

## **BUILT ON THE SHOULDERS OF VETERINARY GIANTS THE PRESIDENT'S UNCLE**

**BY: DR. STEVE JOSEPH, KCVMA HISTORIAN**

The veterinarian looked at a picture of his favorite nephew and said, "God has his hand on this boy. You will live to see him President of the United States." The veterinarian was Dr. Abraham Lincoln Eisenhower and his nephew was our 34th President.

Dr. Eisenhower – or Abe as he was called – was born in the wake of his namesake's assassination in 1865. David was Abe's brother and the President's father.

As a boy, Abe spent long days working on his father's farm near Abilene, Kan. On weekends he would ride fast ponies over the prairie in a light buggy. His love of animals was characteristic of the Eisenhower family.

At that time, it wasn't unusual for the formally untrained to act as professionals. Abe did the same and placed a shingle over his father's mercantile in nearby Hope, Kan., calling himself a veterinarian. Two nearby practitioners provided practical instruction and before long young Eisenhower was in business.

As a way to promote his practice, Abe would drive his buggy over Dickinson County roads as fast as possible creating a dusty sight. Farmers who watched must have thought he was a busy doctor who was in demand and must be good -- which he was.

When the mercantile closed Abe decided to seek formal veterinary training. He attended classes at the Chicago Veterinary College during the winter and spring of 1889 and 1890. He received the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Science the following March. The list of graduates showed him as "A.L. Eisenhoever" of "Abilene IL". The training he received was apparently better than the mistaken listing.

Following graduation, Abe returned to Abilene and opened a practice on the grounds of what is today the Eisenhower Library and Museum. Over the barn a large sign read "Dr. A.L. Eisenhower, Veterinarian". The sign must have been visible over all of Abilene as it hung 30 feet high on the impressive barn.

The President's boyhood home remains on the property. The 818 square foot home was called "a mansion" although it housed six boys, including the President and their folks.

Dr. Eisenhower attended an evangelistic tent meeting in Abilene and received a calling to the ministry. Later, he was ordained as a minister and served churches in Oklahoma, Ohio and Iowa before retiring and moving to California.

The veterinarian died in 1944 and did not see his nephew sworn in as President of the United States.

*Regards to Dr. Ron Elmore, Associate Dean at KSU CVM, for lecture notes and to the Eisenhower Library and Museum for the image.*

