

From Boston to the Los Angeles County milk shed

A rather long chain of events led me to Ohio State University in 1934 to enroll in the College of Veterinary Medicine. The first link in the chain was forged by circumstances beyond my control.

I grew up in Boston, living in an apartment over my parents' grocery store. One of my most vivid childhood memories was during the Boston police strike, when I walked into a holdup in my parents' store and foiled the attempt with my fearful screaming. Instead of aiming the gun at my father, the robbers aimed their gun at me and pulled the trigger. I was shot in the leg and, according to newspaper headlines, was declared a hero for saving my father's life. A few years later, my father died when he was hit by a car in front of our store. My mother decided that a California atmosphere would be a better place to raise a teenager, so we packed our belongings and journeyed to Fresno. My mother and I went to live on a farm with my sister and her family. During this time, the most important person I knew was the veterinarian who came to the farm as the dairy inspector. He became my idol, and the first seed was planted in my desire to become a veterinarian.

In 1932, while enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley, I worked in a small dairy and bottling plant in Marin County, just north of San Francisco. The depression was in full swing, and jobs were hard to find, so I considered myself fortunate to earn \$50 a month, plus room and board. My position was laboratory technician along with operating the bottle washing machine and other odd chores. In 1933, after I married my high school sweetheart, Isabelle, I was given a pay raise to \$75 a month plus two quarts of milk daily.

Early in 1934, I applied for the position of dairy inspector for Marin County, but a veterinarian was appointed. A similar experience in Los Angeles County convinced me that I needed more schooling to achieve my goal.

Beginning my career

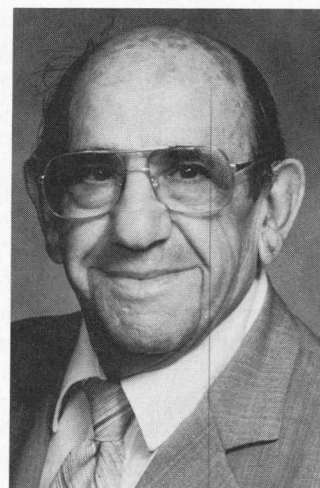
Packing up our few belongings in my model-A Ford, my wife and I traveled to Columbus, Ohio to enroll me in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Ohio State University. Although my wife had teaching credentials, married women were not being employed during the depression. We managed to make ends meet by taking various jobs, being a maid and butler, and renting out rooms in our apartment.

After graduation in 1938, I was still interested in the dairy inspection program, so I took the civil service examination in San Francisco. Meanwhile, I pursued other opportunities and was hired as a resident veterinarian for Reliance Dairy Farms, located in the Los Angeles County milk shed. I was paid \$20 less than the milkers, who received \$120 a month. Nevertheless, I considered this position to be the best internship possible for a new graduate.

Through the 40s and 50s, the Los Angeles County milk shed had a growing number of dairy cattle in production. Unlike other dairies, the cattle were kept in corrals, feed was trucked to the farms, and cattle were fed in feed bunks. There was no grazing in pastures. When Drs. Guard and Donham visited me from Ohio, they were amazed at how the cows were kept in sectioned-off holdings.

Opening a practice

After working with Reliance Dairy



Dr. Charles Ozanian

for 5 years, I learned that the three veterinarians in the area were all on the verge of retiring. My thoughts turned to establishing a permanent office and a small animal clinic. The town of Bellflower, Calif. was in a central location and largely undeveloped, with many open spaces available. The first phase of the Bellflower Veterinary Hospital was dedicated in 1945, with many of the guests remarking that now the community had a pet hospital but no human hospital. One of my early colleagues was my classmate, Dr. H. I. Ott, who had just returned from the Philippines, surviving the Baatan March and being held as a prisoner of war. We spent many hours together while he shared with me the harrowing tales related to his confinement.

Only a few antibiotics and sulfonamides were available in those days and we used whatever medication was supplied to us from the pharmaceutical firms. Many cattle were sent to slaughter because diagnostic and treatment techniques were inadequate. Mastitis, brucellosis, and tuberculosis were prevalent in many herds. In the early 50s, Dr. Oscar Schalm visited me to observe the mastitis control and procedures in testing. I was using somatic cell counts performed by microscopic examination of the milk, which was time-consuming and laborious. Dr. Schalm simplified the test by introducing his method, which soon became known as the California mastitis test.

As treatment for the most prevalent diseases improved, the demand for artificial insemination and pregnancy diagnosis increased. Because of the demand, the basis of my practice became pregnancy diagnosis and I spent a great deal of time sharing my expertise across the state. When the first artificially inseminated calf was born, a Los Angeles newspaper featured a photo of me with the calf with a caption that said I was passing out cigars to celebrate the calf's birth. Pregnancy diagnosis continued to be the strongest point in my practice because of the

type of dairy farming in the area. I accepted requests to present papers on bovine subjects to the California, Nevada, Arizona, and Intermountain Veterinary Medical Associations. Several associate groups were organizing in veterinary medicine, so with a group of bovine practitioners, we organized the American Association of Bovine Practitioners. As the reproductive and fertility program in my practice evolved, Dr. John Kendrick introduced it into the curriculum at the University of California at Davis as part of the herd-health program.

Following other interests

By the end of the 50s, the practice had grown until I had four other veterinarians on the staff and had built additional space onto the original building. In the early 60s, encroachment of housing and business developments forced the dairies into other areas, a distance too far to travel, so I retired from the practice in 1967. I leased the veterinary hospital and enjoyed my leisure by traveling to places around the world. Property values had greatly increased and we decided to develop the empty area on our property by building 28 row houses and a new home for ourselves. So while retiring from the veterinary practice, I assumed the role of landlord, which kept me busy for almost 25 years.

Before retirement, community service had become an important component of my life. Drs. R. Smith, L. McBride, A.M. Scott, and I would often join Dr. J.T. Tyler in traveling to the state conventions in Davis. Dr. Tyler, who had earned his MD degree, then his DVM degree, was our guiding light. He would lecture to us "young ones" about the value of serving the profession and community unselfishly. His fatherly advice made an impact on me. My involvement in community organizations and activities, including 4-H, Boy Scouts, YMCA, Girl Scouts, Red Cross, Kiwanis, career days, and science fairs, brought his philosophy to

light. I derived great joy and satisfaction in returning support to my community. My last public service was as the veterinarian on the Los Angeles County Certified Medical Milk Commission from 1967 to 1988 and as the Chairman of the National Medical Milk Commission from 1985 to 1990.

The veterinary profession has given me wonderful opportunities to serve others. My involvement as secretary, treasurer, program chairman, membership secretary, and president of the Southern California Veterinary Medical Association began in 1940 and continued until 1955. From 1955 to 1967, my service to the California Veterinary Medical Association included membership secretary, ethics committee chairman, program committee, and president. In 1963 I was elected to the Judicial Council of the AVMA, re-elected in 1967, and served until 1971.

The veterinary profession has not only provided me with a meaningful life, but has enriched me with wonderful colleagues and friends. My family and I have all benefited from these wonderful friendships and are grateful for the many opportunities the veterinary profession has given us.

Dr. Ozanian wrote his "Reflections . . ." before he passed away in December of 1991.

The Southern California VMA (1971), the California VMA (1973), the AVMA (1978), and the Association of Bovine Practitioners awarded him Honorary Life Membership awards. In 1971, The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine presented him with the Distinguished Alumni award.

Retired veterinarians are encouraged to contribute to this feature. Dissertations should be concise. Contributors should focus primarily on noteworthy professional experiences and observations. Persons interested in contributing should contact the editor-in-chief for details.