

## A Biography of and Interview with Harry J. Fallon, DVM

Class of 1938, College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell University

Author and Interviewer: Dr. Donald F. Smith, *Austin O. Hooey Dean Emeritus*

New York State Veterinary College Graduation Photograph



*Harry J. Fallon 1938*

### From New York to West Virginia

*A big frog in a small puddle* is how Dr. Harry Fallon describes his impact as a veterinarian in West Virginia compared to those classmates who established small animal hospitals in New York City. He practiced for over four decades in Huntington, the second largest city in the state, serving mayors, the State governor, and business and community leaders. Many of these, now retired, rub shoulders with Dr. Fallon in their retirement complex, as they share joyful memories of their pets from years gone by.

Though reticent to acknowledge it, Dr. Fallon also played in larger pond, served in leadership positions in the state veterinary association, being twice named West Virginia's Veterinarian of the Year, and writing scientific papers in veterinary journals.

Not bad for a young Jewish lad raised during the Depression in the Catskill Mountain area of New York! Harry Feldman (as was his surname growing up) became interested in animals as he was surrounded by various livestock and crops that supported the family-owned hotel. Though his parents had several businesses...

*they never had enough surpluses that they could have covered my expenses, so I had to work my way through school ... I worked at a butcher shop in New York City and I sliced my hand with a cleaver. I got three hundred dollars compensation, and that \$300 lasted me five years at Cornell.<sup>1</sup>*

Feldman enrolled in the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell in 1933 and, in a job that improved his candidacy for veterinary college, gained animal experience working at a pheasant facility for the Department of Conservation. The following spring, he was accepted in the veterinary college in the Class of 1938, matriculating in a class that had eight students—mostly Jews, like himself—from New York City.

Fearing that it might be difficult to get a job as a veterinarian with a Jewish-sounding name, he changed his surname to Fallon before starting his senior year. Ironically, the veterinary

---

<sup>1</sup> Personal communication, 2007

practice in Akron, OH, that offered him his first job was owned by two men—one a Catholic and the other a Quaker—who actually preferred to hire Jewish graduates. Regardless of his name, the new Dr. Harry Fallon fit right in!

Akron was a bustling community. Harvey Firestone—one of the practice's clients—had introduced a tire company there in 1900 and was now, along with competitor Goodyear, creating a major industrial complex in central Ohio. Fallon's mentors, L.D. Barrett and H.P. Noonan, who had graduated, respectively, from the Ohio State University in 1925, and Cornell in 1919, reinforced the academic knowledge that he had acquired in college. Importantly, they also gave him a solid grounding in business and practice skills that would serve him well as he started his own practice.

At the end of his Akron contract in 1940, Fallon heeded the invitation of a client and located in Huntington, West Virginia where he established the city's first exclusive small animal clinic. Like many of his contemporaries, however, he was called into the service of his country following the attack on Pearl Harbor. He left his practice in the hands of another veterinarian, but that individual failed to maintain acceptable quality and a high level of professionalism. To assure his reputation, Fallon decided to close the clinic and re-establish his practice following his war service.

Returning home following the war, Fallon immersed himself in rebuilding his practice. Huntington was a fast-growing, industrial city and, for many years, Dr. Fallon was its only exclusive small animal veterinarian. His reputation for quality and service attracted wonderful clients and interesting cases, both of which he loved. He responded to the opportunities of practice by developing and refining surgical procedures, including intramedullary pinning for fractures, a technique that he described in a veterinary journal. In another published article, he reported an outbreak of rabies that was refractory to the recommended vaccine of the time.

Fallon and his wife, whom he had met at Cornell, parented three children who are leading accomplished lives. Their son, Ronald K. Fallon, DVM, has an ambulatory veterinary surgical practice in the Washington, D.C. metro area. Their older daughter, Aline Brusman, was one of the first women to earn an accounting degree at the University of Virginia. Denise Ogren has two degrees from Cornell, including a MSc in Child Development.

Dr. Fallon retired from veterinary medicine when his associate, Auburn graduate Dr. Jane Ball, purchased the practice about 15 years ago. Though his wife succumbed to cancer several years ago, he has many wonderful memories of a fulfilled personal life and very successful professional career. With a twinkle in his eye, he modestly attributes his youthful appearance to good genes, good nutrition, and exercise.

Dr. Fallon appreciated the opportunities that Cornell's land grant tuition-free status gave him many years ago, and his gratitude towards his education spurred him to create a lasting legacy at the university in recognition of the indebtedness that he feels towards the college.

