Commentary

Paul Spears
Mark Allam was a gentleman from another era, with a graciousness, twinkling humor, and style which is rarely seen anymore. Who today could wear a straw boater with such elegance and panache? It was my supreme privilege to have been taught by him, even though he was retired when we met.

I met Mark when I was doing research at New Bolton Center in the 1970's before veterinary school. Some one I had never met appeared at my door and said he had learned I was involved with horses, and would I be interested in learning to drive a pair? As I studied the art of driving carriages from him, I also learned a lot about Mark and the world of veterinary medicine. We used to have long talks while we drove around New Bolton, with Mark telling me all the reasons that veterinary medicine was really an ideal profession for women, given its broad range of applications and its flexibility. Although I had always wanted to go to veterinary school, I had recently encountered some resistance from a different school about my intention to study equine medicine. Mark was there to tell me it wouldn't stay that way, that such prejudice was ridiculous, and of course he was absolutely right.

What I also remember well is that the goal of that first summer was for me to become proficient enough with New Bolton's team that I could take my parents (who were coming to visit at the end of August) for a tour of New Bolton Center in one of the carriages. It was with a great leap of faith that my father, who was inexperienced with horses, was persuaded by Mark's laudatory comments about my skill, to enter the carriage for my big moment. Mark then proceeded to point out to my increasingly nervous parents the important sights at New Bolton Center, such as every place he had ever turned over a carriage on a visiting VIP, or had a runaway, or a crash! To this day, I have no idea if he was just pulling our legs.

From the two summers I drove with him, my life changed profoundly, because of course, I did go to veterinary school at Penn, and at the same time, started a long term love affair with carriage driving, including showing and training, which continues to this day.

As a relative newcomer to NBC, I feel very honoured to have met them.

Karin K. Ewing, D.V.M.
Assistant Professor of Anesthesia