Alvin B. Hoerlein Oral History
Alvin B. Hoerlein, Interviewee
Dennis Maguire, Interviewer

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Part II

Alvin Hoerlein: That's of veterinarians and veterinary medicine. Like I say, they were adaptable, I think, because they had a lot of solid courses. We didn't have four years of pre-vet, we had one. Of course, there wasn't near as much known then as known now. I feel sorry for the veterinary student now.

The class that I entered, which would have been in '36, the fall of '36, was the first class that was selective. They had more applicants than they had space for. I don't know how many applicants they had, maybe one or two for each slot. Now it's four years of pre-vet with an awful lot of applicants for every spot, which means there are a bunch of smart kids, and they are smart.

I wish they could learn more basics. I see this in teaching students in microbiology majors. As long as I talked about DNA and RNA, boy, they were right with me, but if I got to anything complicated like lymphocytes, they didn't know what the hell I was talking about. This again, this is basics and it limits your ability to teach. It's going to limit the, I think, I've not taught in a hospital, an occasional lecture on something I knew something about, but the problem in veterinary medicine or medicine is making a diagnosis. That's really the only problem. Once you make a diagnosis, then you look in the book to see what the hell you do about it, if you can do anything, if you don't know.

The diagnosis is a difficult thing for any kind of a disease situation. The ability to make logical moves in this game, it's called diagnosis, is going to depend on basic knowledge. I don't think you're going to get it out of a machine. You may get a lot of numbers out of a machine and this is, of course, amazing. If you had a physical recently, you get a lot of numbers, but you're still going to have to know what the numbers mean. This is basics, how much glucose you're supposed to have. Is that related to something else that comes off the machine?

In many ways we were lucky. We didn't have this much stuff. I don't think the new curricula are better. I personally feel they're not as good for producing the type of veterinarian that we were producing, that could go into a dairy business or a meat inspection or on and on and on, lab animals. But we'll see.

Dennis Maguire: Would you evaluate the deans for me?

Alvin Hoerlein: Of course, that's very difficult to do. Dean Newsom was the first one when I came. He followed Dr. Glover and Dr. Glover taught us a course or two. He was quite an old man then, and I suppose for his time he might have been a very good dean, but there was no college, either, only a department, that was called a department.
Newsom, he was vice president of the university, of the college, it was only a college then. He was vice president for a number of years and finally president. He was a fine, well-educated man. He did a lot for the college. It's hard to compare him to Rue Jensen. Rue Jensen did more for the college, but it was at a time when the college was going to grow unless you had a nobody there. It's hard to compare deans, I think. Rue Jensen, in addition to being a super researcher, is one of the best teachers I've ever seen. They used to give a seminar, they have a pathology seminar every week, for five or seven years I used to go to that just to sit in and see if I could learn something interesting, when I came back in '59. Rue got kind of ticked off at the way it was being handled, so he said, well, I'll take it next semester. He was dean then, he wasn't head of the department. He took it. He's a master teacher and he knows everything in the world.

Dennis Maguire: Yeah.

Alvin Hoerlein: He's a master of that. He's retired again, saw him a couple of weeks ago. I don't know what he'll do next. That's four or five times he's retired from something. Tietz, Tietz was an unusual person, and I think a good one. I liked Bill real well. He came in at an unfortunate time. He was in the administration, university administration, as a vice president or something, during the '60s. There were some student problems university-wide. You've heard about the '60s. You were probably there demonstrating with them.

Dennis Maguire: No, too young.

Alvin Hoerlein: He has real ability in handling people. I think he caved in, maybe, under veterinary student pressure, but maybe not. I mean the new curriculum. I'm not sold on that at all.

Dennis Maguire: You think it was student agitation that got that started?

Alvin Hoerlein: Yeah, it got it started with Booth and Tietz is the one that really did it. I suspect that Tietz may have kept it from going too far. He may have been a brake on it. Tietz is good. Booth was less effective as a dean than the others, I think. He worked awful hard but it was a hard job. Again, he took the brunt, a lot of the brunt of student activism, growing pains and what not.

