

The 2022 Bartlett address



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In light of the current events in eastern Europe that has produced millions of people seeking a new life in a new land, I thought I would share some of my ancestry and how it has influenced my career decisions and approach to life. When my paternal grandfather, Joseph Sertich was 3 years old, his mother died giving birth to his baby sister. Four years later while Joseph and his father were cutting timber in a forest near Nova Kapala, Yugoslavia (just east of Zagreb, Croatia) Joseph's father was crushed by a falling tree, leaving his 2 children orphans. Local farmers were willing to look after Joseph as he had experience caring for sheep and goats, but my grandfather always said that his sister died of a broken heart. It is easy to understand that what likely was an unthrifty 4-year-old girl did not thrive as an orphan. My grandfather worked on farms in Croatia and Germany and eventually made his way to the United States in 1911. He married my grandmother, Effie Polyan and they managed the boarding house at the Nemaquin Coal Mine in southwestern Pennsylvania. When cars became more readily available and men began to commute to work from home, the boarding house closed. In 1938 he built and operated Sertich General Store in Carmichaels, Pennsylvania with his wife and 4 children, my father being the youngest. There was a slaughterhouse behind the store where they finished livestock and provided custom dressing of stock, that produced beef, lamb, pork, chickens and a variety of smoked meats/sausages for sale in the store. This is where I grew up (lived above the store) as my parents took over management of the operation in 1955. In spite of 2 milk venders selling dairy products in our store, we always kept our own milk cow so we could have real milk for our family consumption.

At 12 years of age my maternal grandfather, Josef Klimek immigrated to Chicago, Illinois in 1909 from Mszana Gorna, Poland with his oldest sister, Anna and her husband. When their father died, Anna, being the eldest of the family returned to Poland to deal with her father's funeral and settle family affairs. World War I broke out and Anna never returned to the United States. Josef made his way to southwestern Pennsylvania's coal region and worked at the Richeyville Coal Mine. He met Mr. Kois who suggested he might want to marry 1 of his 5 daughters. My grandfather thought it was a good idea and married Rose, the youngest and biggest of the Kois girls. Eventually they saved enough money working at the mine to buy a dairy farm in Carmichaels. Josef got work at the Nemaquin Coal Mine. My grandmother Rose managed the dairy, milking up to 35 cows twice a day and had 8 children of which 6 survived.

My parents met after at the end of World War II and soon married, had 3 sons (twins and a singleton) and then me. I was able to spend much of my youth with both sets of my grandpar-

ents and all the animals at the store and dairy farm. To make my animal experience complete, I had the good fortune that my father had a keen interest in horses. He had a horse as a teenager that unfortunately broke its leg while he was in the navy during the war. When his children came along, he was keen to provide us all with ponies to ride and drive. None of my brothers maintained an interest in horses once they were able to legally drive. My dad fanned the flames of my horse passion and we enjoyed many horse activities together.

Looking back at things I can recall 3 distinct instances that sparked my interest in animal reproduction. The first was when I was 5 or 6 and my brother John's paint mare foaled. I had known that the mare was expecting a foal but was baffled when one morning a rambunctious filly was running around the mare. I saw that the mare had a bright streak of blood on her white hip and was puzzled that that the filly could have come out through that bloody spot. The second instance was in 5th grade when I asked my science class teacher, Mr. Burchani how chickens reproduced when they did not appear to have any of the special body parts that were needed to copulate. I was disappointed that he never was able to give me an answer to this question. And the third instance when I wanted to know more about animal reproduction was when I became a Senior in our Greene County 4-H Horse and Pony Club. I struggled to complete my Senior Project Workbook which at the time required us to draw a picture of a mare's reproductive tract and label all its parts. There were no books in our local library about horse breeding and I certainly was not going to ask the 2 elderly horsemen who led our 4-H club about female reproduction. I finally met another Senior at the District Horse Show who had completed her workbook. She allowed me to scrutinize her genital tract drawing and the labels which I carefully copied with tracing paper, not really understanding any of the drawing and ashamed to admit it. So, I headed off to college with some burning questions in my head.

During the summers when I was in undergraduate school I volunteered on weekdays at the Waynesburg Animal Hospital for a general practitioner, Dr. Elmer Marx. I would meet Dr. Marx at the hospital at 7 am and we would head out driving around southwestern PA doing large animal farm calls which included a lot of equine work throughout the day. We would return to the animal hospital on most days by 6 pm to start the small and large animal appointments at the hospital. Although the appointments for the day were usually not finished, I'd leave for home around dark so I could get back early the next morning.

I started at West Virginia University in the School of Pharmacy. After 1 or 2 days shadowing a pharmacist, I quickly realized this

was not the field for me. I completed most of the pharmacy foundation courses while floating along in general studies. I discovered the School of Agriculture when I met a pre-vet major, Sarah Beamer in a physical education swim class. I quickly changed to Animal Science and through a work study job soon found myself being the Teaching Assistant for the introductory survey course in animal science. My work study boss, Dr. H. E. 'Doc' Kidder and Dr. E. Keith Inskeep were course organizers for Physiology of Reproduction. It was in that course that I discovered my interest in reproduction and the answers to so many questions. Dr. Kidder was West Virginia University's pre-vet advisor and I soon found myself applying to Pennsylvania's veterinary school, the University of Pennsylvania. But after 2 veterinary school rejections, it was Dr. Inskeep that mentored me and facilitated my applications to graduate programs in Reproductive Physiology. Keith Inskeep was a pioneer in PG-F2_a research in sheep and he was an excellent teacher and role model.

