

Confidential Interview #5

Q: Okay, thank you again caller for speaking to me regarding the 2009 Sound Horse Conference. I understand that you have some knowledge concerning soring practices that may be used on Tennessee walking horses and similar gaited breeds. And maybe the best way to begin is for you to sort of describe what your experience is and what kind of knowledge you have.

A: Sure. I own one of these beautiful animals that is showing. I have seen him when I would go into the barn. He would be with his nose in the corner in the back. The trainers came out and would have to just drag him down the hall. I am very familiar with soring. I have never done it but I have seen it done quite often.

It's just an openly wide practice. You have your (chemicals) sitting there, your plastic wrap. Anybody that walked in the barns that I've been in could see it too.

Q: And what were you told?

A: I was told that he wasn't sored. I know he was sored. I've been messing with horses since the 70s. I know he was sored.

Q: Were there any other things that you observed concerning your horse that supported the conclusion that he had been sored?

A: Well, the look in his eyes. I know the horse well enough to know when he has this real wide-eyed look there is something wrong. Put him in cross ties and then leaning back trying to get off his front feet – that's quite obvious there's something wrong.

Q: Yeah. What classes does your horse show in?

A: He was our world grand champion.

Q: So this is a performance class horse, not a flat shot horse?

A: No. Well, this is a – he's not padded. He doesn't show padded. He shows flat shod. We're talking about spotted horse.

Q: But he has shown flat shot?

A: Right. All spotted horses show flat shod.

Q: Okay, were you able to determine anything about how your horse was sored?

A: During the week when he is worked I believe it is done in the pocket with mustard oil or maybe diesel fuel that can be put under plastic the night before to cook. And then the day before the show it's done from the bottom up. That's not what I would consider sored with an agent. That's considered – I don't know whether it's called pressured. It's not screws. It's just something done

to the bottom of that foot and then a real thick, heavy acrylic concrete type thing is put on over that, dirt thrown over it and then it is sanded down. I did watch it being done to another horse, not mine, but another horse. I told the trainer I did not want mine done that way.

Q: But you conclude that your horse was done that way despite your instruction?

A: Yes.

Q: Now, although your horse shows flat shod, is there a thin pad that your horse wears between the skin and the shoe?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: It's the Tungsten shoe.

I don't know what is done to the sole of the foot. I do not know. I know there was a substance put there and I know there is a hardening agent.

I have no idea. I do know that I had a friend that had her horse in another barn that she said basically the same thing was done, and after the celebration last year she took the horse home, and she said our farrier said the stuff was so hard the farrier couldn't get it out. She had to take the horse back to the trainer to have it removed. I don't know what is done to the sole, but I do know that it is squirted out of a tube-like caulking with a gun, like you would do a house.

Q. Does your horse wear action devices?

A: No. Just when he is being trained. Just in the barn. A mixture of diesel fuel, and I don't know if it is diesel fuel or not. But it's put around the pastern area, wrapped in plastic and then leg wraps like three days a week. I have not seen that done but I have someone in the barn that's telling me it's being done.

Q: Has your horse ever had any problems with inspection? Has he ever been turned down?

A: No.

Q: Are you comfortable saying either what part of the country you show your horses in or what state? You can if you want to, you don't have to if you don't want to.

A: No, it's shown in Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Florida, Tennessee.

Q: Based on your experience as an owner and an exhibitor and a judge, do you have a sense of how common soring practices are, at least in the states where you show regularly – in terms of the percentage of horses in a show that might have been sored?

A: I think it's done in just about all of them in one way or the other. I have even seen in a yearling class. I turned a horse down because I believe it had too much animation. I believe it was sore.

Q: Do you think there is something to be done to better explain the spring problems so that owners will sort of open their ears and listen a little more?

A: Heavenly days knows no. That trainer is in there to get that monthly income. Mine gets \$50 every trip he makes. When he wins a ribbon that check is jerked off of that ribbon before he clears the outgate. That's what it's all about with the trainer. And the majority of trainers, that's all they know how to do – that's train a horse. And a lot of them don't know about that wet saddle blanket. They just depend on that bottle. And I hate it. I really hate it. And if I ever get this horse sold and get out of this I'll never get back in it again.

I just dread show season coming around.