

**Thomas E. Catanzaro, DVM, MHA, LFACHE**  
**Diplomate, American College of Healthcare Executives**

## Fingerprints: Dr. Tom Catanzaro

What you'd ask and what you'd never think to ask a leading voice of veterinary medicine.



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By [Marty Becker, DVM](#)

### **VETERINARY ECONOMICS**

Shouldn't somebody who's always been nicknamed "Tom Cat" be predestined to become a veterinarian? Lucky for us, he did.

Dr. Tom Catanzaro, MHA, LFACHE, DACHE, has been involved with many aspects of veterinary medicine from the military, organizations and education to leadership, writing and consulting. What has fueled his long career is a deep appreciation, understanding and celebration of the human-animal bond.

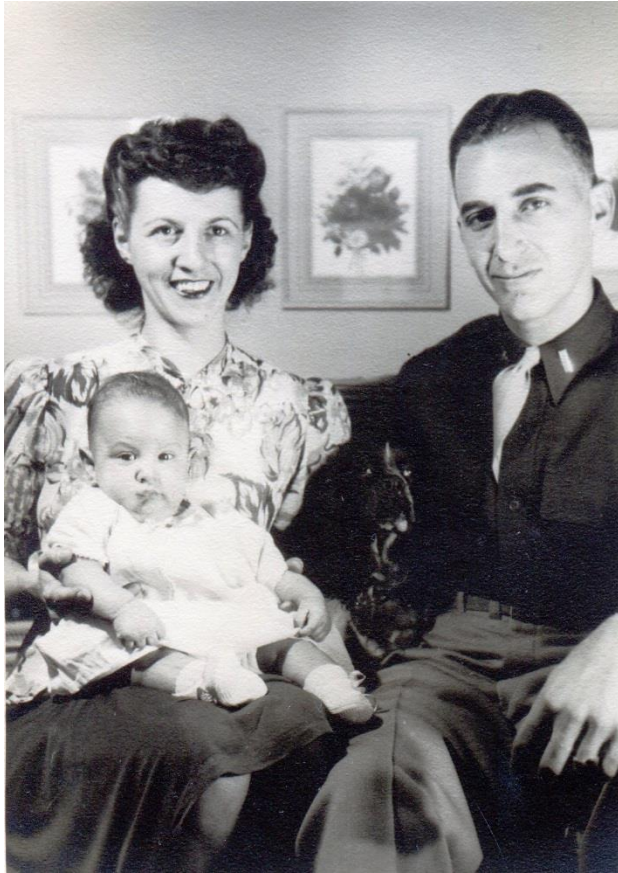


Catanzaro in Australia.

Seemingly having penned more books than James Patterson, "Tom Cat" has never been at a loss for words. Love him or hate him, Tom's made a dramatic and positive impact in our profession the results of which will last forever.

### **Where were you born and raised?**

Born at Scott Field Air Base. I wanted to be close to my mom who wanted to be close to my dad who was in the Army Air Force circa WWII.



Mom, Tom, and Dad, at Scott Air Base

**Were there indicators of your future in veterinary medicine as a child?**

You tell me after you look at these pictures that I received after my mom died:



Ambulatory work with my dad's dog



It appears Montana was in my future

**Your first job was?**

Five at once before age 16: Mowing lawns, raking leaves, shoveling snow, delivering newspapers and mopping a deli in the evenings. After turning 16 it was stocking shelves at National Tea and working in the steel mills of Chicago.

**My dad always taught me to? Rely on myself (he cut me off at age 12)**

**My mother always taught me to? Respect family**

**How many kids in your graduating class and how did you rank scholastically?**

High School I was in the middle of 401 students, and my counsellor said I'd never make it at a University At Montana State University – I was in the middle, but skied every day (my adviser said I could never get accept in a veterinary medicine program)

In CSU (DVM - 82, half Vietnam veterans) – I was in the middle, but played backgammon at the pipe shop daily, editor of the vet school newspaper (Vet Scoop), and organized the class keggers

At Baylor for my MHA (43 middle manager cohort group) – I was just below the middle, but did Scouting every weekend



Anatomy Lab, first year DVM program at CSU

**When did you first know you wanted to be a veterinarian?**

Spring quarter during my senior year at Montana State University.



