

et has worked with baboons, too

Disease finder heads lab

By MARGARITA JAIME
Battalion Reporter

Dr. A. Konrad Eugster certainly has his share of "monkey business" coming to Texas A&M University campus.

Eugster, who was recently appointed as executive director of the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory, used to work as a virologist with baboons.

"I knew I had to leave when I began scratching myself," Eugster said with a grin.

Eugster was appointed by the Texas A&M University Board of Regents as director of the lab in August, replacing Dr. William L. Sippel, who retired after 11 years.

Eugster joined the Texas A&M University in 1968 as head of microbiology in the diagnostic lab.

While working at the lab in 1978, he discovered Parvovirus, a mutated form of cat disease that attacks dogs. He received nationwide recognition for his discovery.

Eugster is originally from Austria. He was raised on a small dairy farm in a village and left home as a child to attend a high school education.

"It's tough to leave home at the age of 11," Eugster said from his office in the diagnostic lab. "But for me to go to high school, I had to go to a town, get a job, rent a room and live with strange people."

Eugster is the only child of five to receive a college degree. Eugster entered the University of Vienna, where he received his veterinary medicine degree.

Although supported partially by his family while in school, he often still had to hold down two jobs at the same time while in vet school.

"My last two years in vet school, I worked for as many as four veterinarians," he said.

Eugster said he fondly remembers his time as a veterinarian he worked for before his senior year in vet school.

This doctor was 70 years old and active in his practice," Eugster said. "He had a pharmacy that ran veterinary practices don't exist anymore. At that time veterinary medicine had a lot of pharmacology where you mixed your own medicine."

The veterinarian never let anyone into his laboratory, Eugster said, because he had "secret homemade concoctions" that he didn't want anyone to copy.

During his sophomore year in vet school, Eugster received a Contact Lens Scholarship to study one semester of veterinary medicine at a veterinary school in Munich. The idea of the scholarship was to send students from different areas to "make contact," and work together, he said.

"I thought I filled that criteria of scholarship," Eugster said, smiling because that's where he met his future wife.

After his semester of work ended, two years passed before Eugster met his future wife again. She was on an exchange program with Brazilian veterinarians in Munich and had to return to Brazil to teach for two years.

"We kept the postal service busy for three years we were apart," Eugster said with a smile.

After graduating from vet school, Eugster traveled around Europe and then to the United States as a veterinarian.

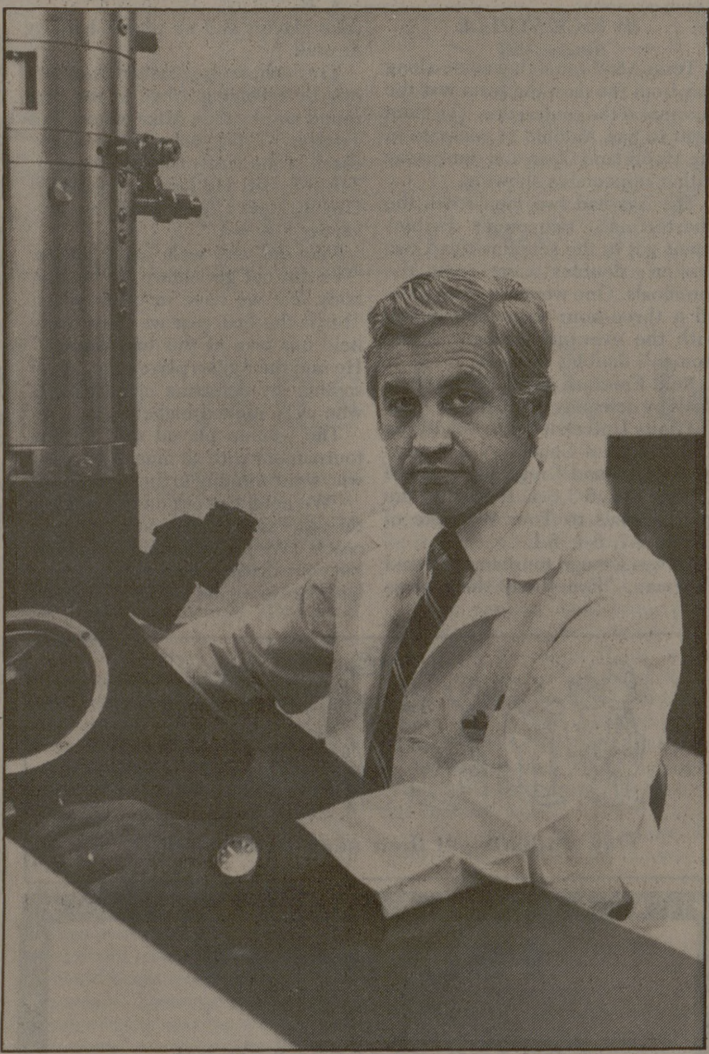
He traveled around the East and West on a Greyhound bus. Although he didn't expect to stay in the United States, he ended up taking the job as virologist working with veterinarians at the Southwest Foundation for Research and Education in Antonio.

It was in San Antonio that Eugster and his wife were reunited. They were married in the historical San Antonio Mission.

"We thought that if we got married in the oldest mission in Texas, our marriage would last forever," Eugster said.

Because he wanted to further his studies in virology, Eugster said, he accepted a fellowship from Colorado State University. He obtained his doctoral degree there in two and a half years.

