

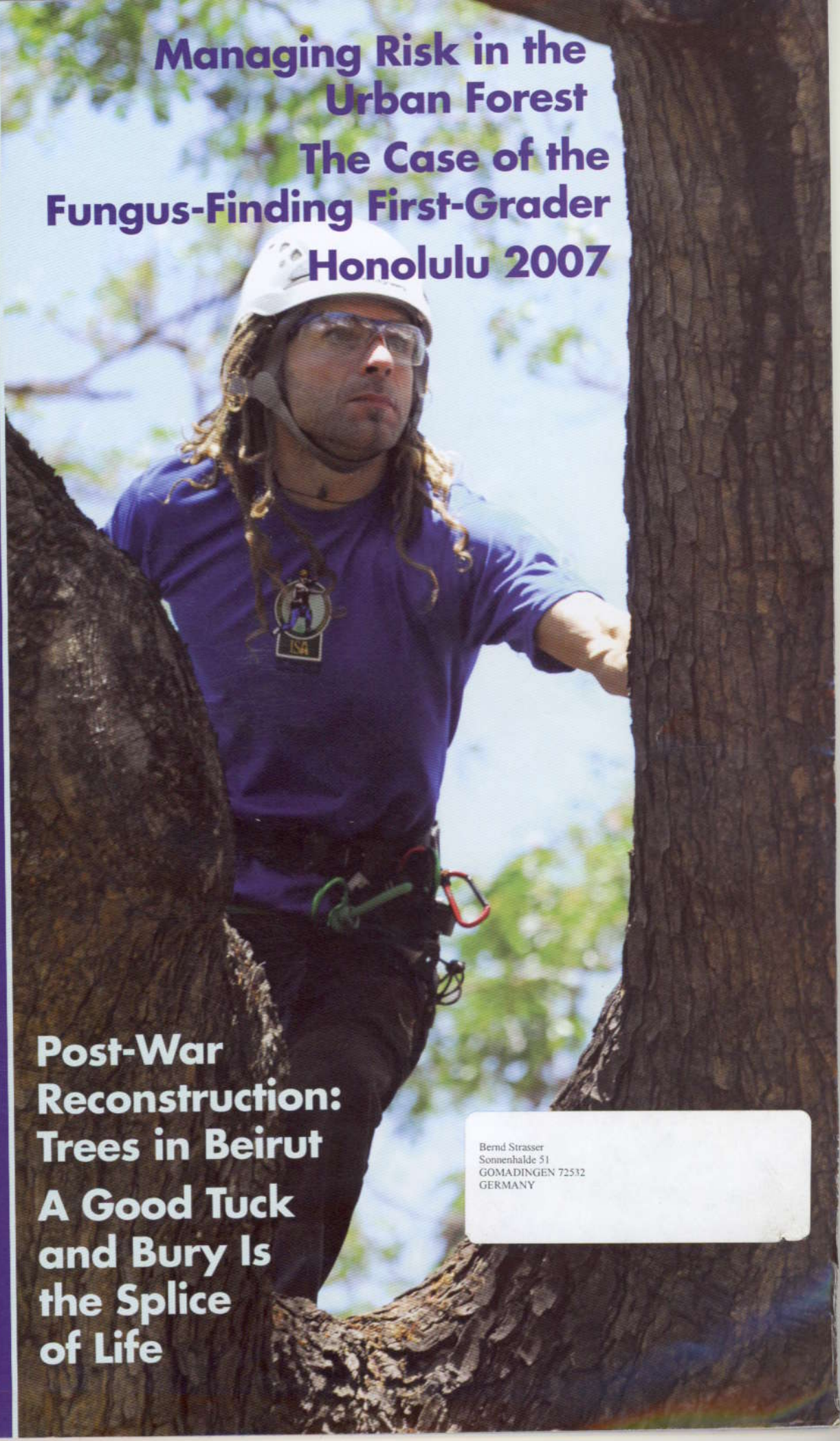
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# Strasser Continues to Write ITCC History

By Andrew Koeser



At this year's 2007 International Tree Climbing Championship in Honolulu, Hawaii, Bernd "Beddes" Strasser set yet another precedent by becoming the first climber to clinch seven titles. With typical Strasser grace, he finished the Masters' Challenge 29.67 points ahead of second-place finisher, Mark Chisholm.

Strasser has competed at the international level for more than a decade. In that time, he has become well known by many in the arboriculture profession for his record-breaking career, relaxed climbing style, and philosophical outlook on trees and their care. Strasser, along with Mark Chisholm and Dan Kraus, has been featured in the *Washington Post*, and his exploits have been well documented in numerous articles featured in *Arborist News*.

For nearly a decade, the name Strasser has been synonymous with the International Tree Climbing Championship. The following is a brief retrospective of his professional climbing career.

## **Stamford, Connecticut, 1999**

After five years of international competition, Strasser became the first climber outside of the United States to win the championship buckle. In the preceding years, he had become a familiar name in both European and North American climbing circles. After working his way up from fifth place in Halifax, Nova Scotia; fourth at Hilton Head, South Carolina States; and second in Birmingham, England, Strasser hit his stride as a champion climber.

## **Baltimore, Maryland, 2000**

Despite rain-soaked conditions, Strasser managed a come-from-behind victory. Leading up to the Masters' Challenge, Mark Chisholm seemed favored to win after taking the footlock, Belayed Speed Climb, and Work Climb. However, Strasser finished the final event 7 minutes and 16 seconds faster than Chisholm. The win made Strasser the first climber to win two consecutive championships since 1982.

## **Seattle, Washington, 2002**

After finishing second to Chisholm in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 2001, Strasser won his third championship at Seattle's Volunteer Park. He cleaned up in many of the morning's events, taking first

in the Aerial Rescue, Belayed Speed Climb, and Secured Footlock. When interviewed after the competition, Strasser stated that much of his success came from his ability to curb his competitive side and stay relaxed during competitions.

## **Montréal, Québec, 2003**

In what was described as a near-perfect climb, Strasser became the first four-time world champion. The 2003 championship marked numerous other broken records, such as the largest field of competitors in ITCC history, and several competition firsts, including a new event—the Head-to-Head Footlock.

## **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2004**

Pittsburgh's West Park hosted an extremely close matchup between Bernd Strasser and Dan Kraus. In the end, Strasser managed to capture his fifth ITCC title, finishing just 0.34 of a point ahead of Kraus in the Masters' Challenge. The sting of the loss apparently motivated Kraus, because he took the title the following year in Nashville, Tennessee.

## **Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2006**

Strasser remained cool and collected at Loring Park in Minneapolis, despite the blazing summer heat. After placing first overall in the preliminary events, Strasser beat out Ronny Epple, Mark Chisholm, and Dan Kraus in the Masters' Challenge to capture his sixth championship title. As always, Strasser attributed his success not to an extensive training regime but to his daily work, which consists of collecting seed and leaf samples for various research projects and teaching advanced climbing classes.

Throughout the years, Strasser has awed spectators and fellow climbers alike. His humility and soft-spoken nature have helped to increase his reputation as a crowd favorite. Many find it difficult not to cheer, "Go, Beddes!" as he takes to a tree after setting his line.

When asked in 2004 what he felt the future had in store for him, Strasser replied, "I don't believe age is a limiting factor. I will always climb."

With no sign of slowing down, Strasser's fans can hope to see much more from him in the years to come.