



GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

## History of Animal Acupuncture: Part II

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In Part I of this article, I had gone back to 1969 and tried to describe the atmosphere and events of that year that engulfed many of the younger generation, some who were all the core members of the National Acupuncture Association. It is so difficult to put into words the power of those times and the events that would shape the character of this generation.

As a part my own personal journey, I was determined to complete my clinical training with Dr. So, and in 1974 this meant that I would need to travel to Boston with the National Acupuncture Association Team.

When I went to Boston in 1974 with the NAA team to finish my studies with Dr. So Tin Yau, I left John Ottaviano with the responsibility of running the NAA Veterinary Acupuncture project in California. I handed over to him two clinics where I had been treating all the animals. He already had two clinics of his own where he was treating animals, so now he was responsible for doing all the horse clinics. I was fully committed to finishing my course of clinical studies with Dr. So, and this meant that I needed to travel with the NAA team to Massachusetts. Dr. William Prensky was the president of the NAA and the driving force behind us being able to go to Boston. As the team leader he was critical in bringing Dr. So to the United States and also coordinating and directing all of the NAA projects.

Before our group went to Boston, Dr. Prensky had originally made arrangements for the NAA Team to move to Portland, Oregon, where we would be working with a pain center run by a neurosurgeon Joel Seres, MD. But when Bill got there and met with the Portland sponsors, they made it clear that they would not be willing to bring the entire NAA team to Oregon. Upon his return to Los Angeles, Bill sat down with all of us and we went over the offer that had been made and Bill asked us how we felt. We all wanted to stay together as a group, and so Bill flew off to Boston to try to negotiate there for us.



Jay Jay The Tiger

Bill was successful, and made arrangements for us all to go and be supported. Not everyone, of course, could pick up and move, but for those of us who could, in July of 1974 the NAA core group, consisting of Bill Prensky, Steven Rosenblatt, Kathy Ferrick, Dr. So, myself and Karen Frede relocated to the East Coast and began to build the Boston Acupuncture Center and the Acupuncture Center of Worcester, Mass. Because of our dedication to remain as a team with Dr. So and the NAA, we picked up stakes and trekked back from West to East, carrying what we had learned with us.

Acupuncture was legal in Massachusetts under a certain exception in the state medical practice act. There was no licensing for acupuncture, but under the general supervision of a licensed physician we were able to treat patients with acupuncture. I assumed that I would be done with treating animals while in Massachusetts. I was wrong.

In November of 1974, I received a call from Werner Nobel, M.D. I vaguely remembered the name. It turned out that Dr. Nobel had attended the weekend conference that the NAA had sponsored at the UCLA medical school in 1973. I had presented the preliminary results of our Veterinary Acupuncture Project at that seminar. Dr. Noble had discovered that I had moved to Boston and since he was in Amherst, he decided to contact me. He wanted me to visit him at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Werner was on staff at what was called the "Veterinary Labs." This was a few years before the Veterinary School of Medicine was established at the Amherst University of Massachusetts.

Dr. Nobel was a retired orthopedic surgeon who was doing research on alternative therapies. Of all the areas he was researching, he was the most interested in acupuncture. I began working with Dr. Nobel and in early 1975 I performed what was at the time the first "acupuncture analgesia" that was ever done on an animal. The entire vet labs staff was present. And it was filmed.

The effects of the acupuncture analgesia were so dramatic it left the entire veterinary staff stunned. At that time I also treated some of the University's milk cows at other locations that were suffering from arthritis. But most of my work was done directly with Dr. Nobel at the University. Steven Rosenblatt and I had finished all the translations of Dr. So's two books on acupuncture for the first class of the James/Stevens Acupuncture College, which became the New England School of Acupuncture (NESAC) the following year. By mid-1975, I had finished my clinical internship with Dr. So and decided to return to California. The nation was still in the midst of a severe recession.

## Back to California

When I did return to California I again assisted John Ottaviano in treating animals at the clinics in Los Angeles. Primarily I was working with Dr. Joel Rossen at the West Hollywood Clinic that he shared with Dr. Craig, and with Dr. Robert Friedman at his animal clinic in Van Nuys. Alice DeGroot had left the horse farm in Chino, but I still treated horses at the various racetracks, including Hollywood Park, Santa Anita and Del Mar. One day a week, I worked at Orthopedic Associates of Beverly Hills with some of the finest orthopedic surgeons on the West Coast.

The National Association of Veterinary Acupuncture (NAVA) had joined its members with a newer organization called the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society (IVAS) in 1975. This was part of the goal that Ottaviano and I had. That is, to have a group of veterinarians that we trained in animal acupuncture establish their own educational group so that acupuncture could spread among their profession for the benefit of animals everywhere. And still later, the American Academy of Veterinary Acupuncture (AAVA) was formed as an offshoot of IVAS. Steven Rosenblatt and Kathy Ferrick had come back from Boston shortly after I returned, and William Prenskey had moved to New York where he had a private practice. Steven and I founded the California Acupuncture College and began its first class in 1975.