Only a small handful of Cornell's veterinary alumni have established their careers in West Virginia, and Dr. Fallon will be honored there for many years for his accomplishments and legacy.

## Interview

Listen to the Interview

**Subject:** Harry J. Fallon, DVM  
**Interviewer:** Donald F. Smith, DVM  
**Interview Date:** December 18, 2007  
**Location:** Huntington, West Virginia



Photograph by Donald F. Smith

Dr. Harry J. Fallon, 12/18/07

### Interviewer's Note:

*Shortly after embarking on this project of interviewing legendary veterinarians, I sought advice from my good friend, Dr. Lewis Berman '57, who owns the prestigious Park East Animal Hospital in New York City. In the course of Dr. Berman's description of his own formative years becoming a veterinarian, he gave special tribute to Dr. Harry Fallon '38, with whom he had spent the summer before his final year at Cornell. I called Dr. Fallon and he invited me warmly to interview him. One week before Christmas 2007, I drove through the snow-covered mountainous roads of western Pennsylvania, through Maryland into West Virginia, to my appointed meeting with Dr. Fallon. He was living comfortably in a retirement home apartment adorned with family and Cornell memorabilia, including the early photo of the Ithaca campus shown above. It was a trip well worth making, as I found his life story to be full of informative and interesting anecdotes, all passionately expressed. (Dr. Donald F. Smith)*

*Dr. Smith:*

Good morning. This is Donald Smith from Cornell University, and I am here in Huntington, West Virginia, with Dr. Harry Fallon, Class of 1938. The date today is December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Dr. Fallon, it's a real pleasure to be with you today.

*Dr. Fallon:*

I'm tickled to death to have you here.

*Dr. Smith:*

Would you talk about your parents coming to America, how you became a veterinarian, and what it was like being in veterinary college in the 1930s?

*Dr. Fallon:*

Well, it goes back quite a few years, to say the least. My folks came over from Poland many, many years ago and they had a lot of little business endeavors. The thing I remember most about my childhood was living in the Catskill Mountains where my folks had a small hotel and a farm associated with it.<sup>1</sup> On the farm, we had several horses and some cows and chickens, and some crops that catered to the hotel part of the business. I got so that I really enjoyed the outdoor aspects of agriculture.

When my folks left the hotel and farm and moved to New York City, I went from a one-room school house in Ellenville, N.Y.<sup>2</sup>, to an agricultural course in high school on Long Island. So, I've seen both extremes—a one room school house, and a high school with several thousand in it. I went to Long Island in the early '30s. From Newtown High School, I took an agricultural course and then applied to Cornell Ag School for two reasons. Number one, I was interested in agriculture, and secondly, it was free tuition.<sup>3</sup> These were the days during the Depression, so free tuition made a big difference.

My folks had been in several small business endeavors, and had made a [fair] living during the Depression, but never had enough surpluses that they could have covered my expenses, so I had to work my way through school.

*Dr. Smith:*

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

*Dr. Fallon:*

There were seven in my family: five children, and my father and mother.

I worked in all kinds of different shops. The thing that brought me into Cornell was the fact that I worked at a butcher shop in New York City and I sliced my hand with a cleaver. I got three hundred dollars compensation, and that \$300 lasted me five years at Cornell.

I had fairly good grades and, coupled with an agricultural background, I got into Ag School without too much trouble. After I got into agricultural college, in the summer time, I was fortunate enough to get a job at the New York State Conservation Department, raising pheasants. We raised those in outdoor pens and whenever I lost a pheasant, I generally did an autopsy on it to get an idea what may have caused it. Once in a while I caught a weasel and did the same thing, so I was interested a little bit in pathology.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Fallon referred to his parents' hotel as part of the so-called "Borscht Belt", a nickname for the resort region in the Catskill Mountains in southeastern New York State that developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Mainly in Sullivan County about 75-80 miles from New York City, these luxurious hotels became the summer vacation destination for immigrants, including Jews and some Italians.

<sup>2</sup> Rural community in Ulster County, approximately 100 miles northwest of New York City.

<sup>3</sup> Full tuition scholarships were granted to New York State residents in accordance with Cornell's land grant status.

When I got back to school, my folks were no longer on the farm, and the farm didn't look as promising to me as the possibility of going into a profession like veterinary medicine. That had two appeals: I was interested in pathology and it was free tuition. These were the times of the Depression when making a living was very important. So I applied for vet school and was fortunate enough to get in. In 1933, I applied to agricultural college at Cornell and in 1934, I got into vet school.

