

Exitpoint Stallions Ltée



BACKGROUND: DOUGLAS SPINK & UNCONVENTIONAL CHOICES

It can be fairly said that I have chosen to lead a fairly unconventional life. This is hardly unique to me, but the confluence of no non-mainstream life choices and some of the public attention paid to various of my adventures - and misadventures - has resulted in the formation of a fetid little knot of rumors and urban legends about me. Nowadays, a self-reinforcing loop has been created and the repetition of the same tired accusations takes on a life of its own. Rather than chase my own tail attempting to continuously refute each wave of re-heated rumors, I have chosen to release an authoritative statement on the issue.

Ironically enough, the more poignant variants of these rumors do indeed have a very specific point of inception. This specific starting point is a where the story begins:

The areas I address here are as follows:

History of these allegations

In the late 1990s, I managed or worked for several technology companies (a big part of my overall career path). One of these companies was an internet service provider, which offered hosting to businesses and nonprofits, as well as some personal websites. As part of our commitment to free speech, we made available hosting for websites that had been censored elsewhere due to unpopular content. We didn't host any illegal content, or content that advocated for hate or violence or intolerance. Mostly, we provided this free service to personal websites of individuals who were part of unpopular groups. One such website, for example, was from a transvestite in Arkansas who had been fired by her employer due to her gender. When she first put a website together protesting the firing, it was taken down by her ISP after complaints from her ex-employer. She was referred to us, and we provided no-cost hosting until, eventually, her case was settled with her ex-employer and she took the site down.

That's the sort of no-cost hosting we provided, in addition to our commercial focus on ecommerce transaction services. As a longtime member of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, we provided this free service as part of the "Blue Ribbon Campaign" against internet censorship - a campaign that, incidentally, continues today.

I was approached, through a friend of a friend, by a young man whose personal website had been shut down by several ISPs. The website included only text, and links to videos of animals mating - the sort of thing one can see any night on the Discovery Channel. Going from memory, the young man expressed a deep feeling for wolves, in particular, and did work in raising funds for wolf-recovery and wolf-rescue efforts. He sold copies of the "animal mating" videos to help support these other nonprofit causes. I didn't see anything dangerous about videos of other animals mating - and I still don't, though I have to admit they aren't very exciting to me, personally. I suppose different folks like different things - no reason for censorship.

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Several months after we began providing hosting (including hosting the domain name for the website via our own NSI account, to protect the owners' identity – this was before “private registration” was available for domain owners themselves), we began receiving angry demands to take the site down. Further, the demands told us that we had to turn over the personal information of the “true owner” of the website in question. The demands seemed to come from several different people, but trivial analysis showed they all originated from the same AOL account. I responded, personally, to say that we didn't own the site and we would not take the site down absent a court order or a showing that it advocated violence, hatred, or intolerance – which it clearly did not. These emails went back and forth for several months.

Eventually, we received a warning email: take the site down, and turn over the personal information of the site owner, or I would personally be targeted with a full assault of internet rumors and accusations. At the time, I was an active breeder (with my wife) of AKC Golden Retrievers. I was also an AKC-licensed Hunt Test judge, a Working Certificate judge with the Golden Retriever Club of America, an active field trialer, and a co-founder of a Golden Retriever rescue organization in Oregon (Golden Bond Rescue, still active today). The threatened rumors that would be spread were that I was guilty of animal abuse, that I had been convicted of animal abuse, and that I was running an “animal sex porn website” for profit.

Clearly, all of these claims were nonsense. While I thought that the threats to spread such rumors might be genuine, I didn't think there was much at stake when I look back at the decision I made. After all, each claim was demonstrably false and anyone who cared to do so could confirm it for themselves. Who would accept rumors with no facts, given my long-time involvement in the sport of field trialing, breeding, and judging? Would anyone believe an anonymous internet “troll” over someone with a name, address, and phone number – when no proof existed of any of the claims?

I told the person threatening us that I would not accede to his demands, and the he could go screw himself (actually, I used a different word). He was, indeed, true to his word and he did spread these rumors. He created some fake documents, but mostly just passed along the rumors as “facts” and counted on others to amplify and expand them. And it worked. Before long, we had a police investigation of our “abuse,” animal control visited our kennel, and I was being asked to resign from the many boards of directors on which I served in the dog sport. Nobody every had any proof of anything, but they had “heard” from so many people that. . . well, it *must* be true, right? During this time, exactly one person ever called me to ask me, directly, if the rumors were true or not. One, and I still thank her for her courage to take that step and actually ask someone she'd known for years, over a rumor. Everyone else simply assumed the worst.

