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Holding the Tiger by the Tail

Nostalgia

For many graduates between the years 1912 and 1954 the phrase "over there," uttered in a soft, guttural tone and accompanied by a haphazard wave of an arm attached to a hand holding a cigar, conjures memories of only one person—Dr. Frank E. Lentz. "Over there," was Dr. Lentz' stock phrase in reply to any student who had the temerity to inquire as to the location of one of the several hundred drugs then stocked in the pharmacy. Most of us give directions by pointing to the vicinity in which an object is located. With Dr. Frank the wave of the arm—usually from the elbow down—could mean north, south, east, west, or even up or down. At that time, the pharmacy had ceiling-high cabinets equipped with a sliding ladder. Therefore, the student, who wanted something from Frank's endless supplies, was on his own because Dr. Lentz seldom deigned to do any searching himself.

The room was called the Pharmacy but it served many other functions. In one closet there was a stock of candy, chewing gum, cigarettes, cigars, and sundry of other items. This was, of course, a self-serve closet in which there was a box for receiving payment for items taken. In addition to the lure of the "goodies closet" the pharmacy was the source of all sorts of information, and also served as the social center of the school.

At an early stage in his career, Dr. Lentz was recognized as an astute businessman. Students and faculty often sought his advice on such non-academic matters as mortgages, automobile purchases, the strength of the stock market, and the advantages of savings and loan associations. More than this, many senior students looked to Dr. Frank as the best source of information on operating a practice.

Junior students were assigned to pharmacy duty on a rotating basis, and this duty involved many things. Amid the aromatic odors of camphor and the repugnant smell of sulfur, students would concoct the many remedies then in vogue. This included filling thousands of one-ounce gelatin capsules with



kaolin and pectin (for diarrhea), mixing cough remedies containing guaiacol and wild cherry syrup, or preparing tincture of iodine or Lugol's solution. This was before the advent of antibiotics and sulfonamides and dogs suffering from horrendous cases of pneumonia were treated with a foul mixture known as C.C.C. (camphor, cod liver oil, and creosote). This was also the day of the famous novoxil, a silver compound with a shiny black cast, which was the last word for treating diarrhea.

Not all of the students' time was occupied in pharmaceutical duties. There were frequent trips to the pharmacy annex, a house on Pine Street where drugs were stored. On at least one occasion the pharmacy duty involved some pyrotechnics.

A daily visitor to the pharmacy was Dr. Henry C. (Harry) Campbell, Professor of Bacteriology, and like Dr. Lentz, a sharp businessman. Most mornings the two doctors would discourse on the world's financial situation. One spring morning Dr. Lentz gazed out the window on Thirty-Ninth Street and observed that there was a parking space near the archway of the school. Knowing that Dr. Campbell would soon arrive, Dr. Frank directed a student to gather up some wooden crates and build a substantial bonfire in the parking space so that his friend would have a reserved spot!

If all of this is taken to indicate that Dr. Frank Lentz was a "character," and indeed he was, be it known, then, that he was a loveable character.



Although Dr. Lentz, himself, never talked about such affairs, it is a fact that he was a source of financial aid to many needy students. Also, numerous young graduates were able to start practices with drugs and instruments obtained on credit from the good doctor. In addition to academic functions, Dr. Lentz operated a retail drug business. He earned his VMD degree in 1907 and also had a degree in pharmacy.

Dr. Frank Lentz is indeed a legend of a time when bureaucracy had not yet become a way of life, and when many of life's problems were dealt with on an individual basis rather than through a complicated, impersonal agency.

A plaque in the cafeteria area of the Alumni House at NBC recognizes Dr. Lentz as a benefactor of the school. The Frank E. and Harriet Lentz pharmacy in the new Veterinary Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (VHUP), was provided through the generosity of the Lentz family. The inscription on the plaque best describes the roles played by Frank and his lovely wife in the history of this school: "Together they befriended and sustained generations of veterinary students."

Holding the Tiger by the Tail

An animal trainer, when asked how he handled a cage full of tigers, answered, "Very carefully." The same is true about a faculty's approach to changes in teaching methods and the curriculum.

In 1970 the faculty of the School of Veterinary Medicine took a revolutionary step in veterinary medical education by breaking away from the traditional lock-step type of curriculum and instituting a core-elective curriculum. This proved to be a highly effective change—one that has been emulated, in part, by a number of other schools. However, after twelve years, during which there was much piecemeal discussion, it became obvious that

there was a need for in-depth consideration of the curriculum and of teaching methods.

Through October 9 to 11, 1981 about sixty members of the faculty convened for a three-day retreat at New Bolton Center. They were joined by eight students and several experts on education from other institutions. Dr. Cleve Brown represented the alumni and Dr. Wayne Mountain, the Pennsylvania State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners. Thomas Ehrlich, new Provost, spoke of the University's commitment to seek ways of more adequately recognizing good teaching and of developing techniques for improving teaching methods.

Those assembled, spent three days of soul-searching activity in twenty-four different workshops and three plenary sessions. At the

end it was obvious that considerable progress had been made in meeting the two major goals of the retreat: to elevate the priority of teaching, to improve methods of teaching, and to determine the changes that are needed in the core-elective curriculum. Many of the recommendations will now be translated into action. Some changes can be made fairly quickly while others will require considerable study.

The faculty and all of those who participated in this noble effort are to be congratulated. The tigers have been approached and they are being dealt with—carefully.