

## Joseph N. Beasley

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### The Life of Joe Beasley

Fate (time, place and opportunity) can govern the outcome of one's life. I consider myself a very lucky person - family (wife Joan and son Mike) and the opportunity to work in the chosen field.

I was born on a farm in Benton County Arkansas. My father was an attorney and my mother a school teacher. Interest in veterinary medicine began early. At the age of 10 or 12 we visited relatives in Manhattan, Kansas and I accompanied my uncle to the Kansas State Veterinary College to pick up their dog. For some reason we were given a tour of the clinic. At home an old USDA Agriculture Year Book (Diseases of Cattle) was available and was devoured from cover to cover. There were no graduate veterinarians in the area and I remember a cow with milk fever recovering after inflating her udder with a tire pump as directed in the book. During my teenage years a young veterinarian came to town and made several trips to treat our herd. He impressed me greatly.

World War II came along during the senior year of high school and on entry to college we were encouraged to join the Enlisted Reserve Corp. We were called to activity duty near the end of the spring semester and after basic training went to college in the Army

Special Training Program. Most people were in engineering but an acceptance to medical, dental or veterinary college was recognized. I went to Texas A & M. After the second semester we were informed that the program had been closed and that in an hour we must decide whether to remain in the Army, take a discharge and continue veterinary school on deferment, or take a discharge and do what we wanted. Several of us joined the Navy and, due to the year of veterinary college, were assigned to the Hospital Corp. My room mate became a hospital corpsman in the Marines - thus wearing all three uniforms during the war.

In veterinary college Dr. Virgil Robinson had "hooked" me on pathology but I still intended to practice large animal medicine. Upon graduation in 1949 I received the offer of a position in the Veterinary Science Department at the University of Arkansas and assumed that in a couple of years could save enough to open a practice. The position called for teaching, research and herd health. Veterinary positions had been vacant during the war but someone had written a project, "A New Disease of Young Broilers" to which I was assigned. We never found a new disease - I assume the writers of the project must have been referring to New Castle disease. After two years I returned to Texas A & M in the Clinic -working both small and large animals. At that time the pathology interest stimulated work on a Master's degree that was interrupted by a family health problem.

I took a position with the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission (ALPC) in Fayetteville. This was a new "laboratory" in which the ALPC supplied the man and the University of Arkansas everything else. We had a microscope, autoclave, culture media and necropsy equipment. Media preparation, report writing, etc. were the responsibility of the diagnostician. After a year the ALPC provided a technician and there was equipment for virus isolation. The years in Fayetteville were interesting in that the poultry industry was not completely integrated. There were several small hatcheries and feed stores and growers were on their own for answers to disease problems. All the "classic" diseases were present. We saw pullorum, typhoid, New Castle disease, bronchitis, epidemic tremor, black head, lymphoid leukosis, pox, etc. Many pullorum reactor hens were cultured and turkey breeding flocks were tube tested for pullorum each fall. There were several old tomato canning factories in the area that individuals attempted to use as broiler houses. These buildings were wide and had no ventilation systems. "Air Sac" was one of the more prominent diseases with which we dealt. Kegs of aspirins were displayed in feed stores for use on affected birds. Several individuals in the area were selling mixtures of copper sulfate and vinegar for the treatment of "mycosis." A local company produced New Castle vaccine from the AA fluid of B1 inoculated chicken embryos. This product was frozen until used. A "renowned poultry pathologist" came to the area and made his reputation by ordering chicken livers in a restaurant and refusing the order because the livers were "diseased."

I completed the Master degree at Texas A & M in 1956 and took a joint position in Pathology and Microbiology working on the turkey ornithosis project. Both department heads had much influence on my career, Dr. Hilton Smith in Pathology and Dr. John Delaplane in Microbiology (Poultry). We were also responsible for histopathology from

the poultry laboratories. When the ornithosis project was completed, I was assigned to the pathology department with responsibility for poultry histopathology. With the encouragement of Dr. Smith I applied for an NIH Special Research Fellowship, which was awarded and two years were spent at the University of Oklahoma Medical Center with Dr. W.E. Jaques in pathology. Dr. Jaques was a pathologist/physiologist and an excellent teacher. He worked with cardio-pulmonary conditions and some of his experimental dogs were found to have heart worms. Thus, my dissertation was on S. immitis. A high point came in assisting with the necropsy of a mature elephant that died after a dose of LSD.

We returned to the University of Arkansas in 1965 mostly for family considerations. The position called for teaching and research, and since Marek's disease was the industry's major problem at the time it was chosen for work. Skin lesions produced high condemnation rates. A grant from the East Lansing Laboratory provided isolation equipment and financial support for the project. The method of transmission of the disease had been researched by many laboratories and was not settled. Histologic study of the dermal lesions and the massive amounts of dander (skin desquamation) which clogged isolator filters suggested that this could be a means spread. This was proven by a series of experiments. Working with Dr. Jay Lancaster (entomologist) many of species of insects that occurred in poultry houses were used in transmission studies. After the HVT vaccine was introduced, work included investigations of "vaccine breaks" and search was made for more virulent strains of the virus. In following years research was carried out on a series of poultry diseases as they became problems - hemorrhagic enteritis in turkeys, bursal disease, tibial dyschondroplasia, citrinin, proventriculitis, etc. Pathology support was provided for other projects. Several studies of mammalian disease were made - equine spinal ataxia, bovine dermatosparaxis, Johne's disease, etc. Working with Dr. George Templeton, series of experiments were performed to prove to the EPA that the fungus, *Colletotrichum gloeosporioides* was environmentally safe for use as a mycoherbicide on rice.

Work with veterinary students at TAMU and pre-veterinary students at the University of Arkansas was very rewarding. Arkansas has contracts with Oklahoma State, LSU and Tuskegee that supports Arkansas residents in Veterinary College. As director of this program for several years good relationships were made with students and with administrative officers at these institutions. Work with the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee was sometimes frustrating but necessary. I served several terms as chairman and was the lab animal veterinarian for a couple of years. I think that we developed an excellent program.

Comparing the equipment, funding and knowledge that were available at the time I became involved in veterinary medicine to that available today, one can only speculate as to what the field will be like at the end of the careers of the 1997 graduates. It has been a good career - enjoyable, fulfilling, sometimes exciting, sometimes frustrating; an opportunity for association with many good people.

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*Biography solicited by the Committee on the History of Avian Medicine, American Association of Avian Pathologists.*

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