Dr. Edward von der Schmidt III ’79, Dr. Jeanne Barsanti ’74, Austin O. Hooey Dean of Veterinary Medicine Michael Kotlikoff

This is such a great honor. Those who have received this award include men whom I have admired from the time I entered veterinary college. To be included in this group is beyond words. Thank you to the selection committee and to Dr. Jonathan May whose patience with me is very much appreciated.

I thank Dr. Sheila Allen, graduate of Cornell, long-time colleague, and Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at UGA for nominating me along with Drs. Del Finco, Scott Brown, and Richard Wooley for supporting my nomination. These individuals composed our research team at UGA and without them in so many ways I would not be standing here tonight.
I also want to recognize my husband, Dr. Craig Greene, who has been a tremendous support since we met here at Cornell in 1973. Without him, I never would have begun an academic career. Also, I thank my son Dr. Casey Greene who actually deserves the credit for my innovative use of web-based instruction and his wife, Dr. Anna Greene, who are here tonight. I know all of you understand the importance of family in any individual’s success.

To convey what this award means to me, I have a short story for you.

In 1957, the fifth-grade class at Minoa, NY, had to write the inevitable essay on what you would be when you grew up. I am sure all of you had to write such an essay at some time. Mine was on veterinary medicine even though I knew not a single veterinarian. My essay was solely based on a brochure I had received from the AVMA after seeing a public service advertisement on TV. My family owned no animals, but the idea of a career combining science, medicine, and animals seemed right for me. All students had to read their essays to the class. The teacher, Ms. Brennan, complemented my essay but announced that it was not possible for girls to become veterinarians as it was a career only for men. I was crushed, but my father, a military man, had conveyed to
his children the importance of a steady gaze and a “stiff upper lip” and in this manner I returned to my desk.

After school, I ran home, burst in the door, and asked my grandmother if women could be veterinarians. Unfortunately, there was no internet to rapidly answer the question. My grandmother asked if the brochure addressed that question. I read it again and looked at the pictures, but the brochure did not say. When my mother came home from her work as a nurse, I asked her, but she said she did not know either. There was a veterinarian near town who was a man but that was the only veterinarian she had heard of. When my father came home on the weekend, he asked where I would go to learn to be a veterinarian. I said the brochure indicated that one went to the veterinary college in one’s state and so I would go to Cornell. My father said the next school holiday on a weekday, he would take time off and we would drive to Cornell and find out.

And so we did. My father dressed in his white, formal uniform with his small daughter in tow entered this College and went into the first open door where we were greeted by a smiling woman at a desk. My father addressed her formally and told her that his daughter needed to know whether girls could become veterinarians or not. The woman asked us to follow her to the hall. There were the pictures of all the graduating classes and in some there was at least one woman. She told me that the women had to be very smart and very determined, but because they were such a select group that they were excellent veterinary students and became excellent veterinarians. My heart soared – I could become what I wanted to be. I never forgot her words. They were especially important as it was not easy for women to be accepted into veterinary college in the late 1960s and veterinary school itself was difficult for all, but especially for women and men who were different. I would like to acknowledge all the Cornell women veterinary students who came before me, beginning with Dr. Florence Kimball, who graduated in 1910 and especially the other 4 women who were in my class who provided great support and companionship during those years. I would also like to acknowledge the men that were supportive including faculty such as Drs. Delahunta, Delahanty, Whitlock and Vaughan, and classmates including Drs. Don Schlaffer and Ned Dykes who have been such wonderful hosts on this trip. I wish my grandparents, parents, and even Ms. Brennan could be here tonight. Veterinary medicine was the wonderful career I hoped it would be and this is the icing on the cake. Thank you.