

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

Arriving at Anchorage: Traveling with Beau

Author's Note: This is the ninth in a series of stories¹ reflecting on a 2007 trip to Alaska with my dog, Beau. During that trip I began a personal journey to an expanded understanding of One Health, the implications of which would unfold over several years.

By Dr. Donald F. Smith
November 7, 2014

Day Eleven (Alaska)

I slept soundly and awoke refreshed. Though it was still dark outside, as I looked over to Beau his eyes were already wide open and he wiggled his intent to start the day.



Wrangle Mountains, Alaska
(Photo by the author, 2007)

As we headed out for a crisp morning walk, the quarter moon illuminated enough of the motel parking lot that we could see it was dotted with bouncing white puffs, snowshoe rabbits. I marveled at the millions of stars spread across the entire expanse of sky and made a comparison with the rabbits bouncing around us. Other than that, my head was empty as I shuffled along with Beau and his inquisitive nose in the lead. We were comfortably enjoying the morning solitude when an intimidating discord from barking dogs defending their territory erupted from behind some houses at the edge of town. Not wanted to incite a confrontation

that we would most certainly lose, we turned around and headed briskly back to our waiting car, and left an otherwise peaceful Tok as Venus was fading into the dawn.

An hour later, with a picnic breakfast settling in our bellies, we headed south on the highway that is called the "Tok Cutoff". The long straight stretch of road was eerily reminiscent of the unbending prairie, but the Wrangell Mountains far to the east assured me that we were indeed in Alaska.

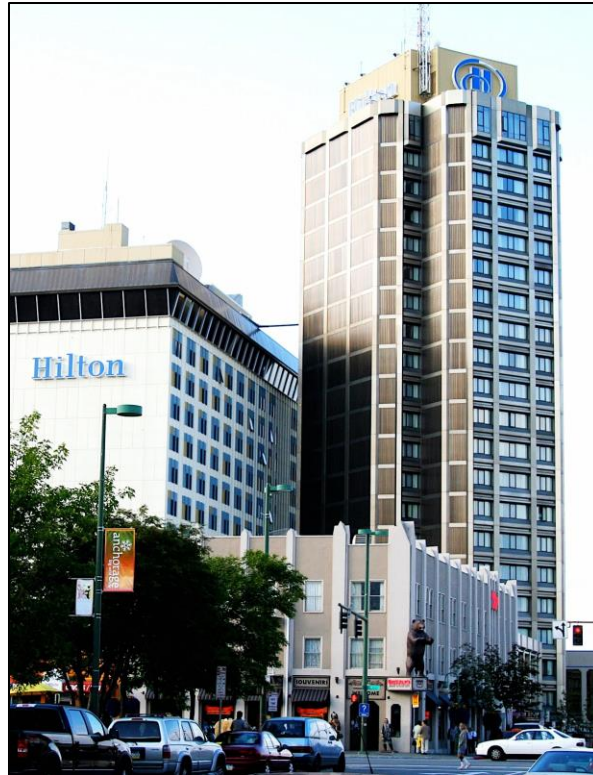


Matanuska Glacier, Alaska
(Photo by the author, 2007)

Like many other travelers, we stopped to admire the Matanuska Glacier. The full effect of its two-mile depth and far reaching length was hard to comprehend from the road. However, after driving down the dirt trail to the glacier's leading edge and paying the fee to walk out next to it, its massive expanse and the bone-chilling air made it seem like a living behemoth organism.

We arrived in Anchorage mid-afternoon. The four-lane expressway seemed too large, the cars were going too fast, the sidewalks and schools and shopping centers were incongruous with the forest and the "danger - moose" signs. Everything seemed out of place.

It was easy to locate the towering Hilton Anchorage in the center of the city. As we stepped into the spacious lobby with its shiny and polished floors, we were immediately surrounded by gregarious Alaskan visitors reaching to pet Beau and exclaiming in various languages, "*We didn't know the hotel took pets. We should have brought our dog.*"



Hilton Hotel in Anchorage, Alaska
(Photo by the author, 2007)



Beau and doorman at the Hilton
(Photo by the author, 2007)

After a long walk along the river and a quick stop for takeout dinner, we returned to the room to clean up. In the previous two weeks, we had traveled over 4,200 miles traversing five states, four Canadian provinces and Canada's Yukon Territory.



Beau resting at the Anchorage Hilton
(Photo by the author, 2007)

I ran the bathtub half full of warm, soapy water and treated Beau to the longest bath of his life. Off came the sand from the St. Claire River, the dust from British Columbia and the burrs from the shore of Lake Kluane. Even the green bandanna from the Lake Michigan ferry crossing received a scrubbing.

After a warm blow-dry, his soft red fur glistened once again and he fell asleep across the top of the largest bed he had ever seen.

¹ Smith, Donald F. Traveling with Beau: My 34-day Trip to a Deeper Understanding of One Health. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*, Sept 9, 2014.

Smith, Donald F. Returning to my Canadian Roots: Traveling with Beau. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*, Sept 11, 2014.

Smith, Donald F. From Ontario to Wisconsin: Traveling with Beau. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*, October 16, 2014.

Smith, Donald F. A Lesson in Humility: Traveling with Beau. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*, October 17, 2014.

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Smith, Donald F. The Texas of Canada: Traveling with Beau. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*, October 29, 2014.

Smith, Donald F. The Alaska Highway: Traveling with Beau. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*, October 31, 2014.

Smith, Donald F. Lake Kluane: Traveling with Beau. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*, November 3, 2014.

KEYWORDS:

Human-animal bond

One Health

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Alaska Highway
Alaska
Anchorage

TOPICS:

One Health

LEADING QUESTION:

Are there still glaciers in southern Alaska?

META-SUMMARY:

The author continues his journey across America with his dog.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr. Donald F. Smith, Dean Emeritus of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, had a passion for the value of the history of veterinary medicine as a gateway for understanding the present and the future of the profession.

Throughout his many professional roles from professor of surgery, to Department Chair of Clinical Sciences, Associate Dean of Education and of Academic Programs and Dean, he spearheaded changes in curriculum, clinical services, diagnostic services and more. He was a diplomat of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons and a member of the National Academy of Practices. Most recently he played a major role in increasing the role of women in veterinary leadership.

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine is one of his projects where he was able to share his vast knowledge of the profession.