

A Look Back At *The Veterinary Student*

Dr. Robert Norton*

Editors note: This was a wonderful letter to receive because it so nicely commented on the people and situations that produce a publication such as this. It made this staff feel good about not only where the *ISU Veterinarian* is going, but from whence it came.

Half a century may sound like a long time, but memories of the early days of *The Veterinary Student* (the original name of the *Iowa State University Veterinarian*) are as vivid as they are persistent. The staff was proud of this pioneering venture and flattered to be imitated by Student AVMA chapters over the nation.

Pioneering had its hardships as well as its pleasures. The original office was in the southwest corner of the Veterinary Quadrangle above Christian Petersen's sculpture studio. His classic work "The Gentle Doctor" was not yet old and his winsome smile and quiet charm were well taken as the "Vet Student" staff would pass by his door. For us, it was up the iron stair to the catwalk. Frank Ramsey, who had his research project in the cubicle next door down the catwalk, always had a verbal pat on the back and a kick in the pants for whoever would stop to talk. We were young and it was fun.

As for the office, we would now consider it a pain. To call it spartan would be complimentary. The brightest thing about it was the single drop cord dangling a clear glass bulb of sufficient wattage for youthful eyes. The single rectangular room was quite well littered with old issues, galley proofs, rewritten copy and all those good things which make a news office look lived in. A large copy table made of $\frac{3}{4}$ " lumber supported by two structures resembling saw horses was the center of activity. There was another smaller table on which to operate a typewriter. Of course, the magazine didn't own one but I found a used Underwood portable at a bargain (\$15.00) and pounded out

pages and pages of copy. The room was bone chilling cold in the winter and sweltering in the summer. (There were classes all year during WWII.) The bane of our existence was asking proofreaders to not change the article, just read proof. Copyreaders were to make changes, proofreaders read proof only! The ISU Press had only one (old and overworked) linotype man during the war and they objected strenuously to resetting entire paragraphs.

Dr. Fowler was a jewel of an advisor. He let us learn by our mistakes and never scolded us. He encouraged initiative and a balance of articles. He suggested two general types of articles. One type would outline improvement or new perspective on an established medical principle or surgical procedure. The other would break new ground on a new discovery, diagnosis or procedure.

One unforgettable episode was when Dr. L. A. Merillat (*AVMA Journal* editor) critiqued an issue of our beloved magazine and really marked it up, sending the marked copy to Dr. Benbrook who gave it to us. And I mean Dr. Benbrook "gave it to us" tactfully but firmly. From that time we set up a stylebook of sorts to help us avoid our editorial blunders.

In the early days the business manager was blessed with generous advertising from willing supply houses. With the proliferation of student publications nationwide, the drug and supply houses curtailed their support. So, while editorial quality and methods continued to improve, business management has become more of a challenge.

The beginning was fascinating, humble and historic. Much more could be told. It has been not only an asset to the students and the ISU Veterinary School but it has also been a lot of fun. May the *ISU Veterinarian* hang in there not only today but also tomorrow.

*Dr. Norton is a 1944 graduate of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University and a former editor of *The Veterinary Student*.