Leaders of the Pack
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Author’s Note

Donald F. Smith passed away on October 29, 2016. Just days before he became ill, we submitted the manuscript to this book. Despite the profound loss, I take comfort that he experienced the joy of seeing the work to fruition, from our earliest conversations to the cover design. This project was but one of many distinguished achievements within the bookends of a remarkable life. With his passing, the veterinary profession has lost a giant.

Those who knew Don were fortunate to enjoy his generous, warm, and expansive spirit. He loved learning about people from all backgrounds and especially loved encouraging students, colleagues, and friends to find their paths, often ones he illuminated for them. “He believed in me before I believed in myself,” say many who knew him.

Don’s journey took him from a childhood on an Ontario dairy farm to his extraordinary career as a leading authority on bovine surgery. Along the way, he earned his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Guelph University, graduating with distinction, completed a residency in large animal surgery at the University of Pennsylvania, became a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, and served for ten years (1997–2007) as dean of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. His research on metabolic alkalosis in ruminants was instrumental in advancing the field of metabolic diseases of cattle.

Don delighted in the stories of veterinary leaders past and present. His passion for history resulted in a popular veterinary history course at Cornell as well as his Veterinary Legacy blog (www.veterinarylegacy.blogspot.com) that is still read across the world and is considered a treasure trove of the profession’s history and commentary on prevailing issues in veterinary medicine. In 2015, he authored Pathways to Progress, a history of the veterinary colleges in the United States and beyond.
Don was an ardent champion of women in leadership, and he researched, taught, and spoke forcefully about the need for women to direct veterinary medicine to keep the profession thriving. It was in this arena that we became colleagues. Don was known for his curiosity and genuine interest in people, and I was fortunate to be one of those he met, quite by chance. He was a generous professional, introducing me to the history, challenges, triumphs, and leaders in veterinary medicine. I shared my perspectives of gender barriers and successes in women’s issues. Despite vastly different careers, our professional collaboration grew, always in a spirit of exploration, lively debate, and a commitment to women’s leadership. In the four and half years since we met, we shared an intensity in purpose, researching leadership issues and examining data. In that period, we interviewed hundreds of individuals, wrote over 30 online articles, developed a course at Cornell, taught educators at other universities how to tailor leadership courses for their own students, delivered seminars at conferences and universities, and wrote this book.

What began as an unanticipated professional partnership became a cherished friendship. It is a rare thing to develop an unlikely bond, and I’m blessed by that gift. Four and a half years is brutally short, and yet I’m grateful beyond words for knowing Don. His kindness, generosity, and encouragement far surpassed his grand achievements. In an era where cynicism is chic, Don was unabashedly effusive. He told people he considered special—ranging from janitors to colleagues of high rank—that he loved them. His wife, Doris, and their children and grandchildren were blessed by those qualities during his lifetime. It is those qualities above all that I hope to carry forth to continue his legacy and remain in his bright realm.

In cowriting Leaders of the Pack, Don’s favorite chapter to work on was “For the Greater Good” because it celebrated people who embodied the principle of servant-leadership. Don was one of the true, great servant-leaders in his beloved veterinary profession and in women’s leadership. May his spirit and dedication live on.

Julie Kumble
December 2016