



Bud Christopher Tennant

November 10, 1933 – November 16, 2016

Bud Christopher Tennant, James Law Professor of Comparative Medicine, had a distinguished career as Professor at the College of Veterinary Medicine for more than 41 years. Dr. Tennant achieved remarkable success as both a clinician and as a comparative medical researcher. Bud's success in comparative research likely equals that of any veterinary school faculty member in North America. Related to his long-standing and highly successful research using woodchucks as a model for human viral hepatitis, he was the 2016 recipient of the highly prestigious Baruch S. Blumberg Prize awarded by the Hepatitis B Foundation.

Dr. Tennant was born, November 10, 1933, in Burbank, California and was raised in the western part of the San Joaquin Valley where his father was a foreman in the Kettleman oil fields. Dr. Tennant spoke frequently and fondly of his parents, and of his many adventures growing up in the Kettleman North Dome Association community. He also frequently told the story about his parents growing up in Kansas a very short distance from each other but not knowing each other until dating age. Bud attended elementary and high school in nearby Avenal California. He began his pre-veterinary education at San Jose State University but transferred and received his undergraduate degree from the University of California at Davis. In 1955 Bud enrolled in Veterinary School at the University of California, Davis and received his doctorate of veterinary medicine (DVM) degree from U.C. Davis in 1959. He was extremely proud to be a U.C. Davis graduate (two times) and was particularly fond of the many life-long friends he made there. He and his wife, Priscilla, would frequently return to Davis for Veterinary School class reunions. In 2016, shortly before his death and while being treated for pneumonia in Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, New York, Bud's classmates who were attending their 57th DVM class reunion called him from Davis to pass along their best wishes and to express their fondness for him. This call apparently brought tremendous joy to Dr. Tennant and raised his spirits beyond what medicine could do. Following veterinary school graduation, Dr. Tennant was for one year a Standardbred equine practitioner in California and Ohio.

From 1960-1961, Bud served as a 1st Lieutenant in the United States Army Veterinary Corps where he was assigned to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration project. The following year he conducted research on wound healing at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Washington, D.C. and later in the Germfree Research Program at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. While he was a 1st Lieutenant at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, he met dietitian Captain Priscilla Trayers, who was a higher-ranking officer than Bud. Priscilla and Bud married in 1963 and Dr. Tennant was always quick to tell the story that his life-long partner was someone who literally outranked him!

After completing his Army commission, Bud returned to the School of Veterinary Medicine, University of California at Davis in 1962 where he was a faculty member in Large Animal Medicine for 10 years. In 1968-1969, Bud completed a Research Fellowship in Medicine in the Gastrointestinal Unit at Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital and this experience helped provide the groundwork for Bud's 40 years of work in comparative gastroenterology and hepatology. In 1986, the School of Veterinary Medicine at University California-Davis awarded Dr. Tennant the U.C. Davis Alumni Achievement award in recognition of his many contributions to both veterinary medicine and medical research.

The Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine was fortunate to recruit Dr. Tennant and his family to the Ithaca campus in 1972, where he was a faculty member for more than 42 years. During this time, he was a beloved teacher, a highly respected large animal internist, and a world-class comparative medical researcher. At Cornell, he was recognized as an international expert on hepatic and intestinal diseases of horses, cattle and sheep. In 1973, Bud was named a charter member of the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine. In 1999, he received the most prestigious award that this college offers, the Robert W. Kirk Award for Personal Excellence. Dr. Tennant was the first large animal internist to receive this award.

Dr. Tennant's research during his years at Cornell focused on comparative intestinal and hepatic disorders. His laboratory at Cornell was responsible for the identification of the woodchuck hepatitis virus (woodchucks are also known as groundhogs, *Marmota monax*) and for the development and decades-long operation of a woodchuck breeding colony. The humble woodchuck proved early-on to be a near perfect animal model for viral hepatitis research and Bud's program provided woodchucks to hepatic researchers world-wide. During this time, he became one of the best funded researchers on the Ithaca campus, receiving uninterrupted support from the National Institute of Health and National Institute of Infectious Diseases from 5/27/1985-9/29/2010. The research performed in his laboratory led to numerous discoveries related to the pathogenesis, diagnostic testing and potential treatments for human viral hepatitis. At Dr. Tennant's memorial service in 2017, Dr. Timothy Block, co-founder of the Hepatitis B Foundation and the Baruch S. Blumberg Institute, noted that almost every drug currently available for the treatment of hepatitis B was developed in Bud's woodchuck model. His research and woodchuck colony continue today at Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York.

