

Historical Perspective

The “Original” AAV: The Founding of the Association of Avian Veterinarians

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Introduction

The Association of Avian Veterinarians (AAV), which was founded in 1980, is a relatively young organization. Many of the founding members of AAV were also members of older groups, like the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians (AAZV) and the American Association of Avian Pathologists (AAAP), and these 2 related organizations chronicle their histories in various ways.

Founded in 1946, the AAZV displays a Web page on the organization’s history.¹ The dates and locations of all past AAZV conferences are also posted online. More detailed information on the history of AAZV is written by Dr Murray Fowler and is available through a CD-ROM of annual conference proceedings from 1968 to 2011.²

Although the efforts of the AAZV on detailing their history are laudable, their work pales in comparison with those of AAAP. Founded in 1957, AAAP’s Web site boasts not only a page on the history of avian medicine,³ but an entire section that chronicles the history of their organization, as well as tributes, archives, and the “Biography Project,” a compilation of facts as well as the biographees’ thoughts about their careers. For some the project is an opportunity to set the record straight, and, for others, an opportunity to credit those who helped them along the way.

This article chronicling the origin of AAV is based on research as well as telephone, e-mail, and written interviews of extant members of the original Board of Directors.

Avian Medicine in 1980

“It was a much different world then...”

Descriptions of avian medicine in 1980 are as diverse as the founding members of AAV, but as

From 30 Severance Circle, Apt 206, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118, USA.

Dr Susan Clubb said, “[I]t was a much different world” (S. Clubb, oral communication, May 2013).

Common species

Patients frequently seen in clinical practice included some canaries (*Serinus* species) and finches, lots of budgies (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), and many imported parrots (R. B. Altman, oral communication, November 2012; R. R. Nye, oral communication, October 2012).⁴ In 1980, the importation of birds into the United States was still in its heyday, and up to 900 000 wild birds were brought into the United States on an annual basis.⁵ Some clinicians frequently saw reproductively active birds, as aviculturists tried to breed “more valuable” species such as hyacinth macaws (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*), African grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*), and the rare cockatoo (*Cacatua* species).

Common diseases

Disease conditions commonly observed in 1980 were obesity, malnutrition, respiratory problems, egg binding, and renal tumors (R. Spink, oral communication, June 2013). Many birds also presented with leg band–induced trauma.

Bird owners often lacked a basic understanding of cage hygiene and “there were many [infectious] disease processes [encountered] that...had never been seen before” (Clubb 2013). Clinicians saw many bacterial problems, including salmonellosis, as well as outbreaks of psittacosis, exotic Newcastle disease virus, avian polyomavirus, and psittacine beak and feather disease (G. J. Harrison, oral communication, December 2012). It was a challenging time for management of viral disease. For instance, many different theories were published on the pathogenesis of psittacine beak and feather disease before circovirus was identified.

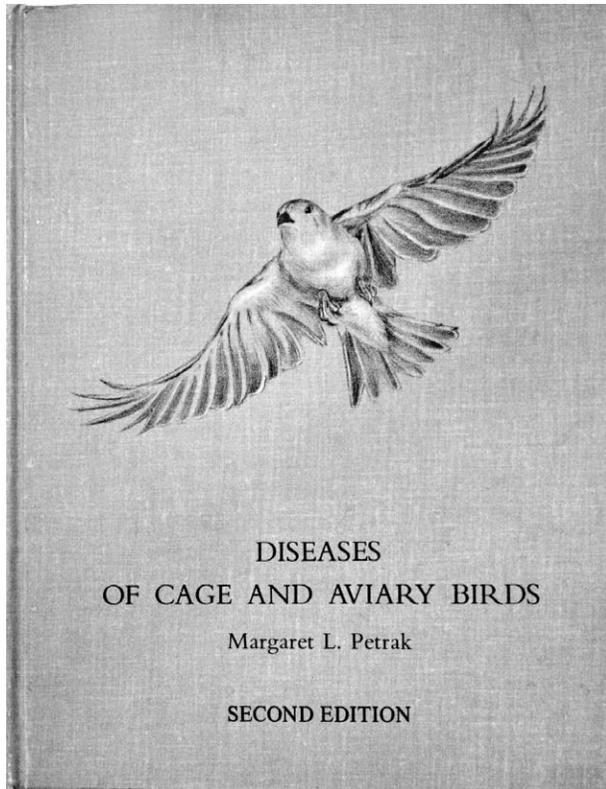


Figure 1. Originally published in 1969, Dr Margaret L. Petrak's *Diseases of Cage and Aviary Birds* was the first published text on avian medicine written by a veterinarian.

