Equine Research News

A digital presentation of Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation

Providers of Equine Research From 1940 thru 2018

Issue 5 • 2018

AN INTERVIEW WITH ECLIPSE AWARD WINNER DENISE STEFFANUS

Basic background

I was born on January 10, 1951, in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh. Ohio Gov. John Kasich is a native of McKees Rocks. I went to high school with actor Michael Keaton, who is from my neighborhood, and Kentucky Men's Basketball Coach John Calipari grew up about two miles from my home. I am a 1968 graduate of Montour High School in McKees Rocks.

I was the youngest of six children; my siblings were all boys and ranged from 7 to 21 years older than I.

Early interests, and introductory steps to interest in horses. Which equine activities were most interesting.

My love of horses was in my blood. My grandfather, Christ Hartz, was a Standardbred trainer around the turn of the 20th century. His best horse was a trotter named Major Dewey, who in 1915 was designated by the Philadelphia Record as one of 67 top stallions in training with a lifetime record less than 2:15 (two minutes, 15 seconds). The Record lists Major Dewey's lifetime mark as 2:04-3/4. Sadly, my grandfather died when my mother was seven years old, so I never met him. A curious aside to this story is that a few years ago I learned that one of the mares on Major Dewey's distaff side was bred here in Cynthiana.

I actually began riding before I could walk. My brothers' friend, Chubb Colangelo, showed jumpers. He put me on his prized mare, a big bay named Lady Catherine, when I was just six months old. My mom recalled how I buried my little hands in her mane and squealed with glee.

When I was about four, my father would take me to the pony rides near our home every Sunday. It cost ten cents to canter once around the ring. During the week I'd beg my brothers to do chores for them, like shining their shoes, so I could earn money to go to the pony track on Sunday.

Commentary

Horsemen Like Van Berg

We need more horsemen on the racetrack like the late Jack Van Berg, to whom I dedicated my Eclipse Award. He had almost a sixth sense about horses from a lifetime of hands-on experience. If a horse had a problem, he knew how to deal with it. A lot of today's trainers immediately look to their veterinarians for a quick fix, so instead of taking time with the horse, drugs become the answer. We need to get back to the basics of training horses—water, hay, and oats, and time off when they need it.

I am not against drugs. I am against the pointless, chronic use of drugs that are a Band-Aid for symptoms, not a cure. For example, exercise-induced pulmonary hemorrhage is a primary cause of poor performance. I believe if furosemide were banned from racing, a trainer's priority would be to find the underlying cause why his horse bleeds—an infection, allergies, etc. Bill Casner has combatted bleeding in his racehorses by cleaning up their environment so their respiratory systems remain healthy.

The prevailing thought is that up to 90% of racehorses bleed because of the extraordinary demand on their lungs, exceeding that required in other equine sports. But during roundups of wild Mustangs, these terrified horses are running for their lives, or so they think. Some run so hard they die from capture myopathy. Yet I don't know of a single study or report of epistaxis in captured Mustangs. Why? These horses live in open air, so their lungs stay healthy.

Racehorses are housed in dusty, moldy stalls laden with particulates that hang in the air because of poor ventilation.

Respiratory problems are prevalent in backstretch workers, too. If racetrack management and trainers joined forces to make the backstretch a healthier place for horses to live and train, we'd virtually eliminate EIPH and then we wouldn't need furosemide. And if a horse is genetically predisposed to EIPH, without furosemide it won't be competitive, owners won't breed it, and that genetic weakness eventually will disappear from the breed.

With few exceptions, I think everyone involved in horseracing has the welfare of the horse at heart. It's the business of horseracing and the industry that need improvement. We have 38 autonomous jurisdictions with their individual agendas. We need to set egos and politics aside and work together to improve the sport or racing will vanish except for a few boutique meets for elite owners. Instead of squabbling over the trees, we need to take care of the forest.

The show horse industry has had a central governing body for more than 100 years.

The National HBPA represents horsemen's interests at the grassroots. I believe they should have a greater voice in the industry. Blue-collar trainers with their meager owners historically have been the backbone of racing. Their interests must be protected and their difficulties addressed if the industry is to survive.The Association of Racing Commissioners International does a good job of researching and developing model rules for the industry. It also maintains a central database of rule-breakers that a central governing body could use to identify persistent offenders who should be banned from the sport.

