When the original owners of Beauty Rose no longer wanted her, they took her to a shelter. The people at the shelter then referred her to me. She was named Junior, but one look at her beautiful face and I knew that name didn't fit and so she became Beauty Rose. She was a huge, overweight hedgie who couldn't roll up because of her fluffy tummy and triple chins. She also had sores and long poopy nails, but she soon became as beautiful as her name.

Even though Beauty lost weight she remained fluffy and could only stroll on her wheel. Soon, I noticed that she couldn't even do that and was having trouble walking. Beauty Rose's WHS symptoms began with her front legs which meant that she couldn't raise her head to eat on her own and couldn't pull herself around. It was hard for her to be so immobile and heartbreaking to watch her struggle to move. She loved to eat though and would eat every drop of food I made for her. She also loved her daily backrubs and would get a look of ecstasy on her face when I massaged her. When her WHS became too much for her she was helped to leave her body so she could run in Rainbow fields and stuff herself with mealies. I will always love my big, beautiful girl and she will reside in my heart forever.

~Jan Ernst

Honey was the mother of Holly my first hedgehog. She came to me after Holly passed from WHS and unfortunately, she too developed WHS. She was given to my son by her owner and was probably about two years old when she first showed signs of WHS and came to me. Her illness progressed quickly and she wasn't with me nearly as long as I wished her to be. She was a small, light brown hedgie, shy and reserved who brought the love of hedgehogs back into my life. I wrote this poem for her:

Honey, a small, shy hedgie as sweet as her name,
Honey, the mother of Holly, who when she came,
Brought love back to me after Holly's sad passing,
And brought me joy and hope and love everlasting.

~Jan Ernst
I'll never wander out of your sight--I'm the brightest star on a summer night. I'll never be beyond your reach--I'm the warm moist sand when you're at the beach.

I'm the colorful leaves when fall comes around, And the pure white snow that blankets the ground. I'm the beautiful flowers of which you're so fond-- The clear cool water in a quiet pond.

I'm the first bright blossom you'll see in the spring; the first warm raindrop that April will bring. I'm the first ray of light when the sun starts to shine, and you'll see that the face in the moon is mine.

When you start thinking there's no one to love you, you can talk to me through the Lord above you. I'll whisper my answer through the leaves on the trees, and you'll feel my presence in the soft summer breeze.

I'm the hot salty tears that flow when you weep and the beautiful dreams that come while you sleep. I'm the smile you see on a baby's face. Just look for me, I'm everywhere!(Author unknown)

Shirley, Haolie, Haolette, Steve, Poi Boy - Guardians, Donnasue Graesser and Missy Graesser

Shirley was only the second hedgehog to come into my life, and that was before the days we even knew WHS existed. Shirley was bred to the study Humberto, and not long afterwards gave birth to beautiful offspring, Haolie, Steve, Poi Boy, and many others. Haolie eventually became the mother of Haolette. At the time, I was a graduate student, writing my dissertation on animal models of the human demyelinating disease multiple sclerosis. It wasn't long before it became obvious that many of Shirley's babies had some neurologic problem. Many of these babies had gone on to new guardians, but Steve, Haolie, and Haolette stayed with me, and Poi Boy lived with my niece, Missy. As a graduate student with access to a wonderful veterinary medicine department, and a superb neuropathologist, we were able to determine that all of these hedgehogs had the same demyelinating lesions. Interestingly, Shirley never showed signs of WHS, but her necropsy revealed that she had WHS lesions too. Thus, this extraordinary group of hedgehogs were the first diagnosed cases of the disease we now call WHS. They were instrumental not only in characterizing what type of disease WHS is, but also in establishing the first family connection, suggesting WHS is an inherited condition. They are amongst the special group of WHS pioneer hedgehogs, that also includes Trooper Slatini, Tommy Roberts, Norma Plombon, Pinyon Storm, and other “Storm” hedgehogs.

Shirley, Haolie, Haolette, Steve, and Poi Boy made a special contribution to WHS research, but their specialness goes way beyond that. I have so many great memories of them all, and they each hold a special place in my heart. Shirley loved to wheel so much, even though she was a free-roamer, she would choose to run on her wheel rather than around the room. Haolie was the most sparkling white beauty I have ever seen. Haolette was so precious in the way she clung to her mother. Steve (aka “Lefty”) was a frequent visitor to the lab, and everyone was charmed by his friendly nature. Poi Boy lived with my niece, and I heard many stories of his antics.

This is a poem that elicits thoughts of all my beloved hedgehogs, and other loved little ones, who have crossed over. They will always be a constant presence in my life. I have found this poem on various sites, but the author is listed as anonymous.

