

# Charles Henry Stange

## A Biographic Sketch

Russ Daly\*

Dr. Charles H. Stange's influence on veterinary education and the profession as a whole reached far beyond the effects he had on the Division of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State College while serving as its dean for 27 years. At the time of his death, it was remarked that "Perhaps it would be no exaggeration to say that Dean Stange had a greater influence on veterinary education in this country during the past two decades than did any other member of the veterinary profession."<sup>1</sup>

Charles Henry Stange was born on May 21, 1880. In Cedar County, IA, the fourth of six children born to Claus and Sophie Stange. Dr. Stange worked on his family's farm and attended elementary school in the area, then attended high school in Lowden, IA, graduating in 1896. For the following years, he worked on his father's farm before deciding to attend Iowa State College. In order to finance his education, he gave up his 80-acre share of the family farm, a decision he later said was "a wise decision and a good investment."<sup>2</sup>

Charles Stange entered the veterinary medicine curriculum at Iowa State the year the program was changed from a three-year to a four-year curriculum, thus becoming a member of the first class in the United States to complete a four year program in veterinary medicine. He graduated in 1907 with the highest marks not only in his veterinary class, but also in the entire college. Upon graduation, he took a job with the Bureau of Animal Industry, as did many of the graduates of the time, and was assigned to duty in New Mexico working on scabies eradication during that summer. In the fall of that same year, Dr. Stange returned to Ames to serve on the faculty of the Veterinary Division.

Dr. Stange joined the faculty at an unfavorable time for the Division of Veterinary Medicine. Facilities and equipment for the clinics

and teaching purposes were inadequate, as was available funding that could have enabled the Division to attract the high caliber faculty members it desired. It was later commented that "if the faculty is the 'heart' of an educational institution, 25 to 50 per cent of the 'heart' was lost each year because of sufficient funds for faculty support."<sup>3</sup> Pleas to the state legislature for support and a new building for the Division largely fell on deaf ears. Dean J. H. McNeil managed to keep up the moral and interest of the students and faculty, for a time, but eventually he became frustrated by the situation and submitted his resignation on September 30, 1908 to take a position in surgery at Ohio State Veterinary College. The College administration and Board of Trustees recognized the cause of Dean McNeil's resignation and in a committee report following his stepping-down, the Board of Trustees recognized stated that "more adequate provision must speedily be made for this Division of our college. We should either frankly abandon the Veterinary Department or provide for creditable work. We believe that great credit is due to the Dean, Dr. McNeil, for achieving results that are so creditable with such meager resources and facilities... We out to provide... more experience men, in part at least, for our faculty. Such men cannot be secured for the salaries we are paying."<sup>3</sup>

College President Storms served as acting dean, and Dr. Stange was authorized to make purchases and carry out correspondence under the direction of Dr. Storms. It wasn't until March 1909 that a committee of the Board of Trustees reported that it had selected Dr. Stange to take the position of Dean. After being assured by the college administration that the Veterinary Division would receive the same considerations as other divisions of the college, Dr. Stange accepted the appointment. In doing so, at the age of 28, Dr. Stange became the third Dean of the Division of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State College.

In the history of the Veterinary Division which he wrote for the 50th anniversary of the

\*Mr. Daly is a fourth year student in the college of Veterinary Medicine

Division, Dr. Stange states "...there was some hesitancy in accepting the appointment, as experience in organization or administrative work, which seemed so necessary, was not possessed by the appointee at that time. In fact, if there had not been a full realization at that time of Dr. Stalker's (Dean, 1879-1900) experience and the difficulties encountered by Dean McNeil, it is doubtful if the appointment would have been accepted. Youth and inexperience sometimes lead persons into attempting things older and more experienced heads would not attempt."

Nevertheless, it was not long before Dean Stange had mapped out plans for future development of the Division, and later in the same year (1909) the Iowa legislature approved an appropriation in the amount of 150,000 for construction of the new veterinary buildings, which were completed in 1912. Dean Stange's first report to the president in 1910 indicated some of his visions for his division's role in the profession: "...the primary object of establishing this division was to afford and opportunity for those who wish to study veterinary medicine and to deal with problems of livestock sanitation in this state. The former, however, is the only mission this division has attempted to fulfill. The benefits of the division should be more far-reaching than this, because we fail in our mission if we become nothing more or less than administrators of medicine to animals."<sup>3</sup>

To improve efficiency in the division, in 1911, Dean Stange organized the division into five departments: anatomy and histology, physiology and pharmacology, pathology and bacteriology, surgery and obstetrics, and theory and practice. The layout of the five buildings that comprised the Veterinary Quadrangle facilitated this division, and to a certain extent, this departmental structure is still in place today.