*Dr. Smith:*

Did you have an interview for veterinary college?<sup>4</sup>

*Dr. Fallon:*

Yes, I did. I think the thing I stressed at that time was the conservation. I was interested in conservation and I was interested in pathology. I used to [preserve] these animals that I got, and so forth.

*Dr. Smith:*

Do you remember who was involved with your interview?

*Dr. Fallon:*

No, I don't remember. I remember that it was quite a stringent thing. At that time, I was living in New York City and I thought that might be a detriment getting into agriculture and the vet school, but the conservation background helped me get in, I think.<sup>5</sup>

*Dr. Smith:*

You started veterinary college in the fall of 1934. Tell us about your veterinary college experience.

*Dr. Fallon:*

Well, it was during the Depression and I was fortunate enough not only to work in the conservation department each summer raising pheasants, [but] I also worked for Dr. Pete Olafson<sup>6</sup>, who was professor of pathology. Back in those days, there was NYA—National Youth [Administration].<sup>7</sup> I worked for my meals, and during the summertime, I worked for Conservation Department, and I made enough to pay for my fees and books. My folks never were in a position to help me any. I was lucky enough to work my way through all five years of college with the original three hundred dollars I started with.

*Dr. Smith:*

Do you remember some of the faculty, besides Dr. Olafson?

---

<sup>4</sup> Starting with the 1934-35 academic year, Cornell's *Announcement of the New York State Veterinary College* stated that the Committee on Admissions required a personal interview, whenever feasible.

<sup>5</sup> The annual college report for the 1934-35 academic year (published in 1936), stated that, "Farm-reared boys are preferred to those from the cities" because of their experience with animals.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Olafson '26, MS '27, professor of pathology

<sup>7</sup> The NYA was established in President Roosevelt's New Deal to provide work for college and high school students. See interview with Dr. Robert Ferber '39, who also worked for Dr. Olafson under the NYA program.

*Dr. Fallon:*

Oh yes, I remember quite a few of them. Dr. Udall<sup>8</sup> was in large animals at the time. Dr. Frost<sup>9</sup> was a surgeon ... Dr. Fincher<sup>10</sup> was in large animals. Dr. Stevenson<sup>11</sup> and Milks<sup>12</sup> were all part of the faculty; also Asmus.<sup>13</sup> Earl Sunderville<sup>14</sup> taught anatomy.

I remember the old veterinary college itself was an antiquated place—more like a museum than a vet school<sup>15</sup>.

*Dr. Smith:*

What about your classmates, for example, Steve Roberts?<sup>16</sup>

*Dr. Fallon:*

Steve Roberts was tops in our class. The two twins (the Morris brothers) were next<sup>17</sup> and I think I was about fourth in the class. We lost several of them real early. Glindmyer<sup>18</sup> died early, shortly after graduation. Bob Jewett was another one who died real early.<sup>19</sup>

Jim Helyer had a terminal illness, perhaps cancer.<sup>20</sup> I communicated with him once by letter, but didn't have much contact with any of the others.

*Dr. Smith:*

Were all of your classmates about the same age, or were some older?

*Dr. Fallon:*

Pretty much so, but there was one older: Sam Eddins was one of the older ones<sup>21</sup>; he was married. Harold Cooper was another<sup>22</sup>, a little bit older, but most of them were about my age bracket.

*Dr. Smith:*

You had one woman, Marion Leighton.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Dennie Hammond Udall '01, professor of veterinary medicine and director of the ambulatory clinic

<sup>9</sup> James Nathan Frost '07, professor of veterinary surgery and director of the surgical clinic

<sup>10</sup> Myron Gustin Fincher '19, MS, assistant professor of medicine and obstetrics

<sup>11</sup> Hadley Carruthers Stevenson '20, assistant professor of *materia medica* and small animal diseases

<sup>12</sup> Howard Jay Milks '04, professor of therapeutics and director of the small animal clinic

<sup>13</sup> Henry Asmus, assistant professor of farriery

<sup>14</sup> Earl Sunderville '08, professor of veterinary anatomy

<sup>15</sup> The veterinary college was located in central campus and the main building contained a large museum.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen J. Roberts '38, originally from Hamburg, NY; became a professor and noted textbook author at Cornell; deceased Jan. 21, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Morris '38 and Robert Bernard Morris '38; originally from Jamaica, NY; deceased Dec. 6, 1993 (Alexander), and June 2, 2002 (Robert)

<sup>18</sup> William Edward Glindmyer '38, originally from Scotia, NY

<sup>19</sup> Robert Frances Jewett '38, originally from Cortland, NY

<sup>20</sup> James Edwin Helyar '38, originally from Stelton, NJ

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Graves Eddins '38, originally from Ithaca, NY

<sup>22</sup> Harold Keim Cooper '38, originally from Manhattan, KS; transferred to Cornell during his junior year.