Please don’t mourn for me, I’m still here, though you don’t see. I’m right by your side, each night and day and within your heart I long to stay.

My body is gone but I’m always near. I’m everything you feel, see or hear. My spirit is free, but I’ll never depart as long as you keep me alive in your heart.

Asti, Cletus, Pinecone, & Ferdinand – Guardians, Murfi Jackson and Sheila Dempsey

Since our first little Hedge, I have had an affinity for our little ones that are not well. You see, our very first little guy had wobbly. We could see his feelings in his eyes. Asti spoke to me. I don’t believe I have ever been so close to purer souls than those of these sweet little ones that cross the Rainbow Bridge. It is a hard thing for them, and they need someone who will give them unconditional love and caring. Since Asti we have cared for those that need help. It is an honor to give of myself to them. Although it always feels like they take a piece of my heart with them, I believe they leave love and wisdom with me. That is why I call them “Little Angels.” Murfi and Sheila. In tribute to Asti, Cletus, Pinecone and Ferdinand.
Thorn, Katiya, Savannah, Pinyon, Opal, Iris - Guardian, Pat Storm

The following hedgies who had symptoms of WHS should also be remembered here:

Thorn, Katiya and Savannah—All related and all showing indications of a genetic fault.

Opal and her daughter Iris—also showing a possible genetic component to WHS.

And

Pinyon—who passed away at just the right time to attract the attention of Dr. Terry Spraker and spark his interest in WHS.

Death Leaves A Heartache
No One Can Heal
Love Leaves A Memory
No One Can Steal

If Tears Could Build A Stairway
And Memories A Lane
I'd Walk Right Up To Heaven
And Bring You Home Again.

Welcome New Rescue Contacts!

Put your hands together for
Andrea Kennedy (Ohio) and Jennifer Muckenfuss (Indiana)
for opening their hearts and homes to hedgies in need.

Thanks for coming to the rescue, ladies.

If you are interested in becoming a rescue contact, simply write to Sheila at SexyTexy@comcast.net for an application.

Thank you for your support!
Sheila and Cyndy
It’s time for another Hedgie Hero

Dr. Terry Spraker

Over the years, we have honored numerous Hedgie Heroes from our community. Amongst these heroes have been dedicated rescuers, educators, hedgeie-caretakers, and friends. This month, for the first time, we feature a Hedgie Hero who does not post regularly to the hedgehog Internet community. Nevertheless nearly everyone on the lists knows who he is. Several have even had the great honor of meeting him in person. Even more will have that honor at the Rocky Mountain Hedgehog Show in Denver this October. For this edition of the newsletter, we have chosen a hero who is a pioneer and an advocate in the field of WHS research. This month, the spotlight is on Dr. Terry Spraker, DVM, Ph.D.

I want to begin this Hedgie Hero column with one of my favorite quotes from Pat Storm: “There are hedgeie heroes and then there are hedgeie SUPER-HEROS. Dr. Spraker happens to be one of those heroes who wears a cape.”

Dr. Terry Spraker is a veterinary pathologist and full professor at the Colorado State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, and is well-known throughout the hedgehog world for his very significant contributions to Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome research. Dr. Spraker was first made aware of WHS years ago, when he happened to perform a post-mortem examination on Pat Storm’s hedgehog, Pinyon. This case was brought to his attention by Dr. Priscilla Dressen and Z.G. Standing Bear. Dr. Spraker is a scholar and animal advocate whose interest was piqued by this unique case. Soon thereafter, Dr. Spraker was introduced to Jennifer Plombon, Norma Plombon, Donna Sue Graesser, and others in the hedgehog community with an interest in WHS. The rest is history. He has performed necropsies on countless hedgehogs with WHS, and, to our knowledge, is the veterinarian most experienced in recognizing WHS pathology. He has described in detail the “typical WHS lesions” that we now use to diagnose WHS. The hedgehog community and the hedgehogs we care for are extraordinarily blessed and grateful that Dr. Spraker has generously offered his time and expertise to learn more about WHS, in hopes of one day controlling this terrible disease. He is an invaluable asset to hedgehogs, and to the people who care for hedgehogs.

Dr. Spraker is originally from Louisiana (must be where his warm, southern gentlemanly demeanor comes from!). He completed his undergraduate degree, doctor of veterinary medicine degree, and a Ph.D. at Colorado State University, where he still practices today. He received further training and accreditation from the American College of Veterinary Pathologists, and became a board-certified veterinary pathologist. Only a very small percentage of veterinarians pursue this extensive specialized training in pathology, as well as earning a Ph.D. research degree in addition to a D.V.M. clinical degree.