I'd like to see the National Thoroughbred Racing Association prioritize its original mission: to promote the sport to the general public and improve racing's image. This is the only way we are going to attract new fans, many of whom could become future owners and trainers. Racing no longer has a monopoly on gambling, so we need to market the whole package of the sport—the back story behind individual horses, trainers, and owners; celebrity status for jockeys. We need to create passionate fans who follow racing because they love it, with gambling adding to the fun and excitement.

I quickly advanced from riding the ponies to riding a palomino draft cross named Sonny. I was so little my feet couldn't reach the stirrups, but I hung on, pigtails flying in the wind, as I galloped him around the ring.

I grew up in a rural area, so there were plenty of horses around me. When I was 10, I became acquainted with a 15-year-old girl, Kitty Weaver, who owned two horses. Although I knew how to ride, I didn't know how to handle a horse, and Kitty taught me about horses and horsemanship.

I bought my first horse when I was in college, an unraced Thoroughbred named King who was out of steeplechase stock. The horse could jump anything I put in front of him, so I began training him for show jumping. Unfortunately, he was killed in a tragic accident before his first show.

King had been my first love, and I desperately wanted another Thoroughbred. So I went to Waterford Park (now Mountaineer Park) in West Virginia to look for a retiring racehorse. That's how I ended up at the racetrack. In 1973, I got a job as a groom with arguably the worst trainer in North America. Waterford Park was then the bottom of the barrel, and he was the worst trainer at Waterford Park.

In that era, women were scarce on the backside at most racetracks. But because Waterford was the bottom of the barrel, the prevailing thought was that females couldn't make it any worse than it already was. So many of the women pioneers in racing were at Waterford when I was there in the early 1970s. Three of the first women jockeys, Patti Barton, Donna Schriver Zook, and Cheryl White, rode at Waterford, and Gail Morrow was the prominent female trainer there. The stable foreman at my first job was Claudia von Ostwalden, two years my senior, who taught me about racehorses and racing. She eventually obtained her trainer's license and later became public relations director for Charles Town Races in West Virginia. Claudia and I are still good friends.

Racing always has been my passion. As a child, I read every Walter Farley book in the library, and my dream was to own a horse farm in Kentucky and train racehorses.

Ongoing education---where, major, etc.---and how did horses mesh with required curriculum, etc.

My primary goal was to be a journalist, so horses didn't enter into my early career aspirations. I began writing for my hometown newspaper, the McKees Rocks Gazette, in 1963 when I was 12 years old. The editor, Sinbad Condeluci, published essays I wrote about social

issues. One I remember was about hate groups—Robert Shelton, the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, and George Lincoln Rockwell, founder of the American Nazi Party—heavy stuff for a 12-year-old. Sinbad recognized my talent, so he took me to a school board meeting and showed me how to report on it. That was my first assignment as a 14-year-old beat reporter. Within a year, I became the primary political reporter for the newspaper, covering the majority of the public meetings and the civil rights movement in the newspaper's circulation area during the turbulent 1960s. In addition to my political reporting duties, when I was 15 Sinbad asked me to write a weekly teen column, Teen Beat, which covered the emergence of local garage bands during the coffeehouse era.

I studied journalism at Point Park College in Pittsburgh, with the intent of becoming an investigative reporter covering politics and social issues. As associate editor of the college newspaper, the Globe, I earned a Collegiate Press Award in 1969 for a series on racial integration of public schools.

The story I wrote for the Globe that I remember most vividly was about the 1969 race riots in Hazelwood, a Pittsburgh neighborhood. A friend who was active in the Pittsburgh civil rights movement, Father Donald Fisher, thought I could help. So he convinced the head of the black militants to allow me to interview him about the situation. Accompanied by my brother, I made my way to their headquarters on the second floor above a storefront in the riot area. Angry eyes followed us as we drove through streets strewn with debris and broken window glass. One of the militants escorted us upstairs to meet with their leader. Inside the office, other militants carrying rifles stood guard. I was terrified. The leader—his name has faded from my memory—was intelligent and articulate as he paced and spouted poetic rhetoric about racial unrest, inequality, and most of all frustration. His demeanor made it clear he didn't trust me.

"Why are you doing this?" I asked. He paused to study me, then replied, "Do you know you are the only person who has asked me why we are rioting?"

