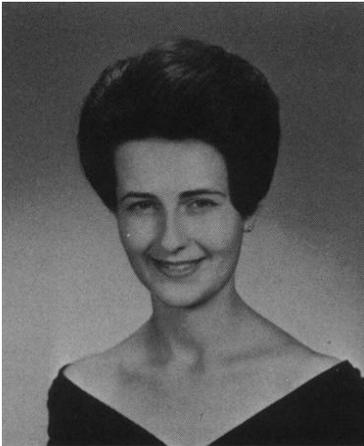


**A Biography and Interview with
Linda Dixon Reeve (Peddie), DVM**

Class of 1965, College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell University

Author and Interviewer: Dr. Donald F. Smith, *Austin O. Hooey Dean Emeritus*

Photograph from the 1975 edition of *The Cornellian*.



Linda Dixon Reeve (Peddie) 1965

The Only Woman in her Class

During the early decades of the 20th century, Cornell accepted more women than other U.S. veterinary colleges. Many of these early women DVM's had distinguished careers that were consequential in advancing veterinary medicine during the formative years of the profession.¹

However, during the late 1940s, Cornell's priority shifted to support the educational needs of men returning from WWII, and the large number of male applicants left little room for women. The preference for male candidates was reinforced by strictly adhering to the land grant culture that advocated for agricultural priorities in faculty hiring, curriculum content and career placement for graduates. Women, it was argued, were less likely than farm boys to aspire to a career in large animal practice.

The gender bias continued through the 1960s when only two positions per class were typically reserved for women. The Admissions Committee, under the authoritarian hand of Associate Dean A. Gordon Danks,² served as gate-keeper.

By late spring each year, two stacks of admission folders formed on the desk of Dr. Danks' secretary. The larger group was of male students whose files had been selected from the 800 or so applicants, and from which approximately 200 would be interviewed. The other stack—smaller, but still sizable—contained women candidates from whom about eight would be identified for interview after the process for screening male candidates had been concluded. The final class would be comprised of approximately 58 men and two women.

It was in this environment that Linda Dixon Reeve, an academically-gifted student from the eastern end of Long Island, sat awaiting her interview in the spring of 1961. Linda came from a farm background where she was actively involved in 4-H activities before enrolling in Cornell for two years of pre-veterinary education in the College of Agriculture. Her high school counselor had urged her to pursue a career in medicine, but her love of animals drove her to seek veterinary medicine though the odds of being selected were so challenging.

¹ The stories of some of these women are available at <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/library/archives/Legacy/index.htm>

² Arthur Gordon Danks '33, PhD, professor of surgery and chair of Admissions Committee.

Dr. Reeve recalls the interview,³

“It was on the order of the Grand Inquisition. All I was lacking was the bucket over my head with the gong, but there was a bright light. The interview table was set up in a “T” configuration with me at the bottom of the “T” and Gordon Danks at the head. There were men seated all the way around, all of whom had pens and tablets and hardly looked at me. It was just Danks and me.

“He asked me if I cooked, if I sewed, if I danced, if I enjoyed dancing. Did I date? Then he wanted to know, ‘If you were to marry someone who had a vocation out in the desert, somewhere where there really weren’t any animals, just what would you do with this degree?’ That one really threw me because I thought, ‘Oh, my goodness, this man knows I’m dating a fellow from Dartmouth who happens to be studying oceanography’”.

Despite the grueling and discouraging interview, Linda was selected and became the only woman in her class (the college took three women the following year to make up the ‘deficit’). She was well-accepted by her male colleagues—many of whom she dated—and by her professors.

She married James Peddie, one of her classmates, and they moved to California. Their practice careers were interrupted in 1966 when Jim was drafted and deployed in the Veterinary Corps. They moved to Fort Sam Houston in Texas for six weeks, then to Chicago for ten weeks, and finally to Fort Lee in Virginia for the remainder of his two-year deployment.

Returning to California in 1968, Linda and Jim partnered in the Conejo Valley Veterinary Clinic in Thousand Oaks, a large and progressive group of veterinarians who handled all species and managed both a hospital and ambulatory service. The size of the practice allowed Dr. Reeve a flexible work schedule while her two daughters, Hillary and Jennifer, were young.⁴

The most unusual aspect of Dr. Reeve and her husband’s careers was in serving as ‘veterinarians to animal stars’. They worked with all kinds of animals, including primates, large cats, and elephants. For over 15 years, they cared for the animal stars in television series, such as “Frazier” and “Full House”, and in such feature films as “Dancing with Wolves”. At the height of their career, they had penetrated the inner circle of Hollywood and were working for all of the major studios. Dr. Reeve became particularly adept at dealing with regulatory and quarantine issues associated with moving animals in and out of the United States and foreign countries.