Dean Stange was a substantial proponent of high entrance requirements for the veterinary curriculum. In 1911, Iowa State became the first veterinary school in the nation to require its entrants to be graduates of an accredited high school. In a speech he gave that year to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), Dean Stange contended, "In order to prevent the country from becoming saturated with semiqualfied veterinarians, higher entrance requirements should be enforced and made attractive to desirable and qualified men, so barring the unqualified, and after admission, the course must be of sufficient

length to permit thorough work without congesting for confusing, but rather aiming to enlighten and student."<sup>3</sup> Dr. Stange's view met with some disapproval at the meeting, especially from those members who were involved with the private veterinary schools of the time. Many of these people relied on high enrollments as a source of income for their schools and believed that more stringent requirements for admission would drastically reduce the number of students enrolled. For many years, the matter was a subject of much debate in veterinary education circles. Twenty years later, in 1931, the division raised its requirements to include one year of pre-veterinary work in college, again becoming the first veterinary school in the nation to do so. The three or four years following Dean Stange's appointment could be considered a true turning point for the Division of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State. With the construction of the new Veterinary Quadrangle and the continued strong support from the College administration and state legislature, the clinic cases, undergraduate enrollment, and number of new programs taken on by the Division increased almost as rapidly as the morale of the students and faculty. In response to an outbreak of Hog Cholera in 1931, Dr. Stange secured appropriations for development of a State Biological Laboratory. The laboratory produced serum for use in Iowa's control of hog cholera and was reported to have saved the state over \$3,000,000 in its first season. Dr. Stange was director of the laboratory and was the main organizer of hog cholera control in the state of Iowa.

At roughly the same time, and maybe as a result of the outbreak, funding was obtained for development of a State Research Laboratory, of which Dr. Stange also served as director. This laboratory is now the Veterinary Medical Research Institute.

Dr. Stange joined the AVMA upon graduation in 1907 and served as a member of many of its committees, including the Publication Committee, the Intelligence and Education Committee, and the Journal, Resolution, Budget, and Policy Committees. He was a member of the first executive board elected after the AVMA reorganized in 1917. From 1913 to 1915, Dean Stange served as the chairman of the Committee on intelligence and Education, and in his report to the convention, he once again defined his vision about the

profession and its educational system: "It is folly to deny that the veterinary profession of the coming years will be what the institutions of this country make it...We need men who are willing to practice a profession and not men looking for a commercial or business career. I venture to say that before our profession can reach the position of importance, trust, and dignity that it should occupy and which we all covet for it, it must mean more than an attractive opening to those who are casting about for opportunities to secure comparatively large monetary gains."<sup>4</sup>

In 1923, the convention, meeting in Montreal, elected him to the presidency of the AVMA. During his tenure, and in his address to the membership as president, Dr. Stange urged AVMA members to dwell on the inner workings of their organization and more on serving the interests of the nation. "This would not only be rendering a service but would bring deserved recognition to the profession. In spite of our scientific advancement...people will continue to require food and their health must be safeguarded. In the final analysis is this not the object of most of our efforts?"<sup>5</sup> Dr. Stange again demonstrated his vision of the future when he told the same audience. "It is my hope to see the time when veterinarians will be employed to keep herds healthy in a productive state, and advise keepers in regard to their care instead of attempting to treat already advanced or mishandled cases, which is often unprofitable to the owner and unsatisfactory to the veterinarian."<sup>5</sup>

Along with the administrative changes he made in the college and the new programs for which he helped obtain funds, Dean Stange also provided the impetus for a number of teaching and student-related innovations. In 1914, funds were appropriated for a Veterinary Practitioners' Short Course, the first of which saw about 70 veterinarians in attendance. The participants were offered lectures, demonstrations and a chance to discuss their experiences in the field with others in the group. In the same year a highly successful experiment was conducted in which senior veterinary students were assigned to work with veterinarians for a two-week period in order to give the students a better sense of a veterinarian's line of work. This concept continues today at Iowa State in the form of preceptorships utilized by senior students. It was Dean Stange who originated

the idea of creating Student Chapters of the AVMA, and during his tenure as dean, chapters were organized in every veterinary school in the nation and in Canada, including the Iowa State Student Chapter of the AVMA, organized in 1927.

