Henry Hugh Dukes

September 9, 1895 — June 8, 1987

One of the golden eras in physiology ended with the passing of Henry Hugh Dukes on June 8, 1987, in Des Moines, Iowa.

Dr. Dukes was born in Saint George, South Carolina, on September 9, 1895. After obtaining a B.S. degree at Clemson College, he attended Iowa State College, where he received a D.V.M. with honors in 1918. His M.S. degree was earned while he filled positions as a teaching fellow and assistant professor at Iowa State and as an assistant state veterinarian of South Carolina.

He returned to Iowa State in 1921 after practicing in Greer, South Carolina, for one year. During the next eleven years his title changed from instructor to assistant professor of veterinary physiology to assistant professor of veterinary research.

Two important happenings occurred in Hugh Dukes’s life in 1927 that probably set the tone of his career: he married Mary Alice Kent, his lifelong companion, and he began writing the manuscript for his famous textbook, *Physiology of Domestic Animals*.

The book was completed at Cornell in 1933, and Comstock Press assumed the publishing with the third edition. It received worldwide acclaim and has been translated into several foreign languages.

When Dukes arrived on campus in October 1932, he began to develop an innovative method of teaching physiology. It was called the lecture-demonstration method, which he developed with the help of Professors Howe and Grantham of the Department of Physics. Soon graduate students from other parts of the campus were attending the lectures along with the veterinary students.

The popularity of his course finally reached a point where the numbers were overwhelming. Dukes admitted later that at one time he was on the committees of forty graduate students. Gradually other staff members assisted him. Eventually summer courses were given to teachers of physiology in other schools and colleges so that they too could apply the lecture-demonstration method.

By that time Dr. Dukes had established himself as a distinguished physiologist and gave lecture demonstrations in this country and abroad. In 1953 he went to Brazil to lecture and received an honorary degree at Rural University. That same year Iowa State University awarded him the Alumni Merit Award, and Michigan State University...
honored him with the Centennial Award in 1955. At Clemson an honorary D.Sc. was awarded him in 1966. The honors, awards, and citations that he received during his career fill five typewritten pages.

He retired in July 1960, whereupon former Dean William A. Hagan wrote to him from Ames, Iowa: “Since I had a hand in your appointment at Cornell... I should like to say now that I am very pleased at the outstanding record you are leaving. You certainly built a department that put the veterinary college on the map.”

But to Dukes retirement only meant a change of direction. He immediately embarked on a career of lecturing. He covered elementary and secondary schools as well as colleges. His lectures, “Demonstrations in Living Biology,” were seen by nearly a hundred thousand persons. For that work he received the Distinguished Physiologist award from the American Association of Veterinary Physiologists and Pharmacologists in 1973.

Because of his preeminent position in the world of veterinary physiology it was altogether fitting that he was invited to give the inaugural Sir Frederick Smith Memorial Lecture at the Royal Veterinary College, University of London, in 1965.

Recently an endowed fund was established at the New York State College of Veterinary Medicine on the occasion of H. Hugh Dukes’s ninety-first birthday. It will be used to perpetuate the Dr. H. H. Dukes Prize in Experimental Physiology that is awarded annually to a veterinary student demonstrating evidence of scholarship in the field of physiology.

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