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Alumni Profile: Karreman Family

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The University of Pennsylvania boasts countless family legacies – where students follow in the education and career path as family members before them.

But at the School of Veterinary Medicine, our legacies are a bit different. From small animal care, to human research, to military service, to government oversight of the human food supply, to biodynamic dairy herd management and more, the options for graduating students are abundant.

While parents, children, siblings, aunts and uncles may all earn the VMD degree, each individual can paint his or her own unique career path.

One family, the Karreman family, illustrates this point.

In the Ocean

Born in Woods Hole, MA, Grace Karreman, C’76, V’82, spent her earliest years by the ocean and observing the life within it.

But when Grace’s father, George Karreman, moved his growing family to Philadelphia to pursue a professorship at Penn Medicine, Grace’s connection to the ocean was strained.

Grace entered her freshman year at Penn as a linguistics major. Soon, she realized, however, that she was not so adept at social sciences and later switched to pre-veterinary medicine track. In 1978 she started at Penn Vet. Two years into her studies, Grace attended the AQUAVET program run by Dr. Donald Abt, V’61, GV’65, at Woods Hole, a program that married her passion for the ocean and her education.

After graduation, Grace married and moved to British Columbia, Canada to see the coast, sail the fjords, and begin a small animal practice in Vancouver.

In 1986, the University of Guelph’s Ontario Veterinary College created an aquatics program and Grace began pioneering work with remote fish farms. Here, she applied principles of livestock herd health medicine to farmed aquatics populations through a program she created called Cooperative Assessment of Salmon Health (CASH).

“The most important thing is to think critically and to use first principles of veterinary medicine,” said Grace. “Whether on land or in the ocean, the environment is both life support and a conduit for infection.”

Today, Grace works for the National Aquatic Animal Health Program (NAAHP), Canadian Food Inspection Agency, which looks at the infectious disease management of aquatic populations at a federal level. She is internationally recognized for her work on biosecurity and disease control, including emergency response and day-to-day disease prevention. Her work includes wild and commercially caught species.

On the Land

Hubert Karreman, V’95, M’08, George Karreman’s third child, did not intend to follow in the footsteps of his siblings. Both Grace and Frank (an architect) graduated from Penn. Hubert enrolled at the University of New Hampshire and became a “back-to-the-lander.”

As a college sophomore, Hubert worked with the USDA Soil Conservation Service surveying land for conservation practices. Occasionally, he came into contact with dairy barns and cows, where he was intrigued by the food chain. How does soil affect feed? How does feed affect cows? And how do cows, which ultimately become food sources, affect us?

After traveling to Holland where he learned to milk cows and goats, Hubert came back to New Hampshire to test soil for commercial builders. But then he had
Dear Fellow Alumni,

In March 2011 my term as president of the Veterinary Medical Alumni Society will come to a close.

As I write my last Bellwether letter, I’d like to reflect on the past two years, during which one word surfaced again and again: “Change.” I have, during my tenure, witnessed some of the most dramatic changes within Penn Vet, its alumni, staff and students.

Of course one of the most major impacts on the School has been the challenging economic times, which has affected everyone in some way, shape or form. For Penn Vet, it meant a major state budget cut and decreased case loads in the hospitals, compelling the School to rethink its operations.

Although the process of operational change is difficult, it has resulted in positive enhancements and enthusiasm to move forward.

We have also been faced with finding solutions to the changes occurring within the veterinary profession and ensuring that our students’ education continues to not only be relevant, but be trail-blazing. One area that is especially important to recognize is the growing demand for veterinary professionals in the public health and government sectors. This evolution has led our faculty to find innovative curricula solutions and options in order to attract students to a career path related to food animal and global health, making Penn Vet graduates as competitive as ever.

Finally, alumni involvement has been one of another of the most noted changes I’ve seen during my two years as VMAS president. I’ve seen alumni’s annual giving increase and have taken pride in noting that my peers have also carved out resources and time to support specific priorities and goals. More than ever, we are supporting student scholarships, volunteering time with committees and working with faculty, Dean Hendricks and the Alumni Office. In addition, alumni have been more proactive in fostering relationships with current Penn Vet students by providing externships with students and serving as mentors.

As I sat on the stage at the 2010 Penn Veterinary Medicine Commencement, I was impressed and inspired by the diversity of our students. Penn has always been a leader in diversity recognizing that it is through different backgrounds and experiences that new ideas are borne. This alone – the diversity of the Penn Vet student body – breeds a change in how we think about veterinary medicine – and about how we, as veterinarians, have an opportunity to impact the world around us for the better.

It has been an honor to serve as your president and to be a part of Penn Vet’s heritage and its future. My commitment to Penn Vet and its students, however, is far from over. Beyond this presidency, I will continue to be committed to their success. I hope you’ll join me in that mission.

—CARLA CHIEFFO, V’86 GR’98
PRESIDENT, VETERINARY MEDICAL ALUMNI SOCIETY