

Summer/Fall 2025

American Indian Horse Registry Newsletter

In Memoriam

Nanci Helen Falley

October 19th, 1938 ~ May 28th, 2025



Nanci and Unwritten aka "Rhett"; Photo by Chris Hurd

President, Registrar and Owner - AIHR

**Owner, Manager, Safe Haven of Lost Animals -
Rancho San Fransico**



***“You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God;
It was never between you and them anyway.” - Mother Teresa***

Nanci gave me this quote once in a letter she'd sent me. She loved sending letters and postcards to keep up with people – and she was always such a fan of the written word itself. I don't know what I was going through at the time that she knew I needed the pick-me-up or maybe she just knew I needed to readjust my thinking, but it was absolutely the right thing. Nanci was good at that. She always knew exactly the right thing. Rather it was what you needed to hear, what you needed to do for your animal, or how you could proceed with love and kindness, that is what Nanci could tell you: just the right thing. Her voice was always so happy and joyous. No one would be happier to see you than Nanci Falley, and you better be ready to give her a hug. I'm pretty sure Nanci never met a stranger.

Growing up I had three mother figures. My actual mother Vickie Ives, her best friend Gretchen Patterson, and Nanci. Through out my life my familial bonds have not always proven to be the strongest, but Nanci always loved me. And I loved her and AIHR. My mother was actually pregnant with me during one of the early AIHR National Shows and I went to every single National I was able to make my entire life. Some of my earliest memories are at AIHR shows.

At 24 I had long completed all of my judge's criteria, and so at one of these shows I sat down next to Nanci and said, “Hey, why aren't I judge?” and she literally laughed and said, “I don't know, why aren't you?” I

Cover Art: Middle - Photo of Nanci Falley and her "O" gelding Unwritten, aka "Rhett" taken by Chris Hurd at the 2010 AIHR National Show.

Bottom - Art created by Leana Westergaard in 2013 as part of an AIHR art/t-shirt contest



L to R: CWH The Sea King, Tomlyn Grey, and Nanci Falley

laughed too and replied, “I think it's mainly because you haven't said so.” So in that moment she declared me a judge, the youngest in AIHR's history. I later found out that also made me an inspector, and later on also became a judge and inspector for Horse of the Americas Registry as well. Without Nanci's belief in my abilities, as well as the judge's who had mentored me, I wouldn't have been able to achieve these accolades.

Sometime after that, Nanci asked my mother to bring my sister Tori and I to come visit her. We did, and upon our arrival she made it clear that she had no heirs that were interested in continuing her work with AIHR, nor did she want to sell the registry. Nanci had spent decades of her life dedicated to recording Colonial Spanish Horses (“O” or Originals) and their Descendants (AA, A, M, and occasionally P) as well as being able to offer horse clubs and show rules and lifetime achievement awards. We decided I was the person for the job after Nanci retired or passed.

I always knew I would have to step into this position eventually. I never actually wanted to. Nanci would never willingly retire from AIHR, and it was absolutely my hope that she was going to live forever. Or at least a healthy 150. And then pass peacefully in her sleep like her friend Scottie Stevenson had.

Things never work out that nicely, do they?

There's no more phone calls now. No more letters. No more sweet quotes or encouragement. No more pictures of the animals or her plants, no random pretty pictures sent to me over Facebook with "Have a good day!" or "I love you!" I miss that. I miss her. I miss her presence in the world, and the entire universe is darker for it.

But her work lives on. AIHR will continue. Right now, the registry is still on hiatus, but hopefully in October I will have access to the registry records. My plans at this point are to bring the records into the 21st with a digital database and then begin issuing papers again, hopefully by the end of the year. There's also a lot of other great things coming soon including the ability to purchase merchandise online as well as memberships and papers online. AIHR isn't going anywhere and will continue to serve all the communities it has in the past, and will hopefully become easier to use as well.

Nanci may be gone, but her dream endures.

And Nanci, I love you too. I hope I do you proud.

