

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

Women Veterinarians Co-owning Veterinary Practices

By Dr. Donald F. Smith

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One of the common models for co-owning veterinary practices involves a married couple. While some may regard this management model as having developed in the last couple of decades as gender parity was reached and surpassed in veterinary classes, it was also actually quite common in the first half of the 20th century.



Dr. Henry M. Doremus, 1946



Dr. Helen M. (Borchmann) Doremus, 1940

(Graduation photos, ©New York State Veterinary College, Cornell University)

I was reminded of the legacy of this co-ownership model last week while reading the obituary of Dr. Henry Doremus, a 1946 Cornell graduate. He and his wife, Dr. Helen (Borchmann) Doremus '40 jointly established two small animal practices. They initially built the Doremus Animal Hospital in Cedar Grove, New Jersey and 12 years later relocated to Vermont and opened the Green Mountain Animal Hospital in South Burlington.

Hank and Helen were not unique. Five of the nine women who graduated from Cornell between 1939 and 1942 co-owned practices with their spouses. The other couples were:

- Drs. Patricia (O'Connor) '39 and John Halloran '40, in Staten Island, New York.
- Drs. Emily (Chickering) '40 and Henry Polanski '41, in Lancaster, Massachusetts.

- Drs. Margaret (O'Brien) '40 and Clarence Combs '39, in Shrewsbury, New Jersey.
- Drs. Grace (Kinney) '42 and Ralph Loomis '40, in Warsaw, New York.

Among those who did not marry veterinarians, one woman from this period owned a practice in Connecticut, then moved to St. Thomas and became the “Veterinarian-in-Charge” in the Virgin Islands. Two others were practice associates; and one became an academician.

Sometimes we think of women as owning practices only in the modern era, but many of those who graduated 75 years ago were trailblazers in business as well as medicine.

KEYWORDS:

Henry Doremus
 Helen (Borchman) Doremus
 Patricia (O'Connor) Halloran
 John Halloran
 Emily (Chickering) Polanski
 Henry Polanski
 Margaret (O'Brien) Combs
 Clarence Combs
 Grace (Kinney) Loomis
 Ralph Loomis
 Veterinary practice
 Cornell University
 Women in Veterinary Medicine

TOPIC:

Women in Veterinary Medicine

LEADING QUESTION:

When did women start owning veterinary practices?

META-SUMMARY:

Many women veterinarians owned and co-owned veterinary practices 75 years ago.

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.