

Alvin F. Sellers

August 9, 1917 — January 19, 2008

Alvin Sellers joined the Cornell faculty in 1960 as Professor of Physiology and head of the Department of Physiology of the Veterinary College. At the time of the appointment, he was internationally recognized for his work on ruminant digestion and ion transport. He would soon attract talented new faculty members that became world leaders in research and graduate training in gastrointestinal physiology and in the emerging field of comparative gastroenterology.

Al was born in Somerset, Pennsylvania, the son of Addison B. and Marion F. Sellers. He received the VMD (Veterinariae Medicinae Doctoris) from the School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania in 1939. He subsequently did graduate work at the Ohio State University and received the M.S. degree in Pathology in 1940. He continued graduate research training at the University of Minnesota until 1942 when he joined the United States Army Veterinary Corp. During World War II, he served as Chief of the Section on Bacteriology and commanded one of three mobile units of the First Medical Laboratory in campaigns in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, and Germany. He returned to the University of Minnesota in 1946 to complete his graduate training and later served as Associate Professor, Professor, and head of the Division of Veterinary Physiology and Pharmacology in the School of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Minnesota. In 1957-58, he was a Guggenheim Fellow at the Physiological Laboratory, University of Cambridge and at the Rowett Research Institute.

Al's personality often appeared serious but this masked a huge sense of humor. For those who knew him well, he was the ideal dinner party guest because of his talent as a storyteller. His dedication of purpose in the laboratory was recognized by all with whom he was associated. His work and that of his close associates resulted in numerous, critical advances in knowledge of ruminant digestive physiology and, during the latter part of his academic career, in similar advances in the closely related digestive function of the equine large intestine. Al was a dedicated experimental physiologist but was equally committed to applying the sciences basic to medicine in teaching and in veterinary medical practice.

Al is survived by his wife of 65 years, Dorothy M. Sellers; by three children, Alvin F. Sellers, Jr., Mary Ann (George B. Seeley) Sellers, and Christine (Karen Grimm) Sellers; by two grandchildren, Kate Sellers Seeley and Laura Jane Seeley; and by one great-grandson, Jack Riley Wheeler Seeley.

Bud Tennant, Chairperson; Charles Guard, Katherine Houpt, Richard Rawson