Tomlyn Grey
President AIHR

Nanci and the AIHR Open House



Blessings

Some count their blessings with fancy clothes,
Fast and shiny cars and large , ornate houses.
But my blessings are of a different nature.
They reside in a laughing dog, a purring cat,
The soft muzzle of a horse or donkey.
My blessings are the trust I see
In the eyes of a wild creature,
The scent of rain on a summer day;
All these and more.
My blessings are the love of my friends,
Both near and far who will love in
My heart forever.
My blessings are Love – seen in so many ways,
Both brilliantly and quietly expressed.

~Nanci Falley~



***In Memory of "Little Horse",
AIHR P-4580 who passed
over to greener pastures.
"Little Horse" was owned
by Leana Westergaard,
Waskom, Texas.***

Jennifer Williams of Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society Remembers Nanci...

She was always such a sweet supporter of Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society. In 2006, she invited us to bring some of our horses to the AIHR show and let us show off the horses and talk about the rescue. Then she donated nearly every year to the rescue, and she was a sponsor, on behalf of AIHR, of our Bluebonnet Horse Expo most years. She also donated items for our silent auction: most years a box would show up at my house with things she thought we could use during the Expo's silent auction with a nice note from Nanci.

I never got to meet her, but she would drop me a note now and then and was a great fan on our Facebook page, sharing our posts, cheerleading us from her home, etc.



Whenever I saw her name on Facebook or in my email, I would smile - because I knew she always had a nice word and wanted the rescue to succeed.

I'm glad the AIHR can carry on in her memory. We'll miss her at Bluebonnet for her nice words and staunch support.

Dr. Jennifer Williams

*Executive Director, Bluebonnet
Equine Humane Society*



Bluebonnet at the AIHR National in Corisicana, TX



Nanci at the AIHR Nantional Show Through the Years...



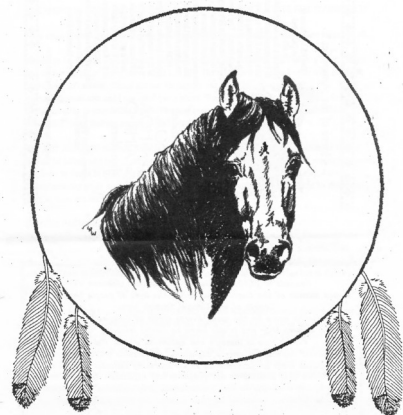
Nanci and Susan Hall with Northern Song



Nanci, Leana Rideout Westergaard, and Gretchen Patterson



To the Right: Nanci in Native American Costume Class on Choctaw Star.



Nanci at the AIHR Nantional Show Through the Years...



*Nanci with Vickie Ives and
Victoria Lynn*

*Nanci and Brandon Krodle with
Corazone de Jaguar*



*Nanci and Leana with
Choctaw Star*

The following is a scan of an article from the 2009 National Program. Some dates are not accurate.

Nanci and AIHR: 30 Years and Counting

by Nanci Falley as told to Vickie Ives

Edited by Tomlyn Grey for the 2009 National Show Program

Often we don't even know that we are in the presence of a truly exceptional person. One of the reasons that we don't know is that so many of these quiet heroes just don't tell. And since they don't beat their own drum, they don't get the respect and honor that they deserve. Sometimes this credit isn't voiced until someone immortalizes that quiet hero in a glowing obituary and we all say, "Gosh, I didn't know that So & So had done all that. If I had known, there was so much I would have loved to ask."

One of my personal heroes [is] a strong and determined lady who speaks softly and leads through example. I am not waiting until she isn't around to get the credit she so richly deserves. I want you to hear at least a small part of her story now. In August of 2009, Nanci Falley, the president of the American Indian Horse Registry, turned seventy years old. No one can tell her story better than Nanci—this is what she had to say when I asked her about her thoughts on reaching this milestone in life:

"My first spoken word was 'caballo' (horse in Spanish) according to my long suffering parents who had to put up with a daughter whose only desire was to have a horse (or horses) of her own. On my 8th birthday they gave me a bicycle that promptly tried to kill me - dumped me on a gravel road and left me bleeding. I got up, brushed myself off and told these people: 'I told you I wanted a horse!' I marched away and never looked at the bicycle again.