Catanzaro in Australia.

**What is your greatest joy regarding this profession?**

Personal - Puppy breath

Professional - watching practices I consult with move to the next level.

**What's the worst mistake you ever made as a veterinarian and what did you learn from it?**

Declaring an egg-blocked iguana dead post-surgery and telling the owner. Then I went to lunch and returned to see it up and looking at me (fast re-closure of suture line was indicated). I learned about stasis in iguanas and waiting for recovery of reptiles.

**The best part about being a veterinarian is?**

I have done so many things, have never gotten bored and am always excited about the new adventure on the horizon.

**Wine, beer, spirits or nothing?** Wine

**What is the single best book you've ever read?**

I should say the bible, but that is too PC – Milo Frank's text, *How to Get Your Point Across in 30 seconds or less*.



**Who are your heroes in real life?** Eagle or Queen Scouts

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?** Being a loner

**What is the trait you most deplore in others?** Dishonesty

**What do you consider the most overrated virtue?** Financial Success

**What words or phrase do you most overuse?** Having a ball!

**What talent would you like to have?**

Ability to "hear music" – I can read notes, have played multiple instruments, but I cannot feel it.

**Favorite car?**



A cruising car for the Autobahn (with vanity plates), and a Scouting Weekend Jeep

**Tell us about a patient that shouldn't have lived but did.**

A horse that fell in a Punji stake pit and ripped its shoulder. The tribal chief wouldn't let me flush the fecal matter from the wound (at threat of crossbow) but had me return in seven days. Maggots had given the shoulder a 99 percent debridement; the chief then allowed me to flush and treat, and healing was amazing!



**Medicine or surgery?**

Medicine. Surgery is too boring.

**Practice or management?**

Management (leadership) for sure!

**What is your perfect idea of happiness?**

A slow walk in the woods with my kids.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Never being able to take a long walk in the woods with my grandkids.

**What is your greatest strength?**

Leadership tenacity.



Tom's Japan Leadership Team



Early Leadership – the Scout behind me is Mac, still a great buddy, 60+ years later!



Catanzaro, front-right, at a Cub Scout meeting in 1953.

**CRAFTS?** Creating a special Japanese Plate at Kyushu factory





**What living person do you most admire?**

An active Scoutmaster.



SM Tom Cat at Zastro, Philmont

**What is your motto?**

Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you will make it come true!

**What do you collect?**

Beaver and veterinarian figurines.

**What is your greatest personal regret?**

Being isolated in Australia

**What is your greatest professional regret?**

Being unable to change our profession fast enough.



**Tell us about your first pet?**

Smokey, a long-haired black cat who was scared of most people but slept on my bed.



Catanzano and Smokey.

**Who was your favorite teacher and why?**

Ms. Gurst in 7th and 8th grades. She saw a glimmer of hope in my math abilities and got me into experimental math in high school.

**Who or what is the greatest love of your life?**

After my kids, Scouting

**What's your favorite childhood food that you still love today?**

Artichokes

**What food(s) do you detest? Liver**

**What memento of your mom or dad do you keep close or visible and why?**

Sorry to say, none. On my vision quest with the Native Americans (after two years of pow wows starting the SCAVMA Native American Project), I had a northern totem (adult) and a southern totem (youth), but no totems coming from east for west (parental influence).



Tom with his dad AFTER reconciliation

**What do you know now, that you wished you'd have known before you entered veterinary school that would have caused you to live your life differently?**

The importance of a balanced family life

**If you could spend a day with one veterinarian (living or deceased), who would it be and why?**

James Herriott. He made such a major impact on the image of veterinary medicine, back when people read books instead of surfing the Internet.

**If you could people over for a dinner party (deceased or living), who would it be and why?**

George Patton, a powerful leader; Dr Marty Becker, a veterinary spokesperson, Dr. Ross Clark, the grandfather of modern veterinary practice management; Pres A. Lincoln, the man who turned the tide for America's vision; Dr. Leo Bustad, the man who modernized the HAB understanding

**If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about veterinary medicine that would help pets, people and the profession, you would ...**

Instill an appreciation for team-based veterinary healthcare delivery, especially in well care.



