# Comments on the Occasion of the Dedication of the 80th Annual Meeting of

The Conference of Research Workers in Animal Diseases

# November 7-9, 1999

By Bernard C. Easterday

Thank you, President Salman, and council members for selecting me for this wonderful honor. I am honored and humbled to be selected to join the 25 honorees before me. As research workers in animal diseases we benefit from and contribute to a tradition that began a little more than 79 years ago. Fourteen men met on May 3 and 4, 1920 at the Hotel Sherman in Chicago because they believed that it was important to gather to exchange ideas and information on research on animal diseases that was in progress. That was the first meeting of the Conference of State and National Research Workers in Animal Diseases, as it was first called. The name changed over the years and the name as we know it now was established in 1955.

The idea for that first meeting is attributed to Dr. R. A. Craig from Purdue. In addition to Dr. Craig, the others in attendance were Drs. Beach and Hadley, Wisconsin; Giltner and Hallman, Michigan State; Van Es, Nebraska; Schalk, N. Dakota; Stange, Iowa State; Dimmock, Kentucky; Graham, Illinois; Fitch, Minnesota; Dorset, the USDA and the Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station at Purdue, Professor Woodbury. It has been my honor to have known two of them, Dr. Giltner and Dr. Hallman and to have been a faculty colleague of one, Dr. Beach.

Topics on the agenda of that first meeting were: tuberculosis and the tuberculin test; hog cholera; swine influenza; suipestifer infections in swine; abortion in cattle and horses; proprietary remedies and bacterins; and diseases of poultry. It is interesting to note that all of these or closely related subjects can be found in the program or presentations for this year (1999). In addition to those topics for discussion, it is recorded that the principal item of business for the meeting was the drafting of a constitution and by-laws to govern the composition and operation of the Conference and set forth its objectives. The objectives stated in the first Constitution of the Conference were:

1. Promote progress in animal disease research

2. Encourage critical review of current projects

3. Establish mutual understanding and coordination among workers

The idea for the Conference probably arose from the “Van Es Dinners”, one in 1918 and one in 1919. Dr. Van Es (Nebraska) had taken it upon himself to invite a group of his colleagues to dinner where, “with good wine and cigars, they could carry on more or less scientific shop talk”. He was firm in his belief that much good could come from a forum where scientists could sit together and “pull out the stops”. The Van Es Dinners took place during the US Livestock Sanitary Association (now the US Animal Health Association) meetings. I have taken this account of the beginning of the Conference from the “Historical and Reminiscent Review of the Conference of Research Workers in Animal Diseases” written and presented by Dr. H. C. H. Kernkamp (“Kernie”) (Minnesota) at the 43rd meeting on Nov. 26 and 27, 1962.

The constitution and by-laws have changed several times, but it is clear that the original objectives, established in 1920, remain. The meeting has remained in Chicago, this hotel being only the seventh location during the 79 years. There have been only 11 secretary/treasurers, now designated Executive Directors, during the history of the Conference. Seven of them served before 1950. Since that time the Conference has been served by only four dedicated individuals, Drs. Karlson, Weber, Kohler and Ellis. While the officers, council members and Conference members are vital to the success of the meetings and the longevity of the Conference, it is clear that these meetings would not happen without the dedication of the Executive Directors.

From the period 1920 through 1961 there were 800+ papers presented. In 1961 there were 80 papers, in 1969 there were 172 papers, in 1974 there were 162 papers and this year (1999) there are 230 papers and 139 poster presentations listed in the program. The Conference was first divided into sections in 1957.

This has been a great time for me to review and reflect on my association with and participation in the Conference. I attended for the first time in 1955 and was inspired by the many notable animal disease investigators of the time. I became a member in 1961. It is miraculous that I could find some of my old files and recall many of the experiences of my 38 years of membership. In 1969, I became a council member. It has been great fun to review the programs and recall papers given by many colleagues.

It was my honor and pleasure to serve as president for the 1974 meeting. During the Council meeting that year we established a committee, Chaired by Dick Wescott, to “explore the feasibility of establishing an award for the most outstanding paper presented by a graduate student”, a tradition that continues and has been expanded. It was also that year the Council supported the recommendation for dedicating the meeting to one of the Conference members. It was my great pleasure and honor to present the first dedicatee, Dr. William R. Hinshaw (mentor, colleague and friend). As part of my dedication remarks, I said: “Through the years the need for exchanging ideas and ‘sifting and winnowing’ has remained and this Conference continues to provide the forum for this exchange. While our numbers have grown, and there have been changes, the original intent and spirit prevail. Many of us had our first scientific meeting experience here as a graduate student or a postdoctoral fellow – to attend and listen or to give our first paper at a national meeting. We were excited (maybe very nervous) about this opportunity because there would be those in the audience that were well known and respected and who were not bashful about asking difficult questions. They were names to us – authors of papers that we had read – and people that our major professor knew on a first name basis.” It was also my honor and privilege to present the 1993 Dedicatee, Dr. E. O. Haelterman, friend, colleague, and veterinary medicine classmate.

The continued success and invaluable contributions of the Conference constitute a great tribute to the vision of those 14 scientists who met in 1920 to establish the Conference. In space program words, “The Dream is Alive”. I found in my files a hand written letter from Dr. Hinshaw – I quote, “I thank you and others who were responsible for the honor of my being chosen for the dedication of the 55th meeting of the CRWAD. As I told you, there are others who could qualify for the honor, but I do appreciate your selecting me.”

Like Dr. Hinshaw, I know that there are many deserving of this recognition. Thank you for selecting me for this very special recognition and honor.