

How I Got Into My Professional Career

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As I discussed when I wrote about my father, he got excited about Ayrshire dairy cattle in the late 1940s or so. He used to read the monthly *Ayrshire Digest* and keep track of all of the award-winning cows and bulls of the breed. He got me interested as well, none of my two brothers or sister were that interested in living on a dairy farm. So I went to college to learn about how to breed award-winning dairy cattle.

My parents both had an 8th grade education, but they always encouraged as much education as possible. I knew that they did not have a lot of money to pay for college, so I worried about how they could cope with the financial resources of a college education. I was valedictorian of my high school, but since there were only 14 in my class, some questioned whether that high school had prepared me for college. Nevertheless, I went to Colorado State University (then Colorado A & M) with the intent of getting a bachelor's degree in Animal Science. After one year in the dorm, I applied to become a dorm counselor so as to minimize the costs. Two years of ROTC were required, but one had the opportunity to sign up for an additional two years, for which a monthly stipend was available. So between those various jobs and (eventually two scholastic scholarships), I was able to see my way forward.

I graduated from CSU with a B.S. degree and a commitment for two years in the Army as a Second Lieutenant. My father got me a summer deferment to help with the farm work, so I did not start my Army career until September 1952. I reported to Fort Carson, CO and was told that the next available Basic Officers Course was not available until the following January at Fort Sill, OK for the field artillery. My first child, our daughter Karen, was born in Lawton, OK while I was at BOC. Upon returning to Fort Carson, I was told that I would get orders to go to Korea in May. While on my way to Korea, the cease-fire armistice was signed. So I spent my tour of duty with no combat, but knowing that war could begin again at any time. While in Korea, I was promoted to First Lieutenant and awarded the Bronze Star. All the time in South Korea, I was eager to get back home to be with my family and to work with my father raising dairy cattle. My second child, son David, was born in his mother's hometown of Wayne, NE while I was in Korea.

On my return to the states, I retrieved my wife and two children from NE and we all went back to the farm to an ever-expanding dairy herd. My father had invested in a "prize" bull named Windrow Preferred Kingfish and wanted me to do artificial insemination (AI) of our herd so that we could get as many offspring as possible from this bull. Windrow Farms was owned by the President of General Motors, Charles Wilson, so he was able to maintain a herd with the most expensive cows and bulls available. Fortunately, our local banker also became a fancier of Ayrshire cattle, so he agreed to a loan to purchase this bull. I had difficulty in achieving high pregnancy rates at first, but eventually went to CSU and took a short course in AI which helped a lot in retaining viable sperm for insemination.

My then-wife was a city girl and she found the farm life to not be her cup of tea. I would rise at 3 or 4 AM to get the milking process started and often went out at nightfall to see if any animals were in distress or need of help. Needless to say, we didn't have much of a social life. One day, I took off to visit CSU and get information about my options with the GI bill to go to vet school. While at the student affairs office, I ran into a former professor of Animal Breeding, Dr. Howard (Stony) Stonaker. I was surprised that he remembered me, but he inquired about my current status. I told him that I was thinking of vet school. A few days later I got a letter saying that if I had not considered graduate school, he would be like to discuss it with me.

I had not considered further schooling having some anxiety about the costs and whether my high school had properly prepared me for a scientific career. I had made good academic grades for my B.S., so that gave me confidence that I could handle more academic challenges. I was the first grandchild of my grandparents to go to college. So after talking with Stony about both animal breeding and animal reproduction graduate schools, I got offers from both Iowa State and Wisconsin. I called Stony who knew both of my potential major professors, and he recommended University of Wisconsin with Dr. L. E. Casida as my best choice, even though Stony had his Ph.D. from Iowa State.

So, I ended up at Madison, WI for four years to get my Masters in Genetics and then my Ph.D. in Endocrinology in 1960. After graduation, the Upjohn Company in Kalamazoo, MI had an opening for someone to study reproduction drugs in farm species. I found out later that Upjohn could have been first with the human contraceptive pill because they had been quite successful in the reproductive steroids based on estrogen and progesterone derivatives.