We were seeing a lot of African greys and Amazon parrots that had unusual viral diseases that aren't even out there anymore. Today we don't see any of those diseases; of course we don't have the imported birds. The viruses came and then they went away, they didn't hang around.—Richard Nye, DVM

Conditions commonly seen in the 1980s that are rarely seen in the United States today include parrot pox and avian reovirus, which commonly affected African grey parrots.

Reovirus would suppress the immune system, making birds susceptible to other conditions like salmonellosis and aspergillosis—it was like a triple whammy. A vaccine was even developed, but the disease did not remain in the US.—Susan Clubb, DVM

Common equipment and procedures

The founding members of AAV often lacked supplies that are now considered rudimentary for avian practice. For instance, veterinary hospitals

did not have brooders, incubators, or hospital cages. Only egg incubators were available, and clinicians often created homemade units out of wood. Aviculture and hand-feeding were also in their infancy. There were no formulated hand-rearing formulas available and instead homemade diets were made using seeds, fruits, and vegetables.

Most avian veterinarians performed few surgical procedures in 1980. Common operations included digit amputation and removal of feather cysts or fatty tumors. Testing for sex identification by DNA was not available, and surgical sexing of larger bird species was just coming into vogue.

The inhalant anesthetics available for general anesthesia were “potent and scary” (Nye 2012). Methoxyflurane was used, as well as cotton soaked in ether. Ether gas is explosive and residual vapors remain within the air sacs. Injectable anesthetics such as ketamine and xylazine were also used quite commonly. Equithesin, a commercial mixture of chloral hydrate, magnesium sulfate, and pentobarbital sodium, was also used on occasion but some “birds never woke up” with the use of this long-lasting barbiturate (Altman 2012, Spink 2013).

Medical treatment of ectoparasites was described by Dr Spink as the “shake and bake method.” A small amount of pyrethrum powder was placed in a paper bag with the bird and shaken.

Educational resources in 1980

Books available in the early 1980s included *Caged Bird Medicine: Selected Topics* by Drs Charles V. Steiner and Richard B. Davis,⁶ and *Diseases of Cage and Aviary Birds* by Dr Margaret L. Petrak.⁷ First published in 1969, Dr Petrak's book was the first veterinary textbook published on avian medicine (Fig 1).

Written by the individual best known as the Birdman of Alcatraz, *Stroud's Digest on the Diseases of Birds*, published in 1964,⁸ and *Diseases of Canaries*, published in 1963,⁹ were also considered important resources. There was also a small booklet on bird care written by the father of Dr Robert B. Altman, Dr Irving Altman, who graduated from Cornell University in 1917 (Altman 2012, Clubb 2013).

As you can tell, we struggled through, trying to find resources, and did the best we could.—
Ronald Spink, DVM

Information on pet bird medicine was also published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, the *American Journal of*



Attend the
**American Association of
 Avian Practitioners
 1st Seminar & Workshop**
 on
“Avian Medicine”

June 21-22, 1980
SHERATON INN
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Figure 2. Front page of the brochure from the 1st Seminar and Workshop of the American Association of Avian Practitioners

Veterinary Research, and the German veterinary literature. The journal published by the AAAP, *Avian Diseases*, also sporadically published information on companion bird medicine.

