

Vern Hornquist: Hoofcare's Friend, and Subscriber #26, Has Died



VERN HORNQUIST HAS DIED; THE CAUSE OF death was a cerebral aneurism that sent him to the hospital on September 3rd. He never recovered.

The friendly Standardbred farrier from Lockport, NY was an icon of American Farrier's Association events and competitions.

Vern held the honor of being the 26th subscriber to *Hoofcare & Lameness Journal*.

In 1983, Vern's face was on the cover of the *Boston Globe*. (above photo) He was shown at the Southern New England Farriers Association contest in Sherborn, Massachusetts.

Vern studied horseshoeing at Michigan State University in the 1960s with the legendary Jack MacAllan as his teacher. He worked at the tracks around Buffalo most of his life.

I first met him at the Calgary Stampede in 1981. No one knew who he was. He was the only one from east of the Mississippi but he was close behind Bob Marshall and Dave Duckett. He was the crowd's favorite. How could he lose when his striker was his 80+ year old father?

Vern represented the USA on the North American Farriers Team in competitions overseas in the early 1980s. Photographers loved to capture his grinning, sweating face on film. In the 1990s, in spite of multiple severe health problems that would have made an invalid of a lesser man, Vern made a comeback. Not only

did Vern Hornquist walk again when they said he wouldn't, he went back to shoeing. That wheelchair was probably dismantled and welded into auction donations. He entered the Jack Benny classes at the AFA convention.

When all the records and ribbons are forgotten, Vern will be remembered as someone who loved being a farrier and someone who showed up, with his cheerful wife Eileen at his side. You could count on them.

Vern loved the camaraderie among farriers. He encouraged other people and showed that hard work can be fun too, as if there was nothing he'd rather do on a hot sunny afternoon than make scotch bottom shoes and try to nail them on a Belgian who won't pick up his feet.

Vern's speech at Cornell vet school's farrier conference in 1999 was the essence of what it means to dedicate your life to your job.

If you look at the picture above, notice that Vern is smiling right at that saddlebred shoe. He was proud of what he created. He is looking at that shoe the way some people look in a mirror. He saw something of himself in his work, I am sure.

The most important thing I learned from Vern: that a big heart can be your most important tool. And that sometimes a person and a profession can match up perfectly. When and if that happens, you can truly be yourself. Vern was.

--A friend