

Thoughts on My Thoughts: The Tales That Wagged This Veterinarian

Walter R. Hoge

ReadersMagnet

(290pp)

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Thoughts on My Thoughts is an uplifting memoir about the mutual enrichment that comes from the bonds between people and animals.

Veterinarian Walter R. Hoge's memoir *Thoughts on My Thoughts* celebrates the joy and satisfaction that comes with serving others.

Humor enlivens Hoge's memories of growing up as an animal-loving child who was known for being a trickster, and transforming into a serious student who, with the help of his dedicated teachers and mentors, was capable of undertaking the rigorous training that was required for his chosen career. But when he began his veterinary practice in 1973, Hoge also recognized that his attitude of superiority might be a liability, especially when compared to the years of experience and people skills that older, more practiced veterinarians had.

And this gathering of conversational anecdotes moves beyond Hoge's work with animals to include his memories of life events. Among them are recollections of seeing his children grow up; expressions of grief over his wife's death; and statements of gratitude for being able to continue his work after a stroke. The book emphasizes the power of meaningful work during periods of difficulty, too: here, a day spent caring for animals can be relied on to be "a wonderful day in the neighborhood."

The book also shares career-specific and contextual information, as about the egg-laying processes of chickens; about medical conditions in animals and people; and about how pigs and bootleggers connected during Prohibition. There are instances of oversharing, though, as with the book's information on castoreum, a brown, slimy substance taken from near a beaver's anal gland, that is used in food flavoring, perfumes, cigarettes, and medicines. And the book has a disturbing, under supported take on masculinity's influence on anger and aggression.

But most often, this is a book that evinces Hoge's extreme dedication to his work. In his desire to understand the experiences of a dog being treated for ear mites, for example, he writes that he put mites into his own ears and underwent the treatment himself. Shocking instances of veterinarians receiving death threats when an animal in their care died reveal the sobering sides of Hoge's line of work, as well.

And the book drifts from its career-specific stories to meditate on what makes for a satisfying life. Biblical quotes flesh such arguments out, in addition to Hoge's personal and professional memories. With conviction, the book comments on the importance of nurturing relationships and honoring individual differences. It also draws on scientific studies to assert that animals and people thrive in communities; that one's health is bolstered by love, connection, and purpose; and that kind treatments can modify health on molecular, individual, interpersonal, and global levels. However, the book's grammatical errors are frequent, impeding its ultimate delivery.

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KRISTINE MORRIS (July 22, 2022)

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