Before the AAV, most continuing education opportunities on avian medicine occurred at the

AAZV annual conference. Avian veterinarians met with falconers and experts in the field, such as Dr James Johnson of Texas A&M University and Dr Patrick Redig of the University of Minnesota. There was also a 1-day veterinary seminar at the annual convention of the American Federation of Aviculture, and the AAAP provided sessions on avian medicine at the annual conference of the American Animal Hospital Association. Dr Arthur Bickford managed these meetings for several years, and he reported that Dr Ted Lafeber played an important role (A. A. Bickford, oral communication, October 2012). There were also exotic animal medicine sessions at the North American Veterinary Conference and the Western Veterinary Conference.

The Founding of AAV

“Off AAV flew!”

The American Association of Avian Practitioners

The AAV was born out of discontent among avian practitioners attending the AAZV meetings. Avian medicine was only a small portion of AAZV’s focus and of course the topics presented were not directed towards practitioners.

Dr Ron Spink incorporated Avi-Vet after inventing and marketing the Therapy Unit PLUS, which was a small metal brooder with a sliding acrylic front for hospitalizing and nebulizing birds. After publishing an article on nebulization, Dr Spink was inspired to host a bird meeting in response to the swell of interest in avian medicine. He used Avi-Vet Inc’s mailing list to spread the word.

So I set up the program of speakers, convention meeting place, meals, rooms, wet labs, etc., and hosted the first meeting in the Sheraton across the street from my hospital.—Ronald Spink, DVM

This first meeting was held in Kalamazoo, MI, USA, in June 1980. This full meeting consisted of lectures and workshops on avian medicine and was attended by approximately 100 people (Fig 2). Sponsored by Riviana Foods, the program even included a panel discussion: “Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Birds but Were Afraid to Ask.”¹⁰

Additionally, an organizational meeting was held in Kalamazoo, and everyone that attended this meeting became a member of the board of directors. The purpose of the meeting was to formulate plans and divide up responsibilities

Table 1. Speakers scheduled for the American Association of Avian Practitioners 1st Seminar and Workshop.¹⁰

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- Dr Robert Altman, Franklin Square, NY, USA
 - Dr Rainer Erhart, aviculturist of Kalamazoo, MI, USA
 - Dr David Graham, Iowa State University, Ames, IA, USA
 - Dr Greg Harrison, Lake Worth, FL, USA
 - Dr Ted Lafeber, Niles, IL, USA^a
 - Dr Richard Nye, Chicago, IL, USA
 - Dr James Sikarskie, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA
 - Dr Ronald Spink, Kalamazoo, MI, USA
-

^a Dr Ted Lafeber was on the program but was unable to attend.

(Table 2), but one of the board's first moves was a name change. Out of respect for the American Association of Avian Pathologists, the name of the American Association of Avian Practitioners was changed to the Association of Avian Veterinarians.¹¹

Ron Spink became treasurer by default since he handled the first meeting himself, managing income and expenses. Despite AAV being his idea, Dr Spink had no interest in being president; instead he selected Dr Greg Harrison.

I was a one-man nominating committee so I chose the first three presidents: Dr Harrison, Dr Clubb, and Dr Axelson. Great choices!—
Ronald Spink, DVM

AAV's earliest affiliation

The very first AAV newsletter, dated September 1980, describes an affiliation between AAV and AAAP because of “mutually beneficial interests and activities” and because the AAAP was considered a “well-established organization of avian diagnosticians and researchers.”⁶ In fact, Greg Harrison and Ted Lafeber approached AAAP board members before the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Annual Convention in July 1980, and AAAP agreed to be “responsible for the administrative duties of both organizations.”¹¹ The plan was for AAV to serve as the liaison between AAAP and the practitioner, “disseminating practice-oriented information through publications and avian educational programs around the country.”¹¹ The AAAP also offered to publish a supplement to *Avian Diseases* for AAV members, which would contain more formal scientific articles. The AAV editorial committee would submit this content to AAAP.¹¹

