



Bellwether Magazine

Volume 1
Number 1 *Fall 1981*

Article 4

10-1-1981

Message From the Dean

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EDITORIAL

A Mandate for Man

Bellwether Readers

In making the commitment to publish a quarterly newsletter of some quality, I hope to rid myself of a long-standing frustration—our seeming inability to find an effective and regular means of communicating the story of veterinary medicine at the University of Pennsylvania to our many constituencies. We are pleased to have fair-share representation in *Health Affairs*, and this will continue, but as the name suggests, *Health Affairs* is concerned with the University's Academic Health Center in its entirety. Of necessity, the space devoted to any one school is rather small, but we also think the circulation of *Health Affairs* is too restrictive to satisfy our growing needs.

Our newsletter may never win a prize, but we shall endeavor to deliver interesting, accurate information on every facet of the school's activities in a format that will invite and hold your attention. Dr. John E. Martin, editor, whom graduates of the '50s and early '60s will remember fondly as a professor of pharmacology and therapeutics, was one of the best teachers in the school.

In preparation for our centennial celebration in 1984, Dr. Martin is also hard at work on a history of the school with particular emphasis on the last fifty years. Looking back to the beginning, to 1884, when the University admitted its first class of veterinary students, Dr. Martin has uncovered data that have a particular fascination, as we prepare to occupy the new teaching hospital in West Philadelphia. He discovered that in 1884, the building that was to house the entire School of Veterinary Medicine cost a mere \$16,900, almost precisely *one-thousand times less* than the cost of the new teaching hospital. In that same year, the Trustees' minutes record an allocation of \$350 to equip the newly-founded school. This original facility stood on what is now the site of the Medical School Laboratory Building on Hamilton Walk, approximately three city blocks southeast of the new hospital.

As between 1884 and now, it is hard to imagine a more sharply contrasting physical and intellectual



environment. Yet, through nearly ten decades, the school's educational philosophy and achievements can be traced unmistakably to those humble beginnings, when a few sagacious men determined to establish a veterinary school in a great center

of humanistic learning and academic medicine.

In this newsletter we shall often cite the achievements of our students and faculty, both individually and in the aggregate, but mainly we hope to acquaint you with the school's remarkable spectrum of activities and to bring to your attention those advances and areas of endeavor which are of particular interest to alumni and to all the constituencies—farmers, horse men, owners of companion animals—served by veterinary medicine.

Robert R. Marshak

Dr. Robert R. Marshak
Dean, School of Veterinary Medicine

No one, of course, has ever been able to fix a point in time when our species emerged. Although the word "impossible" is an anathema to us, I fear we must admit that that search is an impossible one. We are destined never to be certain about where we first appeared or in what moral or intellectual condition. And perhaps that is best. We never stop wondering; we never stop looking; and we will never stop arguing about it. But we will never really know.

We do know rather more, however, about where we are going. We can get a reasonable fix on the end of our story if not on the beginning. Given our technological capabilities and our rate of intellectual growth, in which we are said to be able to double our technology every five years, a task that once took an estimated 100,000 years, we have only two ways to go. We shall become benevolent or we shall become extinct.

Benevolence, more than any other single force in our changing, evolving, turbulent condition is concomitant to our own survival—and a good thing, too. A less sensitive master plan might have come up with an altogether different construction. I, personally, find an endearing imperative in the fact that we simply have to learn to be nice to one another and to our one and only planet in order to survive. It is a little ironic that benevolence had to be mandated, but it has been, and all avenues of logic proclaim it. It is further mandated by logic and time that we take heed rather quickly. Our hate-love affair with ourselves has brought us to the edge without much spare time to do anything but say, "Yes it is so, benevolence here we come."

How then shall we record our own history? Where are the peaks and valleys from those unknown beginnings to that benevolent future? I suggest that evil is not a fair measure of the true human being who will emerge, perhaps, from us. Wars have always been counterproductive dips, and since we usually forget what they are about, or who started them, or why, I propose to you, in the innocence of the non-historian, that we do not count them stepping stones. Rather, I think, the pavement we follow, our path and markers, are moral ones, just ones and, above all, gentle ones. And I do not play Pollyanna here. These are the harsh realities of our survival versus our extermination. In this case, of course, by reason of suicide.

*It is a fact that the moral and gentle things we do outlast the wicked, obscene, bizarre, and dangerous. Quite probably, the third oldest cultural complex we still embrace is pet-keeping. Think about that. First, certainly, came hunting and gathering, a cooperative venture. The second oldest was probably story telling. That, too, was cooperative. What was the third? In all likelihood the beginning of the domestication of the little southern wolf, *Canis Lupus pallipes*, a companion animal. That may have been as long as 150 to 250 centuries ago. And what has come and gone in the interim? Slavery, even if it was a moral disaster, and cannibalism as a ritual and human sacrifice. One of these was a solution to*

Roger Caras, author of this Bellwether editorial



the eternal protein shortage and the other got rid of a lot of undesirables. All of that has gone by the way, however, the companion animal idea has not only lingered on, but has become a very important part of our way of life. Psychological benefits were acknowledged long ago, of course. As a result of studies at this University, as well as at others, it now seems certain that there are profound physical effects as well—things like longevity, our own longevity.

Not long ago I was in Amsterdam with my wife, my daughter, and some friends. I was moved to give them all a brief history quiz. "Who," I asked, "was the prime minister of the Netherlands when the Nazis invaded the low countries? What was his name?" Puzzled looks. "When he was unseated? Who did the Nazis put in his place as the Dutch quisling?" More puzzled looks. "All right," said I with mock disgust, "who was the German general who conquered this part of Europe?" No one knew. "Just two more questions," I promised. "Who was the head of the Gestapo in the Netherlands?" When no one seemed to know, I protested again with mock disgust, "But these were men who had the power of life and death over millions of people—and wielded it without mercy. These were the movers and shakers of their time and they wore shiny belt buckles and daggers. O.K., one last question, who was the twelve-year old girl who remained hidden in a small room here in Amsterdam for two years, kept a diary, and then died in a concentration camp?" The chorus, of course, was immediate. "Anne Frank."

Does that tell us something about power—dark, corrupting, unlimited, and evil? I think it reflects directly on what we were just talking about. It suggests that quiet, benevolent, positive human acts and actions, people with ideas, goals, and thoughts are the high places in our past, present, and future. All the rest of it happens down in the valleys, in the cuts, hollows and draws, the dank places and the dark, the places that real history forgets once you add time.

As might be expected of a race, a species coming from the primitive time of skull bashing and cannibalism and overall brutish behavior toward a mandated, no-alternative place of gentle care and benevolence, we peak at the good and suffer briefly, and mercifully forget the bad. Nature has been kind. Men and women cannot remember pain.

To tie up the loose ends, to package it, as they say in my world of show and tell, I think our purpose in being here today has a great deal to do with everything I have been talking (continued on page 4)