Bud was considered by many to be the quintessential faculty member. He was a worldclass scholar and a highly productive researcher who authored or co-authored over 200 scientific publications, numerous textbook chapters and many invited publications. He also served as

editorial reviewer for Nature Medicine, Hepatology, Journal of Virology, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, and the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association. Bud served on a great many campus-wide committees at Cornell and represented Cornell on numerous state, national, and international committees on science and education. In 2002, the New York State Veterinary Medical Society acknowledged Dr. Tennant for his outstanding veterinary service to New York State. Bud took very seriously his responsibilities to colleagues and to the College of Veterinary Medicine. He always attended seminars given by candidates interviewing for faculty positions; he believed that helping select new faculty members was one of his most important duties. His attendance at the veterinary college faculty meetings approached 100% and, in those meetings, he was famous for listening carefully to all sides of any discussion, commenting when needed, but always upholding strict academic standards and integrity, even when doing so was the hard choice.

For many years, Bud knew almost everyone in the veterinary school. He supported everyone around him in any way possible through re-appointments, promotions, and whatever other challenges life presented. Dr. Tennant was extremely faithful to Cornell University, often crediting this to his father who taught him the importance of being faithful to a good employer. Bud is a much-missed mentor for everyone who worked with him at Cornell, including his technical staff, students, veterinarians, Ph.D.s and MDs; he was particularly well-known throughout his entire career as a very strong advocate for and trusted mentor to faculty women. A bronzed plaque with his photograph can be found at a main entrance to the veterinary college and reads; "A friend to all and mentor to many". This plaque reminds those of us fortunate enough to have known Bud of his kindness, great sense of humor and enthusiasm for science and life-long learning.

In the fall of 2013, upon retirement from the College of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Tennant was awarded Emeritus Professor status. However, as might be anticipated, Bud maintained his lab and continued working. He just didn't get paid any more! As retirement neared, Bud returned to equine medical research where his research team discovered the cause of serum hepatitis in horses; a disease known as Theiler's disease that was first reported in South Africa in 1909. The etiology of Theiler's disease remained unknown for more than 100 years until the team's discovery of an equine parvovirus, which is named after Dr. Tennant: Equine Parvovirus Hepatitis strain BCT1. Bud was delighted both professionally and personally to participate in the discovery of this virus, feeling that his career, which had started more than 50 years prior working with horses, had come full circle.

Dr. Tennant was not only a highly successful clinician, teacher, mentor, faculty member and researcher; he was also a truly classic gentleman and, above all else, was a man of the highest integrity. In spite of his many professional responsibilities, he always made time to chat with colleagues, students and co-workers. He loved informal hallway communications about family, friends, sports, medicine, music, and the arts and was passionate about all of them. He had many stories to tell and one of his favorites seemed to be about his experiences fishing in Alaska with his brother Robert. His friendly hallway chats were so frequent and obviously enjoyable to him that many were amazed how he was able to accomplish as much as he did. He always had time for yet another story, anecdote or conversation.

Bud's greatest loves, though, were his wife, children and grandchildren. Bud is survived by his beloved wife of 53 years, Priscilla. He frequently spoke of the wonderful life he had being a husband to Priscilla and a father to his son, Christopher, and his two daughters, Priscilla Anne and Carolyn. He truly enjoyed being a husband and father and shared many wonderful stories about their family experiences and adventures. In later years, he and Priscilla frequently visited their grandchildren to spend time watching and encouraging each one as they participated in sports, art and music. We suspect there were lots of stories from Granddad also mixed in!

Bud C. Tennant was a man of very tall stature and a man with an equally tall list of accomplishments. His loving heart, warmth, humor and compassion, along with his impeccable attire (which always included a bow tie and a coat) will be sorely missed. Bud was the archetypal "gentleman and a scholar", and will always remain so in the hearts and minds of those with whom he worked and loved.

Written by Thomas J. Divers and Charles A. Hjerpe

Editor's Note: Professor Tennant passed away in 2016. Unfortunately, a memorial statement was not prepared at the time, so we've included his tribute in this issue.