

## Why I Chose To Register With ICAA

by Robyn Lay

I am so happy to be a member of a club that puts the Appaloosa breed first! My husband and I both grew up with ponies and horses but as an adult, like many, we left them behind to make our way in the world. We eventually settled in East Tennessee where the Blue Ridge Mountains ring the valleys and remind me of my childhood home near Asheville, North Carolina. We trail ride these beautiful mountain trails as often as possible. Weather doesn't bother us and we are equipped to ride in anything except perhaps a blizzard! I was even able to ride the 50th anniversary ride of the Chief Joseph trail ride this summer. A dream come true.

Both my husband and I have always loved the Appaloosa and believed it to be the ultimate trail horse. Since trail riding is what we love best and we wanted to raise our own trail horses, we took the plunge buying 4 broodmares at an estate sale of long time Appaloosa breeder, Arnold Wiseman. During this time I learned that a horse with as little as 1/8 "Appaloosa" blood could be registered alongside my 100% foundation horses who are registered alongside my 78% foundation horse. They were all equal in the eyes of the registry, but to me they weren't. I also learned about the composite nature of the Appaloosa and all the various debates and arguments where it was concerned.

As a result of many online debates, some with directors who were helping to make decisions about the breed, I became dejected in general and fearful that the horse I loved would be forever lost or compiled into a hybrid breed of those allowed to make up the current leading registry. I would waffle back and forth with what I needed to do to get peace of mind where the subject was concerned. I actually had many sleepless nights worrying over the relevant issues. But it wasn't until a paint colt won first in a breed show that I threw up my hands in frustration and, for a time, mentally gave up. It seemed cut and dried to me; the rules had been grossly ignored. Further, I learned there are many such horses that have been allowed over the years to contaminate the gene pool

with paint breeding. I partook of several debates, again trying to sway people to my side as much as possible and I started looking once again at other registries. I truly felt the Appaloosa was in danger of becoming just any horse with spots!

ICAA had everything I was looking for in a registry. There were categories for the many horses who have other breeds in their recent pedigree, however the club is structured to protect and build an actual breed. They are preparing for the eventuality of foals that are 8 generations and more - all Appaloosa! I was also thrilled to learn they appreciate the science of genetic disorders and my beautiful leopard shuffling Appaloosa would not be disallowed simply because she has a single N/N trace to Impressive. However, major genetic issues are being kept out of the registry - out of the breed going forward. Wonderful! Add to that the ability to get credit for show participation and trail miles and I was sold. The cherry on top was this registry actually believes in itself and when a foal is born of two ICAA registered horses, there is no need to use any other registry! None of the alternatives believed in themselves enough to do this. I was impressed and once again hopeful.



Richard and Robyn Lay

I can't tell you how much of a difference it has made to me knowing I had a place to register my horses where they would become part of the legacy of a true Appaloosa. Having survived so much in its history, I now feel confident the breed actually has a future! Moving forward with that confidence I was able to stop worrying and found peace with those who prefer to outcross. I am happy there is a place where all of our horses are taking part and there is no longer any need to argue points that just seem common sense to me. Those of us who are part of ICAA are becoming a part of the Appaloosa story and I believe in the course of time, the breed we are building will overtake and indeed surpass any other Appaloosa registry out there simply because we will have a true breed as opposed to a hybrid of many breeds! Thank you to the association for always keeping the best interest of the Appaloosa in the forefront and for protecting it for generations to come. I am thrilled to be a part of it and excited at what the future holds.