

Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine

Jeanne Neubecker Logue, DVM: A Veterinarian Who Understood *The Wonder Of It All*¹

By Dr. Donald F. Smith
May 13, 2014

Dr. Jeanne Neubecker Logue, one of three women in the Class of 1944 at Cornell University, began her veterinary studies during WWII in an accelerated program developed so that the students could complete their studies and contribute to the war effort as soon as possible. The students attended classes continuously without a summer break, completing the equivalent of four years in fewer than three.



Dr. Jeanne Neubecker Logue, 1944, Graduation Photo
(© New York State Veterinary College, Cornell University)

Dr. Logue was one of only three women in the class. “Perhaps they [had more than one of us because they] thought the girls needed moral support,” she said in an interview during her 60th class reunion.² In retrospect, it was quite amazing that she was accepted in the early 1940s. Not only had she grown up in New York City—there was a strong bias against city applicants at the time—but she had little experience with large animals.³

Most of the faculty tolerated a couple of women in the class, but some were staunchly opposed.

Dr. Fincher, our Ambulatory teacher, was hard-nosed and did not want women to go on farm calls during our fourth year. He claimed that it was hard enough to get the farmers to agree to have students go out anyway, and they didn't want a bunch of women around.

But when Dr. Logue got out into practice herself, she concluded that, “The lesion was in the professor's mind more than the farmer's. If you have a bunch of fellows there and one girl among them, what difference is that going to make? Nothing!” Nor did a gender problem follow her into practice where she did a great deal of large animal work for several years. She had no problem with large animal clients as long as she was able to “cure the cow and deliver the calf.”

Dr. Logue had been determined from a young age to be a veterinarian,

Since I was four-years-old, I had wanted to be an animal doctor (that was the word I used at that state in my life). I've never really wavered from that goal. I would even save my allowances—I would get a nickel, or a dime a week. Five cents was given to Sunday school, and the other nickel, I could do with what I wished. I put a little away, but I always wanted to save some of it because I knew even at an early age that going to school was expensive.

Emerging from college and married to Joseph Logue, an engineering graduate from Cornell, she worked at the ASPCA in New York City to accommodate her husband's work location. A few years later, he took a job about 80 miles north of New York City in the town of Poughkeepsie and that is where she started her own practice.

With no money to build a hospital, she operated a small clinic and referred cases that needed to be hospitalized to other local veterinarians. But as her clientele grew, she was able to take over a mixed animal practice in the nearby town of Kingston when the veterinarian there was called into the service.

So began the most enjoyable veterinary years of Dr. Logue's life as chronicled elegantly in her book, “The Wonder of It All.”⁴ She enjoyed the variety of doing both large and small animal work. According to some sages, she was the first woman to practice on large animals, but she never acknowledged that distinction, always citing one or two others whom she felt preceded her.

She was extremely busy during this period of her life as she balanced caring for farm patients in the country, dogs and cats in clinic, along with raising children and being a wife to a busy engineer who expected her to be wife, homemaker and executive's spouse. The challenges of “doing it all,” were passionately described in her memoirs and are familiar to many women veterinarians today. She maintained this lifestyle for several years, working long and challenging hours, which were so disquieted with incessant emergencies that “it seemed like we had only two or three uninterrupted meals in an equal amount of time.”

One of her most memorable stories working with cattle was losing her wedding ring. She answered an obstetrical call and traveled to the farm only to discover that the high school fellow who had prepared her medical pack had neglected to include the examination sleeve and glove that are the normal requisite to the full-armed vaginal and uterine examination.

So there she was, delivering the calf with no protection on her hands and arms for the ultra-slippery fetal fluids. Everything seemed to go fine at the farm, until she got back to a waiting room full of people and she discovered that her wedding ring was missing from her finger. When her client noticed what was wrong, he announced to all those preparing for their turn in the burgeoning waiting room that, “Doc has lost her wedding ring” and soon they were all looking for it.

Meanwhile, Dr. Logue snuck into the surgery in the back where no one would hear her, and phoned the farmer, asking him to separate that cow from the others and to keep her tethered until the placenta had been completely expelled.⁵ “Then search through the afterbirth, and I think you'll find a wedding ring,” she told him. She did retrieve her ring a few days later, but not before her husband and his work colleagues had embarrassingly noticed its absence during a dinner party at their home.

As the practice got so busy that it was disrupting her family life more than she felt tolerable, Dr. Logue decided to make some adjustments in her professional life. Feeling that “maybe I was being too selfish,” she sold the practice and the family moved to Poughkeepsie closer to where her husband worked. She was hired by a small animal practitioner who was also experiencing the challenge of balancing personal and professional life. They each benefitted from the partnership though she missed the large animal work very much.

Dr. Logue and her husband raised three children. In addition to the book describing her life as a veterinarian, she also authored a captivating biography of one of the principles who discovered the role of the tick as the intermediary host in the pathogenesis of Texas Fever in cattle (*Beyond the Germ Theory: The Story of Dr. Cooper Curtis*).⁶ That book, also beautifully-written, is one of the most carefully-researched of the many books written on this seminal subject in the history of veterinary medicine.

Dr. Logue and her husband maintained close personal friendships with her classmates, meeting for dinner parties or other social events. She had an elegance and grace about her, a truly beautiful person. During my lectures on veterinary history, I always give a tribute to her as one of the special people of the profession.

Until she passed last year, I would often invite students to call or visit her to hear first-hand what it was like being a women veterinarian during a challenging period in our profession's history. I shall always remember the excitement on one student's face after her visit, as she told me how grateful she was there had been women blazing the trail for her and her classmates almost 70 years earlier.

¹ Logue, Jeanne. *The Wonder of It All*. (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London, Sydney: Harper & Row, 1979).

² Neubecker Logue, Jeanne (retired veterinarian, Cornell DVM, 1944), interview with Laura Finkel (archivist, Cornell University, Flower-Sprecher Veterinary Library), June 11, 2004, Cornell University. This quotation and all others in the story are from this interview.

³ Smith, Donald F. 150th Anniversary of Veterinary Education and the Veterinary Profession in North America. *J Vet Med Educ* 37(4), 2010. 320-322

⁴ Logue, Jeanne. *The Wonder of It All*.

⁵ In cattle, this is not immediate like most other species, often taking several hours or even a couple of days. It was important to keep her tethered during this period because cows are notorious for consuming their placentas.

⁶Logue, Jeanne N. *Beyond the Germ Theory: The Story of Cooper Curtis*. (Texas A&M University Press, 1995).

KEYWORDS:

Jeanne Neubecker Logue
Women in Veterinary Medicine
History of Veterinary Medicine
Cornell University

TOPIC:

Women in Veterinary Medicine

LEADING QUESTION:

Was the time for the veterinary curriculum to be completed made longer or shorter during WWII?

META-SUMMARY:

Veterinarian Dr. Jeanne Neubecker Logue graduated from Cornell University during World War II and was one of the earliest women to practice with large animals. She authored two books, *The Wonder of It All*, and the *Beyond the Germ Theory: The Story of Cooper Curtis*.

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.