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99 Down, One to Go

99 DOWN ONE TO GO

In lieu of continuing our series on the history of the School at this time, we felt it appropriate to present the story of Allam House and the role played by former Dean Mark W. Allam.

Prominent among the buildings on the rural campus of New Bolton Center is Allam House, an historic manor. Situated in the midst of modern, clinical buildings, Allam House is an oasis from the sterile, white-garbed world of veterinary medicine. It is the center of many social occasions and serves as a home away from home for visiting scientists and other guests.

The house was named after the distinguished Dr. Mark Whittier Allam, who made his own history throughout an illustrious career as a veterinary surgeon and as dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania. Asked about the circumstance that led to the naming of the house, Dr. Allam laughed. "They looked at the list of names and mine was at the top. It used to be Hallam; that's the English-Dutch spelling," he noted. In a more serious vein, he added, "It's quite an honor, especially since the house serves such a useful purpose for so many people."

Now semi-retired, the former dean is still actively involved in promoting the Veterinary School and its accomplishments. Dr. Allam and his wife Lila share an interest in preserving the history of Allam House. "The original part of the house, a Swedish log cabin, was built in 1710," said Dr. Allam. "A second addition was built in 1725 and a third wing was added in 1750. The Caleb Pusey family was one of the original owners. Pusey obtained most of the farm acreage that is now New Bolton Center through a land grant from William Penn. There is a legend that they used to feed the Indians through the small windows in the logroom."

Nearly two centuries later, in 1940, Charles A. Higgins purchased the property and restored the twelve-room interior with the help of architect Brognard Okie, who according to Dr. Allam, was well known for his panelling and for the distinctive black iron hardware accenting the rooms.

The property constituting New Bolton Center was acquired by the University in 1952. Until 1965 the upper level of Allam House functioned

as a student dormitory. Offices and the library were also in the house. "A ladies' committee was formed in 1965 to help raise money to furnish and redecorate the Allam House interior," said Mrs. Allam. "It was first chaired by Mrs. Henry B. Du Pont and included Mrs. Joseph Walker, Mrs. John West, an interior designer, Mrs. Molly Harnwell, wife of the former University president, and Mrs. Merwin Jackson."

Among the exquisite antiques found in the Allam House are a tall case English clock from the Colonial period and a signed Duncan Fife desk. Several pieces of furniture were left by the Higgins', including a pair of Windsor chairs and four Jennersville chairs and settee. Dr. Allam pointed to the plaque in the entrance hall recognizing the contributions of Mr. David G. Jones and his wife, Marian Dille, who established the Allam House Preservation Fund. Framed deeds to the house share the walls with paintings by local artists Carol Jones Frye and Frank Jeffries. The house also boasts four Hogarth prints which are located in a parlor known as the "Hogarth Room."

Other outstanding features the Allams pointed out include hardwood floors and brick floors which were built with bricks from the streets of Wilmington, purchased by Higgins. A donkey and hand-carved harness cart from Sicily stand at the living room hearth, one of the many fireplaces in the house. It was donated by the late Philadelphia theater magnate, William Goldman. The colorful caretta is sometimes used by Dr. Allam, an avid horseman and carriage driver, for festive occasions such as the Chester County pre-steplechase events in which he participates.

The University's collection of antique carriages is kept in the carriage house below the manor. Several of the carriages were donated by Mrs. John Ingersoll, Dr. Robert Mayock of Penn's medical faculty, the late William Goldman, and two from the Allams. While driving the horses remains an active avocation for Dr. Allam, administering to them and other domestic animals was his vocation.

Not unlike British colleague and author, Dr. James Herriot, Dr. Allam enjoyed a rural veterinary practice from 1932 to 1945 in Media, where the Allams still live. "In a one-man practice the days were very long, it was not unusual to work a twenty-hour day," said Dr. Allam. "Working long hours meant some sacrifices. I did not see my daughters growing up. Mrs. Allam deserves the credit for raising them."

Reflecting on his years as a veterinary student, Dr. Allam commented on the progress the Veterinary School has made since he received his V.M.D. degree in 1932. "I think back and compare my own education with what the students learn today," he said. "They get so much more. I never witnessed, let alone, did, surgery in my four years as a student. I did get to see a dog euthanized once. We administered to the patients during clinic hours, but there were no surgical exercises at all. As a consequence we helped our neighbors, whose animals needed surgery. In my third year of school, a junior colleague and I borrowed instruments from the clinic and set up a surgery in the garage, where we operated on a neighbor's beagle that had a hernia.

When we realized that we couldn't boil catgut for sutures, I took the G-string from the owner's daughter's violin. Afterwards, when that beagle started to bay, he did it in G."

During the second year of his practice a hospitalization for appendicitis happened to be fortuitous for Dr. Allam. He was encouraged to pursue surgery by physician Dr. Charles Norris, who later introduced him to Dr. I. S. Ravdin, then professor of surgery and director of the Harrison Department of Surgical Research at the School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. While he retained a busy practice administering to the needs of some ninety area farms, Dr. Allam became a part-time instructor in veterinary surgery in 1943.

"We did surgery from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m., which the students did not like," he recalled. "My first case was a Chester County foxhound that had been hit by a car, causing a hernia in the diaphragm. I had to use bellows from the fireplace to stimulate the animal's lungs and circulation because we didn't have an appropriate instrument."