Table 2. Objectives of AAV as listed in the first newsletter.¹¹

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- To promote an organizational identity for veterinarians interested or involved in the field of avian medicine
 - To enhance the knowledge and practice of avian medicine
 - To promote applied and clinical research in avian medicine
 - To provide to the veterinary community continuing education opportunities in the field of avian medicine
 - To provide a vehicle for the publishing and dissemination of pertinent and current information on avian medicine
 - To promote the teaching of avian medicine in veterinary schools
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As AAAP's representative on the board, Dr Bickford explains, “Everybody was searching for an organizational home...AAAP was still a growing organization [and] we were trying to straddle a fence. Can we be home to population medicine and the individual-oriented practitioners? That was an open question; both sides had some reservations...”. Eventually the misgivings won out and by December 1980, the AAV newsletter announced that this professional affiliation would not proceed as planned due to “some legal points involving non-profit status.”¹²

The first board of directors

Ron Spink's goal was to gather together well-known avian practitioners, and the original board of directors included many of the most prominent bird veterinarians in the United States at that time.

Ronald Spink, DVM, secretary-treasurer: Dr Ronald Spink graduated from Michigan State University in 1963, where he took elective courses in poultry and fur-bearing animals and completed a master's program in bone and joint surgery. Dr Spink completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan in laboratory animal medicine, and he went on to own a small-animal practice in Grand Rapids, MI, USA. Dr Spink also worked as a research associate at Blodgett Memorial Hospital in Grand Rapids.

Dr Spink met Greg Harrison at the AAZV meeting in St Louis, MO, USA (1976), where he remembers Dr Harrison's presentation on surgical sexing as the only avian talk at that meeting.

AAV was a brainstorm of mine and I do recall driving to Florida from Michigan to see if Dr

Harrison would be interested in the first presidency of a new bird group.—Ronald Spink, DVM

Inspired by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, Dr Spink moved to Idaho to perform research on the effects of DDT. He now owns a veterinary practice in Florida.

Greg J. Harrison, DVM, president: Dr Greg Harrison was the first president of AAV, serving 2 consecutive terms. Dr Harrison earned his doctorate in 1967 from Iowa State University. After graduation he moved to southern Florida where he worked in a small-animal clinic. After serving as a zoo and wild animal park consultant, Dr Harrison gravitated towards aviculture. He opened his own practice in 1969. The Bird Hospital was the first exclusively avian practice in Florida.

Dr Harrison founded Harrison's Bird Foods in the mid-1980s and he published *Clinical Avian Medicine & Surgery* in 1986.¹³ A Diplomate Emeritus of the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners (Avian Practice) and a Diplomate of the European College of Zoological Medicine (Avian), Dr Harrison retired from clinical practice in 2005. At that time he created Spix Publishing, which printed the well-known text *Clinical Avian Medicine*.^{14,15}

Ted J. Lafeber, DVM, vice-president, in memoriam: Dr Lafeber graduated from Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 1949 and opened Niles Animal Hospital in Niles, IL, USA. In the mid-1950s he began treating birds, and by the 1960s his practice was one of the largest pet bird hospitals in the United States. Considered an engaging speaker, Dr Lafeber was highly sought as a lecturer and instructor. In the early 1960s, Dr Lafeber was invited by the AVMA to chair the newly formed Avian Medicine committee. Lafeber Company began informally in 1973 when parrot nutritional products were milled in the back of his veterinary clinic. By 1981, his company had outgrown the clinic and was moved into a new, separate facility in Cornell, IL, USA. Ted Lafeber was recognized by AAV with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 1988. He died at the age of 75 in 2001.¹⁶

Although listed as vice-president in 1980, Dr Lafeber was busy with his growing company, which moved to its new facility in 1981. He asked his protégé, Dr Richard Nye, to attend the organizational meeting in Kalamazoo in his place.

Robert B. Altman, DVM, editorial committee: Dr Robert Altman earned his doctorate from Cornell University in 1958, and he founded A & A

Veterinary Hospital in Franklin Square, New York in 1964. Dr Altman served as an attending veterinarian for 3 New York City zoos as well as the Long Island Zoo. Dr Altman also worked as an adjunct associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania from 1976 to 1995.