The leader told me that black children were being chased and beaten by white high school students while they were walking home from elementary school. Concerned parents had pleaded with teachers, school administrators, and the police to stop the assaults, but they were ignored. Frustrated that, once again, the system had failed to protect blacks who merely sought an education, tempers flared and the riots erupted.

Award Winners

Three of the stories I've written have earned prestigious awards. "So Shall You Reap" chronicled the donation Triple Crown winner Seattle Slew made to wobbler research in 1977 that ultimately saved his life 23 years later when the stallion developed neurologic disease. USA Equestrian, the predecessor to the United States Equestrian Federation, bestowed its 2002 Award for Media Excellence for the story, published in Thoroughbred Times, which showed the importance of supporting equine research.

In 2011, I earned the Michael E. DeBakey Journalism Award for "Quadriplegic Donkey Walks Again," a story I wrote for Thoroughbred Times that chronicled how Dr. Doug Herthel at Alamo Pintado Equine Medical Center in California used experimental stem-cell therapy to restore mobility to Eli the donkey after a traumatic spinal-cord injury. The story was picked up worldwide by more than 300 websites. The treatment is now used in human medicine.

Of course, my recent story in Trainer magazine earned the 2017 Eclipse Award. "Call for Common Sense in Testing" investigates the ever-increasing sensitivity of testing equipment that causes environmental drug contamination to be designated a positive drug test.

-D.S

I published the story on the front page of the Globe. Soon after the newspaper hit the streets, Pittsburgh officials began negotiations with the militants to resolve their issues and restore order.

Graduation and launch of career

While at Point Park, I applied for an internship at the now-defunct Pittsburgh Press. Presenting a portfolio of clippings of my investigative reporting, I expressed a desire to work in the news department. The managing editor told me that would not be possible. As a female, I would have to work on the women's pages, writing about fashion, weddings, cooking, and crafts.

At 20 years old and already with six years of serious reporting under my belt, I crashed into the Glass Ceiling. I concluded that if a newspaperman who was familiar with my work wouldn't give me a chance at serious reporting, there was no sense wasting any more time and money in pursuit of a journalism degree. Plus, I was exhausted from attending school full time for two-and-a-half years without a break and working full time to pay my tuition. So I dropped out of college and got a job as an administrative aide at the University of Pittsburgh. Two years later when my position was abolished, I moved to West Virginia and began working as a groom at Waterford Park.

I advanced from a groom for the worst trainer on the grounds to being the foreman for trainer Ervin "Cap" Cunningham, who was a dead ringer for Racing Hall of Fame trainer "Sunny Jim" Fitzsimmons. I was the elderly Cunningham's foreman for two years, assuming most of his responsibilities except entering horses and saddling them for races.

The rule at the time was that an applicant had to work for the same trainer for six months prior to applying for permission to take the trainer's test, and that trainer had to sign the application as sponsor. When I asked Cunningham to sign for my trainer's test, he refused, presumably because he knew if I obtained my trainer's license, he would lose me. Every time I asked him to allow me to take the test, he refused. So I left the racetrack to work in the legal profession. West Virginia racing rules changed, and I was allowed to take my trainer's test in 1991 and passed.

Shortly after obtaining my trainer's license, I bought my first racehorse, Drombo. The gelding was three-legged lame from a slab fracture in his left knee. I learned that he was to be picked up by "the killer truck" later that day. After examining Drombo's knee, I felt the injury was something I could fix with conservative treatment. Killer price was $300. I offered the trainer $280 and a set of used snow tires, and she accepted. As I loaded the horse, I heard her tell a friend that I was a fool if I thought he would ever race again.

I rehabilitated the gelding and trained him on the farm, trotting up and down steep logging trails to strengthen his knee. On February 2, 1992—while I was in Kentucky closing the deal on my Cynthiana farm—Drombo won in a dead heat at Mountaineer Park. Having proven that I could rehabilitate this horse and bring him back into the winner's circle, I retired Drombo and gave him to a family as a trail horse.

