The 2017 Bartlett Address
Ramblings of an idle warped mind
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I got a telephone call in February from Mike Thompson while on my way to Minnesota to speak. First thought….why is Mike calling me. Did they finally figure out that I was incompetent and wanted to take my Diplomate status away? Ban me from ACT/SFT? Draw and quarter me?

No, he wanted to congratulate me for being the David E. Bartlett Award for Lifetime Achievement in Theriogenology! I was speechless (hard to do). Honored. Speechless. Honored. Did I just outlive everybody else who was actually qualified? I know I did not pay anyone. Maybe they got nominations mixed up. Regardless, I am here. Honored! I am still struggling to figure out why. I just did my job. Excellence was my standard. Never left a call not wondering what else could I have done. Probably close to three thousand students (and counting) and always wondering if I could have explained it better, presented it better, or just been better. I know I did not get this award for my research efforts. I am clinical but hopefully scientific enough that I know some will get better even if I do not treat them or in spite of my treatment.

I have many people to thank for this award. First, my wife, Victoria A. Rowe, PhD for which I may never have started down this path. She decided that my mixed practice career in a small Iowa town might not be perfect for both of us! After updating my resume and writing a cover letter, she allowed me to sign it and send it off to Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. I had carefully explained to her that universities wanted advanced degrees and boarded people. Unfortunately, they offered me a job and I had to eat crow. There I got to work with great theriogenologists like Beverly Purswell, Bill Ley, Dave Sprecher, and Jim Bowen while doing ambulatory and extension (by the way, what is a Hokie?)

Then it was back to Iowa for some corporate work with ASDIC Ltd and Yoder Feeds, which kept us clothed, fed, and me on the road. We were blessed with two wonderful children, Clinton Ryan and Abriel Jeane. Clint was a “bug and dinosaur” kid and Abby was our beautiful “computer” daughter. Family kept Vicki busy and made me realize that being on the road was not going to be conducive to a good family life. Lesson one… family first! So off to job hunting and the University of Illinois I went. There, I was introduced to the likes of Ted Lock, Randall Ott, Bruce Brodie, Howard Whitmore, Bill Wagner and a host of great residents and interns over the years. Others that have come and gone from Illinois are Sherrie Clark, Jim Brendenmuhl, Gary Althouse, Manoel Tamassia, Swanand Sathe, Katie Naughton, Hilary French, Deb Sauberli, Jacque Fusilier and others that my mind will think of later. Today I mostly push paper, limp, and work with Drs. Canisso, Lima, Ellerbrock and Herrmann. Illinois worked out well for family and career. I studied and took the practitioner route to ACT boards. Work all day, home with the kids and then study after they went to bed. Lesson 2…do not make the practitioner route so untenable as to limit/prohibit people from trying.

I would also like to thank my mother and father, Malcolm and Emma Jeanne Shipley, the finest two parents a child could have. Dad was a perfect role model. A WWII vet and 90% disabled, he never complained and worked hard every day. Up at five, do chores, breakfast at seven, and work all day in the field or with the livestock and then chores at five and supper at six. If there happened to be more daylight, it was back to work until dark. Once Randy Ott asked who my hero was and I replied that my Dad was. Still is. He passed at eighty-five years with shrapnel in his hands that could not be removed. Mom is still with us today. Eighty-seven and still full of wisdom and kindness. On the refrigerator door, windows, walls and other places reside her little clippings and writings of inspiration and knowledge. She raised four boys and lost two others. She could outrun me until I was twelve and kept the paddle on top of the refrigerator. Probably saved my life by keeping me in line. They “allowed” me all my pets and livestock. From pigs, sheep, cows, horses, rabbits, ducks, geese, turtles and on, they nurtured my mind and spirit. Piano lessons were mandatory, as was church, Methodist Youth Fellowship, band, Cub Scouts and lots of playing in the “crick” (creek for you non-southern Iowans). We were poor, but never wanted
for anything. A large garden that if you were bored, you were allowed to go weed. Lesson three...you do not have to have money to be rich!