Dr Altman was a delegate to the AVMA house of delegates and a past-president of AAV. He also served on the National Board Examination committee and initiated the first avian certifying examination for the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners. Dr Altman moved to Florida in 1995, where he was the co-owner of a veterinary manufacturing and supply company. After this company was sold in 2005, Dr Altman became a partner of CryoProbe, a cryogenic probe technology company. Dr Altman is currently a member of the editorial review board for the *Journal of Exotic Pet Medicine*.¹⁷

Arthur A. Bickford, VMD, PhD, editorial committee: Dr Arthur Bickford graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine in 1960. Considered a pioneer in poultry medicine, Dr Bickford was a professor of clinical diagnostic pathology and an associate director of the University of California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System. Dr Bickford is a Diplomate of the American College of Poultry Veterinarians and the American College of Veterinary Pathologists.¹⁸

As a representative of the AAAP, Dr Bickford's role in 1980 was to share insights on club development and bylaws with the fledgling AAV. Although the AAV and AAAP ultimately took separate paths, Dr Bickford continued his AAV membership for many years, and even now he continues to moderate pet bird sessions at the Western Veterinary Conference in Las Vegas, NV, USA.

Chuck Galvin, DVM, unavailable for interview: Dr Galvin spent more than 40 years running his popular and well-known practice: the Veterinary Hospital of Ignacio in Novato, CA, USA.¹⁹ Now retired, Dr Galvin, also known as “Stonefox,” creates stone-based sculpture in northern California.²⁰

David L. Graham, DVM, PhD, editorial committee: Dr David Graham was awarded a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine by Cornell University in 1965. In 1985, Dr Graham earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Department of Veterinary Pathology at Iowa State University, and he also became a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists.

In 1980, Dr Graham was a professor at Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine. In 1981, Dr Graham became a professor of avian and aquatic animal medicine at Cornell University where he taught avian medicine and disease until 1987 when he moved to Texas A&M University. Dr Graham remained at Texas A&M until his retirement in 1998, performing a host of duties including viral disease research at the Schubot Exotic Bird Center. Dr Graham now works as a wood carver in the Midwest.

Richard R. Nye, DVM, education committee: A 1976 graduate of the University of Illinois School of Veterinary Medicine, Richard Nye was one of the youngest people on the board of directors. Mentored by Dr Ted Lafeber since his senior year in veterinary medical school, Dr Nye worked first as a senior extern for Dr Lafeber and later as an associate in his practice for 2 years.

Along with Drs Susan Brown and Scott McDonald, Dr Nye went on to found the Midwest Bird & Exotic Hospital in 1985. The idea of founding this practice actually originated during a discussion at an AAV meeting.

Margaret L. Petrak, VMD, in memoriam: Dr Margaret Petrak graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a doctorate in veterinary medicine in 1952. She served on the staff at Angell Memorial Animal Hospital in Boston, MA, USA, until her retirement in 1992. Veterinary medical students used her textbook, *Diseases of Cage and Aviary Birds*, for many years.

Following her retirement, Dr Petrak worked for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for several years. She also maintained a wild bird sanctuary at her home in Medway, MA, USA, where she resided for over 50 years. Dr Petrak died at the age of 81 in 2009.²¹

Fred K. Soifer, DVM, in memoriam: Dr Fred Soifer graduated from Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine in 1958. After graduation, Dr Soifer moved to Houston, TX, USA. Here he established a small animal practice in 1960, treating birds, small animals, and exotic pets for 40 years. Dr Soifer was also the staff veterinarian at Houston Zoo from 1966 to 1973, and he served as AAZV President in 1973.^{3,22,23}

After retirement, Dr Soifer volunteered his services to the Texas Wildlife Rehabilitation Council. He died in 2002 at the age of 70. "He was a veterinarian's veterinarian," his daughter said. "He loved animals and he loved people. So veterinary medicine was perfect for him. He always stressed how important it is to find something you like to do. He loved his work."²³

Adina Rae Freedman, executive director: Adina became clerk and later executive director of AAV approximately 6 months after the first meeting (A. R. Freedman, written communication, October 2012). After Kalamazoo, the board next met in October 1980 during the AAZV annual meeting in Washington, DC.¹⁰ Considered indispensable throughout her 32 years of service, Adina retired in 2011.²⁴ Adina currently lives in Delray Beach, FL.