The VPC consulting Office in Heritage Square (an amusement park with shops)

**When and where are you the happiest?**

The trails of Philmont Scout Ranch.



**What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

The AVMA 2012 Bustad Companion Animal Veterinarian of the Year Award.

**What is your most treasured possession?**

Memories of my Seminars at Sea faculty from the past 20 years.

**What's your favorite hobby?**

Scouting.





Catanzaro at Philmont Scout Ranch during a Leadership Course for a Walking Wood Badge.

**When's the last time you cried at a movie?**

Frequently these days

**I wish I had a dollar for every time \_\_\_\_**

My computer showed me I mistyped something

**Describe a perfect day away from work?**

BSA Jamboree, with 40,000 Scouts from 26 countries interacting

**Tell us a secret that nobody outside of your family knows.**

I regret losing my family in a divorce

**How many pets do you have?** Two cats

**What was your most embarrassing moment?**

Forgetting the name of a past client

**What company involved with veterinary medicine do you most admire?**

Fort Dodge/Pfizer/Zoetis, they sponsor without selling their products.

**Tell us about a view or vista that took your breath away and left an indelible imprint in your mind?**

The canals of Venice, Italy.



Catanzaro in Venice, Italy.

**Would you encourage your child to become a veterinarian and why or why not?**

Yes, I would. I think veterinary medicine is a great education with many avenues/potential careers.

**Describe a perfect day as a veterinarian?**

Achieving satisfaction at a job well done, a client willing to refer to us again, and with a team proud of what we did.

**Describe a perfect day away from work?**

Boy Scouts of America Jamboree.

**What do you collect?**

Beaver and veterinarian figurines

**What is the most unusual pet name you've ever heard?**

Pek'an (Algonquin for black spirit cat of the forest).

**For the profession to thrive and not just survive, we must return to ...**

Being interactive colleagues to share expensive resources, ideas and community outreach efforts.

**Fill in the blank. When I retire I'm going to do - die**

– my cardiologist tells me if I ever try to retire, I will be dead within 6 months.

###





Tom Cat and friend, down-under



Canals of Venice – Seminars at Sea



Cub Scout Den Meeting – 1953 – front right TC, front left, Mac Johnson, best man at wedding  
57 years later





Heritage Square (amusement park), first site of my consulting office



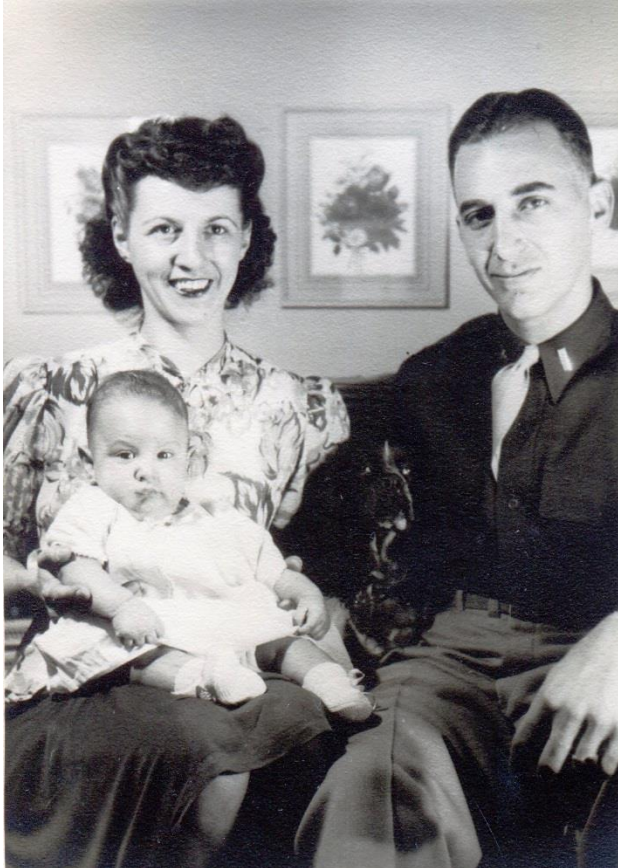
Mac Johnson behind Tom Cat in tug-o-war, 57 years before he was best man at Aussie wedding