In 1965 my mother and I moved north to Central Texas.... I raised Appaloosas and then Arabians and yearned for true Indian Horses which I thought didn't exist except in Frank Dobie's and Will James's books or Remington and Russell paintings. In 1975 I met Leana and Buddy Rideout (.45 Outfit in Marshall, Texas) and learned that, yes, indeed, the true Indian Horse still existed. I was hooked big time and obtained my first Indian Horses/ Spanish Mustangs from the Rideouts and Gilbert Jones (Medicine Spring Ranch in Oklahoma). I acquired Renegade Rang from Leana and Buddy Rideout in 1976, and what a treasure she was! She was featured in a full page article in our local paper early in her career with me, and accompanied us to Austin to the Travis County Livestock Show where she was on TV quite often as she was such a ham and loved the camera.



[I] purchased Rosario and Senorita, both pure Huasteca mares bred by Gilbert Jones. Conventional wisdom advised that I should not use [Choctaw Ghost Dancer] on them as he was a gray paint and there was a graying gene in the mares' line, however one night sometime after I got these horses I had a dream in which a young colt with parti-colored eyes appeared and told me his name was Choctaw Sun Dance and that I should breed Ghost to Rosario so he could be born. I have always been one to

follow my dreams, and so Rosario was bred to Ghost and produced the great Choctaw Sun Dance.

In 1979, the American Indian Horse Registry (formed in 1961 in California) landed in my lap where it has remained since. Taking on a failing registry was a big step, but one I have never regretted. To make the public aware that 1) these horses still existed, and 2) they had value seemed sometimes to be uphill all the way. My partner in AIHR, Scottie Stevenson (deceased) along with a number of close friends and I took the registry on the road as much as possible. [In] 1982, thanks to Leana and Buddy Rideout, and Vickie Ives and family, the Tejas Indian Horse Club was formed in Marshall, Texas, and held the first National Indian Horse Show.

As AIHR grew and thrived, we were joined by like minded people around the country, and indeed the world (we have members in Austria, Germany, Belgium, Spain and France) and several Indian Horse Clubs have been formed and hold events promoting the horses of Native America. These horses are uniquely American - they have a fascinating history and helped make America the world power it is today. They were bred in the forests of the East, the deserts of the West and on the Great Plains. They have partnered with every American culture, from the Native people to the pioneers to the cowboys and vaqueros.



Looking back on our journey, and looking at the breed today makes me very proud to have been a small part of bringing these horses to the public's attention, and showing that these hardy, loving animals are worth preserving. I am blessed to have been one of them. The horses I have had the honor of having in my life and the friends I have made in the breed are true treasures in my life.

I have been fortunate beyond words to have shared my life with these horses and to continue to share that life with their descendants. The current light of my life is Manolito, a wonderful little roan appaloosa gelding who is a great grandson of Choctaw Sun Dance and a great great grandson of my old friend Choctaw Ghost Dancer. He reminds me of my old Ghost in so many ways, temperament-wise, which means he is just the dearest horse in all the world.

For now and in the future - The American Indian Horse is truly an Original."

Remembering Nanci

By Gretchen Patterson



Gretchen Patterson and daughter Jessica at 1985 National Show

I first met Nanci in 1984 when I was part of the AIHR National Show Committee. Being new to the Indian Horse and Spanish Mustang community, I enjoyed her help as I negotiated the ins and outs of a national show; Nanci made me feel welcome. Over the years, we shared friendship and concerns as the registry navigated modern technology and the ever-present crunch to preserve the Spanish horses we all love.

Nanci made every national show including the last one held in 2016. Our family worked and competed in AIHR shows and promotions; our daughter grew up riding AIHR registered horses. When the Tejas IHC disbanded, Nanci did not have enough staff to sponsor and work the show, but she continued to hope that the future would bring the AIHR community back together. Three years ago, she began publishing the newsletter on the [https:// indianhorse.com](https://indianhorse.com) website. I accepted a co-editor spot and put those issues together. Chris Hurd uploaded the expanded news, allowing for increased readership. I was working on the Spring/Summer issue when word came that Ms. Nanci had passed. This memorial issue will be the first under the leadership of Tommi Grey as the new AIHR President.

Nanci influenced several generations of youth riders through example and leadership. We will miss her soft voice and gentle wisdom. ~These are our horses; long may they run~

***Gretchen and Nanci (and
Choctaw Star) at the National
Show***