<sup>23</sup> Marion Lucile Leighton '38, originally from New York City

*Dr. Fallon:*

Marion Leighton was the only woman and we gave her a hard time in those days. [*laughing*]

*Dr. Smith:*

What do you mean by that?

*Dr. Fallon:*

Oh, we used to kid around, and put testicles into her pocket book and things of that sort. She took it pretty well but she took a little bit of a beating.

*Dr. Smith:*

What was the feeling of having a woman in the class by the faculty at that time?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I don't remember. I don't think they made it hard on her. The students made it worse for her than the faculty did. I don't remember it one way or the other.

*Dr. Smith:*

You knew Pat Halloran as well.<sup>24</sup>

*Dr. Fallon:*

I knew Pat quite well, yes. I knew her as Pat O'Connor. I used to study with her and she had a little difficulty in one or two courses—I more or less assisted her at the time.

*Dr. Smith:*

And Jack?<sup>25</sup>

*Dr. Fallon:*

Jack, I knew casually. The ones I was most friendly with were the Jewish boys: the two Morris boys, Harry Schiller<sup>26</sup> and Jim Sasmor<sup>27</sup>. I was [also] quite friendly with Bob Jewette.

*Dr. Smith:*

I thought Sasmor was in the Class of '39.

*Dr. Fallon:*

There were two Sasmor's, two brothers, one in my class and one in '39<sup>28</sup> (he went into the military). Jim was from New York City and I think he opened up a practice there.

*Dr. Smith:*

How many of you were from New York City?

---

<sup>24</sup> Patricia Gwendolyn O'Connor '39, married John Halloran '39

<sup>25</sup> John Lewis Halloran '39, married Patricia O'Connor

<sup>26</sup> Harry Schiller '38, originally from New York City

<sup>27</sup> James Arling Sasmor '38, originally from New York City

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Paul Sasmor '39, originally from New York City

*Dr. Fallon:*

About five or six<sup>29</sup>—surprisingly so—mainly the Jewish boys.

This may be kind of interesting. At that stage, there was quite a bit of anti-Semitism. I changed my name after the first year, thinking it would help me get a job later on. My name was Feldman and, during the Depression, getting a job was the most important thing. I'm ashamed to say it now, but at the time, I was a little ashamed to be Jewish because of the anti-Semitism. Getting a little older, I was proud to be a Jew but at the stage I didn't know any better so I changed my name.

This is very ironic. My first job was because I was Jewish, after I changed my name. This is most interesting. There was a veterinary [practice] in Akron, Ohio, called Barrett and Noonan. Barrett was a Quaker<sup>30</sup>, Noonan was an Irish Catholic<sup>31</sup>; one was large animal, one was small animal. They got a Jewish student every year from Cornell.<sup>32</sup> The Morris boys were selected [from my year], but only one of them. They didn't want to take it and I was next in line, so I took it. So the fact that I was Jewish—I even changed my name—my first job was because I was a Jew. That was 1938.

*Dr. Smith:*

What was their rationale for taking a Jewish [graduate]?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I have no idea. It was most unusual. One was large [animal], one was small; one was a Democrat, one was a Republican; one was a Quaker, [one was a Catholic]. They were opposites in every respect and they got along beautifully. They couldn't decide [whom to hire], so they hired a Jewish student every year. I have no idea why they asked for it but they did.

A fellow by the name of Morris Siegel<sup>33</sup> was before me and I followed him. It seemed kind of unusual that they asked for a Jewish student, but they did.

I worked there for two years. After the second year, I was getting ready to leave and I was heading for Texas. One of my clients had friends from Huntington [WV].<sup>34</sup> They heard I was going to leave and they said, "Why don't you go to Huntington"? And I said, "Where in the Devil is that"? This friend of theirs invited me down to Huntington and I was quite impressed

---

<sup>29</sup> The *Announcement for the New York State Veterinary College* for 1938-39 which lists the members of the senior year class of 1938 identifies six students from New York City (Harry Fallon, Henry Grossman, Jack Klar, Marion Leighton, James Sasmor and Harry Schiller); plus two from Brooklyn (Marcus Mason and Jerome Reisman; and two from Queens (Alexander Morris and Robert Morris).