Smokey –TC's first pet



Born at Scott Air Base (WW2) when dad was in Army Air Force





Always was bound for the west from an early age



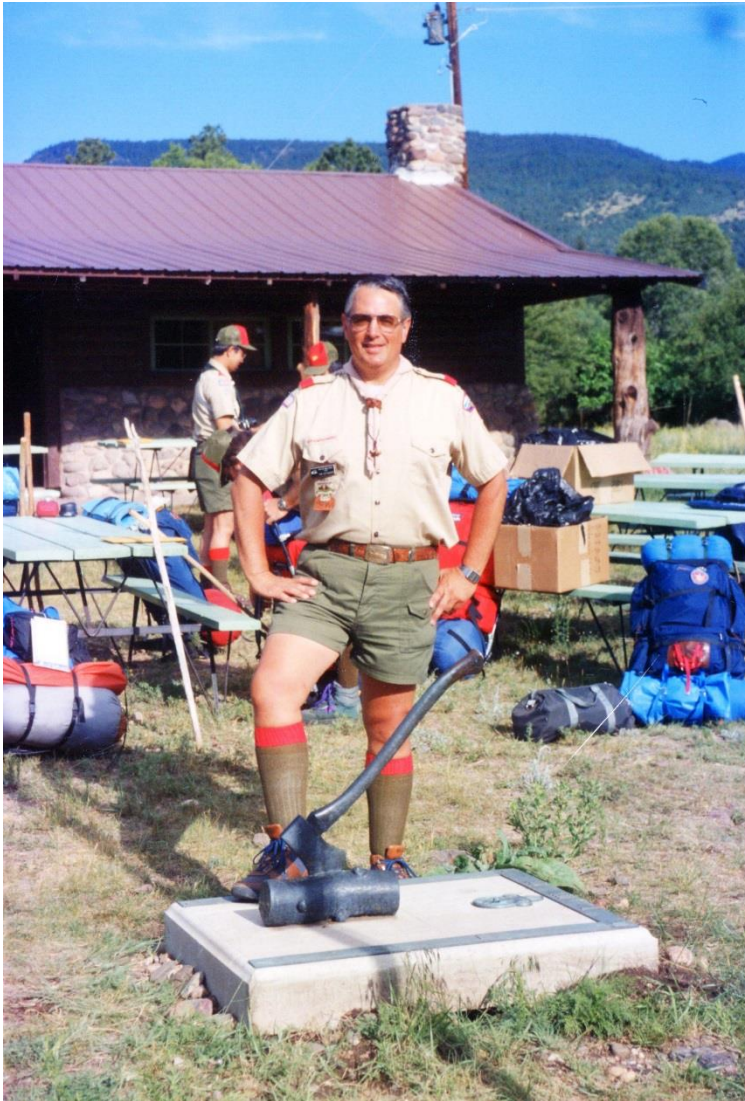
Philmont Scout Ranch – Leadership Course (Walking Wood Badge)



VIETNAM DEPLOYMENT (1967)



WOODBADGE STAFF - PHILMONT



TC replacement Corvette for yellow Jeep (taking the Vet to Germany for Autobahn)





Happy hiking in NM Rockies (Philmont)





Official photo



First consulting check - 1991



Pig's Head Feast – German “good-bye” tradition





Creating a special Japanese Plate at Kyushu factory



Partial Beaver Collection



Grand kids and Grandpa (that is not a joint TC is holding, just rolled paper)



AUSTRALIAN DENTAL X-RAY PROCEDURE



 **Investec**  
Experian

AVA National Conference  
23-28 May 2010  
Brisbane, QLD



Seminar At Sea Faculty Brad Chesney with TC in Nice, France (tailor's sign was nice)





Crossing a Venice Bridge with Seminars at Sea participant in wheel chair





SOME OF THE SEMINARS AT SEA FACULTY

