

Denny Hammond Udall

February 9, 1874 — September 8, 1955

Denny H. Udall was born of New England farm folk, at Craftsbury, Vermont, on February 9, 1874, and died at Ithaca, New York, on September 8, 1955. At an early age Dr. Udall had a keen desire for an education and was graduated with the B.S.A. degree from the University of Vermont in 1898. In the fall of that year, he entered Cornell University to study veterinary medicine. The D.V.M. degree was conferred upon him in 1901. As evidence of his application to his work as a veterinary student, Dr. H. Udall was the “Demonstrator in Anatomy” in 1900-01, his senior year.

After two years (1901-03) in general practice at Saint Johnsbury, Vermont, Dr. Udall was appointed assistant professor of surgery at the Veterinary College at The Ohio State University, in which capacity he served until 1908, when he was called to Cornell as Professor and Head of the Department of Veterinary Medicine. In 1914 Dr. Udall became director of the Ambulatory Clinic. He continued in this dual capacity until his retirement from active administrative work in 1942, when he became Professor Emeritus.

Under Dr. Udall’s able leadership for thirty-four years, the Department of Veterinary Medicine developed rapidly. The Ambulatory Clinic, an integral part of the Department, became the envy of every educator in this field who visited Cornell. Dr. Udall did not subscribe to the modern thesis that eight-o’clock classes and undergraduate teaching are for the young instructors and assistants; he met eight-o’clock classes five days a week, two terms a year. He usually walked to class, was there on time, and always had an acid remark for the sleepy-eyed student who came late. Dr. Udall’s teaching was characterized by the fact that he led the bright student and incessantly prodded the dullard. Those individuals who were wont to slide along with little effort were frequently the target of his biting sarcasm and often found themselves going home with an armful of reference books so that they would not be caught napping again.

While it might be said that Dr. Udall was not particularly close to his students, those who had contact with him respected and honored him. He was absolutely fair and honest. He never hesitated to speak for what he believed to be right, regardless of the consequences.

It is recognized that the Veterinary College at Cornell University enjoys an enviable reputation. Frequently it has been said that *The Cornell Veterinarian* has contributed more to that reputation than any other single factor. For thirty years *The Cornell Veterinarian* and Dr. Udall’s name were synonymous. When travelling in Europe, Dr.

Udall was once introduced to a distinguished veterinarian as the “Head of the Department of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University.” That remark made no impression; but later, when this gentleman was further informed that Dr. Udall was the Editor of *The Cornell Veterinarian*, the response was dramatic.

On the first issue of *The Cornell Veterinarian* (June 1911), Dr. Udall was an Alumni Editor. From 1915 through 1917 he was the publisher, and from 1918 through 1938 the editor and publisher. During that time, the publication grew from 97 pages to a 350-page volume. In 1935, Merillat and Campbell in “Veterinary Military History of the United States” stated: “In no other veterinary magazine in this country has the average quality of the articles published been as high as those published in *The Cornell Veterinarian*, nor have the contents of any other American veterinary magazine been so generally abstracted in continental European veterinary literature.” Throughout the years, Dr. Udall spent uncounted hours as editor, secretary, business manager, and “news hawk,” in the interests of *The Cornell Veterinarian*.

While Dr. Udall was always active as a writer, being the author of at least sixty-one scientific papers and books, his greatest contribution to veterinary medicine may very well have been “The Practice of Veterinary Medicine,” the first edition of which appeared in 1933 and which is in its sixth revised edition (1954). Typical of the author’s thinking, the book is complete, concise, exact, and free from superfluous or extraneous material.

Dr. Udall was proud of his military record. He was a private in the First Vermont Volunteers of the Spanish-American War. During World War I he was a Major, Veterinary Corps; Division Veterinarian of the 86th Division; Commander, Veterinary Hospitals Nos. 7 and 18 in France. He was a teacher of the American Expeditionary Forces at the University of Beaune in France. Those who served under him in France were quick to point out the thoroughness and vigor with which he dispatched his duties. He never compromised with the truth or with efficiency.

Whether or not they know it, the large animal practitioners had an able champion in the person of Dr. Udall. He fought long, hard, and successfully to give the general practitioners a place in the eradication program of infectious diseases—particularly tuberculosis and brucellosis. There were some who would have placed these programs entirely in the hands of regulatory officials, but were unsuccessful so long as Dr. Udall lived to oppose them. Time has vindicated his conviction. Earlier he had pioneered in research on the clinical diagnosis of open cases of bovine tuberculosis. In later years, when the attention of the profession was focused on the control of mastitis, some believed that control could be effective only in the hands of a corps of technicians with a well-equipped laboratory. Dr. Udall believed that the disease could be diagnosed, controlled, and treated in the barn by

the practicing veterinarian. Time and again those beliefs have been justified. Today any system of control of the disease is based upon the fundamental work done by him twenty to twenty-five years ago.

In 1937 he was the first recipient of the Twelfth International Veterinary Congress Award, given to the veterinarian whose work was most outstanding and noteworthy during the year. In addition to his earlier collegiate degrees, Dr. Udall received in 1938 the honorary degree of Doctor of Science from the University of Vermont. He was a member of the Southern Tier Veterinary Medical Society, the New York State Veterinary Medical Society (a past president), the American Veterinary Medical Society, Phi Kappa Phi, Sigma Xi, Phi Zeta, Alpha Psi, Sigma Nu, and the Congregational Church.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Taylor Udall, and by three children, all graduates of Cornell University, Mrs. James Earl Ash of Bethesda, Maryland, John Taylor Udall of Ithaca, and Dr. Robert Hovey Udall of Fort Collins, Colorado, and two grandchildren.

Dr. Udall's tenacity of purpose, his straightforwardness and diligence have blazoned in the history of veterinary medicine an epoch that will be long remembered. His colleagues and former students will not soon forget the forceful man who met his appointments, worked hard and long each day, and expected others to do the same.

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