Dr. Spraker completed his pathology residency at the San Diego Zoo. He also has worked as a pathologist at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Washington DC, arguably one of the most prestigious institutions in veterinary pathology.

Dr. Spraker’s expertise and interests extend way beyond hedgehogs. He is also a noted expert on a wide range of species including deer, elk and sea lions! It is incredible to think about how many different types of animals have benefited from Dr. Spraker’s research! He lists one of his interests as “diseases of free ranging and zoological animals, especially reproductive, neonatal and neurological diseases.” The breadth of his experience is evident in his membership in various professional societies including the Wildlife Disease Association, American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians, American Association of Zoo Veterinarians, Society of Marine Biology, International Association for Aquatic Animal Medicine, and several others. Dr. Spraker has won various awards, including the “Best Paper Dealing with Bighorn Sheep” at the conference of the Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council.

Dr. Spraker is well-known in the veterinary community for his dedicated research on Chronic Wasting Disease in deer and elk. I had the distinct honor of listening to his presentation on this work at a conference in Hershey, Pennsylvania some years ago, as well as a more recent seminar he gave on his work with sea lions in California. Even though I am familiar with some of his work, I was very impressed to read up on the vast body of research that Dr. Spraker has accomplished over the years. His curriculum vita includes well over 100 scholarly publica-
neuropathology or what sort of pizza to order. I have also heard about some extraordinary measures he has gone to for people in his life outside his veterinary work. I am proud to count him not only as a colleague, but as a friend.

Some members of the hedgehog community have shared their impressions of Dr. Spraker with me. I’d like to share these expressions of esteem and gratitude for our Hedgie Hero. As I am not the best with words, I’d like to finish up this article by sharing these expressions of esteem and gratitude for Dr. Spraker:

Perhaps the person in our community who is best acquainted with Dr. Spraker is Z.G. Standing Bear, so his thoughts are particularly valuable and insightful. Standing Bear writes: “I have known Dr. Terry Spraker, veterinary physician and pathologist, for nine years and have worked with him in our joint quest to make better and healthier lives for our hedgehog friends. Dr. Spraker is an unusual fellow in several regards. As a prominent veterinary medical professor and a well respected researcher, he is disarmingly down-to-earth and blessed with a friendly and approachable manner. In high demand as a researcher both in the field (from Colorado to Alaska) and laboratory, he is an instrumental force in cutting edge research on such major wildlife health issues as chronic wasting disease among deer and elk. Yet, with no research funding, he has taken up the cause of exploring the scourge of our hedgehog community in investigating the degenerative myelopathy that we commonly call “Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome” or WHS.

Whenever I visit the Colorado State University’s Diagnostic Laboratories, I make it a point to always bring one or two of our resident hedgehogs along. After all, the folks that work there way in the back of the teaching hospital only see an endless line of tissue and fluid samples, as well as deceased animals awaiting necropsy. Terry is always overjoyed to see our little characters, once exclaiming “It’s so good to see a live one!”

The cavernous necropsy suite at CSU’s Veterinary Teaching Hospital is two stories high with ceiling tracks and pulleys, designed to internally examine animals up to the size of elephants. So it seemed ironic and we appeared dwarfed on that morning that Dr. Spraker, with me assisting, began the very first post-mortem examination on a tiny 220 gram hedgehog that had succumbed to WHS. The examination took well over two hours as he expertly and thoroughly investigated each internal organ and site. What particularly struck me, as a practitioner in forensic medicine, was his kind and respectful treatment of the remains of the hedgehog, a quality that many pathologists conducting postmortem examinations on humans could learn from.

Continues on page 19...
In his talk to the attendees at the *Mile High Hedgehog Show* in October of 2005, he remarked that he had never seen such a fiercely loyal and protective group of people as are the caretakers of our hedgehogs. Likewise, I feel that we and our hedgehogs have a dear and fiercely loyal friend in Dr. Terry Spraker.

Jennifer Plombon presented a seminar with Dr. Spraker at the 2003 Colorado hedgehog show. She had the opportunity to spend some time getting to know Dr. Spraker at the CSU veterinary school before the seminars that day. She writes: “Dr. Terry Spraker is an excellent researcher and scientist, which is very helpful for our companion animals and animals throughout the world. But more importantly, he is a kind and compassionate man to whom every being matters, and who touches every animal he meets with the kindest of hands.”

