1963

Editorial

Ronald Huhn

Iowa State University

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

Part of the Veterinary Medicine Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/iowastate_veterinarian/vol26/iss3/1

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.
"All our lives long, every day and every hour, we are engaged in the process of accommodating our changed and unchanged selves to changed and unchanged surroundings; living, in fact, is nothing else than this process of accommodation; when we fail in it a little we are stupid, when we fail flagrantly we are mad, when we suspend it temporarily we sleep, when we give up the attempt altogether we die. In quiet, uneventful lives the changes internal and external are so small that there is little or no strain in the process of fusion and accommodation; in other lives there is great strain, but there is also great fusing and accommodating power; in others great strain with little accommodating power. A life will be successful or not, according as the power of accommodation is equal to or unequal to the strain of fusing and adjusting internal and external changes."

—SAMUEL BUTLER in The Way of All Flesh

This piece of prose presents in a nontechnical way the situation with which we must cope. The needs of the environment in relation to veterinary medicine are changing rapidly. This places much strain on the accommodating powers of those engaged in the profession and of those attempting to do so. I have confidence that nearly everyone concerned is capable of meeting and even exceeding the challenges thrust upon him, but I believe that in all areas there are some, perhaps many, who have grown lax in their efforts, and in doing so, are jeopardizing the profession. The examples brought forth are not intended to degrade any individual, but are meant to bring forth the nature of the laxity to which I refer.

The institution, because of its critical position in relation to the rest of the profession, must be most harshly criticized. There are people teaching basic veterinary sciences who have forgotten that the word "veterinary" is placed in front of the course name. There are people who prefer to have students scrub walls and water pans rather than work up cases and study them more thoroughly. There are people who, though teaching for some time, are not aware of the sequence of courses; they encourage concentrated study in areas where the basic principles haven't been presented. There are people who base their evaluation of students on "Bell Telephone" quizzes. There are people who assign work, then don't evaluate it; a statement in an assigned
paper on veterinary ethics, “It is the responsibility of every veterinarian to conduct himself in an unscrupulous fashion if the profession is to improve its image,” remained uncorrected and without criticism. Laxity? Yes. Preventable? Yes.

In the field there are people who are unethical (if you can define it); these are but a few. There are people who would rather perform manual work than utilize the knowledge presented while in college. There are people aware of the shortcomings of institutional efforts, yet who will not supplement these by teaching the students who work for them. There are people who hire students for less than the local drunk can command, yet who will undoubtedly accept the students as equals in a very short time.

Students do not live under any cloak of amnesty when it comes to laxity. The most blatant example was brought forth recently. We, as students, hotly criticize the curriculum (in the locker room); a student committee especially created to evaluate and criticize the curriculum has not met in three years.

These examples are but a fraction of what could be drawn from each area of the profession, but they point out the nature of the laxity that I feel is very detrimental. Perfection is unattainable. That is obvious, but the necessity for striving for perfection is as important as the attainment and will prevent the profession from degenerating to the level of skilled laborers and merchandizers. When anyone evaluates a member of the veterinary profession, any aspect, I would not have him say, “Doctor, you did a good job,” but rather, “Doctor, I just don’t see how you could have done better.” There is a difference.

I have been searching for some words of advice and encouragement for the graduating seniors. I know that, as it is the failing of the older to think that experience can substitute for intelligence, so also young people fail in that they feel intelligence can substitute for experience. Be careful in this respect. I wish you good fortune in your future endeavors and leave you with a poem that you might think of as you cross the stage to receive your diploma:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud;
Under the bludgeonings of chance,
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade.
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul!

—William Ernest Henley: Invictus

Your Editor
Ron Huhn

Issue, No. 3, 1964 149