Not surprisingly, the authorities contacted with this empty rumor didn't take long to see the truth of things. The police never even visited our farm. Animal control came, took one look inside our friendly and well-maintained kennel, had a cup of coffee, and left to go find actual abuse. The AKC Board of Directors, having been petitioned to “throw me out” of the organization and revoke my judging license, met and quickly ruled that no claim with any substance had even been made, let alone proven. Same with the Board of the Golden Retriever Club of America. They took no action, and I am still in good standing with all of them to this day.

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But in many ways the damage was done. The “word was out,” and despite no proof and no official actions, many people now shunned my wife and myself. Phone calls were not returned, puppies we'd hoped to purchase were “not available for sale” - to us. After a decade of passionate involvement in breeding and field trialing, I saw the enjoyment I had in the sport drain away, and slowly I cut my ties to the sport.

In 2000, I hired a private investigator to track down the person who had started this all. He was located, in a run-down trailer in the midwest. By then, he had targeted dozens of other innocent people with similar smears. Some had been fired, others committed suicide. This person, apparently, received an enormous thrill from the sense of total power and destruction he wielded with only a keyboard. He used, by our count, seven different aliases – including the “married couple” of Greg and Judy Myers. He even had a non-profit group set up, to take donations to his “cause.” Some good people got sucked into his *jihad*, until the truth finally came crashing down on the entire witchhunt. He was just a very damaged man, lashing out at the world and at those who dared to tell him “no” when he made his demands for obsequence and submission. I still know his name, and where he lives today. I won't post it here because, despite all the harm he did, I am told he's trying to right his life and go forward without hate. I will honor his right to do so, without my desire for vengeance taking control. He made horrible mistakes, they caused real damage. Some of us are still living with that damage, even a decade later.

After the first round of rumors really grew roots and sent out spores, I didn't go online much anymore, and didn't post in the training, trialing, and breeding discussion groups where I'd been active for years. Someone would always throw in an “animal abuser” claim – no proof – and after dozens of such insults, I didn't even want to bother responding. I separated from my wife, and we eventually divorced. At the same time, I saw my technology work go up in smoke as the equity markets went into a nosedive after the September 11th tragedy. I filed for bankruptcy in 2002.

Since that time, many a person who was jealous of me, angry at me, competing with me in business (or in horse sport and stallion marketing) has found these old rumors to be too tempting not to use as a weapon. After all, “everyone knows” . . . and everyone loves to believe a rumor when it's more exciting than the truth. These allegations have been used in attempts to justify all manner of insulting, abusive, and outright criminal actions against me and my family. The fact that cowards attempt to use these old rumors to paint me as a target – an “easy victim” - won't change me into one. I have no hesitation to face down these old rumors, and the spineless bullies that see them as their ticket to an easy “score.” I am not one bit ashamed of who I am and I will contest these outright lies about me, in public, anytime and anyplace. There is no shame, here.

The reality of who I am

After years of struggling with these rumors and the hatred they have spawned against me, I slowly began to figure out how I could deal with them while still maintaining my self-respect and dignity. After all, spending a big chunk of one's time fruitlessly trying to refute unfounded rumors is utterly self-defeating, online:

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one can never make the old rumors go away, and the more one responds to them, the more “real” they sound to some people watching. It's a death spiral.

First, let me respond directly and definitively to the specific allegations, as outlined above:

Have I been convicted of, charged with, investigated for, or found to support animal abuse?

Absolutely not. No. I have, in fact, been a member of many animal rights groups since my teenage years, from my first PETA newsletters forward. I was an Earth First! activist while in college, and today I'm a long-time vegetarian and active campaigner against factory farming, vivisection, and cross-species cruelty in general. I have not – ever – been charged with animal abuse, by any authority, anywhere. There is no evidence or record of this because it has never happened. Yes, this includes “animal rape” or any form of abusive sexual contact with any animal or human. **This has never taken place. Period.**

These are the facts. They can be confirmed, independently, with a background check of me personally. I have only ever been arrested for, charged with, and plead guilty to one criminal charge: possession of a controlled substance. That is the sum total of my criminal record, in any country or state.