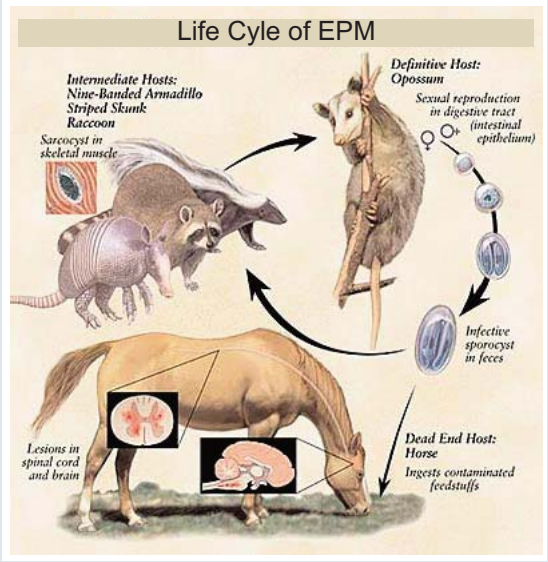
Primary events and/or individuals that were career shaping

When I bought my first horse in 1970, local horsemen told me about a remarkable veterinarian I should use. Dr. Elmer Marx was a legend. He was the personal veterinarian for multiple world champion pacer Adios. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Marx practiced a seat-of-the-pants type of veterinary medicine with rarely a wrong diagnosis. I became one of his tag-alongs, traveling with him and learning from him. With each diagnosis, Dr. Marx would explain, to anyone standing around who showed an interest, his thought processes as he was assessing the problem and the alternatives for treatment. But the education did not stop there. The next time we encountered a similar situation, it was my turn to tell him what I would look for to reach a diagnosis. It was teacher and pupil, with Dr. Marx correcting or adding to my knowledge. With his help I aced the veterinary portion of my trainer's test in 1991.

Fighting Disease

In the 20 years I've been covering equine health, I often revisit topics, especially ones that are the subject of ongoing research. Equine Protozoal Myeloencephalitis (EPM), West Nile virus (WNV), and hyperbaric oxygen therapy are three of them.

EPM is a very complicated disease that at one point was considered horsemen's greatest concern. EPM attacks the central nervous system and causes neurological damage. EPM was a death sentence until scientists found a way to cure the parasitic infection that causes the disease. This was the result of an extraordinary effort by scientists, who made the most of research dollars by collaborating their efforts rather than duplicating them. Current treatments kill the parasitic infection, stop the progression of the disease, and sometimes can reverse its effects if the damage to the nervous system isn't permanent.



West Nile virus is the best example. I was the first journalist to recognize the danger this disease posed to the North American horse population when it was first detected in birds at the Bronx Zoo in 2001. I'm a veterinary-manual junkie, and I remembered reading about the disease in the Merck Manual. I went to managing editor Don Clippinger at Thoroughbred Times and told him, "I know this disease. It's been killing horses in Europe and the Middle East."

Because horses in America had not been exposed to WNV, the population was exceptionally susceptible because of its naïve immune system. During the first year's outbreak, while pharmaceutical companies were scrambling to develop a vaccine, more that 15,000 horses contracted the disease. Forty percent of horses that developed clinical signs died.

With the availability of a highly effective vaccine, only 289 U.S. cases were reported in 2017. Horses that develop the disease typically haven't been vaccinated.

Kirsten Johnson, founder of Kentucky Equine Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation Center (KESMARC) near Lexington, credits me with bringing hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) to the horse industry. In 2000, she presented a talk at Equitana USA in Louisville about HBOT, which she had pioneered at her layup facility in Pilot Plant, Texas. I wrote about the new technology in my monthly veterinary column for Thoroughbred Times. An owner in Louisiana whose filly had an infection that the top veterinarians hadn't been able to resolve read the article. She called Kirsten and then sent the filly to her for HBOT treatments. Kirsten was able to cure the filly.
Soon thereafter, the Kentucky veterinarian who had previously treated the filly called Kirsten to discuss HBOT and her successful protocol. He told Kirsten, "We need you here in Lexington."

Kirsten relocated to Lexington and founded KESMARC, with the hyperbaric chamber being the center jewel of her facility. Since then, KESMARC has used HBOT to save the lives of countless horses while continually increasing the knowledge about this unique, noninvasive therapy. KESMARC became the world's first and foremost rehabilitation center devoted solely to horses. Owners and trainers of the top horses in all disciplines send their horses to KESMARC for rehabilitation and freshening. Because of confidentiality, I can't tell you the names of horses who have benefited, but on any given day it is likely a champion in some discipline is enjoying this spa-like facility.

