Nov 2021 Cassee Steed-Terry (by Elayne Barclay)

Hopefully everyone takes the time to acknowledge what they have to be grateful for on a regular basis but it is that time of the year when we are especially conscious of our gratitude. As endurance riders we are all grateful for the veterinarians that are willing to be control judges and treatment vets at rides on their days off from their regular (long and stressful) work hours. They endure all kinds of inclement weather at all hours of the day and night to deal with a wide variety of personality types, both human and equine. To honor that gratitude, this member focus features one of these keystone people, Cassee Terry.

Cassee grew up in Central Oregon as the oldest of five kids. Her dad told her that at the age of one she would point out the horses in the neighbor's fields by saying “horsey”. Her interest in equines prompted her dad to get her one of her own, a donkey! Cassee recalls, “Her name was Jenny Donkey and my dad would lead her up and down the driveway with me on her back. I have been blessed to have equines ever since.” She got bucked off when she was around six years old and as a result she remembers, “I became very fearful of horses. My mom had the sense to get me into riding lessons and my dad found a great 16.2 hand polish Arab of all things that was the ultimate kids' horse. That horse's name was Special and he truly was and he gave me the confidence I needed to get back to being comfortable and then daring on horses.”

Cassee's dad acquired horses to use while elk hunting and he joined the Deschutes County Mounted Posse. “I remember the Posse playdays, parades and trail rides as a kid. My dad also took me on multi- day cattle drives and brandings out in Eastern Oregon. What a great way for a girl to grow up!”

Cassee lost her dad, who shared her love of horses, when she only 12 years of age. “My mother knew how important horses were to me and after he passed we kept two, my horse and my dad's horse. Horses were my stress release throughout school and sports. I lost my horses while I was in college, and I didn't get them again until after I was married.”

Cassee always knew she wanted to be a veterinarian, but during the summers when she was an undergraduate she was a king salmon fishing guide in Glennallen, Alaska. It was during her time guiding that she met her future husband, Will. In a it's-a-small-world moment they discovered that they lived within 20 minutes of each other in Oregon! Cassee elaborated on their courtship, “We hunted and fished together thru my years at vet school and were married in the spring of 2006.”

Before applying to vet school she said, “I wanted to stay in Alaska thru a winter so after I graduated from Western Baptist College in Salem in 2000, I guided the summer then lived in Anchorage for the winter where I was a very successful substitute teacher. I landed long term jobs and could have easily stayed on as a teacher. If I would not have gotten into vet school I would have remained a teacher in Alaska, my majors were math and science so I would have stayed in that role. High school was my favorite age, but my first day of substitute teaching was a kindergarten class and that was glorified babysitting and not for me!”

Luckily for us, Cassee got into the one and only veterinary school she applied to: OSU. When asked where she had hoped to work after she graduated, Cassee said, “I wanted to work in New Zealand for my first couple of years. I had been there in high school for a mission trip and I loved it. They didn't seem to want a new grad from the USA though, so nothing ever became of that, so I looked for work in my home region. My first choice was Redmond as it was the clinic I grew up at since I was a kid. It so happened that one of the vets there (one of my high school classmates) was moving to John Day and I was able to take her place at my home clinic. What a blessing to be able to live at home and work in the clinic I knew and loved. I have been at Redmond Vet Clinic ever since and became a partner in 2020 (what a year to start buying a practice!)”

Cassee was asked to be a veterinarian at an endurance ride for the first time during her first year out of vet school by Carol Baldery for Dust Devil in October of 2005. Cassee went on to say, “From then I was hooked, vetting not only local rides but a lot of the rides in the PNER region and even one in Arizona. My girls were born around rides. Tabitha was born two days after Bandit Springs in 2008 and Joslynn was born in December 2009 and made me hold her most of her first year while I vetted horses! Growing up in the ride camp environment Joslynn got the bug and started competing at the age of eight. We were blessed by a couple of great endurance horses, Sue McLain gave us AH Priority Male (Prior) and then Darlene Merlich gave us SAR Tiki Eclipse (Lumpy). Joslynn has been sponsored by so many PNER members and it is such a blessing for me as a mom to trust the horses she is on and the sponsors she goes with.”

Cassee has yet to ride and in an endurance event (must be tricky to manage that when she is always vetting at them), but she hopes to and currently rides an Appendix mare named Roz. “Roz is a retired working ranch horse and is so sweet, she carried a junior thru her first 25 at the Mary and Anna Memorial in 2019! I was so proud of them both. Currently she has a beautiful Monster filly at her side.”

Cassee joined PNER in 2015 and currently is the Chair of the Education Committee. She has supported Joslynn in her role as the Junior Rider Representative for the past three years and will be helping Juniors staff the raffle and do some fundraising at the PNER convention. If you have something to donate or have leads for potential raffle donations, Cassee can pass that info on to a youth contact for follow up.

When asked what PNER means to her she replied, “PNER means family! I have seen this group of people come thru time and time again to help others. My family and I have been the recipient of them so many times. Joslynn has needed a sponsor for every ride and so many people have changed their game plan to allow her to ride along. It is amazing and we are truly blessed.”

PNER is truly blessed to have Cassee and her family as part of our family.