Continuing education sponsored by AAV

As education chairman, Dr Richard Nye set up a speakers' bureau and arranged avian medicine programs at various meetings. The AAV led continuing education programs in avian medicine at the 1981 Western States Veterinary Conference and the 1981 conference of the American Federation of Aviculture.¹¹ In conjunction with the yearly conference of the American Animal Hospital Association (April 1981), AAV also met for a weekend conference held at Emory College in Atlanta, GA, USA (Fig 3).¹¹

Although Ron Spink invited Dr Susan Clubb to Kalamazoo, she was unable to attend because the meeting occurred 1 month after her first son was born. Dr Clubb was scheduled as a speaker at the Atlanta meeting, and she was also elected as the vice president of AAV.

Susan Clubb, DVM: A 1978 graduate of Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine, Susan Clubb had a varied interest in nontraditional species. While in veterinary school, she owned chickens, worked with birds of prey, and bred birds, rabbits, and ferrets. Her knowledge base and expertise were such that veterinary professors would call upon her to see avian cases. Dr Clubb completed a preceptorship under Greg Harrison's tutelage and she then went on to work for a large importer of birds, reptiles, and exotic mammals in Miami.

New species were coming in... We'd see things all the time that hadn't been in the country before. It was really exciting.—Susan Clubb, DVM

A past president of AAV, Dr Clubb is board-certified in avian practice through the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners. She continues to practice in southern Florida.

Making a connection

Avian veterinarians in 1980 were working blindly, and the AAV met the practitioner's crucial need for connection and dissemination of infor-



Figure 3. This photograph, illustrating Association of Avian Veterinarian officers, was originally posted in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, Volume 179, No. 1. Reprinted with permission.

mation. Every board director described an atmosphere of fellowship, enthusiasm, and cooperation at AAV meetings.

I think in the very early days when there wasn't as much science...there was an awful lot more camaraderie around the nuclear group. We absolutely looked forward to our conference every year. We knew we were going to be sharing cases and information. "Did you see this? Did you see that? How did you handle this case? What about this new drug that's out there?" We were on the frontier. There was very little literature searches that we could do. We couldn't go on the Internet and search for a topic...So what we did: we networked...—Richard Nye, DVM

The AAV newsletter was also considered a highlight of the early years. Created by Linda and Greg Harrison, the first newsletter was released in September 1980.

* There were 3 member classifications in 1980 (active, associate, and student). Dues were \$10.

Yes, there really is an Association of Avian Veterinarians! We appreciate your support in the way of membership dues* and interest, and your patience in getting this first communication...the Newsletter will be an informal sharing of items of interest to the avian practitioner, including case reports and avian practice tips.¹¹

The newsletter was an important forum used to share information and foster learning. Case reports as well as an "In My Experience" (IME) section featured what clinicians were seeing and doing in practice. The IME section was considered informal and fun and the content was not refereed. An IME by Dr Alan Fudge describes a case of hemochromatosis in a greater Indian Hill mynah (*Gracula religiosa intermedia*).²⁵ The following are additional examples of newsletter IME entries.

To understand the phenomena of feather picking in pet birds, one must realize that birds are emotional animals affected psychologically by both physical and mental stress...Survival in the wild depends upon constant feather care, and is so basic to continued existence that in order of importance, it

ranks next to food gathering and reproduction. Birds will never do anything to damage their feathers if their mind functions normally.

Through 3 million years of evolution, birds have solved all their problems by flying away from them. At any sound, movement, or strangeness, the bird's alarm system would immediately react and send the bird to flight. This system was so successful that birds never had to become cunning or look for other answers. Flight remains as their compelling solution, except that escape in captivity has been prevented...—Ted Lafeber, DVM; IME 18²⁵

Certain plants are considered poisonous to cats and dogs (difenbachia, philodendrum, poinsettia) but do not seem to produce toxicity when ingested by birds. Does anyone else have thoughts on that?—Greg Harrison, DVM; IME 19²⁵

What do the Original Members of AAV Think About...?