More broadly, why does it seem that these decade-old, fabricated rumors about me have managed to stay so alive and active after all these years? I think the answer is fairly simple: I am not a very conventional person. As a child, I was not good at socializing with other children of my own age. More often than not, I was at the barn, riding (I competed successfully on the Hunter circuit of Pennsylvania for years, and was often at horse shows every weekend – in addition to winters spent fox hunting with my family; I first went out on a hunt with the main field when I was 4 years old, and learned to ride when I was 2, before I could walk).

Or, I was in my room, reading or working with early-generation computers. I was a very good student, and enjoyed the mathematics of computers and the challenges of reading all types of novels, short stories, fiction, and nonfiction books (I still do). I spent my childhood in the forests and field surrounding our estate in Fox Chapel, Pennsylvania – often, at the private school I attended, I was taunted for being the “pony boy.” I was the social outcast, had a lisp, and was routinely assaulted, bullied, and taunted by the popular children.

This pattern has carried on all my life.

I don't fit in well, with most social groups. I do best, socially, with horses and dogs. I spend much of my time outside of human company, reading or programming computers. In short, I'm somewhat of a freak – it's true. I'm also not ashamed of who I am. I'm a good person, I do good things. I've made mistakes, learned from them, and done my best to do better. I may not live a life that others would much understand or appreciate themselves – my house is in a barn, and I haven't owned a TeeVee for almost 20 years. I enjoy reading academic journals and I've never been to a live, professional sports event in person (except as a rider in Grand Prix competition, or as a spectator when Capone is competing with another rider in the saddle).

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I also consider the dogs and horses with whom I share my life as family – not “like family,” but part of my family. I put their needs before my own, and I always have. This is how I was raised; in our family, the horses were fed - and the stalls cleaned - before we ate dinner or relaxed for the night. This was the basic foundation of our moral universe, and I don't see anything today that I regret in learning these lessons as I did. I still feed the horses before I eat dinner, and I still put my needs second. I love the horses and dogs who share my life, and I have no hesitancy or shame in saying exactly that. In fact, feel free to quote it far and wide.

Is this a crime, or a horror, or “abuse?” Really, asking such a question is as silly as it sounds. While I may be a bit more unusual than most, and while I may not blend into everyday life all that well, I'm hardly the only person on the planet who loves his dogs and considers them family. Since when is that a bad thing? If that's bad, or a crime, then I'm guilty as charged – and proud of it! Any world – or culture – where a deep respect and bond with beings who don't read newspapers is a horrible, shameful crime is a world I never want to see. But here, in our world, that's simply not the case. Anyone who claims otherwise is simply twisting something entirely positive and healthy – and far from uncommon – into a mutated form that exists only in imagination.

And, finally, of course, there's the “breeding thing.” As a manager and trainer of both breeding stallions and Schutzhund-trained protection stud dogs of several breeds, I am in daily contact with the realities of mammalian reproduction. I've been trained in the mechanics of equine reproduction management by Colorado State University, and I've been taught canine reproduction management by several of the leading researchers in the field. I am not a professional reproduction technician – my work is done only with the dogs and horses in my long-term training and management program. Still, I'm far from a rank amateur.

I don't find any of this to be gross, or disgusting, or worthy of being hidden and never discussed. As I clearly and directly state on stallions.net, I do my best in our program here to integrate the reproductive work of our stallions into a healthy, balanced, positive lifestyle for them. I've written extensively on these topics, and been interviewed in national magazines by leading veterinarians on our program. This is part of my everyday work here, and indeed for us reproduction is not a disease or a disorder – the owners of our stallions and stud dogs see breeding revenue as a positive part of our business structure, not something shameful.

So, I suspect, it's even easier to tar me with the “animal abuse” claim since I'm routinely talking about subjects that make some people very uncomfortable. I have strong opinions on these matters, and I have made those opinions public for years. Rather than contesting those opinions in open, mature discussion some people seem to prefer to prefer shady, rumor-driven attacks on me. That's a shame, as I'm always open and willing to discuss or debate a topic on which I've made past comment – and I am always willing to revise my views and understanding if I find that my past positions no longer hold up under scrutiny.

Yes, I know there's whole volumes of additional, highly-detailed claims about me and how I live my life. And, no, I'm not going to respond to each and every one, whenever asked. I don't demand the minute details of those I call friends, and I feel no affirmative requirement to discuss such things whenever an anonymous attacker feels the need to take a swipe. I have been married, I have helped to raise several amazing, challenging step-children. To those who feel the overwhelming need to demand “more information, I respond as I was

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taught when young: "I'll forgive you for asking such inappropriate questions of me, if you'll forgive me for refusing to answer them as needlessly intrusive and motivated by bad faith."