Graduate school landed me in Laramie, Wyoming resulting in a Master of Science in Animal Science at the University of Wyoming investigating the role of placental lactogen on fetal growth and development in undernourished ewes under the guidance of Dr. Colon Kaltenbach and Dr. Tom Dunn. We used a surgically instrumented ovine fetus model to collect fetal blood samples in late pregnancy. We had a great graduate group that included David Forest, Michael Moseley, Gary Sides, David Walters and we all helped each other with our projects. The team did a lot of hard work and had a lot of fun collecting research data at the University of Wyoming's Agriculture Experiment Station which had been the Wyoming Territorial Prison and working cattle on a few ranches throughout the state.

Graduate school provided some great training and life experiences, but I wanted to do work in horse reproduction and realized that I still needed to be a veterinarian. So, after my third application to the University of Pennsylvania I made the move to Philadelphia for veterinary school. My first contact with the reproduction team was during a lecture by their resident, Gordan Woods. He invited me to palpate teaching mares at the Georgia and Philip Hofmann Research Center for Animal Reproduction located on New Bolton Center campus that next Saturday morning. I had the good fortune to still qualify for work study and was promptly able to land a student work study job at the Hofmann Center that continued for 3 years. During that time, I was exposed to the work of Terry Blanchard, John Hurtgen, Wendel Cooper, Marolo Garcia and Sue McDonnell. I had developed aspirations to be a breeding farm manager but the year I was graduating from veterinary school the Section of Reproduction had not identified a resident. A faculty member encouraged me to apply for the residency position since I knew the routine for handling cases at Hofmann Center. That was in 1983 and I never left New Bolton Center.

We did a fair amount of cattle work my first few years at New Bolton Center along with a steady equine case load. Learned to do stallion work with Bob Kenney and Dickson Varner, mare evaluations and their breeding management with Bob Kenney and J. Stanley Brown and obstetrical work with Terry Blanchard. Katrin Hinrichs and I were residents together. We were busy with clinic case work and teaching but also had considerable freedom to pursue projects of our own interest. At a client's

request and encouragement, I started a clinical Equine Embryo Transfer program that also provided opportunities for research projects investigating cooled transported embryos and ovariectomized embryo recipients. Dr. Kenney seemed to have a generous supply of research monies for small projects and encouraged everyone to always ask questions and pursue answers.

The best thing about working at a university is getting to know and work with so many great people from around the world: and the worst things about working at a university is that most of those people (students and colleagues) leave and go on to other places. And change is inevitable. As faculty and staff members came and went our section slowly lost much of its cattle work. The beef cattle work greatly decreased when the Pennsylvania division of King Ranch was sold and our dairy herd work was transferred to our ambulatory Field Service Section. But the equine reproduction work has thrived and evolved. The racehorse reproduction work has been replaced by many horse breeds with more diverse disciplines whose registries and owners embrace the advanced reproductive services and quality medical care we offer.

So how has all of this influenced my approach to life. Here are some of the things that I think are important and have given me much satisfaction.

- Always shake the milk jug vigorously before pouring it on your corn flakes.
- Cultivate young people's curiosity and provide them stimulating activities as they may be pivotal moments in their lives.
- Be perceptive to the needs of students, facilitate their academic growth and celebrate their accomplishments.
- Respect the past and embrace change.
- Encourage others to question and pursue answers. Provide opportunities for investigation.
- Expect people to do their best. People who respect you will rise to meet your expectations.

Thank you for this recognition and support



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Dr. Patricia L. Sertich is an Associate Professor-Clinician Educator in Reproduction and Behavior at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Veterinary Medicine. Patricia obtained a Bachelor of Science in Animal and Veterinary Science from West Virginia University in 1977 and a Master of Science in Animal Science from the University of Wyoming in 1979. After earning a veterinary degree from the University of Pennsylvania in

1983 she completed a residency in Large Animal Reproduction in 1985 and became a Diplomate in the American College of Theriogenologists in 1988. Based at the Georgia and Philip Hofmann Research Center for Animal Reproduction at New Bolton Center since 1983, Dr. Sertich evaluates large animals for breeding soundness and develops treatment plans to optimize their fertility. Dr. Sertich provides consultation on reproductive issues of patients in the George Widner Large Animal Hospital and is a critical member of the High-Risk Pregnancy Management Team. As a Diplomate in the American College of Theriogenologists (ACT), she has served on the ACT Certifying Examination Committee which determines board certification

for veterinarians specializing in animal reproduction. Dr. Sertich has mentored many ACT Diplomates and received numerous teaching awards including 3 Carl J. Norden Distinguished Teaching Awards and the Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation Teaching Award. As faculty liaison for the Student Chapter of the Society for Theriogenology she can facilitate training for those students to develop excellent clinical skills, provide opportunities to gain clinical experience and connect them with practices that will direct them to a satisfying and productive career in veterinary medicine.