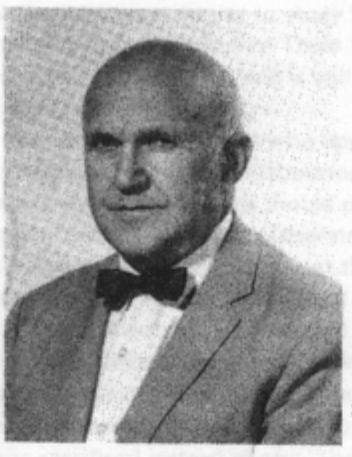
1972 RECIPIENT

of the

AWARD of MERIT

of the

New Jersey Professional Health Officers Society



Oscar Sussman, D.V.M., M.P.H., LL B., J.D.
Director, Consumer Health Services,
New Jersey State Department of Health

Presented June 13, 1972
at the Kings Grant Inn, Point Pleasant, New Jersey
by Nicholas Rice, President, the New Jersey Professional Health Officers Society.

The 1972 recipient of the Award of Merit of the New Jersey Professional Health Officers Society -- Oscar Sussman -- is a rare combination of unusual traits. He is controversial (Some of his critics have said that if there is no controversy, he creates it in order to bring a situation to the public's attention.), forceful, learned, articulate and a champion of the underdog. He has collected degrees and awards the way some persons collect stamps as the reader will see when he or she continues to read on.

He has the courage of his convictions. He is personally a plaintiff in a federal suit to compel the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to put warning labels on meats and poultry inspected by federal inspectors so that the consumer will be advised that inspected meat may contain invisible organisms which could be injurious to health if the meat is not handled properly while it is prepared for consumption. It is the view of Dr. Sussman, the American Public Health Association, and some others that when the U.S. Department of Agriculture places on a piece of meat or poultry a statement that it has been inspected for wholesomeness, it may give the housewife or other person who prepares it a false sense of security. Oscar wants the consumer to be acutely aware that a fine looking piece of meat or poultry may contain organisms that can and will cause illness if the meat is not properly prepared. Thus, while Oscar is a part of government, he has not hesitated to take on Big Government when he considers it in the public interest.

Oscar and Dr. Paul Cornely, a recent past president of the American Public Health Association, are currently co-chairmen of the Association's Action Board Subcommittee on Penal Reform to try to get inmates into the main stream of American life and bring about corrective changes in penal institutions. Oscar is chairman of a subcommittee of the Action Board with respect to Food Inspection.

When he was president of the New Jersey Public Health Association, he let it be known that the Association was going to hold a public conference on mosquito-borne diseases. Some of his more conservative peers cautioned him that this might have negative impact on tourists and the resort industry. His response was that the only way to protect the tourist industry is to develop a mosquito-control program such that there are no mosquito-borne diseases in the state. The meeting was held and a lot of experts came to tell New Jerseyans how to avoid mosquito-borne outbreaks of illness.

When he thought it would be a good idea to hold a meeting on abortion, some of his associates said, "That will create controversy." His reply, in effect, was, "What of it?" The meeting was held and was well attended.

In fact, it may truly be said that Oscar communicated to the Association some of his dynamism and helped greatly to rejuvenate the organization. Some meetings attracted more than a thousand persons.

He also had the Association draw up a list of public health objectives toward which the association and other health oriented agencies should be working.

A few years ago, some New Jersey school children studying cancer used some chickens in their studies. The New Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals brought charges against the children. Oscar became an expert witness for the defense and the children won the opportunity to study biology from life. The Society then moved to oust Oscar from its ranks. He met that attack head on and is still a member of an officer.

He has infuriated those who oppose the use of unclaimed dogs in approved laboratory studies. The opponents claim the pounds should put the unclaimed dogs to death and that the laboratories should breed their own. Oscar has pointed out that this means the destruction of two dogs instead of one. If the unclaimed pound dog is put to death and the specially bred dog is used to advance the cause of knowledge and is then put to death, the first dog has been put to death uselessly and unproductively and two dogs have ultimately been sacrificed instead of one. The "humane" societies have had no effective rebuttal for this argument.

Oscar carries on the practice of veterinary medicine on his own time and no one who has ever watched him handle an animal would ever accuse him of lack of compassion.

A few years ago, Oscar was called to Washington to attend the President's White House Conference on Health. He startled those present by urging better pay for people who work in laboratories. He said lab technologists perform tests whose accuracy literally has an

effect on the life or death of patients. He contended that they are so grossly underpaid in many instances that a continuation of this situation will cause potentially good technologists to look elsewhere for more monetarily rewarding employment.

Oscar has told associates that in all of his work and particularly as Director of Consumer Health Services, he has been influenced by the writing of Thomas Jefferson. Oscar carries around in his wallet this quotation from Jefferson:

> "I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."