-D.S

Sinbad Condeluci, the editor of the McKees Rocks Gazette, taught me the basics of reporting and trained me to be an ethical journalist. But my big break came thirty years later, in 1995, when I walked into the offices of the Thoroughbred Times in Lexington to apply for a typist job, which I thought was the best way to get my foot in the door. After interviewing me and reading my résumé, Betty Gee, the head of the production department, sent me to talk to editor Mark Simon about writing for the magazine. A few weeks later, Mark asked me to cover the annual Equine Law Conference, and other assignments followed. Pleased with my work and my intimate knowledge of veterinary care and horseracing, managing editor Don Clippinger made me a contributing editor.

In 1997, Thoroughbred Times launched Equine Athlete, dedicated to health and training of performance horses. Glenye Cain was named editor, and I served as her associate editor. In November 1997, Cain resigned, and I took over the magazine. In my first issue, January 1998, my editorial was a nod to Dr. Marx. In that editorial I wrote that Dr. Marx had been on my mind since he retired and moved to Alaska, so I called him. I continued: "As soon as I identified myself, Dr. Marx said, 'Well, girl, I've been seeing your name a lot. I get this book Equine Athlete. It's good stuff.'

"Those three words were more valuable to me than a stack of Pulitzers. Not only was it a teacher's nod to a pupil, but it captured the essence of Equine Athlete—to be a forum for sharing knowledge, experience, and discoveries, just as Dr. Marx had done by educating a whole clientele, not just performing a service. Through promoting a sense of community among those whose existence revolves around horses, Equine Athlete hopes to join together the wealth of knowledge and experience of our researchers, contributors, and readers. In the ring or on the track we are all competitors, but when the welfare of our horses is at stake, we must continue to share our collective resources and camaraderie to nurture this noble animal who gives our lives such purpose."

Those words I used to describe the mission of Equine Athlete sum up the philosophy of my career as an equine journalist.

What brought you to Kentucky?

While I was the assistant to the head of the estates and trusts department of a large Pittsburgh law firm, we had a wealthy client in Lexington who was 97 and in poor health. The lady had a penchant for changing her will often, so we flew to Lexington every time she summoned.

I remember the first time I saw Lexington from the air as our plane circled Blue Grass Airport. I said to my boss, "Look at all those sheep down there." He leaned in close and said, "Those aren't sheep. Those are Thoroughbreds!"

To me, Lexington was heaven. After that first visit, my goal was to sell my farm in Pittsburgh and move to Lexington to train racehorses. In February 1992, I bought my farm in Cynthiana and moved to Kentucky with one racehorse and an Appaloosa lead pony.

What steered you toward equine health as subjects? (Is this a major portion today or just one of many subjects?)

During my days traveling with Dr. Marx, I became fascinated with veterinary medicine. I was a fan of logic puzzles, and diagnosing a horse's ailment was a logic puzzle. Dr. Marx was Sherlock Holmes with a stethoscope. The more he taught me, the more I wanted to learn. So I began to study veterinary manuals.

When I came onboard with Thoroughbred Times, I learned that it was difficult to find good veterinary writers. So it was a natural niche for me. The feedback on my first veterinary topic for the Times was good. My editors and our readers commended me on making a difficult subject easy to understand. Managing editor Don Clippinger sent more veterinary assignments my way. I began to suggest topics, based on buzz that I heard at the racetrack, sales, and farms. Soon, researchers and veterinarians began to call me with tips for articles. Eventually, my editors relied on me to fact check anything that came in regarding horse health. I became a sort of de facto veterinary editor without the official title. I covered the annual convention of the American Association of Equine Practitioners and other horse-health meetings and seminars. I was part of the team that followed up on how each of the Kentucky Derby (G1) horses fared after the race. Covering horse health was an exciting, interesting job that I loved.

My interest still lies in veterinary matters. I write two horse-care stories each month for the Paulick Report. For Trainer, I cover a diversity of topics. Editor Giles Anderson has several veterinary experts who cover research and new technology, so my topics tend to deal with the practical application of veterinary medicine. Other topics deal with matters of interest to the racing industry—better owner-trainer relations, trainer profiles, racetrack safety, a day with the Kentucky stewards, and a story about which I am especially proud, the challenges faced by women jockeys from the early days of racing until today. Writing this story was particularly gratifying because several of the women I chronicled are MY personal friends.