³ Linda Reeve Peddie, personal communication (interview), 2010.

⁴ Neither Jennifer nor Hillary aspired to become a veterinarian. As Dr. Reeve opines, they didn’t want to work that hard!

Dr. Reeve retired from active veterinary practice in 2002. She summarizes her personal perspective on balancing motherhood and an active professional life simply,

*“You can have it all; you just can’t have it all at once. I take great pride in having reared two lovely young women who chose good men (Jennifer, Joey Davila; and Hillary, Chris Wilkinson), then elected to put successful careers on hold to become full time moms to our grandchildren: Helena Peddie Davila, Nathaniel Peddie Wilkinson, and Morgan Grace Wilkinson.”*⁵

Dr. Reeve supported her husband in his myriad activities in practice, academic and organized veterinary medicine. She participated in the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians’ National Tuberculosis Working Group for Zoo and Wildlife Species, formatting protocols for the diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis in elephants.⁶ She was also instrumental for establishing the AVMA policy advocating the use of the guide and tethers in managing elephants. This policy has helped halt legislation proposed by animal activists to outlaw use of the guide and tethers, tools she considers absolutely essential to assure the safety of both veterinarians and the elephants entrusted to their care.

As unusual as many aspects of Dr. Reeve’s career have been, her experiences are in sync with veterinarians of all ages who aspire to advance the field of animal health, while balancing their personal and professional lives. How grateful we are that it was she who was selected as “the” woman in Cornell’s Class of 1965.

⁵ Linda Reeve Peddie, personal communication, 2010.

⁶ Dr. Reeve’s publications include the following (she authors under the name L. Peddie):

Mikota S, Peddie L, Peddie J, *et al.* Epidemiology and diagnosis of Mycobacterium tuberculosis in captive Asian elephants (*Elephas Maximus*). *J Zoo and Wildl Med* 2001:32:1-16.

Maslow JN, Mikota SK, Peddie LR, Peddie J, *et al.* Population pharmacokinetics of isoniazid in the treatment of Mycobacterium tuberculosis among Asian and African elephants (*Elephas maximus* and *Loxodonta Africana*). *J Vet Pharmacol Ther* 2005:28:21-27.

Peloquin CA, Maslow JN, Mikota SK, Forrest A, Dunker F, Isaza R, Peddie LR, Peddie J and Zhu M. Dose selection and pharmacokinetics of rifampin in elephants for the treatment of tuberculosis. *J Vet Pharmacol Ther* 2006:29:581-585.

Interview

[Listen to the Interview](#)

Subject: Linda Dixon Reeve (Peddie)
Interviewer: Dr. Donald F. Smith
Interview Date: February 16, 2010
Location: Western Veterinary Conference, Las Vegas, NV



Photo provided by Dr. Reeve

Dr. Reeve with Kohl, her 20-year-old Hanovarian riding companion owned by a friend.

Interviewer's Note:

I had been looking forward for some time to capturing Linda's story as part of the study of Cornell women veterinarians. The only problem was, she was too young: my previous stories of Cornell women were all of pre-1950 graduates! While presenting a course at Cornell in veterinary history this past winter, I thought that it would be interesting to the students if I could include Linda's story in my lecture on the gender shift in veterinary medicine. I arranged to meet her at the Western States Veterinary Conference in February, and Linda told of her experiences as the only woman in her Class of 1965. Two weeks later, I was able to share this poignant story with the students, and they were amazed by the challenges that women faced just these few short years ago. Linda's story goes much deeper, however, as she developed a multifaceted career that included both small animal practice and working with various wild animals, as well as maintaining a balanced personal and family life. (Dr. Donald F. Smith)

Dr. Donald Smith:

Linda, let's start with how you grew up and your desire to become a veterinarian.

Dr. Linda Reeve Peddie:

I grew up on the family farm in Riverhead, Long Island, New York. When I was in the third grade, my father considered returning to school. He had no college experience other than a short course in the Agricultural School, but he wanted to become a veterinarian. He went to

Cornell and got the lay of the land, and realized he could be looking at an eight-year stint. At the time, he had three children and said, “*I don’t think so*”. It just was too daunting a proposition for him.

That was the first time I’d considered becoming a veterinarian. I’d grown up with animals. My folks got me my first small horse when I was five. We’d always had dogs and cats. My family are animal lovers—they truly are, all of them.¹ So that was where the original idea came from.

