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2003 Alumni Award of Merit Nominations Sought

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Faculty Favorites

The Pennsylvania Gazette, Penn’s alumni magazine, as part of its centennial celebration, asked alumni to write about the faculty member who most stimulated them during their years at Penn. Charles D. Knecht, V’56, wrote about Mark A. Allam, V’32, HON’84, who served as dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine from 1953-1973. An excerpt of Dr. Knecht’s response below was published in the May/June 2002 issue of the Gazette.

“On arrival as first year students in Veterinary Medicine in 1952, we found a new dean who was a recent practitioner and an accomplished veterinary surgeon. Dean Mark W. Allam proved to be a remarkable surgeon, an enthralling teacher, a unique administrator, a venerable fund-raiser and, most of all, a friend to all. I can still see him, although he was dean, hurrying into the lecture room from surgery and tying his bow tie as he lectured on the fine points of surgery. I can recall assisting him at the surgery table where no fault in instrumentation, technique or temperature of the irrigation saline was tolerated.

“In 1955-56, our class decided that faculty should be evaluated by students. As chair of the committee, I was joined by several WW II veteran classmates to present our findings and recommendations to the dean. Although unwarned, he accepted our analyses with grace, thanked us and promised improvements – a first for the School. In later years, Dean Allam developed the benchmark program at New Bolton Center, encouraged benefactors by driving the New Bolton Center horse drawn carriage at weddings and originated the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, in which I was later privileged to gain diplomacy and to serve as president as he did.

“In all of his roles as professor, surgeon, dean, assistant vice president for medical affairs and dean emeritus, Mark was joined by the charming and capable Lila in spreading the friendship of Penn. It is no wonder that so many of the children of my era at Penn are named Mark as is my eldest son. Who else could cook scrapple and eggs in the morning after a good night’s sleep in their home and consider us lifelong friends? Who else would exchange similar scrapple with a few pounds of Alabama pecans yearly without fail? And who could speak so plainly of the love for Penn, only second to the love for Lila, just a few days after her death and nearly hours before his?

“An excellent and memorable professor is not just that knowledge and foster thought, it is he or she who can relate his or her and your experiences to life – all of life, not just the few years of classical education. Dr. Mark Allam lived the life, taught the life and shared the life so that each of his students and later colleagues could carry the light of knowledge and dedication to others.”