<sup>30</sup> C.D. Barrett, DVM '25 (Ohio State U)

<sup>31</sup> Henry P. Noonan '19, originally from Honeoye Falls, NY; deceased Dec. 3, 1978; son is James Noonan '58, resides in Akron, OH. Drs Barrett and Noonan met at the practice of Case and Planz in Akron, OH, and established the practice of Barrett and Noonan, also in Akron.

<sup>32</sup> In a follow-up conversation (Mar. 2009), Dr. Fallon opined that perhaps the hiring of Jewish students was not an absolute requirement, but that it often ended up that way.

<sup>33</sup> Morris Siegel '37, originally from Spring Valley, NY; deceased Apr. 8, 2003

<sup>34</sup> Second largest city in West Virginia, between Charleston, WV and Lexington, KY

by the friendliness of the people and the wide open streets. I didn't know any better, so I went down there and was impressed with it and I opened up shortly thereafter.

*Dr. Smith:*

And you were there your whole career?

*Dr. Fallon:*

Yes, except that I had four years in the service. There were three veterinarians at the time I went to Huntington and they were all in mixed practice.<sup>35</sup> When I went down there, I limited my practice to small animals to consolidate the whole thing. I was a big frog in a small puddle. I just felt that if I'd been in the New York area, I would have been just another veterinarian. Here, I was a big time operator.

*Dr. Smith:*

You are being very humble.

*Dr. Fallon:*

Well, I'm just being practical. I know my strength and my weaknesses. Here, I was president of the state veterinary association,<sup>36</sup> and I was president of the examining board. I don't think I would have done as well if I had been in the New York area, but anyway I am proud to be down here. I have enjoyed it and Huntington has been good to me. I came here when Huntington had about seventy or eighty thousand people, and we are down to fifty now. So, I was here during the best of times, and I got quite a reputation as being the only small animal veterinarian.

I had an ambulance service. I even used to pick up dogs in Ashland, Kentucky, twenty miles away, and bring them in—pick up and deliver animals—back in those days. How times have changed!

*Dr. Smith:*

When you were at Cornell, the small animal educational program was probably lagging behind the large animal to some extent.

*Dr. Fallon:*

I would guess so. During the two years I was with Barrett and Noonan, I learned more about hospital management. Barrett—he was the small animal man who I worked with—he had a real personality. One instance stands out in my mind. We lost a dog belonging to one of the Firestones (that was the type of practice that he had). Firestone apologized to Barrett because he tried so hard to save the dog, and couldn't do it. When you lose an animal and have the people apologize—he was that type of an individual. So, I learned a tremendous amount of material from Barrett and Noonan.

*Dr. Smith:*

What kind of surgeries did you do in the late '30s.

---

<sup>35</sup> All primarily large animal veterinarians (personal communication, Dr. Fallon, 2009)

<sup>36</sup> West Virginia Veterinary Association

*Dr. Fallon:*

We did intramedullary pinnings, which started about that time. In fact, we did not do intramedullary pinning [in Ohio]—I did that when I came here [to Huntington].<sup>37</sup>

*Dr. Smith:*

How did you learn that technique?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I had, as a client, an orthopedic surgeon [a physician] and he helped me on the first case or two—femurs. I wrote an article once for one of the magazines on this technique and I wrote another article on rabies vaccination. I had a break in rabies vaccination and the essence of the article was that no vaccine is one hundred percent perfect.<sup>38</sup> I was proud of that. One of the articles was in the *Journal of the AVMA* and the other was in *Modern Veterinary Practice* or one of the other journals (that was on intramedullary pinning).

We did caesarians and most routine surgeries. We didn't do any spinal surgeries or hip replacements back in those days, but we did about everything else.

*Dr. Smith:*

One of the things that Dr. Berman<sup>39</sup>, who worked with you [as a student during the summer of 1956], told me about your practice was that he learned how to do anesthesia. He learned how to be comfortable and confident with anesthesia and that opened up all sorts of opportunities for him.

*Dr. Fallon:*

I don't remember anything out of the ordinary; it was just routine. I always kept up with veterinary medicine. I subscribed to about every journal there was, went to every meeting I could go to. I was a "B" student and I really was curious about keeping up with everything that was going on. I was more proficient in diagnosis than I was in surgery, but I tried to keep up with everything.