If I ever feel the need to discuss my life in more detail, I'll do so on my own terms and in my own time. This might happen, or it might not. Right now, I'm a bit too engaged with living life to slow down long enough to write about it. But the future is an open window. . . who knows what comes next?

Enough said.

Ruminations on personal integrity

On June 9th, 1954 Joseph Nye Welch sat as a witness in Senator McCarthy's infamous Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Welch, chief legal representative of the U.S. Army, faced attack by McCarthy regarding a lawyer in his department. After months of shrill, rumor-driven, demagogue-style attacks on Americans from all walks of life who had somehow run afoul of the sanctimonious Senator, the country watched as another American began the process of tarring and feathering via rumor and innuendo upon which McCarthy had built his political career. Attempting to inject a bit of fact into the debate, Welch was repeatedly shouted down by McCarthy himself. Finally, Welch spoke his mind:

"Until this moment, Senator, I think I never gaged your cruelty or your recklessness[...] let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?"

And with those words, the momentum of rumor and mob-driven paranoia shifted tracks. Rather than vilifying those whose only "crime" was daring to stand out from the norm in some way, America came back to its roots as a country of tolerance, respect for diversity, and celebration of the uniqueness each of us brings to our shared culture. We aren't xenophobes, and never were. We're a country of difference, a melting pot.

Being different, or weird, or a freak. . . this isn't a threat, not now and not in our past. Those of us who harm nobody, whose only "crime" is walking a somewhat different path – are we to be excoriated simply because we don't fit in?

I reject that view of our society, our culture, and our world. The view I hold echoes the deep concerns of our Founding Fathers, who themselves agonized over the risks of empowering "the tyranny of the majority." That is, there's always a risk that a well-meaning but lumbering mob of people can target a small group of dissidents within for overwhelming opprobrium and assault. The odd ducks, the ones who don't fit in. . . we're always at risk of being targeted simply because we are who we are. But we didn't choose to be different, not most of us. It's who we are – and more often than not, we have some really important things to add to our shared world. Are we to be stomped underfoot because we don't fit the typical mold?

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In my life, I have made mistakes and I have done good deeds. From my mistakes, and the losses I've suffered, I have worked hard to distill genuine wisdom. I try my best to be a good person, and have a positive effect on the world around me – one that will continue even long after I'm gone. I am hardly alone in this, nor am I exceptional in this regard. I'd say that most of us do our best to do our best, whatever path we follow.

I live a life of honesty and integrity. I do not hide from my past, nor deny my genuine mistakes. I engage in the world around me with genuine respect and efforts not only to understand those with whom I disagree – but to learn from them, as well. My life, more than most, is shared with “people” who wear fur coats they never take off. From them, I learn much – and to them, I do my best to share my own experiences.

This ability to understand other living, feeling creatures on our green planet is a hallmark of our own species, *homo sapiens sapiens*. One hundred thousand years ago, we started spending time with the canines and before we knew it, they were us – so deeply a part of our social world that we couldn't imagine life without dogs. We've shared our lives ever since, in every culture and on every continent.

Ten thousand years ago, some crazy nomads in Asia decided to hop on the backs of the small horses they herded and hunted. Sooner or later, someone figured out how to stay aboard long enough to enjoy the view – and the unique experience of sharing a body with another species. Ever since, we've taken enormous pride in those within our own species who can “whisper” to the equines, see the world through their eyes, and form bonds with them on terms of mutual respect and genuine love. These creatures who outweigh us ten to one – exhibiting such gentleness and care, capable of such power and athletic grace. Some of us, indeed, were “born with horses in our blood,” as my mother would say. This was not bad in the past, nor is it bad today.

I reject efforts to marginalize me because I'm different. I reject any and all efforts to paint me as abusive, or disrespectful to those whom I call friends and family – whatever species they may be. I reject, in strongest possible terms, the view of the world that sees only bad when something different appears. In the world I call home, it's the variety and beauty of the entire tapestry of life that brings a smile to my face and light to my heart. I hope I never lose the ability to see this, even when anger seems easier and far more tempting.

I hope my canine and equine friends have taught me enough so that I can find true equanimity even when I'm the target of hurtful, painful, false accusations. I hope I never lose the courage to be who I am, to live with integrity, and to open my own mind even to those who differ from me.

To those who just can't stop hounding me, hunting me, and hating me... I can only say '**have you no sense of decency left?**' "

- *D.Spink*

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