

W.Robert Cook F.R.C.V.S., PhD.,
Professor of Surgery Emeritus, Tufts University, School of Veterinary Medicine

206, Birch Run Road, Chestertown, MD 21620
Telephone:(410) 778 9005. E-mail: drwrcook@aol.com

American Farrier's Journal
Attn: Hall of Fame
PO Box 624
Brookfield, WI 53008-0624

To: The Chairman and members of the Nominating Committee
Date: 1/17/01
Subject:

**NOMINATION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL EQUINE VETERINARIAN'S
HALL OF FAME; CLASS OF 2001**

The following nominee is a practicing equine veterinarian working closely with farriers on a daily basis. Although she has no college appointment, she is also deeply involved in teaching and her research on the hoof represents a watershed in the advancement of knowledge in this field. In other words, her nomination could be considered under either or both of the two categories.

Nominee's name: Dr. vet. Med. Hiltrud Strasser

Address: ESHOP GmbH
Blaihofstr. 42/1
72074 TUEBINGEN
Germany

Tel/Fax: (011) 49-7071-87872
E-mail: hufklinik@t-online.de
Website: www.hufklinik.de

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:

1943: Born in Leipzig, Germany

1969: Graduated from the University of Berlin, School of Veterinary Medicine, with a dissertation in anatomy

As a practitioner, she worked for several years with small animals and horses.

As an owner, keeping her horses entirely 'at grass', she observed fundamental differences between her own horse's hooves and those of her hospital patients that were habitually stabled and shod. Her research into the pathophysiological effects of domestication on the horse's hoof commenced at this point.

In particular, she has drawn attention to

- The effects of immobilizing horses by keeping them in box stalls and applying iron clamps ('shoes') to their feet.
- The connection between these management practices and laminitis, navicular disease and many other disorders
- A successful method for treating even advanced cases of the above by restoring normal function to the hoof
- A method of preventing many diseases of the hoof, the limb and the whole horse by adopting husbandry practices that are consistent with the physiological needs of the horse. The method is encapsulated in her recommendations for 'natural boarding' and the 'barefoot' horse.

1980: Published initial findings and started to give seminars on hoof care

1987: Established an educational program in Germany to certify hoof care specialists that have been trained in the methods she has developed, based on her research findings

1993: Opened a specialist hoof clinic

1995-1996: Published two seminal articles in the German veterinary journal

"Tierärztliche Umschau" on

- 'New aspects of navicular disease'⁴
- 'New aspects of laminitis'⁵

1997: Received a commendation from Jaime Jackson (author of "The Natural Horse") for the important role she played 'in bringing the "natural hoof/horse care movement" to light'

1998-1999: Published two important books for the education of both veterinarians and horse owners

- 'A lifetime of soundness: The keys to optimal horse health, lameness rehabilitation and the high-performance barefoot horse'⁶
- 'Shoeing: a necessary evil?'⁷

1999: Jaime Jackson introduced Gretchen Fathauer to Dr. Strasser's work and Fathauer incorporated extensive references to Strasser's work on her website,

<http://www.egroups.com/group/naturalhorsetrim>. This website has been instrumental in bringing Strasser's work to the notice of an international audience.

1999: Graduation of the first ESHOP certified hoof care specialist in North America

2000: Established a series of clinics and seminars in North America to introduce veterinarians and lay people to her research and practice.

2000: 'The Natural Horse' (USA) published an article on her work

2000: Foundation in the USA of a new journal, 'The Horse's Hoof', by one of her American students, Yvonne Welz

2000: Increasing interest in Dr. Strasser's work resulted in it featuring prominently on two listservs on egroups about barefooted horses

- The Natural horsetrim list (Gretchen Fathauer and Yvonne Welz) at <http://members.screenz.com/gretchenfathauer>
- Barefootedhorses (Anna Larson)

2000: Strasser's work also promoted by Cindy "Hawk" Sullivan on her website

www.TribeEquus.com

2001: Strasser and Kells are currently writing a textbook to fully document the 'Strasser Method' of hoof care

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Strasser, H.: "Gesunde Hufe ohne Beschlag." Beate Danker Verlag, Friedberg, 1989
2. Strasser, H.: "Huforthopaedie – heilen ohne Beschlag." Beate danker Verlag, Friedberg, 1992
3. Strasser, H. : "Die praktische Arbeit am unbeschlagenen Huf." Beate danker Verlag, Friedberg, 1996,
4. Strasser, H.: "Neu Aspecte zur Strahlbeinlahmheit." In "Tieraerztliche Umschau" 8/96, pg..478ff
5. Strasser, H.: "Neue Aspekte zur Entstehung von Laminitis bei Pferden unterschiedlicher Rassen." In "Tieraerztliche Umschau" 4/97, pg.190ff
6. Strasser, H and Kells, S.: "A Lifetime of Soundness: The Keys to Optimal Horse Health, Lameness Rehabilitation, and the High-Performance Barefoot Horse." Third Edition (Revised). Self-published, Sabine Kells, Qualicum Beach, BC, Canada, 1998
7. Strasser, H.: "Shoeing: A Necessary Evil?" Ed. & Trans. Sabine Kells, Self – published, Sabine Kells, Qualicum Beach, BC, Canada, 2000

