

## Dr. Victor Perman

Vic Perman, born January 28th, 1926, on a Greenwood, Wisconsin dairy farm to immigrant parents, spoke Slovenian until he started school. He slept in the middle of a corn cob bed with a grandfather on one side and a great-uncle on the other. His one-room school with one teacher and 40 students fostered an early love for learning as it allowed him to listen in on advanced classes.



The farm taught him hard work as his chores included chopping wood, hauling water, managing a team of horses with a walking plow, as well as milking each day before walking a mile to school. He recalled snipping factory beans into the wee hours with the other members of his 12 person household.

Like many of his generation, World War II sent him around the world. He survived sailing in a typhoon and in a mine field off Okinawa, watching a kamikaze pilot cross in front of the bridge he manned as a quartermaster on the USS Pavlic, and he was among the first U.S. sailors to enter Tokyo Bay to witness the Japanese surrender. Shortly after arriving in Japan, he was called back to take over the family farm when his father became ill.

After farming for a few years, a neighbor studying at the University of Minnesota told him that the U was starting a veterinary school. Beginning at age 24 with the help of the GI bill, he completed his BS, DVM, and PhD degrees over the next 13 years while supporting his wife Virginia (Ginny) and eventually five daughters.

Vic and Ginny lived in student housing, initially a trailer without a bathroom that required use of a communal shower and toilet facility. Once their first daughter was born, they moved into a quonset hut for the next 4 years, until they had four children. To help make ends meet, Vic worked in the St. Paul campus animal barns and returned to Wisconsin on weekends to shoot squirrels and rabbits for food. He remained an avid fisherman and deer hunter until the end of his life.

Because the GI bill didn't cover all his school expenses, Vic also accepted part-time work on a

comparative study of the effects of trichloroethylene-extracted soybean oil meal which produced aplastic anemia in cattle. Aplastic anemia, the failure of the bone marrow to produce cells, mimics the effects of ionizing radiation injury in mammals. This part-time laboratory work was nearly full time employment for the four years of veterinary school and changed the course of Vic's career.

Vic initially planned to practice large animal medicine in Wisconsin, but his plans changed when he and Ginny learned that their third child would be twins. About that time, he was offered and accepted a Research Fellowship to stay another year with the same research program and the clinical pathologist in the department resigned. With the fall quarter about to begin, Vic was asked to teach clinical pathology and to begin graduate study in Veterinary Pathology. He continued to teach clinical pathology courses to University of Minnesota veterinary students for more than 40 years, from 1955 to 1998. His daughters teased him that his one sabbatical didn't have him going far — just across town to the Pediatrics Department at the Medical School.

Vic's Cold War era dissertation research on how to extend the life of dogs with induced-radiation injury had also been influenced by human medicine and the life-changing opportunity to conduct research at the Brookhaven National Laboratory with the world's leading experts in hematology. Vic's dissertation advisors had both worked on radiation injury to humans at the Pacific test sites for the atom bombs. After completing his dissertation, Vic had to pass the qualifying examination in Veterinary Pathology as the exam was not offered in Clinical Pathology.

Vic's research on aplastic anemia continued into the 1960's and then his emphasis extended to leukemias, primarily in dairy cattle. The laboratory techniques he mastered were becoming useful to the practice of small animal medicine and he found himself more and more involved with dogs and cats. His training in human and experimental pathology led to a

specialty in diagnostic cytology using fine needles to obtain a small amount of tissue. Vic found it gratifying to observe these techniques accepted in veterinary medicine before they were accepted by human pathologists in the U.S.

Vic worked tirelessly to establish the clinical laboratory, putting in untold hours and constantly asking higher administration for funds for updated equipment. His book, *Cytology of the Dog and Cat*, is a legacy of his time at the microscope. His favorite place to be was with his eye glued to the lens looking at new specimens. He was known, together with Alan Rebar, for entertaining "Stump the Pathologist" lectures at American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) meetings, which continue at the Veterinary Meeting and Expo (VMX). Each presenter tries to stump the other with a difficult-to-diagnose slide.

Learning to diagnose disease from blood smears made him one of the founders of the field of veterinary clinical pathology; indeed he was only a graduate student when he and 11 others founded the American Veterinary Clinical Pathology Association. Vic's expertise in diagnostic hematology and cytology led to the development of continuing education courses, hundreds of lectures both nationally and internationally, and significant awards early in his career. Within a few years of receiving his PhD in 1962, he had received the Norden Distinguished Teacher Award (1968), the AAHA Gaines Fido Veterinarian of the Year Award (1973), and the College Little Red Oil Can Award (1975).

Later awards and service included: the AAHA Distinguished Service Award (1980), Gaines Fido Award for Research and Teaching from the AVMA (1993), and election as a Distinguished Member of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists (1999). He served as president of the American Society for Veterinary Clinical Pathology and received its first Lifetime Achievement Award in 2001.

Vic's professional career also involved administrative duties. He was Director of the Veterinary Hospital Laboratories for most of his tenure on the faculty, Department Chair for six years, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies for six years, served as Equal Opportunity Officer, and ended his career working for the Development Office. Because he

enjoyed being of service and spending time with alumni, he worked part-time in development until age 77. He also served on the boards of both the University of Minnesota Alumni Association and the Veterinary School Alumni Society.

In retirement, Vic and Ginny enjoyed annual reunions with his Pavlic shipmates and an annual week at the lake with their children and grandchildren. Vic and Ginny celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 2000. In 2006 and 2007, he traveled to Slovenia and Croatia, visiting the homes from which his parents emigrated as teenagers and meeting first cousins and their descendants.

Always passionate about food, Vic enjoyed hosting pig roasts for family, his church, and vet school students. With colleagues, he started the vet school Back-to-School and graduating senior BBQs. He cooked for Loaves and Fishes, made hundreds of pounds of meat loaf to raise money for the Roseville Food Shelf, and engaged his fellow Kiwanis in supporting the Food Shelf, ultimately receiving a Kiwanis distinguished service award. Each year the Veterinary College Christmas party brought out the chef in him when he cooked roast beef and ham in every incubator and autoclave in the laboratory.

For his daughters he set the example of what he expected by the life he led: hard work; curiosity to learn; giving your time, talents and resources; a love of the outdoors; and a love of travel. He was a playful and attentive father, who nonetheless, always had to win when playing cards. Vic died on December 11, 2011; he and Ginny had been married 61 years. We miss him.

*We hope this biographical sketch inspires you to realize your dreams, while recognizing that careers can't always be planned and that life holds many surprises. We wish you well.*

*—The Perman Family: Ginny Perman; daughters Lauri Perman, Joan Bertelsen, Jean Olson, Karen Borgert; and Vic and Ginny's eight grandchildren. Their second daughter, Vicki, died in a car accident when she was 17.*