

Couple Farrier Team Retiring From Horse Foot Care Service Profession

By Frank J. Buchman

After four decades serving foot care needs for thousands of horses and their owners, The Horseshoers are retiring.

Horse owners from Topeka to Kansas City and beyond in every direction thereof are concerned. They're without services they and their beloved equine partners have become most appreciatively dependent.

However, Jim Kanthak and Lolo Thimell, The Horseshoers, of Olathe have sold their farm and are "moving on to new adventures." Col. Dave Webb, Webb & Associates Auctioneers & Appraisals, who's handling their personal property auction, concisely explained the couple's retirement.

"We can stand up and are in good health, so we just decided to do more, something different," Jim verified.

"It's been a great life getting to know so many people and helping care for their horses," Lolo added.

"They're all friends and family," she insisted.

From a most meager and actually quite unusual start, Jim and Lolo have developed vast, diverse clientele. "On a regular schedule, we handle the foot care for 400 to 450 horses on a five week cycle," Jim said.

That's complete farrier services from routine trimming to shoeing and resets on a calendar plan.

"We have worked with a large number of hunters, jumpers, English and dressage horses, but do farrier work for all horses," Lolo stated.

Horses that are under their care have collected titles at major shows throughout the country. This includes both the World Quarter Horse Show and the Quarter Horse Congress.

Both Jim and Lolo are equal in farrier ability. "When we go to the big barns, we'll set up two cross ties and work on two horses at the same time," Jim pointed out.

"We can both do whatever needs done trimming and shoeing," Lolo commented. "We can help each other if necessary, and the barns really like our efficiency getting in and out."

When Lolo started in the profession, she was one of only a handful of women farriers in the country. "Now there are many women who do horseshoeing. Owners didn't care if I was a woman as long as I took care of their horses' feet," she said.

Williams Woods University, Fulton, Missouri, has been a client more than 30 years doing hoof care for 120 horses there. "Horses are donated to the college, so they get all kinds, and we take care of the horses' feet," Jim said.

"It's been a learning experience," he noted. "We shoe top show horses, but also often must figure out certain lameness problems and correct those unsoundness issues."

From high valued show horses to a child's backyard pet all are The Horseshoers clients. "Whether it's a \$300,000 horse or a \$300 pony, we provide the best feet care we can for everyone," Lolo assured.

"The major show barns are important, but sometimes working for the backyard owners seems to give more satisfaction," Jim commented.

"Their horses may not have the dollar value, but those family horses often seem closer to their hearts sentimental value," Lolo said.

Jim was born in South Dakota, but growing lived in a number of states from Arizona to California and back. "I graduated from high school in Minnesota and then attended the University of Minnesota," Jim reflected. "I applied and was accepted for a nine-month intern study abroad to London."

As fate would have it, Lolo, a native of Sweden, was in London, at the same time. "We met in the neighborhood, talked, became acquainted and friends," she remembered.

When Jim returned to the states, the couple did some "transatlantic dating." Also living in several locations while growing up, Lolo then made a visit to the United States. "We decided to get married," Jim said. "We met in London, so we got married in London."

Lolo grew up around horses. "I started riding when I was six -years-old, competed in hunter, jump, dressage competitions growing up," she said.

Jim had little experience with horses during youth days "riding horses of family members" only a few times.

On one of those transatlantic trips, Lolo met a farrier at the Chicago airport. After a long conversation and the flight back to London, Lolo called Jim and asked what he would think of becoming a farrier? "He was all in," she verified.

"We enrolled at a farrier's school in Michigan, and that was our honeymoon," Lolo smiled.

Interesting to the couple, they realized later, both had great grandparents who were talented blacksmiths. "My great grandfather in Sweden self-titled himself, 'Gyllenhammer' Golden Hammer a master blacksmith," Lolo smiled.

Completing horseshoeing classes and becoming professionals are far different equations. "We knew what we wanted to do, but we had to make a living in the meantime," Jim evaluated.

"We each had three jobs for a while," Lolo said.

With her horse background and talents, Lolo soon began working at a major show horse barn.

Jim had an opportunity to apprentice with a top farrier. "You learn the basics when you go to school," he said. "But, the real learning is picking up the horse's foot and going to work."

After living in several locales, the couple arrived in Kansas. "There seemed to be a transition in farriers then which opened up some opportunities for us," Lolo admitted.

Working from Topeka to Kansas City basically, they settled in Lawrence for a time. "Then we had an opportunity to buy a beautiful 20-acre farm, west of Olathe. Later, another 20 acres became available from a close family friend," Jim said.

Their farrier business was headquartered out of the 40-acre farm of pasture and meadow, which has now been sold.

While shoeing horses has been the couple's profession, they've also been in the horse business. "We raised Warmbloods. Lolo trained and showed. The horses have won a lot over the years," Jim credited.

"Having our own horses sure helped us better understand owners, trainers, breeding, unsoundness, everything about the business," Jim insisted.

"I did the training, but professional riders would often show our horses. We had winners all over the country even spent winter months at the Florida shows," Lolo said.

Time at those major exhibitions gave The Horseshoers opportunity to learn from others in their profession. "It's a good time talking to farriers, hearing their experiences, answering each other's questions and problems," Jim verified.

Like with any profession, The Horseshoers have seen considerable transitions in the business. "We made corrective shoes originally, but now there are many different kinds of shoes available to buy," Jim said.

Everybody affiliated with a horse is important. “Often you can learn more about a horse from the barn help than the owner or trainer,” Lolo commented.

“We are friends with everybody involved with the horses,” Jim added.

Jim and Lolo consider their horses, client horses and their owners as family. “That’s the worst part of retiring from the farrier business. We’ll miss all of the people and their horses,” the couple agreed.

The Horseshoers have sold their own horses except for one favorite they put permanently into talented hands of a friend. “We were particular where our horses went when we sold them,” Lolo said.

Days of working on feet of 10 to 15 horses every day six days of a week have come to an end for The Horseshoers.

Their online personal property auction can be browsed, bid on and purchased at www.dlwebb.com.

“This is a lifetime accumulation of some very nice things. But it’s not the things that define a person. Yet, we hope they will be enjoyed by other people,” Lolo said.

“Somebody asked if we were reinventing ourselves, and we said ‘no,’ we like who we are. It’s just time to begin a new chapter in our lives story.

“We don’t know exactly where we’ll be going, or doing, but one thing’s certain, it will be an interesting adventure.

“It’s scary but exciting at the same time. We both grew up in nomadic lifestyles so we’re looking forward to whatever comes while we’re healthy to enjoy it,” The Horseshoers summarized.

CUTLINES

Lolo Thimell works on a 19-hand Warmblood Grand Prix dressage horse at William Woods University. Jim Kanthak works on a horseshoe at the hot forge.