My high school counselor thought I should become a ‘real doctor’. I was valedictorian of my high school class and I know he thought it would be a feather in his cap to have me become an M.D. rather than a veterinarian (he was not impressed with my desire).

I considered other things: my math teacher wanted me to be a math teacher; my English teacher wanted me to be an English teacher, and so on down the line. But I always came back to veterinary medicine as my primary interest and that’s how it all evolved.

Dr. Smith:

How did you get to Cornell?

Dr. Reeve:

When I was a senior in high school, I wrote to Cornell, Ohio State and the University of Pennsylvania, which were the only campuses in the northeast that offered veterinary programs in that era. Ohio and Penn told me if you can’t get into your own state school, there’s no way we’re looking at you.

That made it very simple: I had to apply to Cornell. I went into the Vet School after just two years in the Ag School, which definitely had its pros and cons. There were a number of fellows in my class who had already had anatomy and courses of that nature that I had not picked up in my two years of pre-vet. My pre-veterinary course work included classes like inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry and physics, all those things that I really didn’t like.

Dr. Smith:

You applied to the veterinary college at a time when there were typically two women per class who were accepted. Could you talk about your application process and the admission process?

Dr. Reeve:

First of all, I’m not good about asking people how these things are set up. I just had an interview date, and figured out what I was going to wear. My roommate questioned my choice of attire. I know what I wore: a white blouse with a maroon flower pattern, a maroon skirt and black, low-heeled shoes. My roommate said, “*You look like you’re going to a party, not to a job interview.*” I responded, “*I’m going to interview with a bunch of men. I want them to like looking at me.*” Obviously, I was not terribly sophisticated.

¹ Linda’s brother, Laurence H. Reeve, graduated from Cornell with his DVM in 1972. He is deceased.

The other young women who were there to interview were mostly in suits. I was not! As far as the interview itself went, it was right on the order of the Grand Inquisition. All I was lacking was the bucket over my head with the gong, but there was a bright light. The interview table was set up in a “T” configuration with me at the bottom of the “T” and Gordon Danks all the way up at the head of the table.² There were men seated all the way around, all of whom had pens and tablets and hardly looked at me. It was just Danks and me.

I have no idea why he asked me the things that he did. He wanted to know if I liked to cook, which I do. Part of what puzzled me was that I had basically answered most of the questions in my written application. I had a strong 4-H background and grew up on a farm.

He asked me if I cooked, if I sewed, if I danced, if I enjoyed dancing. Did I date? Then he wanted to know, “*If you were to marry someone who had a vocation out in the desert somewhere where there really weren’t any animals, just what would you do with this degree?*” That one really threw me because I thought, “*Oh, my goodness, this man knows I’m dating a fellow from Dartmouth who happens to be studying oceanography.*” I really began to wonder how thoroughly he had checked into my background.

This went on and on and on. This was not a brief interview. The applicant that I had followed had come out of the interview after ten or twelve minutes with a smile on her face, and I came out of a grueling ordeal, thinking, “*Well, I’ll try one more time next year and, after that, I’d better have another plan.*” I did not think there was a prayer that I had passed that interview successfully. It was just such a different experience from what I saw from the other applicants who were there.

Dr. Smith:

How did you learn of your acceptance?

Dr. Reeve:

We received acceptance letters. Actually, the timing was wonderful. I was on my way to Green Key Weekend at Dartmouth³ and got my letter, so it made it a really great weekend.

Dr. Smith:

You were the only woman in your class of 1965.⁴ What was it like to interact with the men?

Dr. Reeve:

It was 59 guys and me. In fact, when I looked at the list that was posted on the bulletin board when you went into the veterinary school—in that era, they posted the class names—Carmen Scherzo⁵ was one of them. I was standing there, thinking, “*Well, there is another woman in this class*”, when Brian Rind⁶ said, “*Oh, I know him.*” [So I concluded], “*Well, I guess it’s me and them!*”

² Arthur Gordon Danks ’33, PhD, professor of surgery and chair of Admissions Committee.

³ The Green Key Society is a service organization for Dartmouth students.

⁴ In that era, the veterinary college more typically admitted two women per year.

⁵ Carmen S. Scherzo ’65, currently resides in Essex Falls, NJ.

⁶ Brian Rind ’65, currently resides in Dix Hills, NY.

I really think it was an advantage to be the only woman in the class. In the class ahead of me there were two women, and two women ahead of them. Those women tended to pair off and I think they missed out on a lot of interaction with their classmates because they paired off. I can understand why they did, but I enjoyed a very easy interaction with all of my classmates.

