

The Bellingham Herald

[Next Story >](#)

What's closed Labor Day in Whatcom County

Bellingham woman the 'Johnny Appleseed' of Chincoteague ponies

Published: August 20, 2012



Gale Frederick with her Chincoteague ponies, Miss Arrowhead Nine, left, and Sterling Silver at her home on Wednesday Aug. 1, 2012 in Bellingham. "They're puppy dogs, sweet natured, Frederick says, concerning the breed.

ANDY BRONSON — THE BELLINGHAM HERALD[Buy Photo](#)

By MICHELLE NOLAN — FOR THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

If Gale Park Frederick hadn't sought ponies for her children while in Maryland, she probably would not have become a national authority on the rare Chincoteague breed.

"I pretty much fell into it," she said with a laugh, explaining her four-decade love affair with the breed. "It all started when I bought three Chincoteague ponies at auction in 1973, when we were living in Maryland."

Frederick, a 1961 graduate of Ferndale High School, and James Frederick, her husband of 44 years, live on a farm in Squaticum Valley, a few miles east of Bellingham, where they breed Chincoteague ponies. James is a retired senior vice president and manager of Alcoa Intalco Works.

Question: Gale, how did you set up your registry?

Answer: In the late 1980s I was the first to set up a registry and officially recognize the breed when I founded the National Chincoteague Pony Association. All of our profits go back into raising this wonderful breed of ponies. I feel I'm the "Johnny Appleseed of Chincoteague ponies."

My love of horses goes back to when I was raised on a farm near Ferndale and I got my first horse, a wonderful old brood mare named Babe, when I was 15. I taught myself to ride bareback.

Q: Describe Chincoteague ponies.

A: They are truly wonderful, loving animals, so sweet and natural. They'll rest their little heads on your shoulder when they get to know you; there's a lot of love there. They are great equestrian ponies for young riders. They are great jumpers and very muscular.

Q: Where are they from?

A: They came from Spain in the early 1600s, from the shipwreck of a Spanish galleon off the coast of what is now Maryland and Virginia. The galleon was headed for Peru. The horses swam to an island (they now live on Assateague and Chincoteague islands) and they bred to pony size.

Q: How large are they?

A: I've bred them to 15 hands high with selective breeding and good food, but they typically stand 14 hands or less and weigh about 800 pounds. Horses usually go about 16 hands.

For competition, Chincoteague ponies are limited to those under 14.2 hands. They can live to about 30 years old. I have a 30-year-old brood mare, Miss Arrowhead Nine.

We brought them to Washington state in 1979 and began to breed them with the three "seed ponies" I bought in 1973; two fillies and a stud colt. All of our Chincoteague ponies are descended from those three ponies.

The nearest Chincoteague farms are in Arlington and Spokane.

Q: As a child, were you inspired by Marguerite Henry's classic "Misty of Chincoteague" series?

A: I treasure the books I have collected, but I never saw them as a child. The books have really helped people learn about Chincoteague ponies. A lot of current grandmothers and mothers have introduced Chincoteague ponies to children through the books. I wrote a nonfiction book about Chincoteague ponies.

Q: Are Chincoteague ponies valuable?

A: They can sell for up to about \$12,000. We breed (up to) 18 ponies a year now. I want people in Washington to know these wonderful animals, so I try to give a break on the price to residents of our state.

Q: Do they really love attention?

A: When cars drive up our farm's long driveway, ponies will come running to the fence. If we stand and clap and laugh, the ponies will run, jump, frolic and gallop in our pastures. They love the attention. Each pony develops its own personality and likes.

LEARN MORE

Gale Park Frederick can be reached at ponypen@aol.com, 360-671-8338 or 360-671-7603. For more about the National Chincoteague Pony Association, see pony-chincoteague.org.

Michelle Nolan is a Bellingham freelance writer.

**[Back to Top](#)
[< Previous Story](#)**

Bellingham woman hit while running across road in Skagit County

[Next Story >](#)

What's closed Labor Day in Whatcom County

© 2012 www.bellinghamherald.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.bellinghamherald.com>