## Oregon

Late in 1975 I traveled to Portland, Oregon, to take the Board of Medicine exam in acupuncture. If an applicant passed both these exams they were then qualified to sit for the Oral & Practical Exams the following day. The Oral and Practical Exam in Oregon at that time was in front of the entire Acupuncture Committee of the Medical Board. Because only Nevada and Oregon had exams for licensure, acupuncturists from all over the country and other nations were taking those exams. Still, out of the large group that took the written exams, only two of us had qualified for the Oral / Practical Exam - Yoshio Manaka, M.D., and myself. We both passed the Oral & Practical Exam the next day. Dr. Manaka returned to Japan, never to practice in Oregon. I returned to California with the goal of one day returning with my family and practicing Chinese medicine in Oregon.

In California, while continuing to treat both animal and humans, Rosenblatt and I finished the instructions for the first class of the California Acupuncture College. But, I was now looking for a way to move to Oregon and begin a practice there.

In 1976, I returned to Oregon and opened an office there called the Acupuncture Center of Portland. There were six acupuncturists now practicing in Oregon. Five of us were in Portland and one in Salem. With focusing on my new practice in a new state, and with trying to settle my family, I did not treat any animals for several years. Anticipating a possibility of returning to animal acupuncture, in 1978 I made a request of the Oregon Veterinary Medical Board to grant me permission to treat animals with acupuncture, even though I was not a licensed veterinarian. Interestingly, the Oregon Veterinary Association openly opposed this request of mine at the meeting I had with the Veterinary Medical Board.

Nevertheless, the Veterinary Medical Board approved my request with the condition that a veterinarian act as a supervisor for any animal I treated. This was similar to the arrangement that Ottaviano and I had in California.

### Jay Jay the Tiger

In 1980, I got a phone call from Laurie Marker who was working for Wildlife Safari in Winston, Oregon. She had under her care a Bengal Tiger that she wanted me to treat with acupuncture. Somehow she had found out that I was in Portland, Oregon, and was one of the two acupuncturists who was responsible for introducing animal acupuncture into the U.S. I told her I would treat the tiger and I agreed that she could bring the tiger to my office in Portland. And she did.

I treated Jay Jay for the next 7 months at my office, at my home in Aurora and also at Wildlife Safari in Winston, but because of the travel distance I was not able to treat him on a regular basis. I did instruct the veterinarian for Wildlife Safari on how to treat Jay Jay, but she never did treat him. Part of the reason may have been that I instructed her to treat him un-sedated, as I had. I was especially concerned about the research that showed that tigers would hallucinate when coming down off of certain sedative medications. The last thing I needed was an hallucinating tiger in my office, or anywhere! I was also concerned that the acupuncture treatments may not have been effective if Jay Jay was under heavy sedation. In the end, Jay Jay died of his illness, which an autopsy revealed was the first ever known case of a feline suffering from canine distemper!

### Present Day

Since early 1976, I have been practicing acupuncture and Chinese Medicine full time in my office in Portland and currently in Salem, Oregon. Over the years I have continued to treat dogs and horses on occasion. But, for the last 40 years or so my practice has been primarily dedicated to treating humans. Then, shortly after the death of my friend John Ottaviano, I decided to look again at the field of animal acupuncture.

I had kept in contact with my old friend Dr. Joel Rossen for over 40 years and early in 2013 contacted him about a new project I had in mind - to reintroduce Animal Acupuncture to licensed acupuncturists. I knew that IVAS and the American Academy of Veterinary Acupuncture (AAVA) and the Qi Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine were all still teaching veterinarians animal acupuncture. I was also aware that the Maryland University of Integrative Health (formerly Tai Sophia) had discontinued its certificate program in Animal Acupuncture.

Dr. Rossen was completely open about this new project. He was living in Florida but was so excited about this that he applied for his veterinary license in Oregon and planned to move out West. I also contacted my friend Barbara Ota, DAC, in Hawaii, who has been treating animals for two decades. I then contacted Becca Seitz, LAc, Dipl. OM, a very experienced animal acupuncturist in Portland. We all were committed to preparing a comprehensive educational program that was heavily based in clinical experience so that we could teach animal acupuncture only to licensed acupuncturists. The International Academy of Animal Acupuncture (IAAA) was officially founded in the spring of 2013. We worked together diligently every week on the courses and we had planned on beginning the classes in the spring of 2014, but in early December of 2013 we were stunned by the sudden death of our friend, Dr. Joel Rossen. I was very distraught by my friend's death and it disrupted my work with the group.

Eventually we were able to begin our work in a new way and it is nearly completed. Even though our plans were delayed, the three of us moved forward and the IAAA will open its seminars in November of this year. The course is comprehensive in its didactic and clinical instruction in the

treatment of large and small animals. The successful completion of the course will allow the acupuncturist to sit for the American Board of Animal Acupuncture's (ABAA) certification exam. The ABAA is the only national agency for the certification of qualified licensed acupuncturists in animal acupuncture. The ABAA awards certification in Animal Acupuncture only to licensed acupuncturists.

I want to thank all of you who took the time to read this article and take this journey with me back in time to the birth of animal acupuncture in the US. Any acupuncturist who wished to contact us, email the International Academy of Animal Acupuncture at 971-285-4983 or email [animalacupunctureacademy@gmail.com](mailto:animalacupunctureacademy@gmail.com).

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