Celebrating Women’s History Month and this amazing profession

March marks Women’s History Month, a time for me to reflect on the women who paved the way for me and so many of my veterinary colleagues in this noble profession.

I celebrate the achievements and accomplishments of those who had a much tougher path than I did, and I share my gratitude for the women who came before me and those I meet today who continue to inspire me. I have often thought, “How did I get lucky enough to be part of this amazing profession and call all of these amazing people my colleagues?”

This profession has been very good to me, thanks in no small part to the women who have broken barriers and paved the way for all of us. These influential women have contributed immensely as clinicians, specialists, researchers, educators, public health officials, and business owners. As AVMA president, I must give a shout out to the four women who preceded me in this role and inspire me to always do my best. And I must give credit to the many women veterinarians I meet who are leading their local and state associations, and species and specialty organizations. You all are making significant contributions!

With all the gratitude I feel, I must say that the path has not been without challenges. Striking a balance between my professional demands and my family responsibilities seemed like an endless battle at times, with sacrifices made at both ends. I sometimes felt like there was no balance and often faced the difficulty of fighting through the emotions of overlooking my family for business or vice versa. I also had to fight through the frustration of either not being taken seriously in business or facing criticism and negative perceptions when making tough decisions.

As I reflect on all the memories of my career, I am reminded of one of my favorite quotes, “Pressure is a privilege, and champions adapt.” All of us have the privilege of holding the title of veterinarian and the associated pressures that go along with it. I know you are all champions, and we will adapt!

In conclusion, whether we think about a pioneer in the profession or the contemporary leaders of our day, these women have advanced veterinary science and continue to inspire the next generation of veterinarians. As we celebrate Women’s History Month, let us all take a moment to reflect on the indelible mark that women have made in this amazing profession.

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I want to hear from you. Please reach out to me with your comments, questions and concerns at presidentscolumn@avma.org.