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99 Down, 1 to Go

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99 Down—1 to Go!

Immediately after the death of Dean Raymond A. Kelsler in April 1952, Dr. Mark W. Allam was called to the office of the President of the University and asked whether he would accept an appointment as acting dean of the Veterinary School. He accepted, and served in this capacity until February 1953 when he was appointed dean. Dr. Mark Whittier Allam was the eighth dean of the School.

Although there had been some real progress under Dean Kelsler, the new dean inherited a school which had severe problems. In fact, soon after he was appointed dean Dr. Allam posed the critical question of whether the School could, or should, survive. This question was asked of a small group of faculty, and after much soul-searching a decision was reached that an all-out effort should be made, not only to solve the problems, but to put the School on a pathway to future greatness. Considering the problems at hand, this was a brave decision.

At the time the following were recognized as being imperative to the School's future: The image of the School in the University family must be greatly improved; the School must win the support of important agricultural groups in Pennsylvania and use this, and other support, to obtain increased appropriations from the Commonwealth; the physical plant must be renovated and expanded; the faculty must be upgraded and enlarged; the relationship of the School to its alumni and the private sector needed great improvement. All of this would require considerable time, but under the energetic and astute guidance of Dean Allam a beginning was made in all of these problem areas. An essential feature in the renaissance program would be the wholehearted support of the faculty. In fact, the next three decades were a period in which the faculty came together as a cohesive, productive unit.

Before becoming dean, Dr. Allam had already developed some close, lasting friendships with important individuals in the university. These included Dr. Isadore S. Ravdin, vice-president for medical affairs, Dr. A. Newton Richards, and Dr. Robert Dripps. Through these and other individuals the Veterinary School began to receive support from the University in many areas that were important to its future.

On the advice of Dr. Alexander Webb, an influential alumnus, Dean Allam joined various agricultural organizations, attended their meetings and carried the message that the Veterinary School intended to provide Pennsylvania with the very best in veterinary medical service, research, and education. Many of these groups become loyal supporters of the School, and this, along with Dean Allam's persuasive education of state legislators about the potential contributions of the Veterinary School, led to a progressive increase in Commonwealth appropriations.

Soon after Dr. Allam became dean he was able to obtain some funds from the University to renovate portions of the Small Animal Hospital and by 1955 a Faculty Study Group was diligently at work developing plans for a new basic science building on the Philadelphia campus. This structure, completed in 1963 and known as the Rosenthal Building, not only provided the School with urgently needed space for research, teaching and a library, but also marked a turning point in the School's relationship with the Commonwealth. To construct this building, the Pennsylvania State General Authority, through its General State Authority, provided a \$2.2 million loan. At the time, Dr. Allam recalls, those who had been advocating a veterinary school at Penn State University "backed off."

The matter of recruiting a larger, better trained faculty was a slow, difficult process. Since its inception, in 1884, the School had largely depended upon its own graduates to staff its faculty. While this process resulted in the appointment of some excellent individuals who were the backbone of the School for many years, this inbreeding process also resulted in a faculty lacking individuals with advanced training and rather parochial in its views. Following World War II most veterinary schools began to undergo some pronounced changes; other schools were developing faculties with larger numbers of individuals who had done graduate work and were expanding their research programs. The Veterinary School at Penn suffered by comparison, especially in its research activities. A saving feature at Penn was the presence, in the early 1950s, of a small nucleus of faculty who had begun some major research. Particularly noteworthy were Dr. David K. Detweiler and Dr. John T. McGrath; Dr. Evan L. Stubbs was continuing his outstanding research on poultry diseases. Dean Allam set about attracting faculty from other institutions and also from among Penn graduates who had a desire for advanced training. An important feature in this building process was that individuals on the Veterinary School faculty were able to engage in graduate work in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and in the Graduate School of Medicine. Through this process, and the attraction of individuals who had already established themselves, a strong cosmopolitan faculty was developed.

One essential step in the renaissance of the School was the acquisition of a rural campus, New Bolton Center, in 1952. At that time the Veterinary School was in danger of losing its accreditation because of the very low clinical load of farm animals and horses. New Bolton Center provided the means of answering this problem. More about this in the next issue.

A National Award

Bellwether has won a national award from the Dog Writers Association of America (DWAA). This award, made by the DWAA at their annual banquet and meeting in New York City on February 13, 1983, was in the category of Special Interest Animal Magazines. Last year Bellwether received a national CASE award.



Dr. Mark W. Allam