I was classified once as "veterinarian of the year"<sup>40</sup>—twice during my time in this state—and I was proud of the fact that they chose me as president both of the veterinary association and the examining board.<sup>41</sup>

*Dr. Smith:*

What did they think of having a Cornell graduate here in Huntington, West Virginia?

---

<sup>37</sup> Intramedullary pins (rods), inserted into the bone marrow canal, are sometimes used in orthopedic surgery to align and stabilize the fractures of long bones, such as the femur or tibia.

<sup>38</sup> Dr. Fallon initiated legislation leading to compulsory rabies vaccination of dogs in West Virginia. Harry Fallon, personal communication, 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis Berman '57, worked for Dr. Fallon during summer of 1956; owns Park East Animal Hospital practice at 52 E 64th Street in New York City.

<sup>40</sup> Veterinarian of the Year, for the State of West Virginia

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Fallon served as consultant to local VA hospital. Harry Fallon, personal communication, 2009.

*Dr. Fallon:*

I was accepted. I never had any problems whatsoever down here. It's surprising. I saw much more of it back in New York. Well, the times were different. But, I didn't experience any anti-Semitism here at all, though I did experience quite a bit around the New York area—and being in agriculture. People didn't like Jews and they didn't like New York City people.

*Dr. Smith:*

Could you explain that a bit more? How was it expressed?

*Dr. Fallon:*

Every once in a while you would hear somebody talk about this “Jew boy” or expressions of that sort that people would come out with. That was the early stages of Hitler. It was casual remarks of that sort that reflected on the anti-Semitism.<sup>42</sup>

The ironic part of it was, [though] I'm proud to be a Jew, I'm a cultural Jew. I don't go to Temple. But I'm proud of the things that the Jews have done over the ages. It makes me feel [proud]. The contrast of what it was as a student and later on [was significant].

*Dr. Smith:*

When you changed your name, was that a personal decision?

*Dr. Fallon:*

Strictly a personal decision.

*Dr. Smith:*

What about your family?

*Dr. Fallon:*

My family was secular in the sense that they did not go to Temple either. They were sort of non believers, so to speak. My father started to be a rabbi, then he went over to the opposite extreme. He didn't think much of religion, organized religion.

*Dr. Smith:*

Did your parents object to you changing your name?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I had very little contact with my parents. From the time I was in high school, I was away, working. My parents at times were also separated in order to make a living—my father was working in one place and my mother in another place. My mother was an excellent cook, and she ran several small restaurants. My father had a little consignment in Paterson, NJ. He had a little [concession] stand that serviced one of the big office buildings.

---

<sup>42</sup> In addition, the two social veterinary fraternities did not accept Jews. Harry Fallon, personal communication, March 2009.

I remember working on an egg farm, working in a shoe store, working in a butcher shop. I worked in newspapers. I always had a job. I never had too much contact [with my parents]. It seems kind of odd.

*Dr. Smith:*

Did you have much contact with your siblings?

*Dr. Fallon:*

My brother was very proud of what I was doing. He changed his name and then went back to the original name. That's one of the few things that I would not do if I had a chance to do it over again. But at that time, during the depression, it was a matter of thinking that it would help, but it really did not make much of a difference. When I came to Huntington, I married a Jewish person<sup>43</sup>; but I could have very easily married a Catholic or anything else. It didn't make any difference to me.

*Dr. Smith:*

How did you choose the name "Fallon"?

*Dr. Fallon:*

Out of the clear sky. Started with an "F", I liked the sound of it. It sounded good to me.

*Dr. Smith:*

Do you have children?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I have three children. One daughter [Denise] went to Cornell.<sup>44</sup> [My other daughter, Aline Brusman, graduated from the University of Virginia.] My two sons-in-law went to Cornell. I met my wife at Cornell. One son-in-law went to med school<sup>45</sup>; one was a graduate student in physics.<sup>46</sup> My brother went to the school of labor relations,<sup>47</sup> and my wife went to arts school also. I have a grandson (in arts) who just graduated<sup>48</sup> and is working for IBM right now.

*Dr. Smith:*

If I may be personal, you look like you're 80 years old. [Dr. Fallon: I'm 92.] To what do you attribute your youth?

*Dr. Fallon:*

Good genes. [laughing] Good genes, number one; and I've always followed nutrition pretty well. I have always been fortunate. I weigh the same now as I did 20 years ago and I always exercise quite a bit. Not strenuous.

---

<sup>43</sup> Edith Pockrose, AB '40; coincidentally, she was also from Sullivan County and her family ran a hotel in Monticello, NY.