How have publications reacted and interacted in terms of these subjects you address?

Editors appreciate my intimate knowledge of the various facets of the horse industry. I worked with a veterinarian; I trained racehorses; I bred mares, stood a stallion, and delivered and raised foals; I broke yearlings; and I manage a farm where, in younger days, I did all the work myself. A considerable portion of my portfolio of articles stemmed from incidents with my own horses that readers may have experienced with their horses. I try to make every topic relevant and practical.

Editors tell me they appreciate my professionalism in providing them interesting, well-researched, thorough, and accurate stories. Rarely do they change a single word. If a writer makes an editor's job easy, more assignments will follow.

How do you like to operate—a lot of interviews or research in veterinary journals, etc.?

Doing my homework is the most important part of writing a story. All my interviews are with the top experts in their fields, so I have to be able to ask intelligent, informed questions and understand their answers. I do an enormous amount of research for every story. I mostly use PubMed to search for pertinent studies, and I interview the top authorities on the subject.

Accuracy is my #1 priority, so I tape record all my interviews. This serves several purposes. It protects me from interview subjects who later deny what they said—and there are those who will; it allows me to concentrate on the discussion rather than on taking notes (although I do make some notations during the interview); afterward, I transcribe the interview to assure the quotes I use are accurate. I also check the facts stated by the person I interviewed. People do make mistakes, and most are grateful that I caught the error and gave them the opportunity to correct it. Some people are deceptive on purpose.

By the time I'm ready to write a story, I know the subject inside and out. Much of this is because my hands-on experience with horses enables me to see the big picture.

Have you entered other award contests? What was your general thought before the Eclipse Award on how the trade publications reacted to your and others' articles on these subjects?

In addition to my Eclipse, I earned 14 American Horse Publications awards between 2000-2010, the USA Equestrian Award for Media Excellence in 2001, and the

Michael E. DeBakey Journalism Award in 2011. The DeBakey award was especially gratifying because it was bestowed by the scientific community, the Foundation for Biomedical Research.

Readership surveys usually show that veterinary topics are the most-read sections of trade publications. Horse health is the one common interest among horsemen. Publications crave veterinary articles, but good veterinary writers are scarce. Most of these topics can be too technical and dry if the writer isn't skilled enough to make them interesting as well as informative. A veterinary writer has to be able to understand the subject well enough to translate "vet speak" into language that the layman can understand and follow. People tell me this is my particular talent. I guess I'm a teacher at heart.

The best young writer I've encountered is Natalie Voss at the Paulick Report, who won the 2016 Eclipse Award for her story about head injuries in jockeys. Natalie is an extremely bright, talented, and savvy journalist. I'm hoping she and I will be able to collaborate on an investigative piece at some point. That would be an exciting project.

What is the best part of writing about horse health?
The people I interview are wonderful, with few exceptions. These are experts in their fields, and they are grateful when the press is interested in their work. They want to get the information they discover out to horsemen and veterinarians, so most are eager to work with a good writer to do this.

These experts are the best people I know, and I've become friends with a lot of them just through working with them. They know me personally, or by reputation, and they often will call me to give me a scoop because they know I will do a good job of presenting their information.

One advantage of this job is that if one of my horses gets sick or injured, I can contact the foremost authority on the subject and ask for advice. For example, my adopted OTTB developed a very high fever and went off his feed. He had not been off my farm in years, and none of my other horses was sick. My farm vet and I were puzzled. So I called the top expert in infectious disease, the person flown in whenever an outbreak occurs. He insisted on taking care of my horse personally in appreciation for the good work I had done with him over the years.

Details of Eclipse Award. Degree of confidence (hopefulness), how you found out, who you shared news with, etc.
Over the years, I have submitted several feature stories for the Eclipse Award and came up empty. "Call for Common Sense in Testing" was the first piece I submitted in the news/enterprise category. I made sure it had all the elements of a good investigative report: I did an enormous amount of research to provide the reader with the science behind the story; I presented arguments from all sides of the issue so the reader could make up his/her own mind; and I solicited potential solutions from experts. I knew the piece was good work, but that was no guarantee it would be selected by the judges.

