



4-1-1998

Commentary

E. J. L Soulsby
Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior



Dr. Luther Terry, vice president for medical affairs at the University, Mrs. Allam and Mr. Graham French, in 1968.

My first encounter with Mark Allam was some 40 years ago, when, at an AVMA Conference in Denver Bob Marshak was endeavouring to convince me of the great attractions of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, his blandishments were interrupted by a hop-stepping and skipping figure who to Bob's consternation said "Hi neighbour" and twirled his way into the elevator and was gone. "That was the Dean, that was!" it was explained. Though it was to be a further five years before I joined the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, that early meeting made a lasting impression — here was a man of boundless energy and, I was to learn, one with a deep understanding of veterinary medicine and a matching determination to bring veterinary education in the University of Pennsylvania to a peak of excellence unequalled elsewhere in America or the rest of the world. I, and all my contemporaries were caught in the long shadow of this great man, who exuded enthusiasm and confidence and inspired these features in all of us.

As a practicing private veterinarian he knew the importance of strong basic science underpinning the clinical sciences. Perhaps his expertise as a surgeon, which skill brought him to the attention of the Penn authorities, lay at the root of his comprehension of the essential intermingling of science and the practice of veterinary medicine. His encouragement of research, the promotion of the concept of comparative medicine and the advancement of strong specialist programmes of training and clinical practice, all within the ambience of a strong medical environment was to become a template for veterinary education in many other schools in the U.S.A. and elsewhere. The Penn model of science, scholarship and clinical skills was established under the Deanship of Mark Allam and is carried on elsewhere with increasing effectiveness.

But Mark Allam also realized that major programmes cannot be achieved without major financial input from elsewhere than the University or State. To describe him as a genius at raising funds

would be seriously to understate his remarkable capacity for this. Much of it came from years, often many years of "cultivation" of prospective donors but the toil of that was lightened by his horse and buggy rides at NBC, viewed by some as a *faute de mieux*, but was serious stuff resulting in serious donations.

As well as his success as a dean he and his devoted wife, Lila, played an outstanding social role in the life of the School of Veterinary Medicine. Student societies, fraternities, faculty wives groups and alumni convocations were all addressed with tireless enthusiasm. There can be few deans who were or are in such close contact with staff and students and their families. To the thousands of Penn alumni the passing of Lila and Mark Allam, close up on one another, will leave an indelible memory of a couple whose long life of devotion to the Veterinary School will remain as a beacon to all to follow, to emulate and to give thanks that they came this way.

Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior