



## *SPECIAL INTERIM NEWS & COMMENT*

July 18, 2011

*Dr. Phyllis H. Larsen, reporter*

### **Earliest News About Our Society**

In 1976, Dr. J.Fred Smithcors began writing newsletters for a proposed American Veterinary Historical Society. He reported that when given a list of choices for its activities, 27 “members” replied as follows: promote history teaching (15); have a newsletter (14); preserve old books, etc. (14); encourage museums (13); have a journal (11); prepare exhibits (10); compile lists of resources (10); and have annual meetings (1).

Recipients of the newsletters were already teaching veterinary history to students, preserving old books and instruments, starting museums, and setting up exhibits at AVMA conventions. In addition, co-founder Smithcors was including lists of old books in his newsletters, and distributing his taped oral interviews of prominent veterinarians

### **Then Our Society Began**

Even though meetings ranked at the bottom of what members thought the Society should do, the American Veterinary Historical Society soon held its first formal meeting during the AVMA Convention in Dallas, Texas, on July 18, 1978. All who had joined earlier, plus those who joined at that first business meeting, became the 43 “charter members”, and 6 of them are members now:

Dr. Fred J. Born  
 Dr. Wolfgang Jochle  
 Dr. Robert C. McClure  
 Brig. Gen. Thomas G. Murnane, DVM  
 Life Member, Dr. R. Gary Roop, and  
 Dr. William E. Ryan, AVHS co-founder.

### **Why This Special News and Comment?**



It is for Susanne Whitaker because of her myriad contributions to furthering aims of our charter members. Take this news. Your reporter gathers it and types most of it up roughly. But it is Susanne Whitaker who fills in gaps, finds illustrations, adds long lists of resources, and puts it all in formats that get called “excellent” or “professional.”

Most years it is she who prepares exhibits, sets them up, and stays with them nearly all of the time. When an exhibit featured past winners of the J.F. Smithcors Student Essay Contest, she compiled for reference all topics that had been submitted since 1992.

Recently Susanne Whitaker undertook the laborious task of transcribing many oral tapes recorded by co-founder Smithcors in the 1950s. As with the AVMHS Registry of Historic Veterinary Practices, her annotated list of old and new oral tapes will further veterinary history via the AVMHS website.

For these and many other volunteerings, beyond any call of duty, this special Interim News and Comment displays AVMHS appreciation for Susanne Whitaker.