I was crawling through my attic, trying to wrangle a raccoon, with a flashlight in one hand and a baseball bat in the other, when my cell phone rang. I was going to ignore it, but for some reason I answered. It was Jim Gluckson from the NTRA, calling to congratulate me. I burst out laughing at the absurdity of the scene. I'm sure Jim thought I'd lost my mind.

The first person I called was Mary Simon, who has won three Eclipse Awards. Mary has been my biggest cheer-leader since we worked together at Thoroughbred Times. Her husband, Mark Simon, who was the editor of Thoroughbred Times, answered the phone. I told Mark the news, and when he congratulated me on winning the Eclipse, Mary overheard him and began to scream in the background. Mary told me she was more excited that I won the Eclipse than she was at her own wins. I also called Don Clippinger, who had been the managing editor of Thoroughbred Times. All three told me the recognition for my work was long overdue.

Giles Anderson, editor of Trainer, was skiing in the Alps, so I sent him an e-mail. He later told me that he read it several times before the news sunk in. My Eclipse Award was the first one for Trainer.

How would you describe your career today including personal family as well as pets, etc.
I'm retired now, so I write one in-depth story for each quarterly issue of Trainer magazine and two short health-care articles each month for the Paulick Report. Giles Anderson at Trainer has given me the opportunity to tackle issues outside veterinary topics, which is exciting because it gives me the chance to go back to my investigative journalism roots.

When I wrote full time, I'd turn out a dozen articles a month. I wrote monthly columns in Florida Horse, Hoof Beats, and Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred. I was a regular contributor to American Quarter Horse Journal, American Racehorse, Backstretch, California Thoroughbred, Canadian Thoroughbred, DVM, Harness Edge, HorseCare, Horsemen's Journal, Indiana Thoroughbred, Southern Racehorse, Texas Thoroughbred, and Veterinary Practice News.

I've been the editor of the magazines Equine Athlete, Horse Show, and Full Gallop.

I also teamed with Kirsten Johnson, founder of Kentucky Equine Sports Medicine And Rehabilitation Center (KESMARC), to write a chapter on rehabilitation for the Nova Publishers textbook The Equine Tendon in Health and Disease.

The 17 years I spent as part of the Thoroughbred Times team was an amazing experience. I was surrounded by the best people in equine journalism. Ten of those people, including myself, have won Eclipse Awards, with superbly talented Mary Simon garnering three. I often have compared editor Mark Simon to legendary Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee. Mark's ethics are unwavering, and his journalistic instincts always are on point. It would take me pages to mention all the people at the Times who contributed to my career. Every time I buy a lottery ticket, I fantasize about putting the Times back together. We were more than a team, we were a family—one that I miss very much.

My own family is gone now, but I am fortunate to have many friends I consider my extended family. My best friend, Amy Ernharth, and I have known each other since we were five years old. She lives in Florida now. Singer, musician, and Emmy Award winner Pete Hewlett and I met in 1966 when I followed his band in my Teen Beat column. In 1987, he made history as a member of Billy Joel's band when they were the first rock group to tour the Soviet Union. Pete is my muse, so I go back to Pittsburgh often to hear his phenomenal voice. Bob Falsetti, who was a VISTA worker in McKees Rocks during the civil rights movement, has been my guru and social conscience since 1967. He lives in York, Pennsylvania. These are my three lifelong friends, but I have many close friends that I have met over the years, in the horse industry and elsewhere.

Since 1992 I've lived in a 125-year-old Victorian house on my Rose Run Farm in Cynthiana, Kentucky. I have six horses, four Thoroughbreds that I either raced or bred and two cross breeds that I adopted. I have three house cats and an ever-changing number of barn cats. My most beloved pet was the late, great Navarre, my gray wolf. I got him when he was two weeks old, and he died of old age at 14. Navarre was a legend in Cynthiana. When I'd give people directions to my farm, I'd always add, "If you get lost, ask anyone where the wolf lives." Navarre was by far the smartest animal I've known. We had a special bond that I've never had with another animal. He taught me how to howl, and we'd sit out back and howl together most mornings to greet the sun.

2018 Belmont Stakes Charity Celebration

Thursday•June 7, 2018
7pm to 10 pm

Bryant Park Grill
New York, NY

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