Others who have influenced me along the way would be the first veterinarian that I remember. Dr. Pollack of Villisca, Iowa. I was probably six when he came to treat a down cow with milk fever. A true miracle to an unsuspecting lad. Always wanted to be a veterinarian. Still do. If I could figure out a way to pay the bills, I would do this for nothing. Lesson four...do things that bring you joy and make work seem like fun! The next most important veterinarian was Dr. Richard Riese. I was still in high school and he let the poor kid from Nodaway help him work cattle, spay dogs and clean the chute! He later returned to Iowa State University and did a residency and I had the pleasure of being one of his students (again). Others at ISU that influenced me were Steve Hopkins, Tracy Clark and Larry Evans. Dr. Clark was very protective of the repro mares so you would find Dr. Hopkins or Dr. Evans and ask them if you could palpate “extra”! He also did not appreciate riding the mares down the hall, but....Lesson five...it is not what you know it is who you know.

Now, to be serious for a very brief time. I see an erosion of theriogenology’s place in academia (in Illinois for sure) or we would not be talking about it repeatedly. I do not have a solution. We (veterinarians) have become burdened with two paradigms. Production versus pets (human medicine). That is hard to reconcile some days. One of my early non-therio colleagues at Illinois once declared to me that all the profit in hog production is made in the finisher. I reminded him that nothing happens in the finisher unless something happens in the breeding barn. Lesson six... all production begins with reproduction. Lesson seven...even pets start with reproduction!

I used to and still do tease my equine brethren when doing colic surgery or some other super-duper complicated thing to something that is still going to die, that “don’t worry, I’ll make another one”! Lesson eight...we are/they are “still gonna die”. At what cost do we practice? Real medicine? Standard of practice? Are we as veterinarians going to pass the lifeboat test? At what point do we lose our perspective? I have no problem providing the best of care, but also do not belabor that many do not want, need or have the resources for that kind of care. A very smart resident (Julie Funk) once told me that people come to us for options. Dr. Ott drilled the students that the probability of a favorable outcome was paramount to the treatment decision. Lesson nine...there are always two treatment options at least...do nothing and euthanasia. In between those two are the Ford, Chevy, Cadillac and Mercedes options.

Almost done. Lifelong learning is one the most important duties that we have to our clients and patients and to ourselves. Attend meetings. Read proceedings. Read books. Read newspapers. Anything! My mother said education is the one thing they cannot take away from you. Lesson 10...keep learning....never say no to an opportunity to learn. Even if it is going to be a hard lesson! That is probably what led me down this road. Eat crow while it is warm and stop digging when you find yourself in a hole. Leave plenty of dead behind. That means you have done something. Be it a lion, tiger or bear, just do it.

Last, thank you goes to the SFT and the ACT. You have become my brothers and sisters and are collectively, the finest people to be associated with that I have ever come across. I would ask that all read the first Bartlett Award talk by the Dr. Dave Bartlett. We owe everything to our founders and the battles that they fought for us. History is important. How we got here is important. What we leave behind is even more important.

Now to end with a Dr. Shipley story with a moral at the end. I was working on the Navajo Indian Reservation back in the early 1980’s volunteering. Great fun, adventure, new place, challenges! A colic was coming in and I drew the short straw. While waiting for the horse to arrive, I went over everything that a senior veterinary student should know about colic. The professors and books had never been to the reservation. Up drove an old pickup truck with the cab jammed full of people and the bed of the truck full as well (I think thirteen people in all). Pulling an old two-horse trailer that was rusted and carrying a two-year-old palomino stallion, body condition score one. Par for the reservation. I tried to carry on a conversation with the owner, great grandpa, but he spoke little or no English. I worked my way down the generations to a youngster that appeared to be in his early teens. I would ask him a question and it would be passed up the generations to be answered by great grandpa and then passed back down through the
generations to me. History questions like age, when was he last dewormed, how long since he has eaten, has he been down rolling, etc. Passed up and down the line. Finally the question about feces. Puzzled look from the youngster. No answer. Has he had a bowel movement? No answer. Has he passed any manure? No answer. Finally stumped for any other phraseology, I said, “Has he taken a shit?” Great grandpa jumps in, “big shit”…Lesson eleven…speak your mind so nobody has to guess what you’re saying.

References
Will Rogers, Baxter Black and Shel Silverstein