



Matthew Mackay-Smith DVM, Editor Extraordinaire

As Medical Editor of EQUUS, He Connected
With Everyone Around Him

By Emily Kilby, Former EQUUS Senior Editor

November 1980, marked the beginning of my 22-year association with Medical Editor Matthew P. Mackay-Smith of the revolutionary magazine, EQUUS, which envisioned inclusive coverage of all horses presented through engaging journalism. Matthew drove the medical and management content and effectively informed the 150,000-plus devoted readers.

Working with Matthew was an ever-challenging and always-energizing experience. He was usually in the Gaithersburg, Maryland, office two days a week, arriving latish after a headlong dash in his aging BMW from, first, Chester County, Pennsylvania, then Clarke County, Virginia. That's the way he lived his life, always in the superlative, not to be boastful or outdo others but because he would not throttle his energies nor limit his possibilities.

It was impossible to not grow when working with Matthew. Each assignment of a medical or management article began with a conference in which Matthew provided what sometimes seemed like the entire history of the subject back to the beginning of time. So much of the medical and biological material required significant instruction. With each article I submitted for his review, I dreaded the possibility of a WRONG! in his one-inch script scrawled across the top of the page, meaning some serious and entirely justified revision lay ahead. Matthew had unwavering standards, but he was as free with his praise as with his criticism. Under his tutelage, I became a better thinker and writer.

More affecting, even, than his intellect and professional standards, was Matthew's singular personality. He seemed to know everything, so staff members tended to go to him when there was a problem with a dog, a horse, a child, a painful body part, whatever. He almost always had an answer, and it almost always proved to be correct.

The combination of his wide-ranging knowledge and an uncommon ability to recognize patterns in the connected dots made him the great diagnostician, innovative surgeon and astute advice-giver that he was. Matthew connected with staff members at all levels and departments.

He was the hugger-in-chief of the office, breaking through the reserves of even the standoffish when he thought they needed consolation or congratulation.

Even though he was always chronologically the adult in the room, he willingly joined in the obligatory skits for the company party and interdepartmental contests at company picnic, taking as much delight in the nonsense as any of the staff members young enough to be his children.

Matthew was one of a kind who changed the world through his innovative veterinary career, his co-creation of a magazine that set a new standard for educating horse owners and his lasting effect on all the people, who were fortunate enough to have been pulled into his fast-spinning orbit.

Publisher's note: Emily Houston and I also worked with Matthew at EQUUS and kept in contact with him afterward. We share the sentiment expressed in this tribute.