<sup>44</sup> Denise Fallon Ogren, BS '68, MS '70, resides in Bloomington, IN

<sup>45</sup> Harold Brusman, MD (U. Chicago); resides in Atlanta, GA

<sup>46</sup> Harold Ogren, MS '68, PhD '70, resides in Bloomington, IN

<sup>47</sup> Gerald J. Feldman BS '48, resides in Silver Spring, MD

<sup>48</sup> Eliot Brusman AB '07, resides in New York City, NY

When I was at Cornell, I went out for track. Shortly thereafter I got a job in a restaurant and started washing dishes and got to be a short-order cook and then got to be manager of the Cornell Cooperative Dining Club, so I had a good background in hotel stuff. The Hotel School was expensive, and I could have ended up in Hotel if I had the money for it. I just felt I could do anything if I put my mind to it.

*Dr. Smith:*

You have contributed and you have been a supporter to the Baker Institute over the years.<sup>49</sup>

*Dr. Fallon:*

I feel indebted to Cornell. I feel I have made a success of my life. I met my wife at Cornell and my whole career has been based on my past experience. I left Cornell in my will and whenever I'm able, I've donated money. I feel obligated. Today, I understand that if I went into veterinary medicine, it would cost me roughly \$25,000 a year. I had five years of no tuition whatsoever, so I really feel indebted to them.<sup>50</sup>

*Dr. Smith:*

What's your view of the Land Grant system?<sup>51</sup>

*Dr. Fallon:*

I think it was a wonderful system and I was disappointed to hear that they had done away with it. How long has that been going on?

*Dr. Smith:*

It's hard to say it has been done away with. We charge tuition, of course, now—is that what you mean? [*Dr. Fallon:* Yes.] Well, that's been thirty years, probably longer.

*Dr. Fallon:*

I checked on the computer a while ago and tuition was \$25,000. I got it for zip. It seems out of line, but I just felt I was extremely lucky.

*Dr. Smith:*

So to you, the Land Grant concept embodies the free tuition.

*Dr. Fallon:*

That's what I associate it with, and the fact that it encourages agriculture. Now agriculture today, unfortunately, is big business rather than small farming like it was back in the days when I was starting out.

Little incidents in my life caused big changes as time went on. I was in ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps). As a result of that, when the war came, instead of going in just as an individual, I went in as an officer. I got four years, went in as a First Lieutenant and got out as a Major. So all of these little things, the fact I had a client who lived in Huntington

---

<sup>49</sup> James A. Baker Institute for Animal Health

<sup>50</sup> One year in College of Agriculture and four years in veterinary medicine

<sup>51</sup> Established by the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862

when I was in Akron led me down here; the fact that I was in ROTC; cutting my hand resulted in getting enough money to go to Cornell. Little things affected my later life.

*Dr. Smith:*

Where were you during the war?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I spent four years in the service, all in the States. I started out in the Veterinary Corps of the Air Force, and I spent two years in the desert in Blythe, California.<sup>52</sup> I was associated with a station hospital with doctors and dentists, and most of my work was food inspection—the mess halls, and also inspecting the restaurants and bars in town. We had no jurisdiction over the towns, but if they didn't comply with Army regulations, we put an MP [Military Police] in front of them. I was an eager beaver back in those days and the mess sergeant hated my guts, I was really after him. But we maintained a pretty clean outfit. I remember one instance in Blythe, California. There was a bar that catered to officers only. They had a wooden sink where they washed the dishes, with lots of grease. I gave them a warning several times that it was not in accord with army regulations. The guy was kind of nasty about it, "We got here before the army got here. We can do without you now".

So I put an MP in front of him. Two weeks later, he called me on the phone and said, "I got a new metal sink". And I didn't have any trouble with him since.

I then spent a year in Walla Walla, Washington.<sup>53</sup> Then I got orders to go overseas and went to Long Beach, California. But when I got to Long Beach, they lost my orders, so I remained there for the rest of the war.

*Dr. Smith:*

Were you married during the war?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I was married in 1940, two years before I got in the service. My wife joined me; she was with me most of the time in the service ...

*Dr. Smith:*

How would you like to be remembered as a veterinarian during the early years?

*Dr. Fallon:*

World War II was the main thing that stood out in my mind, and the Depression. The Depression years and World War II: those were the things that stood out in my mind.