After leaving Colorado in 1978, Eugster got the job at Texas A&M's veterinary diagnostic laboratory as head of microbiology.



Staff photo by Pat O'Malley

Dr. A. Konrad Eugster

Ten years later, Eugster discovered parvovirus.

"Because of the diagnostic lab's sophisticated equipment, such as the electron microscope," Eugster said, "it was possible to detect this virus."

Parvovirus is a disease that affects the intestines of young dogs.

"The symptoms are vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration and fever," Eugster said. "It can also be fatal."

During the summer, when parvovirus reached epidemic levels all over the country, Eugster received many phone calls from veterinarians all over the state and country asking for advice.

Eugster also received a call from CBS News.

"Walter Cronkite didn't call me himself," Eugster said, grinning. "But they called to get my permission to use my picture of the virus that came out in the Journal of Veterinary Medicine."

Eugster said his new job in the lab is a challenge, especially since Sippel, his predecessor, is known to most veterinarians as the father of modern veterinary diagnostic medicine.

"It's an odd feeling sitting in this chair," Eugster said, "and I hope I can fill his shoes... I'll certainly give it my best."

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coming to Texas
A&M Uni-
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ugster, who
recently
ointed as
xecutive
irector of
Texas Veterinary
Medical
Diagnostic
Laboratory,
used to
work as
a virologist
with baboons.
and gold
I knew I
had to
leave
when I
began
scratching
myself,"
Eugster
said
with a
grin.
Eugster
was
appointed
by the
Texas A&M
University
Board of
Regents
as
director
of the
lab in
August,
replacing
Dr. William
L. Sippel,
who
retired
after
11 years.
Eugster
joined
the
Texas
A&M
University
in 1968
as
head
of
microbiology
in the
diagnostic
lab.
While
working
at the
lab in
1978,
he
discovered
Parvovirus,
a
mutated
form
of
cat
disease
that
attacks
dogs.
He
received
nationwide
recognition
for
his
discovery.
Eugster
is
originally
from
Austria.
He
was
raised
on a
small
dairy
farm
in a
village
and
left
home
as a
child
to
attend
a
high
school
education.
"It's
tough
to
leave
home
at the
age of
11,"
Eugster
said
from
his
office
in the
diagnostic
lab. "But
for
me
to
go
to
high
school,
I
had
to
go
to
a
town,
get
a
job,
rent
a
room
and
live
with
strange
people."
Eugster
is
the
only
child
of
five
to
receive
a
college
degree.
Eugster
entered
the
University
of
Vienna,
where
he
received
his
veterinary
medicine
degree.
Although
supported
partially
by
his
family
while
in
school,
he
often
still
had
to
hold
down
two
jobs
at
the
same
time
while
in
vet
school.
"My
last
two
years
in
vet
school,
I
worked
for
as
many
as
four
veterinarians,"
he
said.
Eugster
said
he
fondly
remembers
his
time
as
a
veterinarian
he
worked
for
before
his
senior
year
in
vet
school.
This
doctor
was
70
years
old
and
active
in
his
practice,"
Eugster
said.
"He
had
a
pharmacy
that
ran
veterinary
practices
don't
exist
anymore.
At
that
time
veterinary
medicine
had
a
lot
of
pharmacology
where
you
mixed
your
own
medicine."
The
veterinarian
never
let
anyone
into
his
laboratory,
Eugster
said,
because
he
had
"secret
homemade
concoctions"
that
he
didn't
want
anyone
to
copy.
During
his
sophomore
year
in
vet
school,
Eugster
received
a
Contact
Lens
Scholarship
to
study
one
semester
of
veterinary
medicine
at
a
veterinary
school
in
Munich.
The
idea
of
the
scholarship
was
to
send
students
from
different
areas
to
"make
contact,"
and
work
together,
he
said.
"I
thought
I
filled
that
criteria
of
scholarship,"
Eugster
said,
smiling
because
that's
where
he
met
his
future
wife.
After
his
semester
of
work
ended,
two
years
passed
before
Eugster
met
his
future
wife
again.
She
was
on
an
exchange
program
with
Brazilian
veterinarians
in
Munich
and
had
to
return
to
Brazil
to
teach
for
two
years.
"We
kept
the
postal
service
busy
for
three
years
we
were
apart,"
Eugster
said
with
a
smile.
After
graduating
from
vet
school,
Eugster
traveled
around
Europe
and
then
to
the
United
States
as
a
veterinarian.
He
traveled
around
the
East
and
West
on
a
Greyhound
bus.
Although
he
didn't
expect
to
stay
in
the
United
States,
he
ended
up
taking
the
job
as
virologist
working
with
veterinarians
at
the
Southwest
Foundation
for
Research
and
Education
in
Antonio.
It
was
in
San
Antonio
that
Eugster
and
his
wife
were
reunited.
They
were
married
in
the
historical
San
Antonio
Mission.
"We
thought
that
if
we
got
married
in
the
oldest
mission
in
Texas,
our
marriage
would
last
forever,"
Eugster
said.
Because
he
wanted
to
further
his
studies
in
virology,
Eugster
said,
he
accepted
a
fellowship
from
Colorado
State
University.
He
obtained
his
doctoral
degree
there
in
two
and
a
half
years.
After
leaving
Colorado
in
1978,
Eugster
got
the
job
at
Texas
A&M's
veterinary
diagnostic
laboratory
as
head
of
microbiology.