...Avian medicine today?

Back then everything was so new, exciting. There were all these problems to solve, there were people willing to spend money... Today there is a big gap between aviculture and avian medicine...now the largest portion of bird medicine is pet medicine... Today it's a really changing field. The interest in keeping birds as pets and as avicultural subjects has declined and is continuing to decline...—Susan Clubb, DVM

Dr Nye took a further step back to evaluate the ethics of bird-keeping.

I think very honestly, as a veterinary profession we are assessing what animals should we really have as pets? What animals are benefitted by our care? ...I think of having animals in cages as a 'tough one' because unless you are there interacting with animals all the time essentially they're in isolation...-that's the tough part of bird medicine: pet bird ownership.—Richard Nye, DVM

...AAV today?

Many of the original members of AAV agree that AAV has done very well for itself. The Association

has representation in the AVMA house of delegates and is now larger than AAAP (B. Bevans-Kerr, written communication, July 2013).²⁶

While some founding members have had little or no contact with AAV since retirement, others are still active members with acute perceptions on their Association:

Now I don't know that there's as much networking. I sense everybody just goes to the computer, isn't that where everything is? ...There's a lot more science associated with everything and I think that's a good thing.—Richard Nye, DVM

AAV is going through a painful transition, similar to our specialty in general. Membership is going down for the very reason that avian medicine is declining: demand is down, and you can't afford to do [avian medicine] unless you can get the caseload. Members are looking for a more diverse [continuing education] experience in order to be able to select a meeting. AAV is struggling with that, our profession is struggling with that...—Susan Clubb, DVM

And what does the driving force behind AAV's origin, Ron Spink, think about the Association today?

I am glad to see that AAV has made conservation issues an integral part of the association. It appears that new avian vets are encompassing the totality of the concepts... The AAV was and is a motivating force not only for avian medicine but also avian research and environmental conservation.—Ronald Spink, DVM

Looking to the Future: Any Advice for New Avian Veterinarians?

Most founding members of AAV had little advice for younger avian veterinarians. Dr Bickford strongly recommended residency training due to gaps in the basic veterinary curriculum; however, Dr Susan Clubb suggested caution and a broader clinical focus:

Today the money is in small animal medicine, and it's a lot harder to make a living in avian medicine. You really need to network with small animal practitioners, people who will refer to you if you're going to be able to get enough of a caseload. Build a referral base...don't try to specialize in avian medi-

cine unless you can move into a large city where there's no competition...If you're going to try to do it, you're going to have to do it all [all exotic animal species]... It's fun, it's tough. Not as financially rewarding as it probably should be...—Susan Clubb, DVM

Conclusion

It is interesting, and likely no accident of fate, that the founding members of AAV were successful entrepreneurs and business owners. Hard work and dedication are no strangers to veterinarians; however, the founding members are surely exceptional in the breadth and the depth of their contribution to avian medicine. Without the individual and collective work of AAV's founding members, where would avian medicine be today?

It was a struggle helping people...I distinctly remember the 'tipping point' that spurred me into caged bird medicine. In 1969, Mrs Baack called seeking desperate help for "Captain"—a parakeet (now called budgie). I told her I knew very little and had no one to refer her to. She showed up at my clinic soon after. As I took the blanket wrap off the cage, the bird said very clearly "What's the matter?" I've spent the rest of my professional life trying to answer Captain's question for 1000s of birds.—Ron Spink, DVM

Avian medicine has grown tremendously since the founding of AAV in 1980, and the advances made, in a relatively brief period of time, have been nothing short of amazing. The Association has spent very little time looking to the past, but that's not surprising. As a relatively young organization, the AAV is more concerned with its present and future. Nevertheless there may be valuable lessons that we can learn from the past and certainly legacies that we should honor.

Acknowledgements: I thank Liza Bollinger and Debbie Cowen, formerly with the AAV office, for answering my many questions.

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