As the caretaker of several hedgehogs with WHS, Laura Dunklee has also had several opportunities to converse with Dr. Spraker. She also shared her impressions: “I've had the pleasure of speaking with Dr. Spraker a couple of times, all regarding hedgehogs that I'd sent for necropsy as potentially having WHS. Dr. Spraker exemplifies to me a pretty much ideal scientist: he's practical, straightforward, unbiased, and logical - all balanced with empathy and insight. These are rare traits in anyone and I respect him as a scientist and as a person.

In talking with Dr. Spraker about hedgehogs and WHS, I've come away with two resolutions in mind. First, we need to put an end to WHS - too many of our companions are suffering. We need answers to help them. Secondly, we CAN end WHS, through a committed effort by breeders and caretakers. I'll admit occasional despair about that second resolution. But the last time we spoke, Dr. Spraker told me about his work with another species. He explained how a genetic neurological problem had been bred into a particular breed - and how the breeders had worked together, in a concerted effort, to stop those lines and eradicate the problem. His words gave me hope: We can end WHS!

The time and effort, professionally and personally, that Dr. Spraker has contributed to the hedgehog community is incredible and the knowledge that he shares is immeasurable. I am grateful for all he has given and done for us and for our little bundles of quills.

And, finally, here is more of the quotation from Pat Storm with which I started this article: “There are hedgehog heroes and then there are hedgeig SUPER-HEROS. Dr. Spraker happens to be one of those heroes who wears a cape, and is so important to us and the war on WHS. As the story goes, it was one of my hedgehogs that caught Dr. Spraker's attention and gained his interest in the fight our quilly little friends were up against. They say being in the right place at the right time is important. Not that I am ever happy about losing one of my hedgies, especially to WHS, but I must say, I am glad Pinyon was in the right place at the right time with the symptoms to make Dr. Spraker take notice. Her sacrifice has brought new life and new light to the research on WHS through Dr. Spraker's and Donnasue's good work. Their knowledge has been shared not only here in the United States but also in many other countries around the world where people value African hedgehogs as pets.

Important information has been made available to other veterinarians through medical periodicals and a part of at least one medical book on exotic animals. These are major steps in making WHS known to other veterinarians. They need to know what to look for. Perhaps this information will give them pause to think and maybe come up with a theory that could crack open the WHS mystery.

I recently sent a hedge for examination to Dr. Spraker and I was sure it was a case of WHS. To my surprise the report came back that she didn't show any signs of WHS. Not enough tissue was sent to determine the cause of her death or the reason for her pathetic loss of movement and stooped posture. I would have bet anything that she was a pure WHS. If it hadn't been for Dr. Spraker, I would have thought I had another possible WHS link in my lines.

We are ALL in debt to Dr. Spraker for his generous work in researching the WHS crisis. I hope he continues to be there for us and that he may someday be in the ground floor of determining what causes WHS, or developing a test that may identify animals with the potential to spread WHS or MOST of all, a possible cure.

We can all dream big and with the right heroes in our dreams, we may accomplish our mission. Dr. Spraker is our SUPER-HERO!

Thank you, Dr. Spraker, FOR EVERYTHING.
Pat Storm, Thistle Dew Hedgehogs
On Thursday, June 8, 2006, the idea for the Hedgehog Red Hat Society began formulating in the minds of three breeders, two rescuers, and three hedgie slaves at the base of Pikes Peak in Manitou Springs, Colorado. These nine hedgehog enthusiasts decided to recognize special hedgehog ladies who have reached the grand age of four years old or older. After several meetings and hours of crafting, the Hedgehog Red Hat Society was officially launched on October 10, 2006.

By joining this elite club, your hedgehog will receive:

- Decorated Red Hat
- Beautiful Thick Red Hat Lap Pad
- Decorated TP Tube
- Laminated Membership ID Card
- Red Hat Poem
- Membership Certificate
- Welcome Card
- Photo Page in *The Red Hat Album*

Each member will receive a special gift and card on her succeeding birthdays. The committee will also be sending out a monthly newsletter. Once a hedgehog girl joins and receives her packet, take a picture of the grand lady in her Red Hat finery and submit it to the committee. That picture along with all the stats will then be placed in a *The Red Hat Photo Album*. The album will be taken and displayed at all hedgehog functions that a committee member attends.

Come check out the Red Quill Shop. There you will find other nice items to purchase that follow the red hat theme. Candles, pencil holders, bags and photo frames are just some of the things you will find there.

Every month, Maisey travels the world to find the latest and greatest in fashions for hedgies and is showcasing her finds here in Maisey's Costume Corner.

Send your pictures to hedgiemom@comcast.net

Want to see your Hedgie in the newsletter? Send your photos in now so that they can be used in future issues.