

veterinary world

TUFTS UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

SPRING 1995

Library takes a magnificent gallop through equine history

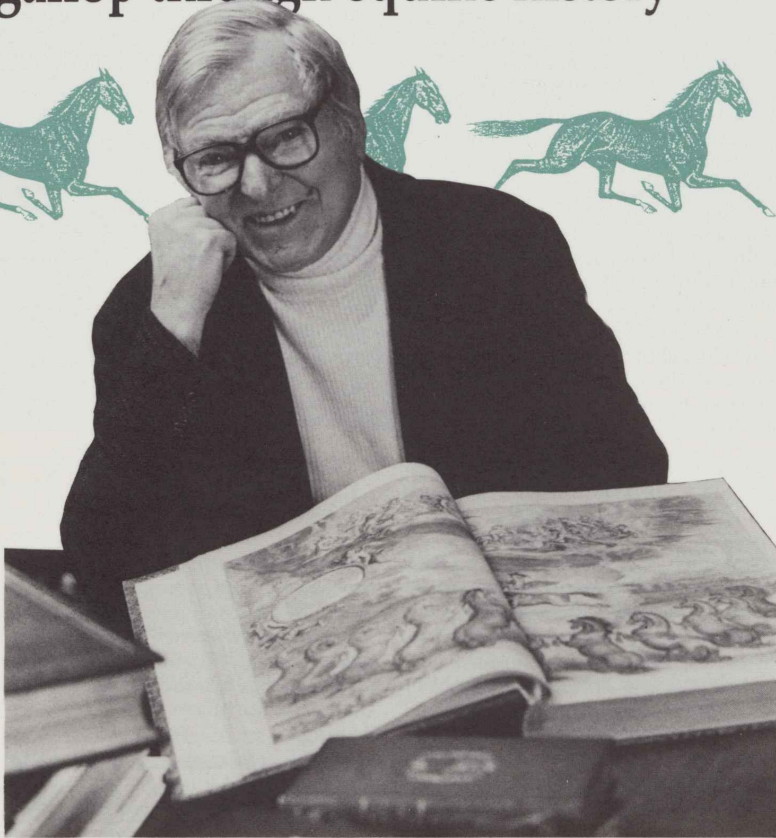


Photo by Robert Weisman

John Seaverns with the Duke of Newcastle's *A General System of Horsemanship* (1748).

Just a dozen books, purchased more than 40 years ago, have given rise to what may be the world's most extensive privately held collection about horses.

Within his Wellesley, Mass., home, John Seaverns — self-described “omnivorous collector” — has amassed more than 7,500 non-fiction equestrian books as well as hundreds of pieces of ephemera, including catalogues, annuals, show programs and other materials relating to horses.

“There should be a record of everything, and I’ve tried to provide that record of the horse,” Seaverns said. His hand-written notebooks provide a complete inventory of the collection, which he assembled by visiting book shops, flea markets, book and paper shows and by corresponding with book dealers in this country and abroad.

Seaverns became interested in horses as a teenager, when he helped friends

(See BOOKS, page 8)

SURGERY THAT COUNTS

Spay clinic benefits animals and students

Students at the School of Veterinary Medicine are gaining valuable surgical experience and improving the lives of dogs from area shelters by participating in a new spay clinic.

“The spay clinic, which this year became the core course for teaching surgical and anesthesia skills, provides our third-year veterinary students with a real-life learning experience by spaying shelter dogs that are available for adoption,” said Dr. John Berg, course director and associate professor of surgery.

For Tufts’ veterinary students, performing their first surgical procedure is no longer a laboratory exercise but “surgery that counts,” Berg said. “There’s pressure for them to do it right, so it’s a much better learning experience.”

Each week, shelters in Worcester, Framingham and Hopkinton bring dogs to the veterinary school for students to spay. A spay, or ovariectomy, surgically removes a female’s reproductive tract, while neutering removes a male’s testes.

“We select dogs that are good candidates for adoption because they are young and healthy or have a good disposition,” said Susan Sebilian, director of the Bay Path Humane Society, a no-kill shelter in Hopkinton that finds homes for more than 900 dogs and cats a year.

“I really think that spaying helps the animals get placed,” she said. “People are more interested in adopting an animal that already has had the surgery and won’t be giving them a litter of puppies.”

(See FRONT-RUNNER, page 4)

Books will be housed at Tufts

(Continued from page 1)

with stablework in Wellesley in exchange for the opportunity to ride. "I was hooked on horses from then on," he said. Although Seaverns rode intermittently after that, it wasn't until later that he purchased his first horse. "I started fox hunting when I was 50," said Seaverns, who is a past president of the Tanheath Hunt Club of Norfolk and has been president of the Horse and Buggy Club of Holliston for more than 20 years. At age 80, he still owns a horse and rides regularly.

