

Veterinarian's life mirror of best seller

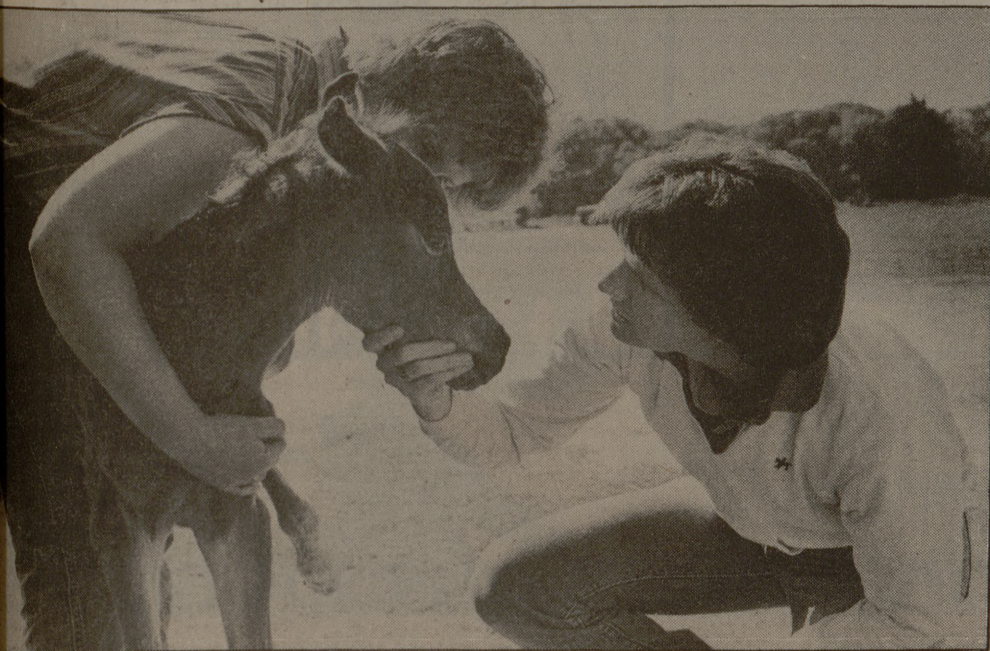


Photo by DAVE SCOTT

Dr. Jeanna Fiske examines a three-day-old colt while her associate, Dr. Jenny Bowers, assists. Fiske and Bowers operate a local veterinary clinic.

By DAVE SCOTT
Staff Writer

The ragged, day-old wound located high upon the soft side of the horse's left hind leg, inserted fully inside the inch wound, made ugly, snoring noises as it probed and cleaned the cut. Bright red blood overflowed the wound, and streamed down the side of the brown mare. The veterinarian was stretched out on its bricks, under anesthetic, breathing evenly and regularly. Dr. Jeanna Fiske is at work in a small pasture just a few miles from the College Station. She is medium height and has long, neck-length brown hair and pearl earrings in her ears. She wears a tan V-neck sweater over a plaid shirt, jeans and cowboy boots. Fiske remained perfectly calm, not a drop of anything fell from her. A phenomenon for which she has no explanation. Spending a day with her and her associate is like living in the heart of the best-selling book "All Creatures Great and Small." The book, and the series which followed it, is an autobiographical story by Dr. James Herriot, concentrating mainly on his experiences as a veterinarian in Yorkshire, England. Fiske, who has read all the books many times over, says that although Herriot's books

take place prior to World War II and are set in another country, she and Herriot have a lot in common. "I would say around 80 percent of the things that happened to me, have happened to me," Fiske said. "Every time I reread one of the books I find something new. His books are exceedingly realistic." Like Herriot, Fiske says she has been in the middle of treating an animal and to her embarrassment, found she suddenly could not remember the owner's name. She also has sat down to dinner with owner and family after working on a sick animal, a scene often repeated in Herriot's books. Fiske recounts a particular story in "All Creatures" about an old man's dog that Herriot must put to sleep. Fiske tells with empathy of how the veterinarian realizes at once that the old, grey-muzzled animal needs to be put to sleep, but also that the dog is much

more than a pet to the family-less old man. The old man tells his only companion good-bye and Herriot puts the dog to sleep. Afterward the old man realizes he has no way to pay the veterinarian. But as Herriot is walking to his car, the old man rushes out of the house with perhaps his only other prized possession, a fine old cigar, that he gives to Herriot.

