Winter 1982

On Not Seeing the Forest

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Non-existent; the faculty was small, undeveloped, and inbred; our standing within the University was that of a "poor cousin"; and we had no base of support among agricultural groups, breeding associations, kennel clubs, or the state government. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that, at that time, we could have put all of our friends in a telephone booth!

After some discussion it was decided that rather than recommending a phasing-out process, we should vigorously attack our deficiencies, and develop a plan that would launch the school towards academic excellence. Considering the magnitude of the problems, that was a brave, and perhaps, unrealistic decision. However, under the energetic and imaginative leadership of Dean Allam, and his successor, Dean Robert Marshak, with the help of many individuals and groups, the next three decades became the golden years for the School of Veterinary Medicine. We literally rose from the ashes, and today, we have achieved a level of academic excellence.

Now we have a choice as to how to treat our reputation. We can rest on our laurels, or emulate the many who brought us to this prestigious position and meet the present and future challenges. If we are to maintain our place and prepare for the future it is important for us to develop new facilities and continue to strengthen our faculty. This means creating a Basic Science and Library building in Philadelphia, and an isolation unit, intensive care facility, and biomechanics laboratory at New Bolton Center. As important as these will be, such facilities will have little meaning unless we provide for new professorships and endowed chairs in several disciplines.

A major undertaking? Yes. And its success will depend, in part, on demonstrating an attitude of pride and appreciation for what we have today, combined with a resolve to continue the work started almost thirty years ago. There are many, many ways to show displeasure, but few avenues for making known our positive feelings, on an individual basis. Since this is rarely practiced on a one-to-one basis, perhaps we need to set aside one or more days each academic year to express our good feelings in a more formal fashion. Appreciation Days?

We could do worse, and the forest would not be quite so obscure.