Seaverns' fondness for all things equestrian permeates his home. Sporting paintings, prints and photographs — including several of Seaverns astride with the Tanheath Hunt — decorate the walls. An assortment of hunt whips, crops and fly whisks are displayed by the front door, and shiny harness brasses hang from the dark woodwork. A set of English painted lead figures — mounted riders in "pink" coats following a pack of hounds in pursuit of a fox — are among the collectibles atop the bookcases.

Most prominent of all, however, are the books themselves. From floor to ceiling, three rooms are lined with shelves, each filled to capacity with books on all subjects relating to horses. (There's also a sizable collection of books about dogs.) The comprehensive collection ranges from modern manuals of horsemanship, to early texts on horse health, to century-old, leather-bound breed registries.

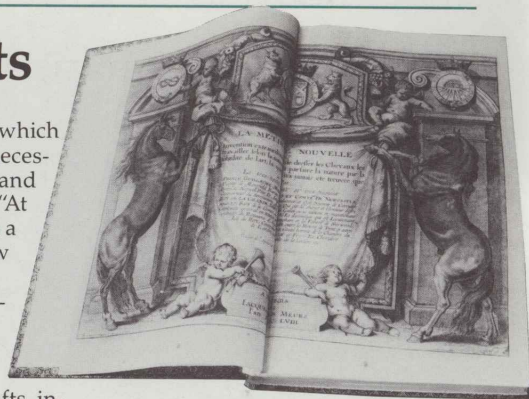
The collection is especially strong in racing, hunting, riding, breed histories and equestrian art. Among the rare and important volumes are Federico Grisoni's *Gli Ordini Di Cavalcare et Modi Di Conoscere* (1571), an edition of the first printed book on the art of horsemanship; the lavishly engraved Duke of Newcastle's *A General System of Horsemanship* (1748); and R.S. Surtees' *The Horseman's Manual* (1831), one of Seaverns' most recent acquisitions.

With a strong conviction that the collection's future home should be with a New England institution, Seaverns has decided to bequeath it to Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine, where the books and other materials will become a special part of the permanent collection of the school's Webster Library. In addition, Seaverns has designated in his will

that Tufts also receive his house, which then will be sold to provide the necessary funding to install, catalog and support the collection at Tufts. "At Tufts, the collection will remain a resource to the people of New England," he said.

As a horseman, Seaverns became familiar with the veterinary school soon after it opened in 1979. "Over the years, I'd attended a number of events at Tufts, including the opening of the large animal hospital," he said. Last spring, Seaverns approached Dr. Franklin M. Loew, veterinary school dean, with a proposal regarding a bequest of his equestrian library.

Last fall, Loew visited Seaverns at his home and received a personal tour of the collection. "John Seaverns' books rep-



resent a precious national resource, and I am delighted that his generosity will permit Tufts to share them with scholars and horse people," Loew said. "It is a truly remarkable and unique collection that reflects the man who assembled it."

— Cristin Merck

A tradition of giving by bequest

Although Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine is still a very young school (it opened in 1979), the institution's supporters already have established an important tradition of giving by bequest.

A cat breeder and longtime veterinary school employee, Lee Irwin, established a scholarship fund through her bequest. Dog enthusiast Ruth Smith directed that her bequest support significant improvements to the Henry and Lois Foster Hospital for Small Animals. As a dog breeder and handler, Edythe Weymouth knew the importance of having a veterinary school in New England and wanted to do her part to ensure its future by providing an endowed scholarship for veterinary students.

Irwin, Smith and Weymouth are among nearly 100 individuals who have included provisions in their estate plans to benefit the veterinary school.

Similar to income tax laws, estate tax laws encourage charitable giving. Gifts made by will pass to charitable beneficiaries free of

estate taxes, reducing the total value of the estate subject to taxes. The asset that Irwin, Smith and Weymouth chose to give by bequest was a house.

John Seaverns realized that the extensive collection of equine and canine books and ephemera he committed to Tufts would require special installation and management. He decided to follow the tradition of donors who came before and support the maintenance of the collection by leaving his house in Wellesley, Mass., to the veterinary school. His house has always sheltered the collection, and it will continue to provide for the collection through the provisions of Seaverns' will that direct Tufts to sell the property to provide financial support for the collection.

If you have included Tufts' veterinary school in your will or if you would like more information about providing for the veterinary school in your estate plans, call Brian Lee, assistant dean and director of development, at (508) 839-7905.

— Shelley Rodman