

## “RANCH REALITIES”

### Personal Statement for Veterinary School

As I was growing up our house was always filled with an assortment of animals-dogs, cats, birds, and reptiles. In the summer, I worked on my grandparents' cattle ranch in central Oregon, and there I participated in the planting, irrigating, and haying operations. My true preference, however, was working with the livestock. I rode on the cattle drives and helped in the branding (which included dehorning, vaccinating, and castrating). Through these experiences I came to understand the relationship between rancher and livestock, and the often harsh reality of animal husbandry.

At my grandparents', too, I became interested in horses. My first horse was an unbroken quarter horse, who quickly educated me on the trials of owning a large animal. I have owned two other horses, both thoroughbreds, which I trained, showed, and later sold. As a horse owner I have experienced my share of colics, wire cuts, and mysterious lameness, as well as learned how to handle and cajole an animal that eight to ten times more than I do. I have taught English and Western lessons, anatomy, general horsemanship, and first aid to Sierra Club members and summer camp children, and have been responsible for the care of fifteen lesson horses. No matter what the experience, the companionship, enjoyment, and sense of responsibility I have gained from growing up around animals has convinced me that veterinary medicine offers me a way to combine my love for animals with my interest in biological science.

More recent events have also directed me toward a career in veterinary medicine. After graduating from Duke with a bachelor's degree in biology, I accepted a four-month internship near Naples, Florida, working at a wild animal rehabilitation clinic. In contrast to my experiences with domesticated animals, the wild animals I encountered did everything in their power to flee or fight their way to freedom. We worked in cooperation with local veterinarians to provide emergency care to injured wildlife, nursing care to convalescing animals, and physical therapy to animals that were potentially releasable. I participated in all aspects of these procedures and gained invaluable experience handling raptors, seabirds, and other native species. My daily responsibilities included medicating, weighing, rescuing and providing emergency care, as well as preparing food, cleaning cages, and answering public inquiries.

My internship ended in January and I moved back to Seattle, where I was hired by a major dog and cat hospital. The hospital provides a general and specialized veterinary services; employing an oncologist, a neurologist, a radiologist, and an internist. When I started at the clinic my responsibilities included restraining animals during procedures, cleaning cages, and medicating hospitalized cases. I now am the technician to Dr. Verna Petrakis, the neurology specialist (see letter of recommendation), and my duties include placing IV catheters, drawing blood, monitoring animals under anesthesia, and preparing for joint/spinal taps and myelograms. In addition, I have been trained to operate a CAT scan, which the hospital is fortunate enough to own.

In my present position I am not only learning new procedures and techniques, but also I gained experiences in seeing how a veterinary clinic operates. I realize that in order to maintain high professional standards it takes solid managerial and financial skill. The hospital runs smoothly only when inventory is well stocked, kennels well maintained, and a positive rapport exists between the clinic and clientele. Based upon conversations I have had with veterinarians and on my own observations, I sense that the profession of Veterinary medicine is undergoing rapid change. Advancements (in both human and animal medicine) have created new dilemmas for veterinarian and client. While care has improved and previously incurable conditions can now be treated, the costs for such procedures can be prohibitive. I believe veterinarians must approach their clients honestly when discussing the benefits and costs of treatments and offer alternatives to the client whenever possible.

After working in several areas of the animal care industry, I have begun to narrow down my potential career goals. While I enjoy working with small animals, my interests really lie with large ones.

My experiences working in central Oregon have enforced my desire to work in a rural area and treat Livestock. I am also interested in wildlife and marine mammal medicine. In addition to my work in the small animal clinic, I<sup>1</sup> work as an ecology teacher on a research vessel on Puget Sound. This experience has reinforced my commitment to environmental issues. Wildlife veterinary medicine seems to me to offer a way I can help preserve wildlife and fulfil my own professional goals.

*\* From Graduate Admissions Essays, Donald Asher*

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<sup>1</sup> Graduate Admissions Essays, Donald Asher, Ref. Pg. 218-220