

Diana Hassel

D.M.V., Ph.D. '85

Interview

Q: What made you dream of becoming a veterinarian?

A: My first experience with horses was at horse camp when I was six years old... and it wasn't a good one. I fell off a runaway horse twice in one day and didn't ride again for another six years. Then I started working at a local horse stable leading trail rides and tending to the horses—and I was hooked. I decided at the age of twelve that I would become an equine veterinarian and never wavered from that decision.

Q: Where did you receive your education?

A: After Louisville High School I headed straight to "vet school mecca," the University of California, Davis, and immediately got started with an animal science major en route to vet school. After receiving my B.S. in 1989, I started vet school at UC Davis, graduating four years later. I headed off for a large animal internship at Washington State University after receiving my D.V.M. degree and returned to Davis for a three-year residency in Equine Surgery. I ended up staying on as a faculty member in equine surgery for several years, mostly working nights on emergency, and completed a PhD program in Comparative Pathology simultaneously, which was completed in 2003.

Q: What is your specialty/field and where has it taken you?

A: I have two specialties now. The first is in equine surgery and I am board certified by the American College of Veterinary Surgeons. More recently, I completed a three-year fellowship in Emergency and Critical Care Medicine (Equine Emphasis) at Colorado State University, concurrently with my position as an assistant professor in Equine Emergency Surgery and Critical Care. Last fall I received my board certification by the American College of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care. As you can see from my job title at CSU, having specialization in both surgery and critical



Diana in surgery

care is ideal for my current position and allows me the ability to provide advanced training to residents or fellows in either discipline. I couldn't be happier with my current employment. I am doing exactly what I want to do and it's very rewarding and enjoyable.

Q: Have you cared for any unusual or famous horses?

A: We don't have much of a racehorse population here, so no Barbaro's to tell you about, but top notch cutting and reining horses are very popular in Colorado. We just treated a mare for colic yesterday that was valued at two million dollars.

Q: What brought you to a teaching position at Colorado State? What do you teach/how are you enjoying the position?

A: Once I completed my PhD program at UC Davis in 2003, a position in Equine Emergency Surgery and Critical Care opened up at CSU. I immediately applied, as Colorado was on the top of my list for where I may want to spend most of the years of my life. I had never been there prior to my interview, but knew it was the type of environment I would enjoy, with lots of active people and outdoor activities. I was quite fortunate to be offered the position following the interview process and haven't looked back. My position involves spending about half of the year in the clinical environment, taking care of emergency cases and teaching students, interns and residents in the clinical setting. The remainder of my time is spent conducting

research, providing continuing education to veterinarians, and teaching students equine surgery and critical care topics in didactic lectures.

Q: Any fond memories/teachers at Louisville?

A: Yes... I can picture all of the faces. I vividly remember my Physics teacher and my English teacher who motivated me to actually read a book instead of Cliff Notes! Our Biology teacher, Mrs. Haas, was great fun as well and really stimulated my interest in science at a young age.

I also really enjoyed being a member of the track and cross country teams. Had I known I would become such a triathlon addict later in life, I would have been a part of the swim team too. It's funny though, my whole life I never considered myself much of an athlete as I do now.

Q: When did you begin triathlon competition?

A: My first triathlon was in the fall of 1997 after meeting and befriending a number of triathletes at my local gym Master's swimming group. It was a local sprint tri (500 yd swim, 19 mi bike, 3.1mi run), and I had so much fun, I was hooked. Over the years I discovered that the longer the race was, the better I did, and I eventually became interested in racing the Ironman distance (2.4 mi swim, 112 mi bike, 26.2 mi run), after going to Kona, Hawaii and watching one of my good friends compete. Ironman Hawaii in Kona is the World Championship event for Ironman (there are dozens of other Ironman's around the world), and it is a race that people spend their lives just trying to qualify for.

Q: What triathlons have you competed in? Tell us about them!

A: I decided in 1999 that my goal was to qualify for Ironman Hawaii and race there in 2000, even though I had never even raced a half Ironman or even run a marathon (or a half marathon for that matter!). I enlisted the help of a friend in Davis to coach me and managed to qualify for Hawaii on my first attempt in one of the few half Ironman distance qualifying races. Then I went to Hawaii that year with no particular expectations other than to finish, and managed to

finish in third place in my age group, beating about half of the professional women's field. From there, I competed in one to three ironman races each year for the next several years, always culminating in the World Championship in Kona. I have had five of six fantastic races in Kona, with one first place (2002), one 2nd place (2005), two 3rd places (2000, 2001), and a 5th place (2003). My fastest finish in Kona was 10:14, and my fastest Ironman competition ever was Ironman California in 2001, where I finished in 9:59. I have backed off a bit in recent years to focus on my work, but hope to return to Kona this year in my new age group (40-44) to reacquire my world championship title! I currently race with the MarkAllenOnline elite amateur team. I keep a log of my race reports on my blog that I started as part of a team I was on last year. You can take a look at it and see if any of it is useful. The web site is: www.dianahassel.blogspot.com



Diana's Ironman Hawaii Victory