Dean Cross, I didn't really know him too well as a dean. He was dean of men when I was in school, the university. Then he was head of our department the year after I graduated, so I worked for him. Then he had retired, resigned as dean before I came back. He was a fine man in a lot of ways. Clever, he could go across the street to where the old student union was, Johnson Hall, and get a pack of cigarettes and come back and have had four worthwhile repeatable experiences on the way with that. What a man. He taught us a course in sheep diseases when I was a senior, and we learned a lot about football.

That's about all the deans, I guess. Bob Phemister, of course, known him for a number of years. I'm out of it, so I have no way to evaluate, but he still has a staff. I haven't heard that anybody's after him.
Dennis Maguire: No.

Alvin Hoerlein: I think Bob will do a good job.

Dennis Maguire: What about colleagues?

Alvin Hoerlein: About what?

Dennis Maguire: Some of your colleagues here at the university. Why don't we talk about a few of them that you feel are notable men or important to the history of the university or to the college of veterinary medicine?

Alvin Hoerlein: Of course, we've mentioned the big ones in the past and recent past. Dr. Faulkner really started the bull farm on the upswing after Dr. Hill. Then Faulkner got into physiology and they brought in Pickett. Before Pickett came, of course, I worked with Ed Carroll and Les Ball very closely. This was real cooperation. Nobody tried to squeeze anybody, everybody tried to help everybody. The college has been like that. In fact, the university has been like that. I've never had any trouble working with animal science people. In fact, been a delightful situation.

This is something you can't direct from up above. A dean can't say, "Now, you two work together," especially during different disciplines. If it comes from below, "Dean, we'd like to work together," then it flies. The association with people at the bull farm was very good for me and for them, I think. I was pretty well out of their hair by the time Pickett came. Pickett, of course, has a tremendous reputation worldwide. Met Pickett in Italy years before he came here.

I guess these are the main people that I've worked with. The pathology department, Dr. Young is, don't quote me on this, but he may be the outstanding neuropathologist. He certainly is in the country and maybe in the world. Maybe he's only second in the world. The, I can't think of his name, in Switzerland, that he's worked with, may be the neuropathologist in the world. He's very capable and he's got a beaut of a thing going right now.

Dennis Maguire: Research project?

Alvin Hoerlein: Yeah.

Dennis Maguire: In the pathology?

Alvin Hoerlein: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Dr. Deem had a big influence on me and I think he more or less built the first corrals and things out at the farm. I used to come back every other summer and visit with my folks, so I'd always visit with him and, of course, we had to go out to the farm. I was out there when they were digging the first post holes. Of course, it's expanded tremendously since that beginning. It was a nothing beginning but I guess everything starts like that. He had a lot to do with the development of that.
Dr. Durrell taught us poisonous plants. He was a famous scientist at CSU. He was in the botany department, later became dean of something or other, don't remember how the department structure was then. He taught us poisonous plants. He'd bring specimens and we had our big notebooks, we mounted these specimens. He was quite an artist. He could draw a flower on the blackboard that was prettier than the flower. Amazing man. He stayed active on campus for 10 or 15 years after he retired. Amazing man.

Dennis Maguire: If there aren't any others that you'd like to mention-

Alvin Hoerlein: Oh, I guess I hadn't sat down to think, but I guess I've hit the-

Dennis Maguire: Did you work with Dr. Chow?

Alvin Hoerlein: Yeah, I respect his knowledge of virology. I've known Charlie for, long before I came here. I can't always understand him. Have you visited with him yet?

Dennis Maguire: Next week.

Alvin Hoerlein: I felt sorry for the students. I've known him so long, we used to play bridge with him. I've known him so long and I still have difficulty understanding him. His poor dumb students, for the first three weeks they're not going to get anything, I think.

Dennis Maguire: I hope I can understand-

Alvin Hoerlein: Fu Ho, no problem at all.

Dennis Maguire: Oh.

Alvin Hoerlein: She's smart, his wife.

Dennis Maguire: Sure, yeah.

Alvin Hoerlein: She's a real smart one, good bridge player, too. So is Charlie.

