Meet Bill Grant II, DVM, 2008-2009 CVMA President

Veterinary Medicine is a great profession and for me it is a family profession. Growing up in Anaheim as the son of a veterinarian in the 1960’s and ‘70’s, I gained a unique perspective of the veterinary profession. I have seen firsthand how the profession has changed over the last 40 years and how those changes have affected my father, me, and now those we teach. I have seen those changes through the eyes of a 10-year-old boy cleaning cages and walking dogs, as a 15-year-old veterinary technician (couldn’t do that today!), as a veterinary student, as an intern, and as a practice owner. I have seen how parvo changed the way my father practiced medicine and administered vaccines and how different anesthetics and lasers changed the way we perform surgery. Since graduating from veterinary school 20 years ago, I have experienced remarkable changes – changes that have affected the general makeup of the profession and the way I practice veterinary medicine.

Despite having grown up in a veterinary family, the grass looked greener on the other side – I was going to human medical school. It was the kind efforts of a family friend, an MD, who showed me the light – the nightmare of insurance involvement in medical profession. So I headed off to Kansas State University (KSU) – the “Little Apple” – where I had the experience of a lifetime. Four years of a fantastic veterinary education, great friends, and down-to-earth Midwest living, not to mention ice, freezing cold, snow, and did I mention freezing cold?

As a veterinary student at KSU, the majority of my class was male; many, if not most, went into large or mixed animal practice; and we all dreamed of owning our own practice one day. Today, as a Clinical Assistant Professor for Western University, I have the wonderful opportunity to educate third- and fourth-year veterinary students as they rotate through our practice. Interfacing with future veterinarians, I have noted some significant differences. Women now predominate in veterinary school, the debt load has increased dramatically, most enter small animal practice (some states offer a debt forgiveness program in an attempt to change this trend), and most graduates do not want the hassles and lifestyle of practice ownership.

While at KSU, I was national president of the Student AVMA – an educational experience that provided me with exposure to veterinary politics and important issues facing our profession. It was here that I learned how important it is to be informed about the issues facing our profession and to speak out. At that time, the most pressing issues were getting an official student vote at the AVMA House of Delegates, establishing Centers of Excellence at different veterinary schools, and having the United States represented at the International Veterinary Student Association (which this past year was jointly hosted by the Western University and UC Davis schools of veterinary medicine). Today we are faced with more legislation than ever governing how we practice veterinary medicine, escalating lawsuits, and initiatives such as farm animal confinement.

Following graduation from KSU, I traveled to the “Big Apple” for an internship at the Animal Medical Center in New York City. In 1989, I was one of a minority of veterinarians entering postgraduate training. Today, Davis and Western University boast that almost 50% of their graduates are pursuing an internship or residency, and most are choosing private practice internships over university positions. Similarly, 20 years ago, becoming a professor at a veterinary school was the ultimate achievement. Today, boarded veterinarians are choosing lucrative specialty practices instead of heading to a university, leaving one to wonder who will train our future colleagues.

In contrast to Kansas, New York City was a bit of a shock – the concrete jungle, different personalities, attitudes, and opinions – an education in itself. But the Animal Medical Center (AMC) provided this new graduate with a remarkable education. An icon of veterinary medicine, the AMC has trained generations of veterinarians, exposing them to some 80,000 medical and surgical cases a year under the guidance of world class veterinarians who give you the world and expect the world in return. The AMC taught me how to apply what I learned in school to my patients – the AMC was where I began...
learning how to be a veterinarian. The ultimate goal of the AMC was to train you to be the best veterinarian you could be – rarely did we speak of malpractice or lawsuits.

It was also at the AMC where I met my future wife, Dr. Dayna Wiedenkeller. We now practice together and have two wonderful children, Billy and Lizzy. Never did I anticipate that I would marry a veterinarian, especially one from the dreaded “Big Apple.” Raising a family, practicing together, and trying to make a go of farming and growing avocados makes for an exciting life!

The trip from the West coast to the East and back again provided me with insights into the many different points of view on issues across our country – just as there are many different opinions within our profession. There are many issues facing our profession, such as changing standards of care, changing values of those entering our profession, changing public perception of our profession, and the changing involvement of the legal profession into the veterinary profession.

I have been involved in organized veterinary medicine non-stop since earning my DVM. I have served on many CVMA committees as well as the Board of Governors. It’s important that we all support each other as colleagues and share our expertise as we address the issues that affect all veterinary professionals throughout California. As CVMA president I look forward to an exciting and challenging year working with many of you through the CVMA’s committees, task forces, the House of Delegates, and the Board of Governors.

A Snapshot of Bill

Hometown
Anaheim, CA

School Stuff
Arizona State University – BS, Zoology
Kansas State University – DVM, 1989
Animal Medical Center, New York, NY – Internship

Wife and Kids
Dayna Wiedenkeller, DVM (President, SCVMA)
William (Billy) A. Grant III – 14 yrs old
Elizabeth (Lizzy) Victoria Grant – 13 yrs old

Animal House
Rosie, Penny, Sparky (a.k.a. Woody) (2 labs and a "wanna be" Chihuahua)
Monty (a 32-year old Red Tail Boa constrictor)

Having Fun
Rowing, fishing, coaching baseball, snorkeling in Hawaii, and working in the avocado grove.

Family Fact
One year post open-heart surgery and enjoying every minute of life!

Work History
Community Veterinary Hospital started in 1961 as a solo practice, now a 7-doctor teaching hospital.