He believes the first allegiance of government is to the consumer, the taxpayer. He thinks the public has a right to know so that their knowing will help them make a choice for the better.

He believes strongly that there must be an improvement in the delivery of health services, especially medical care. But he worries lest the new emphasis on this facet reduce the equally essential emphasis on prevention. As he has put it, "If we prevent kids from getting lead poisoning by removing old lead based paint from their environment and thus prevent their ingesting it, we won't have to worry about the effectiveness of medical care to heal them."

When he was president of the New Jersey Public Health Association, he urged implementing a philosophy that will take the profit motive out of the sale of addictive drugs even if society must go to the point of providing drugs to those who are beyond redemption so that such persons will not have to steal or commit other crimes to support their addiction.

The plaque awarded to Dr. Sussman by the Society reads: "The Award of Merit in Recognition of His Outstanding Contributions to the Advancement of Public Health in the State of New Jersey."

The award has been conferred on five other persons: the late Harry Nicholas who was a long time employee of the State Department of Health; Clyde Newell, also a long time employee of the Department and now retired; Dr. Roscoe P. Kandle, State Commissioner of Health in the 1960s; Ralph T. Fisher, currently with the State Department of Health; and John J. Hanson, Health Officer of New Brunswick.

Dr. Sussman acquired the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Michigan State University; the Master of Public Health degree from the Yale University School of Medicine and the Juris Doctor degree from the Seton Hall University School of Law.

Dr. Sussman began his public career with the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a livestock inspector in 1940.

From 1941 to 1946 he was with the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps and was overseas in New Guinea, the Phillipines, and Japan. He was separated from the service in March 1946 with the rank of major. After another brief stint with the U,S. Department of Agriculture, he was commissioned in 1947 in the U.S. Public Health Service for duty with the Communicable Disease Center, Atlanta, Georgia and detailed to the Arizona State Department of Health. He was discharged from the Service to the inactive reserve in 1949 with the rank of colonel.

In 1949, he came with the New Jersey State Department of Health as Chief of the Veterinary Public Health Program. He was Assistant to the State Commissioner of Health from 1970 to 1971 and in 1971 was named Director of Consumer Health Services in the department, the position he now holds.

He has been president of the New Jersey Public Health Association, of the Veterinary Medical Association of New Jersey, and of the Conference of Public Health Veterinarians. He was also vice president of the American Veterinary Medical Association. He is a diplomate and counselor on the executive committee of the American Board of Veterinary Public Health. He is presently a member of the Governing Council of the American Public Health Association.

In 1962, at the invitation of the U.S. State Department, he accepted a Senior Fulbright Professorship with assignment to the High Institute of Public Health, Alexandria, United Arab Republic. The UAR had requested his assistance in an evaluation of the veterinary activities of their health services.

In 1964, the Communicable Disease Center of the U.S. Public Health Service and the Conference of Public Health Veterinarians gave him an award for outstanding

achievement in public health.

In 1965, the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Officer Corps promoted him to be Veterinary Director with the equivalent rank of Captain in the U.S. Navy.

From 1964 to 1966, at the invitation of the Florida State Board of Health, he served as a member of its Advisory Committee for the Control and Study of Encephalitis.

In 1966, he served as a consultant to the World Health Organization in Brazil.

In 1967, he was vice chairman of the Committee on Diseases of Birds Transmissible to Man at the 18th World Veterinary Congress in Paris.

In 1968, five organizations joined to honor him as a Humanitarian - Scientist. The award said he had "worked effectively in bringing together scientists, physicians, veterinarians, educators, public health workers, and the public to the understanding that through comparative medical studies man can lengthen his life, make it more pleasant, and also contribute to the well being, health and happiness of man's companion animal pets." The five organizations were the Medical Society of New Jersey, the New Jersey Public Health Association, the New Jersey Science Teachers Association, the New Jersey Society for Medical Education and Research, and the New Jersey Chapter of the Association of Operating Room Nurses.

In 1969, he received the Dr. Karl F. Meyer Gold Headed Cane Award, for meritorious service, from Dr. James H. Steele, Assistant Surgeon General of the U.S. Communicable Disease Center, U.S. Public Health Service.

During these busy years, he also found time to serve for nine years as a professor of biology at Westminster Choir College, Princeton. He was also for many years a lecturer on meat inspection at Rutgers - the State University of New Jersey.

Dr. and Mrs. Sussman reside in Montgomery Township on the outskirts of Princeton.

Probably it is not mere coincidence that the Sussman family is medically oriented. Oscar's wife, Jane, is a qualified medical technologist. His daughter, Nancy, has a master's degree in biology from Notre Dame University. She was one of the first female students admitted to the graduate school. His second daughter, Peggy, has a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from Russell Sage College and is working on her Master's Degree.

His son, Timothy, resides at home and attends high school. He is greatly interested in the graphic arts field. He will probably be interested in reading this profile.

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