Dennis Maguire: How would you assess the Department of Pathology and the Department of Microbiology, as it is now compared with as it was before the split?

Alvin Hoerlein: I think both departments benefited from the division when it happened. How they might compare with other departments around the country is kind of hard to do from here. We have good people in both. I'm sorry we don't have more good veterinary microbiologists. There's only three now. Cholas, he's in the department, he's public health and Reif, the same. But Collier and Chow and Miller and Hoerlein are gone and they've not been replaced. Carlson is gone. He was a replacement for Chow, but he's gone. Parks was a replacement for Chow and he's no longer in the department. Fortunately, Collins and Pierson are in the department as veterinary microbiologists and I think they're both good. This used to be the strength of the department and part of this is money again and tradition, and tradition. We got money from the Experiment
Station because we'd always gotten money from the Experiment Station, but the Experiment Station didn't have all that much money. We also went out and got NIH grants.

Dennis Maguire: Yeah.

Alvin Hoerlein: Which are hard to come by now.

Dennis Maguire: Why?

Alvin Hoerlein: They don't have much money.

Dennis Maguire: Feeling the effects of inflation like everybody else? What do you see as the future for veterinary medicine?

Alvin Hoerlein: Veterinary medicine has been wonderful to me. I don't know where I could have been as happy. Worked hard, awful hard and worked 40-hour weeks when I was on vacation. It was a time of opportunity. There weren't as many veterinarians and I think I was fortunate. Over the years I've changed places many times, but I'd like to think they were always an improvement. I dropped a few thou when I came to Colorado from the University of Illinois, but I'm glad I came. If a young man would ask me today if he should go into veterinary medicine, I don't know just what I'd tell him, but I'd sure be more reserved than I would have been 20 years ago. An awful lot of veterinarians coming off the assembly line and they're filling, the numbers are increasing because the attrition is not that great. The veterinary classes were very small before 1940. The old men are going to retire, of course, but there weren't very many of them compared to what's coming off the line now.

So I think that it's going to be a more difficult future for them. If they really want to work at it, they can certainly be productive and help people. I think that's all that veterinarians do anyway, is help people. If they do anything else, they've probably got a poorer set of goals. If you treat somebody's dog or cat, you're treating the people. If you treat somebody's cow or pig, you're helping the farmer, which is people. Chickens, on and on. If they can keep this as goals, I think they can be very happy. If it's dollars and cents, I think they won't be so happy, and there are going to be less dollars and cents in veterinary medicine than there would have been had they been 20 years earlier.

Dennis Maguire: Do you agree with the Arthur D. Little study?

Alvin Hoerlein: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I may have influenced it a little bit in that the AVMA was tempted to do it in-house and I was on council then and I, and many others, I'm sure, who said, well, don't do it in-house because then nobody will believe it and it won't be a good survey. They got the best there is, cost them a little dough, but I think their survey is roughly what I've been saying.

Dennis Maguire: Where could I find this study?
Alvin Hoerlein: The dean must have it or know, or talk to our librarian. What's her name? Johnson? Who's the veterinary librarian?

Dennis Maguire: Used to be Bergland, Elsie Bergland.

Alvin Hoerlein: After that now. Elsie's been gone 20 years.

Dennis Maguire: Yeah.

Alvin Hoerlein: We have a librarian over in the big library.

Dennis Maguire: Oh.

Alvin Hoerlein: Can't think of her name. Anybody will know, but the dean will know where this is available. I'm sure it's available in his office, probably, should be.

Dennis Maguire: Okay, I guess that's about it unless you've got anything else that you're [inaudible 00:24:01] to say.

Alvin Hoerlein: It's a wonderful profession. I've loved it. I've worked with a lot of people, especially the farmers and ranchers and herdsmen and technicians. It takes a lot of people to get a lot of work done, but it's been great.

Dennis Maguire: No regrets?

Alvin Hoerlein: No regrets. Yeah, sure, a few things I'd do differently.

Dennis Maguire: Yeah.

Alvin Hoerlein: Not regrets, really. You're too late smart.

Dennis Maguire: Thanks, Dr. Hoerlein, for the interview.

Alvin Hoerlein: What-

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