OPINION:

I have been a veterinarian for nearly 50 years and am still active with research projects in my own field. By way of establishing my credentials for putting forward this nomination, I attach a copy of my CV. Briefly, I am an equine ear, nose and throat surgeon. I have been on the faculty of veterinary schools in England, Kenya and the USA for most of my career. I was in horse practice for the first several years and taught 'lameness in the horse' when at the University of Glasgow School of Veterinary Medicine. More recently, at Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, I held a dual appointment as Professor of Surgery and Professor of Anatomy. In my anatomist's role, I took a special interest in demonstrating the complex anatomy of the horse's hoof.

I have long been puzzled by many contradictions and uncertainties in our traditional understanding of the horse's hoof. The irrefutable answers to these puzzles were made abundantly clear to me when I read the two books cited above^{6,7}. Dr, Strasser has done the veterinary profession and all horse owners a great service by drawing our attention to ten centuries of error on the part of man in our dealings with the horse. She is to be warmly commended for her major contribution to the horse's welfare, and for solving many serious problems. The treatment and prevention of many diseases of the horse's hoof have, for too long, been poorly understood and inadequately managed. Her achievement is the more remarkable in that she has satisfactorily explained the cause of two particularly intractable diseases, navicular disease and laminitis, both of which have

been the bane of the horse for centuries. Because their cause has not until now been correctly understood, treatment of these diseases has defied the best efforts of experienced clinicians throughout the world. Yet using Strasser's recommendations, these diseases can be prevented and even advanced cases of 'incurable' navicular disease and laminitis can be cured. Strasser's therapeutic approach to these challenging cases has been tested and found successful not only by her but also by others ... an important criterion by which any new methods have to be judged. The total number of horses with both these diseases that have been successfully treated in Europe and North America already runs into the thousands.

I am of the opinion that the two books she has already written are destined to become classics. They should be in every horseman's library and should be required reading for any veterinary student who aspires to become an equine practitioner. It would be no more than appropriate that Strasser should be acknowledged not only for her original research but also for the very considerable efforts she has already made to share her research findings with colleagues in the profession and with horse owners world-wide.

200 years ago, Bracy Clark, an early graduate of the Royal Veterinary College, London, came to very similar conclusions with regard to shoeing that Hiltrud Strasser has arrived at more recently and, incidentally, quite independently. Having already published her results, it came as something of a shock when she discovered that Bracy Clark had predated many of her findings. Greatly to Strasser's credit and her sense of professional integrity, she has added a generous appendix on Clark's work to subsequent editions of her first book. This degree of honesty provides the reader with the reward of being able to see the way in which two original thinkers have both arrived at the same conclusions, each from slightly different routes.

Sadly, Clark's work, even though based on an excellent scientific approach, was received with mulish resistance, violent opposition and an unpleasant mixture of aggression born of ignorance and vested interest. His peers conspired to suppress his findings by a process of ridicule and misrepresentation. To his dismay, the institution that raised the greatest obstacle to the general acknowledgement and diffusion of his research was, in his own words, 'that very school (the Royal Veterinary College) founded for promoting horse knowledge'. That his own veterinary colleagues should become his 'greatest persecutors was not to be believed'. But what hurt him most, even after 20 years of labor, was that they condemned him 'unheard, and without examination'. Persons in authority, who should have known better, 'thought they had their accounts from one who had read'.

Thanks to a further 20 years of labor by Dr. Hiltrud Strasser, the veterinary profession is now being given a second chance. Veterinary historians in the future will not judge us kindly if we repeat the same mistake as our predecessors and fail to recognize the value and significance of this work. New ideas can be painful to man but we should be prepared to examine the evidence that Strasser submits with an open mind and serious attention.

The American Farrier's Journal is to be congratulated on their initiative in establishing a Hall of Fame specifically 'to recognize veterinarians who have contributed to knowledge (with regard to) proper hoof care for horses'. This provides a tailor-made opportunity to set the record straight and to immeasurably improve the welfare of the horse. If we fail to acknowledge Strasser's achievement and do not make use of her work, the horse will continue to suffer. And we, the farriers and the veterinary profession, will not only be the losers but we will be seen to have failed in our duty to do everything in our power to improve the welfare of the horse. The horse has already waited 200 years for this advance in knowledge to be implemented. Let it not be said that our generation has been responsible for yet further delay.

I urge every member of the nomination committee not to condemn Dr. Strasser 'unheard' but to read both of her excellent books before they vote.¹ Actually, all I need do is to recommend that members read the opening page of either one. For I am confident if they do that they will not be able to stop reading. Their duty to promote the relief of suffering in horses by honoring an outstanding veterinarian will be self-evident.

Signed:

Robert Cook

¹ I am making arrangements to have a copy of both books delivered