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The Loyal Red and Blue

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The Veterinary Medical Alumni Society was organized on the day the first class of ten men graduated from the Veterinary School, June 17, 1887. At this time a banquet was given for the first graduates, hosted by Dean Rush Shippen Huidekoper and Dr. William L. Zuill, professor of surgical pathology and obstetrics. Prior to the dinner, the graduates had received their diplomas at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. Following the banquet the Alumni Association was organized, with the adoption of a constitution and a code of professional ethics.

The Alumni Association met regularly on the afternoon of Commencement Day each year, however the minutes of meetings from 1887 to 1901 were lost, and apparently during these years, attendance at meetings was poor. In 1901, Dr. Clarence J. Marshall, president of the Association convened a meeting for the purpose of establishing a "permanent alumni society of the Veterinary Department of the University of Pennsylvania." At this time a new constitution was adopted and the name of the association was established as "The Society of the Alumni of the Veterinary Department of the University of Pennsylvania." Dues were set at \$1.00 per year and by 1903 there were thirty active members. In 1912 a resolution was passed to affiliate the Veterinary Society with the General Alumni Society of the University.

The Society met in various places during the early years. At times meetings were held in conjunction with the Annual Conference for Veterinarians in January and in other years there were special meetings to coincide with A.V.M.A. meetings in various parts of the country. The early meetings were embellished with social activities of various kinds. When the society met at the Veterinary School in June, it was common for the group to march to Franklin Field to view a baseball game. In other years meetings were held at such locations as the H. K. Mulford Laboratories in Glenolden, PA., the Mineral Springs Hotel in Willow Grove, PA., and at "The Orchard," in Essington, PA. "The Orchard" was the home of the Philadelphia Athletic Club, and business meetings at this location were often followed by a cruise down the Delaware River. At some gatherings, a picnic atmosphere prevailed with baseball games and foot races. At meetings held at the Veterinary School the clinical staff presented various demonstrations.

During the 1920s the Society was involved in a very ambitious project of raising funds for an endowment that would establish a number of chairs and which would enable the School to meet all of its operational costs without seeking financial aid from the Commonwealth. The University itself launched a \$45 million drive in 1925 but the School of Veterinary Medicine was advised that it would not share in this and that it should solicit its own funds. Some money did accumulate in a Veterinary School endowment fund but never a sufficient amount to establish chairs or to make the School self-sufficient. In the 1932 meeting it was reported that the fund had a total of \$179,243.93. About \$150,000 of this total represented an endowment that had been set up by Mr. Joshua B.

Lippincott and Mr. Joseph Gillingham, two early benefactors of the School.

The Alumni Society was concerned with the lack of research undertakings, but there was never a concerted effort to develop a research fund. At the 1932 meeting it was estimated that in order to carry out some research and to improve graduate teaching, an additional \$90,000 was needed in the annual budget. This did not happen, and in fact, from 1930 to 1935, during the years of the Great Depression, the budget was cut.

An important committee of the Society was the Departmental Committee which each year surveyed the overall program of the School and submitted recommendations. In 1935 this committee was greatly disturbed by a report of the Educational Committee of the A.V.M.A. in which the School had been placed in a position secondary to veterinary schools at Cornell University, Kansas State University, and Ohio State University. The committee believed that this was the result of a mistake in evaluation and registered a strong protest. Apparently this was successful, because in 1936 the School was placed in a Class A rating which was equivalent to the Schools named above.

At the Alumni Society meetings the dean gave a detailed report of the activities of the School for the previous year. Throughout the reports submitted by Deans Louis Klein and George Dick, there are several common threads. For example it is evident that the School was always in a precarious financial situation. Despite this ongoing situation, both Dr. Klein and Dr. Dick continued to express optimism about the future, and the Alumni Society always gave evidence that it was solidly behind the School. One perceives, however, that there was never a realistic, cohesive plan on the part of the School and the Society to attack the problems. Compared to the current situation, Alumni Annual Giving was quite small, but most years it did increase. For example, in 1927 Alumni Annual Giving amounted to \$450, while in 1928 it had increased to \$800 and by 1935 it was slightly over \$900.

The 50th Anniversary of the Alumni Society in 1937 was marked by a banquet held at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia, attended by 341 people.

In 1938 the C. J. Marshall Memorial Library Fund was established in memory of Dr. Marshall, who died in 1937. Dr. Marshall, professor of medicine, was one of the most illustrious of the early faculty members. Dr. Elias Booth was the prime mover in establishing this fund and through his untiring efforts it continued to grow and was instrumental in the School being able to hire a full-time librarian for the first time in 1942. In 1946 a plaque was placed in the library designating it as the C. J. Marshall Memorial Library. The last mention of this fund in the minutes of Alumni society meetings occurs in 1947 when it was reported that \$40,000 had been raised.

In the 1946 meeting, held in January, as a part of the Annual Conference for Veterinarians, Dr. A. N. Richards, vice president for Medical Affairs, announced that Dean George A. Dick was retiring and introduced the newly elected dean, Dr. Raymond A. Ketsler. In 1952, following the death of Dr. Ketsler in April, the acting dean, Mark W. Allam presented his first report to the Society.

Perusal of the minutes of the Alumni Society provides a running commentary on the affairs of the School. The additions of new members, deaths of older members, the addition and retirement of faculty, and the acquisition of new facilities are all recorded here. The minutes also record the fact that for all of these years and especially in the bad times, the Veterinary School had great support from a loyal body of alumni. The Annual Giving Fund continued to grow each year, and each of the four deans who served during this period of time stressed the fact that these uncommitted funds were vital to the life of the School. Over and above this monetary consideration, the School's prestige grew in relation to the accomplishments of its alumni in many areas, and in times of need there were always those who were willing to provide their particular expertise in dealing with problems.

Medical Alumni Society
1910-1952



Commencement Day—Marching to the Academy of Music circa 1910

