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Sharing Shaggy Dog Stories

Joan Capuzzi Giresi
University of Pennsylvania

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Sharing shaggy dog stories

by Joan Capuzzi Giresi, V'98

Never in his 40-some years of Main Line veterinary practice did Edward J. Scanlon imagine writing a book. No aspiring Herriot, he.

But triple-bypass surgery three years ago changed that. "It sort of woke me up to my own mortality," he recalls. "I wanted to put these experiences in writing so my children and grandchildren could read them someday."

"Someday" came fast, and Scanlon's four grown daughters persuaded him to publish the veterinary vignettes he scrawled in longhand at his York home. In his just-out *Animal Patients* (Camino Books), Scanlon recalls clients such as newspaper publisher Walter Annenberg and his Kerry blue terriers, the Barnes Foundation director's accident-prone Italian greyhound, Philadelphia Mayor Richardson Dilworth's toy poodle, and the watchdogs who guarded the madam of the "finest house" of prostitution in Philadelphia. Although he treated mainly dogs and cats at his Narberth Animal Hospital, Scanlon, 82, was fascinated by the follies of "the two-legged animals on the other end of the leash."

"When we came out of school, we thought we were veterinarians. But we didn't know we

were supposed to be psychologists, too," says Scanlon, who graduated from Penn's School of Veterinary Medicine in 1945.

There was the mobster who beseeched him to render Philadelphia police dogs "useless for sniffing." The socialite who promised that if her husband's pet ocelot "dies in your hospital,

I will really make it worth your while." And the deadbeats on the "send-me-the-bill Main Line" who had socked him with \$300,000 in uncollected fees by the time he retired in the mid-1980s.

His career took him from doo-wop to pre-hip-hop, but the most cataclysmic cultural shift Scanlon observed was "the attitudinal change of pet owners."

"When I was in practice, it was 'just a dog or a cat,'" he says. "But today, pets have become family members, and owners are willing to go all out to keep them healthy and happy."

An accidental author, Scanlon conveys "the unbreakable ties of perfect love and pleasure experienced by those of us who share our lives with pets."

Joan Capuzzi Giresi is a writer and a veterinarian in the Philadelphia area. This profile originally appeared in the October 15, 2000, issue of the Inquirer Magazine. To read an excerpt online from Dr. Scanlon's new book, visit www.caminobooks.com/animalpatients-in.html.



Join in the Celebration of 125 Years of Women at Penn

With less than a year to go, plans to celebrate 125 years of women at Penn on November 1-2, 2001, are progressing swiftly! The celebration will be a shared experience you won't want to miss. More than 2,000 women and their guests are expected on campus for a fabulous flurry of activities to include:

- A celebration of women authors to be held at the Penn Bookstore unveiling a customized poster honoring Penn women (alumnae and faculty) who have written books.
- Panel discussions featuring notable alumnae.
- Inauguration of the new Women's and Generational Walkway at the 38th St. bridge.
- Gala luncheon featuring internationally renowned Penn alumna and keynote speaker Andrea Mitchell.

Are you a Penn alumna or faculty member who has authored a book? A poster is being created to pay tribute to Penn's women authors to be unveiled during the celebration. Send your book, book cover or camera-ready art of your cover and spine to Angela Scott, University of Pennsylvania, Office of Alumni Relations, 3533 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6226.

For more information, please contact Ms. Scott at (215) 898-7811 or via e-mail at anscott@ben.dev.upenn.edu. The submission deadline is January 31, 2001. Unfortunately, books and/or covers cannot be returned. Don't be left out — help showcase Penn women!