving process for the loss of a pet.

One time a food safety article in the newspaper led to a review of the time in the Caribbean when Dr. Will had spoken on the role of veterinarians in the protection of our food.

So many times Loren's advocacy and service for international development and humanitarian assistance came through. As was mentioned here just a little bit ago by Father Seda, Loren was so grateful when the first humanitarian food aid from the United States went to Cuba just a few weeks ago. Dr. Will had personal experiences in Cuba, the most recent in an Ensminger School course in veterinary medicine.

A very characteristic concept of Loren's, one that he actively advocated was that no one should be alone—no one should be alone. Another which we shared last night identified the poster that hangs above the desk in Loren's office. It is a poster of the World Health Organization which says, "Health for all by the year 2000." In Loren's vision, the global perspective is of public health—of health for people around the world and of the role that veterinarians can play in that health of people. The poster says "health for

all," and we talked about what that word "all" means. Dr. Will's concept that health is for all people, animals domestic, animals wild, and birds, and plants, and crops, and the trees of the forest and the whole of the environment. When you share his reverence for all of life you grasp the world view that is Loren Will.

Now the surprise. These twelve are all the subjects—the titles—of actual talks that Dr. Will gave somewhere in a meeting or conference in addition to having been parts of discussions. For I have selected them from a memory of many, many talks that he gave—some in Iowa, some in other states of the United States, in Canada, in Mexico, in Honduras, in Nicaragua, in Cuba, in Jamaica, in Grenada, in Barbados, in Taiwan and in several European countries. Those titles of the talks once again were 'Transmission of disease from animal manure lagoons; The role of veterinarians in food protection in the Caribbean; Pet facilitated therapy; Groundwater effect on animal health (presented in Taiwan); The concept of health in development; Therapeutic horseback riding; The ecology of health; The gaps in international development; You are not alone; Pets in daycare homes; Global perspectives in public health; and Helping people through the grief of pet loss.' Is it any wonder that we stated yesterday, "We have no one to replace Dr. Loren Will".

I hope that Dr. Will is listening to us as we share today. He always had multiple things scheduled at the same time and I hope at this point that this is not a time when Jesus has scheduled with him to share and I quote. "I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me water; I was a stranger and you invited me into your home; naked and you clothed me; sick and in prison and you visited me."

As this would be paraphrased to specifically fit today—"Loren"—"My family was hungry because I could not afford food, and you fed me safe meat; I was thirsty and you gave me safe water; I was a stranger—a refugee from oppression and you invited me into your home; I was naked because I could not afford to replace my tattered clothes and you clothed me; I was sick with disease transmitted from sick animals; and I was in prison as a political detainee for trying to help the poor and you visited me at the risk of your own freedom".

Like the student prophesied 20 years ago, "If others won't, Dr. Loren Will." "If others didn't, Dr. Loren did."◆