My son is a veterinarian. He graduated from Oklahoma State<sup>54</sup> and took graduate training at Missouri<sup>55</sup>. He now has an exclusive practice of ambulatory surgery in the Washington,

---

<sup>52</sup> A desert town adjacent to I-10 in eastern California, near the Arizona border

<sup>53</sup> City in southeastern Washington State

<sup>54</sup> Ronald K. Fallon, DVM '74 (Oklahoma St Univ)

<sup>55</sup> Residency and MS, board certified in surgery (American College of Veterinary Surgeons)

DC/Baltimore area. He travels from hospital to hospital and does all of their tough cases that they used to send away to the universities.

He worked with me for about a year or so—we couldn't get along very well, then—he was fresh out of school and he didn't like my way of doing things and I didn't like his way of doing things. Since then, we reconciled. He has an outstanding practice and I think he appreciates me now more than he did back in those days, and I respect what he is doing now.

*Dr. Smith:*

Were you a single person in your practice or did you have associates?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I started out as a single, but very early in my career, I had veterinary graduates work a year or so after they got out of college. I learned from them and they learned from me. I've not had too many Cornellians, because they don't seem to gravitate to this part of the country.<sup>56</sup> Most of our veterinarians are from Ohio State, or Auburn, or Oklahoma State, or Tuskegee.

I've had students during the summer and graduates after they have got out of college for about a year or so.

I retired from my practice about ten to twelve years ago. I wasn't ready to retire, but I had a lady veterinarian working for me.<sup>57</sup> She was with me five years—she was from Kentucky and graduated from Auburn. After five years, she decided she wanted to go off by herself. I knew from past experience that it is hard to get veterinarians down here in West Virginia—they think we're all starving to death here—and I felt if I lost her I would have trouble getting rid of my practice. So I made her a proposition she couldn't refuse, and she took over my practice and it worked out fine for both of us.

But, if she hadn't done that, I'd still be practicing. The practice name was Huntington Dog and Cat Hospital—located on Fifth Street West against the flood wall in Huntington.<sup>58</sup>

I started out borrowing \$500.00 from Barrett and Noonan, to open up my practice in 1940. I paid it back in six months. I did not even have an x-ray machine—I used to take my dogs to a chiropractor to have them x-rayed. At one time, I had three hospitals. I built two of them and one I bought. The two that I built, my son ran one for a while and I ran the other (the Huntington Dog and Cat Hospital).

*Dr. Smith:*

What happened to your practice during the war?

---

<sup>56</sup> Dr. Fallon is currently one of the few Cornell graduate AVMA-members veterinarian residing in West Virginia.

<sup>57</sup> Dr. Jan McPherson Ball, DVM '83 (Auburn Univ)

<sup>58</sup> Current address is 200-5<sup>th</sup> St W, Huntington, WV

*Dr. Fallon:*

I turned it over to another veterinarian for two years and he ran it into the ground. It just didn't work out. I closed it up and when I came back, I started out at another location—a store front—and after two years, I built the Huntington Dog and Cat Hospital and I was there ever since.

*Dr. Smith:*

You were back to Cornell for your 50<sup>th</sup> reunion in 1988. Is that the only time you were back, except for last year for your grandson's graduation?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I think I was back twice, perhaps my 50<sup>th</sup> and my 60<sup>th</sup>. The biggest change to me was the Cornell entrance—it used to be near Willard Straight Hall—and now it's someplace else, near the Vet School, I think. When I was there, we used to go into campus near Cascadilla<sup>1</sup> and Willard Straight Hall<sup>2</sup>, but that's all closed off now [to traffic].

*Dr. Smith:*

Where did you live during your five years at Cornell?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I lived on Williams Street and then also on Buffalo Street, right on the corner of Buffalo and College Avenue. I used to pay three dollars a week for a room (not an apartment—it was a rooming house). I had a room, three dollars a week. How times have changed!

And between the rooming house and my working at the restaurants, I made enough to take care of my living expenses and the Conservation Department took care of my fees.

*Dr. Smith:*

How did you get to Cornell? Did you take the train or did you drive?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I used to do a lot of hitch-hiking ... or I'd hitch rides with classmates from New York. A lot of times, I didn't go home. I didn't have a lot of contact with my family.

*Dr. Smith:*

How did you get to Cornell there the first time?

*Dr. Fallon:*

I don't remember how I got there. I didn't have a car—I don't know. Now that you mention it, the subject never came up before...

*Dr. Smith:*

Thank you very much. This was a wonderful interview.

*Dr. Fallon:*

The pleasure has been mine.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cascadilla Hall, a student residence

<sup>2</sup> Currently student union