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DR. OSCAR J. FLETCHER, JR.

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About the cover

DR. OSCAR J. FLETCHER, Jr. (1938)

Oscar Fletcher was born on October 18, 1938, in Bennettsville, South Carolina. He grew up in McColl, SC, where his parents had a dairy farm. After completing his public-school education in McColl, Oscar enrolled in Wofford College in 1956. During his senior year, Oscar attended Clemson University to obtain credit for required pre-veterinary courses. After obtaining his B.S. degree from Wofford College, he matriculated at the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) of the University of Georgia (UGA), where Oscar received his D.V.M. degree in 1964 and the M.S. degree in veterinary pathology in 1965. His original goal to become a veterinary practitioner in McColl to save cows from milk fever changed as the consequence of Sybil Morrison (1939–2019) joining his ninth-grade class. Oscar and Sybil, a nurse-educator, got married in 1962 after his second year in veterinary school. It was clear to Oscar that Sybil had no interest in returning to McColl. Their marriage was blessed with two sons, John in 1967 and Greg in 1970.

Dr. Fletcher continued his education at the University of Wisconsin, where he received his PhD degree in 1968. The thesis research was also his first experience in poultry health focusing on alterations of serum proteins in chickens inoculated with the Olson transplantable lymphoid tumor. After receiving his PhD degree, Oscar and Sybil returned to the CVM at UGA, where he was appointed as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Veterinary Pathology and Parasitology. Dr. Fletcher was promoted to Associate Professor in 1973 and transferred to the Department of Avian Diseases. The department was created in 1970 and housed in the Poultry Disease Research Center (PDRC). Promotion to Full Professor followed in 1978.

The career of Dr. Fletcher was divided into research and administration. Pathology was, and still is, his main research interest. He provided critical histopathology support for many research projects including Mycoplasma infections, Marek's disease, inclusion body hepatitis, etc. After his official retirement in 2018, he continues providing support by reading histopathology slides for the poultry group at the CVM at North Carolina State University (NCSU), the Georgia Poultry Lab Network and other groups as needed. His collection of histology photos is legendary and freely shared on request. He is the editor and co-editor of the 3rd and 4th edition of the Avian Histopathology Manual, respectively. During his career he served as the major professor for nine PhD students at UGA and on the committees of many graduate students. His scientific contributions resulted in over 147 journal articles and 28 book chapters. He is a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists and a Founder Diplomate of the American College of Poultry Veterinarians (ACPV).

Dr. Fletcher's administrative duties included Associate Dean, CVM UGA (1975–1982) followed by Head of the Department of Avian Medicine and Director of PDRC at UGA (1982–1989). From 1989 to 1992 he served as Dean at the CVM of Iowa State University. Finally, Dr. Fletcher served as Dean of the CVM of NCSU from 1992 to 2004. Afterwards he was a Professor in the Department of Population Health and Pathobiology at CVM, NCSU until his retirement in 2018. He currently holds the title of Professor and Dean Emeritus.

Dr. Fletcher served as President of the AAAP (1994–1995) and was a long-time member of the Advisory Board and Editorial Board of Avian Diseases. He was the president of the ACPV (1993–1994) served on the Council on Research, AVMA (1991–1997). Dr Fletcher was inducted in Hall of Honor of the AAAP in 2016 and the Hall of Honour of the World Veterinary Poultry Association in 2017. He became a life member of the AAAP in 2018.

Submitted by K.A. Schat with Dr. Fletcher