In 1930, Dr. Stange served as an official delegate to the Eleventh International Veterinary Congress in London. In the same year, the Bureau of Education of the U. S. Department of the Interior asked him to carry out a survey and report on veterinary education in the United States. As the AVMA Journal would later state, "This was an extremely important assignment and, at the same time, a distinct recognition of the outstanding ability of Dr. Stange in the field of veterinary education."<sup>1</sup> He continued to be an advocate for members of his profession to fully serve the public and as a result, encouraged veterinary schools to increase their enrollments lest the numbers of practitioners decline: "As long as our profession is not crowded there will be no urge for young men with veterinary training to permeate into all the fields which veterinary medicine could best serve."<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Margaret Sloss, who served on the Veterinary faculty under Dean Stange, painted a personal picture of Dr. Stange in a 1948 article, and reveals much about the man when she stated, "He was well-versed in all phases of veterinary work and he accumulated this knowledge by keeping in constant touch with all members of his staff. He spent hours visiting the various departments of his division, not only with heads and professors, but also with the laboratory help making it a point to acquaint himself with the problems as well as with the progress of the work. No staff member ever hesitated to ask his advice or failed to get a direct answer."<sup>2</sup> Dr. Stange spent much of his spare time working at home in his metal and woodworking shop, and with his flower garden and lily pool. He was an avid fisherman and vacationed in northern Minnesota, where he owned a log cabin, which he had a part in building. He was also an accomplished photographer who equipped and utilized his own darkroom.

On April 26, 1936, as construction progressed on a new modern clinic building which he helped plan and obtain funds for, Dean Stange passed away from a heart attack which struck him as he dug dandelions in his yard. At the time of his

death, he was the ranking veterinary dean in the United States. Shortly afterward, on May 6, 1936, the Iowa State Student Chapter of the AVMA fittingly adopted the following resolution:

**Whereas**, Dean Charles Henry Stange was in life and in memory one of the pioneers of veterinary education, a farsighted curriculum builder, a capable administrator, the guiding spirit of great school, and an ever-understanding friend of the student and

**Whereas**, The advancement of his school and profession were always his chief interest, and

**Whereas**, This proposed modern clinic building will stand in actuality as a lasting tribute to his constant and untiring efforts to aid in veterinary progress, therefore, be it

**Resolved**, That the Iowa State College Student Chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association urge that the proposed Veterinary Clinic Building at Iowa State College be named the Charles Henry Stange Memorial Veterinary Clinic, and be it further

**Resolved**, That copies of this resolution be submitted to the Iowa State Board of Education, the President of Iowa State College and the heads of the several departments of the Veterinary Division.<sup>1</sup>

The name was approved as the Chapter had proposed, and the clinic was dedicated on May 17, 1939. Included in the entryway was a life-sized bronze bust of Dean Stange that greeted those entering the clinic. The bust now stands in the entry to the administrative wing of the

new ISU veterinary complex, an improvement to Dean Stange's veterinary medicine program to which he indirectly contributed. The strides the College has made since Dean Stange's passing would not have been possible had it not been for the level of excellence he set and his incredible ability to accomplish the high goals he envisioned.

### Bibliography

1. Anonymous. Charles Henry Stange. *JAVMA*. 1936. 88:79-801.
2. Sloss MW. Charles Henry Stange, D.V.M. *Veterinary Excerpts*. 1948. 8:99-104.
3. Stange CH. *History of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State College*. Ames, IA. Iowa State College. 1929. 22:37, 72-75.
4. Stange CH. Report of the committee on intelligence and education. *JAVMA*. 1924. 68:689-694.
5. Stange CH. Address of the President. *JAVMA*. 1924. 68:689-694.
6. Smithcors JF. *The American Veterinary Profession, its Background and Development*. Ames, IA: The Iowa State University Press. 1963:593.



Steve Servantez