Dr. Allam joined the Harrison Department in 1946, working on a research project in peripheral nerve regeneration. He credits in particular the help of several research associates, Dr. Julian Johnson, since retired, Dr. Brooke Roberts, chief of surgery at Penn, Dr. Paul Nemir, and Dr. Herbert Hawthorne, deceased. Other published research projects included transplantation of a thyroid carcinoma in the canine species.

In his early tenure on the faculty, aseptic or sterile surgery was not practiced in the Veterinary School. Dr. Allam is proud of his effort that helped to pioneer the aseptic surgical procedure in the late 1940s.

"I remember my professor, Dr. William Lentz, who used to roll up his sleeves, lay down his cigar, and scrub for surgery," he said. "In fact, the procedure had to be Dr. Lentz' suggestion before the others at the School would agree to it."

Dr. Allam became dean of the Veterinary School in 1951, a post he held until his retirement in 1973. Returning to the faculty, he held the position of assistant vice president for health affairs until 1977, when he officially retired.

As dean Dr. Allam quickly saw that the Veterinary School was in "dire straits," lacking adequate facilities and modern equipment. He was in office only one week when the purchase agreement for New Bolton Center was signed. In 1953, the Veterinary School was in danger of being closed unless funds were found to keep its doors open, according to Dr. Allam.

"Former University president Harold Stassen wasn't enamored with New Bolton Center and felt that it had been a mistake to buy the Center because it was rumored that the Coatesville steel mills were moving into the area," explained Dr.

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Allam. "So six of us, Dr. David Detweiler, Dr. Charles Roker, Dr. John McGrath, Dr. John Martin, Dr. Donald Lee, and myself, banded together and decided we would stay with the School and make it work. We as a group felt responsible to build the School to acceptable academic heights. This was accomplished. Of the six faculty meeting in 1953, Dr. Lee has retired and I am partially retired. The remaining four are still active.

In the fall of 1952 I was invited to appear before the trustee's committee on hospital and medical affairs to talk about the Veterinary School. Not being aware of what I was expected to report, and since President Stassen had said the new farm in Chester County had infertile soil, I opened a brown bag and exhibited large ears of corn—then presented a blue ribbon for first prize corn raising contest in Chester County. Chairman Orville Bullitt was sufficiently impressed to become a staunch supporter of the rural campus and the School."

The Center continues to grow and thrive through contributions from philanthropic organizations and from animal loving people. The very active and dedicated alumni financed the purchase of three parcels of land and the construction of Alumni House on the campus, Dr. Allam noted.

Another proud accomplishment as dean was the establishment of the core curriculum, which allows students today to choose from a number of elective studies after completing a year and a half of core subjects.

Dr. Allam's list of professional honors and distinctions is long. His awards include: Veterinarian of the Year from both the American Animal Hospital Association and the Pennsylvania Medical Association, 1957 and 1964, respectively; American Veterinary Medical Association Award, 1969; Pennsylvania Veterinary Medical Association's Distinguished Veterinarian Award, 1977; and the University of Pennsylvania Veterinary Medical Alumni Society Citation, 1982.

Since 1977, Dr. Allam has been a consultant on Veterinary School matters. He and Mrs. Allam continue to play an important role in the School's development and public relations activities. While they share an interest in preserving the history of the Allam House, Mrs. Allam has made it clear that Dr. Allam is the horse lover in the family.

Dr. Allam summed up his career accomplishments with a tribute to his wife. "When you're involved in a practice and in administrative life, it takes a strong life partner to make it work."



British Veterinarians Honor Dr. Allam

On Tuesday, June 7, 1983, Dr. Mark W. Allam, former dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine was inducted as an Honorary Associate of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons at the annual general meeting of the College in the Hyde Park Hotel, London, England.

Dr. Allam, accompanied by his wife, Lila, spent twelve very busy days in England and Scotland. Dr. Colin Johnstone, assistant professor of parasitology in the Veterinary School, and a native of England, arranged much of the itinerary for the visit and drove the Allams to various sites. Included in their trip were visits to Sir William Weipers, former dean of the Glasgow Veterinary School (Dr. Johnstone is a graduate of this school), and Dr. E. J. Lawson Soulsby at Cambridge University. Dr. Soulsby is former professor of parasitology in the Veterinary School. While in the Cambridge region the group visited the British Racing Museum and the National Stud at Newmarket.

Dr. Johnstone drove the Allams through beautiful Yorkshire country, a region familiar to

many of our readers who are fans of the long-running television series, *All Creatures Great and Small*. A highlight of the trip was a dinner with Dr. Alfred Wight (James Herriot), his wife Joan (Helen Herriot), and members of the cast of the TV series. These included Drs. Donald Sinclair (Siegfried Farnon) and Brian Sinclair (Tristan Farnon). Also attending was Dr. James Wight, a veterinarian who is engaged in practice with his father, Dr. Alfred Wight. Dinner was held at the Three Tuns Hotel in Thirsk, Yorkshire. Following the dinner Dr. Wight and the others autographed a copy of his newest book, *The Best of James Herriot*. On the following day Dr. Brian Sinclair and the Allams visited some of the other sites depicted in the TV series and eloquently described in Dr. Wight's books.

Lest we forget, Lila Allam had a full day set aside for shopping in London and Dr. Allam bought two hats, a part of his attire for which he is famous!



"THE ARCH"



"ALLAM HOUSE"

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