Fiske says that she has received flowers or cookies instead of usual payment. And, also like Herriot, never charges for putting an animal to sleep. She says it is just something she cannot do, perhaps indicating something more than experiences that Fiske and Herriot have in common.

Fiske, 34, has been operating the Valley Veterinary Clinic in College Station for three and a half years. Her practice, which now includes an associate, Dr. Jenny Bowers, is almost strictly large-animal, which requires her to travel to her patients. She is specially equipped for her mobile practice. The pickup she drives has a mobile clinic in the bed. Fiske says the mobile clinics, which have hot and cold running water, a refrigerator and lots of storage space, cost about \$6,000. Fiske also travels with a beeper attached to her belt so that she can be located for emergencies.

She opened her practice immediately after graduating from the Texas A&M School of Veterinary Medicine. Fiske describes the route to her present situation as "rather circuitous."

She graduated from high school and received a scholarship to study veterinary medicine at Texas A&M in 1967.

At that time, Fiske says, there were about 50 women in her freshmen class who weren't daughters of faculty or connected to the University in some other way.

Fiske spent three semesters at Texas A&M before getting married. She says she and her husband Robert, who was a veterinary student at that time, met in a fitting way: "We met romantically over a small-animal anesthesia machine while spaying a dog."

Her husband now is a veterinary pathologist at the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory located here, they have some interesting conversations over the dinner table, Fiske says.

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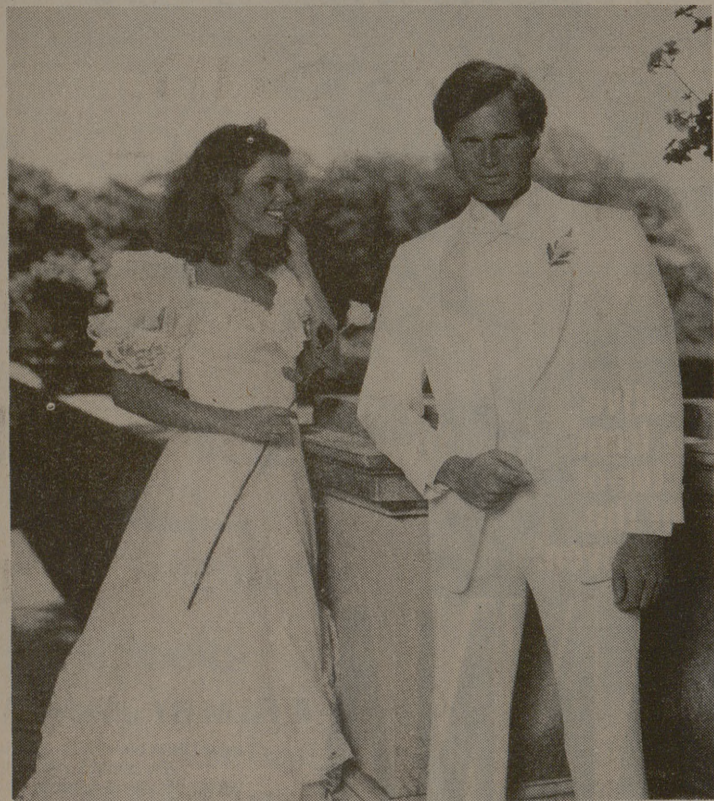
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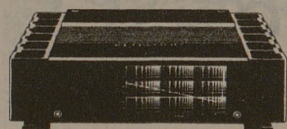
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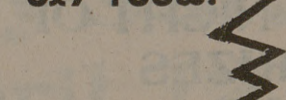


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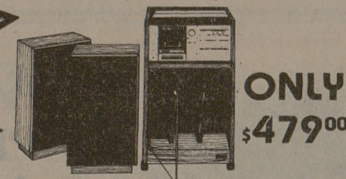
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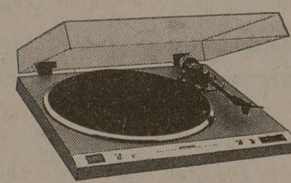
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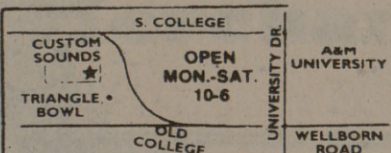
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