The first day that we were set up in anatomy lab with Dr. Howard Evans,⁷ I made a point of going around and introducing myself because I figured, “*They all know who I am, and I’d better know who they are.*” So I made a point of going from table to table and introducing myself. When I got to Jim Peddie⁸—everybody else had been very cordial—his comment was, “*Do you realize you’re taking a man’s position in this class?*” I had no idea where this had come from, and why I wound up marrying him is anybody’s guess.

My son-in-law once said, “*You heard that and thought, ‘this is the man of my dreams’*”. Not really! I actually went out with a lot of fellows in our class and from the class behind us, too. The funny part was that my veterinary student date never took me to any place where other veterinary students were apt to be. It was always funny that way.

Dr. Smith:

How do you feel the faculty reacted to having a woman in the class?

Dr. Reeve:

I certainly enjoyed a nice relationship. Faculty were always very nice to me. I felt that that was one of my advantages being the only woman. Perhaps the faculty felt a little sorry for me. I never, ever saw my being the only woman as being a disadvantage in any way. I felt that they were genuinely interested and approachable, and I never felt otherwise.

Dr. Smith:

How did you choose a career path? Tell us about your life after you graduated.

Dr. Reeve:

The career path was dictated because we were married. I just worked with the hand I was dealt. Jim and I were married during spring break senior year. Everybody assumed I was pregnant; two years later, we had a daughter.

We had intended to move to California as soon as we graduated from Cornell, and did. Jim took a job with a veterinarian for whom I had worked between our third and fourth years, in Maywood, California. I was kicked by a cow in February of our senior year, wound up having a lateral meniscectomy and was physically-challenged for a while. Consequently, I did relief work on a very limited basis for the same veterinarian in three practices that he owned while Jim worked full time.

Jim was then drafted during the Vietnam buildup so we spent six weeks in San Antonio at Fort Sam Houston and ten weeks in Chicago for food inspection school, then on to Fort Lee,

⁷ Howard E. Evans PhD '44, professor of veterinary anatomy, currently resides in Ithaca, NY.

⁸ James F. Peddie '65, originally from Montoursville, PA; later married Dr. Reeve.

Virginia, where we spent the rest of our tour. We were very fortunate that Jim did not get shipped overseas.

[At Fort Lee], we had one day (per week) veterinary clinic that Jim and I worked. This was during the Vietnam build-up. There were a tremendous number of families coming through with pets that needed veterinary care. We put in a full day once a week.

The army would not let Jim expand beyond once a week because the local practitioners really resented our cutting into their potential revenue. We had to be careful.

That was in the era when flea collars were first brought out and we were the miracle workers. You would put a flea collar on a dog in Virginia in the summer and the fleas just fell off of them. It was so dramatic, a very different era.

When Jim got out of the service, he took a position with Conejo Valley Veterinary Clinic in Thousand Oaks. The reason we opted to go there was they were a very progressive group. The veterinarians were writing [papers] and doing clinical trials. Obviously, this was going to be a good practice in which to grow.

They hired Jim full time and I worked every Saturday during the first five years we were there, starting in 1968. As the practice grew, my position evolved. Basically what happened was, I would extend my hours to the point where the practice could justify hiring another full time veterinarian.

When Jim sold his interest in that practice, we were at a dozen veterinarians and it was a complete facility. We had field services and small animal and exotics. We did everything. We had a number of circus acts that wintered over in our area and we wound up working with lions, tigers, leopards, elephants, you name it. It's been a very interesting life!

Dr. Smith:

Looking back on your life are you glad you became a veterinarian?

Dr. Reeve:

With my particular personality type, had I been going through school in the computer age, I would have gone into computers—and had pets.

Looking back, I would never in the world have wanted to miss out on the experiences I have had because I was a veterinarian. So, no regrets, whatsoever, as far as our chosen vocation.

As a woman, you can have it all, but you can't have it all at once. Because of the structure of our practice, I was pretty much able to structure my schedule around my children's school hours so that I was the one who took them to school and I was the one who picked them up. They never knew I was not home in between time, except for one summer when a woman veterinarian on our staff had breast cancer and I covered her hours as well as mine. We sent our kids back to their grandparents on the east coast and they spent a couple of weeks with each set of grandparents.

There are so many opportunities available to veterinarians today; it's a matter of finding what's going to work for you and your family.

There is something out there that will work for you and your family, whether it's going to a Banfield-type facility where the hours are very structured, or working for a private practice that offers a limited commitment.

I know that some people do want ownership and that's a whole different ballgame. But it's all out there. And you have so many government opportunities, and jobs in the military. The sky is the limit as to where you can go and what you can do. It's all a personal decision.

Dr. Smith:

Thank you, Linda.