

Donald L. Piermattei

March 9, 1931 - January 28, 2017

In memory of a great pioneer of modern veterinary orthopaedics

Sadly with the passing of Don Piermattei, we have lost a very dear friend and colleague who was unequivocally one of the great pillars of veterinary orthopaedics in the 20th century. Don was a gifted surgeon and educator whose influence directly impacted many generations of aspiring surgeons around the globe.

Fifty years ago Don Piermattei published the first edition of his classic textbook 'An Atlas of Surgical Approaches to the Bones and Joints of the Dog and Cat'. The timing was perfect, because this detailed exposition of atraumatic surgical approaches was essential knowledge required for the successful introduction of internal fixation of fractures in animals being promoted by the Swiss AO.

During an interview with the late Professor Geoff Sumner-Smith in June 2011, Don had the following words to say:

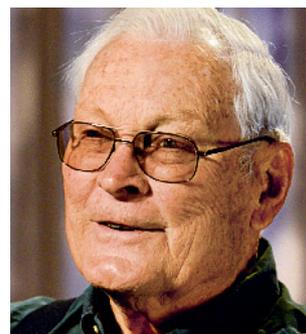
"The Atlas was first published in 1966. It was conceived and written while I was on the staff of Texas A&M University. The first year I was there, 1962, I was the small animal surgeon, so I was on my own. This followed two years in private practice after leaving Michigan State. As I began teaching in the operative practice laboratory, I found myself wishing for an illustrated guide to surgical approaches. As a student of Brinker's I was very much committed to internal fixation of fractures. The only published material on approaches was Brinker's in 'Canine Surgery', but they were photographs and I thought that illustrations were much clearer for the beginner. I found the format that I envisioned in a human text by Banks and Laufman. I

needed an artist and one was available in the Anatomy Department. Dr. Roger Greeley had produced a number of illustrated teaching aids for his anatomy classes. He was self-taught but very talented and of course had the anatomy 'down cold'. At that time there were only three publishers in the veterinary market and I approached W.B. Saunders Company because I liked the quality of their only other veterinary text. They sent their staff artist to give Dr. Greeley some advice, and we were off, and with regard to publishing we were just two neophytes. Now in its' 4th edition, I have been pleased that it accomplished its' objective of providing direction for atraumatic surgical exposures to the bones and joints. I have received many comments about it, the most amusing being 'why don't you show both left and right?', and 'why don't you make it autoclavable?'"(1).

Of course, following the Atlas came the second major textbook, which Don co-authored with his Michigan State colleagues Dr. Wade Brinker and Dr. Gretchen Flo.

In the surgical operating room, Don was consistently calm and considerate. He never appeared to be hurried or anxious, yet surgical procedures were rapidly and precisely executed without hesitation due to Don's exquisite knowledge of surgical anatomy and experience as a surgeon.

In 1988 when the journal *Veterinary and Comparative Orthopaedics and Traumatology* began, Don Piermattei was invited by Geoff Sumner-Smith to join the Consultant Editorial Board of the Journal. Having previously held the position of Editor-in-Chief



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of the *Veterinary Surgery* journal, Don provided invaluable wisdom and advice in those early days. Don was also an influential leader in many other spheres of veterinary surgery. He was President of AOVET from 1990 to 1992, as well as president of the ACVS and the VOS. In 2004, Don was invited to the ESVOT meeting to deliver the prestigious Saki Paatsama lecture entitled "Fifty Years of Internal Fixation" in the palatial surroundings of the Munich Residenz.

Don will long be remembered as a kind, considerate and thoughtful man. Our thoughts and sincere sympathy are extended to his family.

Kenneth A. Johnson
Editor-in-Chief

Reference

1. Sumner-Smith G. Interview with Donald L Piermattei [Internet]. OrthoVetSuperSite website [ESVOT]; 2011 June 1 [cited 2017 February 20]. Available from: <http://www.orthovetsupersite.org/interview/interview-donald-l-piermattei>