However, Kalamazoo was a very conservative community and there was some feeling that contraceptives were not something that they should pursue. Upjohn was pretty much a Kalamazoo institution, so the company leadership was influenced by community opinion. The chemists and physiologists in human research went to the Animal Health division and encouraged them to hire someone to look into the potential of such substances in farm animals. My major professor at Wisconsin was very anti-industry, so he was initially against the idea that one of his students would go to work in industry. I had a long talk with him and convinced him that I could work there and retain high scientific standards. After some time, we had him over and discussed our science with him and he came around to acceptance of my career at Upjohn.

During my scientific career, I found that one of the progesterone derivatives had unique potency in cattle and we found it had a commercial use in heifers in the feedlot. We patented the compound for that use and it allowed the veterinary division to invest in more research in other fields of animal medicine as it was quite profitable. I believe that drug is still on the market today. Eventually, the unit was expanded and we had physiologists working in other animals, mostly cattle, dogs, and chickens. We worked with swine and horses somewhat, but always had limited research in those species. I became the head of the research unit, which was a tough decision for me as I thought of myself as a scientist rather than as an administrator. I accepted the position for a one year trial period, but remained in research administration for the balance of my career at Upjohn.

I had always had a philosophy that my scientists should do work that added to the scientific literature, even if it required a bit more research than was adequate for company purposes. We also worked cooperatively with scientists at various universities so that our unit became well-known throughout the scientific community. Although, the board of directors of our scientific society, the American Society of Animal Science, was also a bit anti-industry they began adding directors-at-large from industry partners. At first these came primarily from the animal feed industry. Starting around the mid-1980s they started to look at the pharmaceutical business as well for board members. They asked me to run for one of the at-large positions and I was selected.

While on the board, the president, who was also the dean at one of the main ag colleges, felt that agricultural animal research was not represented in Washington, DC where much of the federal funding for agriculture was allocated. So the board made a decision to start a DC office so as to be properly represented there when appropriations were made. They asked me if I would be a candidate for that office, since my Upjohn work had taken me to DC fairly often. I initially said no, but eventually reconsidered. I was one of three final candidates, but was chosen and accepted even though it meant less pay and higher living costs. None of us knew for sure how ASAS could financially support such a position as they had always had a tight budget. My naiveté and belief in the value of animal science won me over to take a chance. So I took early retirement from Upjohn and moved to the DC area in 1987. That was the same year that Arlene and I were married, so 1987 was filled with a lot of first-time events.

In DC, I set up an office near the National Institutes of Health ((NIH) where I found lots of common interests as animal research in physiology, nutrition, genetics, reproduction, etc. Working with these groups, we found overlap with our funding requests from NIH. My goal was to see that scientific data were made possible for decision-making as much as possible. So I worked a lot with other ag professional societies as well as the animal commodity groups, such as those representing cattle, swine, sheep, chickens, etc. and other farm animals. I tried to influence legislation representing those interests, but did not lobby as those groups did. I attempted to see that they had the latest and most solid scientific data on whatever topic, either because I understood the issues or could refer them to a scientist who represented the consensus of thinking in that area. Often they would suggest that the legislative staffers ask me to testify on a specific issue, but I didn't often volunteer to influence matters directly. I ended up testifying on animal science issues and funding a number of times.

During my years there - from 1987 to 1999 - other animal societies saw the benefits and we started a Congressional Science Fellow program funded by several societies under the aegis of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). I was mentor to our CSF until he or she found a position on the "Hill," working then in the office of a Congressional representative or committee. Eventually, we formalized an organization called FASS (Federation of Animal Science Societies) and I working with them for a couple of years until they were able to hire their own Executive Vice-President. I then took retirement again and gradually removed myself from the scene by serving on some boards until we moved to Texas.

While in Madison, our third son, Mark, was born. After moving to Kalamazoo, our last son, Brian, was born. I concluded (jokingly of course) that moving to a new city was responsible for children.

As a reproductive physiologist, I knew better but it reminds me of the way that our current crop of legislators speak about scientific issues.