

Brown, James Everett: The Most Comfort in the World ^[1]

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Dr. James Everett Brown: The Most Comfort in the World

by David Cecelski. "[Listening to History](#) ^[2]," *News and Observer*. Published 2/13/2005. Copyrighted.
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At 86, Dr. James Everett Brown still opens his veterinary office seven days a week. He has been looking after the animals of Rich Square, a little crossroads town in Northampton County, since 1943. The roads were icy and a half-foot blanket of snow covered the fields and woods when I crossed the Roanoke River and drove up into his neighborhood. He had been at work all morning. We sat in his office, a little building in his front yard, and he talked about being a veterinarian there for more than 60 years.



Veterinarian James Everett Brown has a cat of his own. ~~Photo by David S. Cecelski, 2005. To request permission for further use or to purchase a print, please contact the News & Observer.~~

"My father stopped me one day when I was in the field plowing with a mule and suggested that I go to veterinary school. We didn't have a veterinarian in Rich Square, and there wasn't one in 25 miles of here. At that time, there were only 11 veterinarians in the county. My father told me he was the oldest son in a family of 11 children. He had to work hard all his life to raise his family and to help raise his siblings too. He didn't regret one thing he had done, but he didn't want me to work as hard as he did. And Quacks did a whole lot of it before veterinarians were around. I remember one of them. He was an alcoholic. There was a fellow over in Conway who ran a livery stable buying and selling horses and mules. One time, he got in a load of horse One thing the quacks did, when they treated a cow that got sick, wouldn't eat, they'd cut a hole in the tail, split her tail open and put salt and pepper on it. That was some of the old ideas.

When I started practicing, very few people relied on veterinarians to treat pets. What practice I did on dogs and cats was at night. I traveled six, seven counties treating farm animals, so I didn't have time during the day. Most of the time, I traveled People back then depended on their farm animals. When I was in school, I guess there weren't six tractors in the county. People farmed with horses and mules. That mule was the only way they had to produce a crop. That was the only transport. A \$5 call was standard fee when I started practicing. The main vaccine we had was the hog cholera vaccine. And we had the black-leg vaccine for cattle. It was a mosquito-borne disease. They'd be all right today, and tomorrow you'd see the Mules and horses, they had a lot of colic and impaction, because they were fed peanut vines and they didn't get enough water. I'd treat them for that.

I did a lot of castrating. Large boar hogs, they had to put them to sleep. A lot of farmers wouldn't castrate their own. And all the bull calves, I castrated. Farmers didn't do that on their own.

One of the most pleasant treatments that we had was for milk fever. The old milk cow, a lot of times when she had a calf, she would get paralyzed. The family was all in tears when they thought the milk supply was gone. You'd go out there and I did a lot of deliveries in cattle. I was telling somebody the other day when we had that snow, I remember 30 years ago we had a snow about that deep and I delivered a calf out in the field with the wind blowing.

During that same cold spell, I had a delivery case one Sunday afternoon. This fellow, the only water he had to deliver the calf was in a bathtub. He had filled it up to the top and it was frozen. It took us 30 minutes with an axe chopping to get the calf out. That particular heifer had right much difficulty. I put one arm in her to try to get the calf straightened out so we could get him out. The minute I pulled my arm out to change arms, the ice would freeze solid on that arm. I worked on that cow and I gave up the large-animal work 13 years ago after my heart surgery. There's not much large animals now anyway. My practice now is nearly all dogs and cats.

People didn't care that much for dogs and cats when I first started practicing, but now people coming here are attached to them. In fact, I had one yesterday. I had treated his dog last week and he wasn't getting any better. I could tell this man I got a cat over there now. He stays in the house with me since my wife died. I never thought I'd have a cat sleep in the bed with me or have one stay in the house with me. Since my wife died, he's the most comfort in the world. He'll get in my bed.

A while back, a fellow asked me when I was going to quit practicing. Before I could say anything, this other fellow told him, "I'll tell you when he's going to quit: when he turns up his toes for the last time!" And that's the way I feel about it, because

Additional information from NCpedia editors at the State Library of North Carolina :

Dr. James Everett Brown lived December 12, 1918-December 29, 2008.

"Obituary: Dr. James Everett Brown," *The Daily Herald*: http://www.rrdailyherald.com/obituaries/dr-james-everett-brown/article_d_06bce90-f7bc-56d2-9094-885dc0d72fb3.html ^[3]

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