



*Washington's  
Horse of the  
Century  
celebrates  
another  
milestone*

*Chinook Pass (foreground) and pasture pals, including multiple stakes winner Turban (background), at Jill Hallin's Maple Valley farm.*

# Honoring Chinook Pass on His 30th Birthday

by John Loftus

**W**hen he was born at Dewaine Moore's Rainier Stables near Enumclaw on the night of April 28, 1979, the little bay colt that would be named Chinook Pass had nothing to distinguish him but the tiniest star on his forehead –

so tiny you could probably count the white hairs. Other than that, he was just a plain brown wrapper.

No one could've imagined the greatness that lay ahead – that less than five years hence his owner and trainer would be toasted at the

Waldorf-Astoria in New York City, their buttons bursting with pride as they accepted Thoroughbred racing's highest honor, the Eclipse Award, on his behalf. A bit more than 20 years later, Chinook Pass would be voted Washington's Horse of the Century.

In between, he was the stuff of legends. His blazing speed was evident from the first time he set foot on the track at Longacres in 1981. After winning nine of 14 races on his home oval at two and three – ten if you count his winning maiden effort, where he was DQ'd to second – the powerful dark bay gelding headed to Southern California in the fall of 1982 to test himself against the best in the West. It was there that he would attain his greatest glory, racking up victory after victory in Santa Anita's top sprints – all of them now graded stakes – setting or equaling records time and again in the process.

His first record came in September of 1982 at Longacres, and it still stands today. More than 26 years have passed, and millions of races have been run, but his five-furlong mark of 55 1/5 seconds remains the North American dirt record. There is little doubt that he could've lowered it had he run more races at that distance. His only subsequent five-furlong effort was on the turf at Hollywood Park, where he clocked in at :56 flat, tying the North American record.

By midsummer of '83 Chinook Pass, the

## A Friend for Life



John Loftus

**J**ill Hallin was the aqua tread operator at Donida Farm when she first met Chinook Pass. After she found out who her "patient" was she conspired with a vet to get a picture of herself on the back of the "fastest horse in the world."

Time passed and the horse didn't get back to the track, so owner Ed Purvis relinquished him to Dewaine Moore. For several years he was a famous pasture ornament at Moore's Rainier Stables, where Jill became his best friend, coming out often to ride him.

Eventually he came home with her, and Jill has not, for a single day in the 20+ years she's

spent with Chinook Pass, lost her sense of wonder that fate saw fit to entrust her with the care of this magnificent and historic animal. Throughout their long relationship, Jill has devoted herself to simply letting Chinook be Chinook. The great champion has belonged to no one but himself, and that's exactly the way it should be.

During his retirement years, Chinook learned to dance (dressage) and became an outstanding ambassador for the sport of kings. No horse could ask for more blissful retirement or a more loving human companion. And Dewaine Moore still brings him fresh timothy hay. ■

conqueror of the Southern California sprint ranks, was ready to return home, determined to capture what had eluded him by a neck as a three-year-old: The Pacific Northwest's most storied race, the Longacres Mile.

His final prep was the Bing Crosby Handicap, the premiere sprint of the Del Mar meet. After distancing that field by a remarkable eight lengths, Chinook Pass and his entourage headed homeward to Seattle. Returning to a hero's welcome, he did not disappoint, crushing the opposition with a six-length romp to victory in the Longacres Mile.

It would be Chinook's last race. Tendon injuries forced him to retire just as plans were being laid for his ultimate campaign: an Eastern offensive that would take on the presumptive champions in their own backyards at Belmont and Aqueduct. His connections felt he'd deserved the Eclipse Award the previous year, when he finished third in the national balloting, and this time they were determined to leave no room for doubt. Fortunately, his achievements of 1983, capped by his victory in the Grade 2 Longacres Mile, had already been sufficient to clinch the award.

Hoping the tendon would heal, his owner and trainer gave him a lengthy rest, but when they brought him back into training he soon bowed the tendon in his other front leg. His injuries were far from life-threatening, but – in spite of later efforts to bring him back to the track – they turned out to be career-ending. The mighty Chinook Pass retired with a record of 16 wins, four places and one show in 25 starts, and earnings of \$480,073.

The disappointment at his premature retirement was all the greater because that same year – 1984 – was the maiden season of the new Breeders' Cup Championship series, which offered millions of dollars in purses.

"Had the Breeders' Cup Sprint started just a year earlier," Breeders' Cup media director Jim Gluckson recently wrote in a birthday message to Chinook Pass, "I know you would have taken the inaugural running in grand style. You are truly a living legend, who personifies the grit and glory of a Champion."

Gluckson also did some research and concluded it to be "highly likely" that Chinook Pass is now the oldest living Eclipse Award winner.

Throughout his long life Chinook has often been called "the fastest horse in the world," a description that's bound to provoke skepticism. Dr. A. E. "Bud" Hallowell, now a member of the Washington State Horse Racing Commission, was attending veterinarian at Rainier Stables for many years. He likes to mimic the late Ed Purvis, who bred, owned and raced Chinook Pass, dropping his voice into a deep gravelly register and saying, "Hey! Ya wanna see the fastest horse in the world?"

Ed Purvis may have been prejudiced. It was his horse. But he was far from the only one to hold that belief. All-time great jockey legend Laffit Pincay Jr., who rode him during his days of greatest glory, is unequivocal on the subject: "Chinook Pass is the fastest horse I ever rode and the fastest horse I ever saw," he says today, adding that,



*Emerald Downs director of broadcast publicity Joe Withee and media relations director Vince Bruun presented Chinook Pass and Hallin with a commemorative blanket on behalf of Emerald Downs.*

## Chinook Pass



John Loftus

Dark Bay or Brown Gelding

Bred in Washington and raced by Hi-Yu Stable, J. Edward Purvis  
Foaled April 28, 1979, at Dewaine Moore's Rainier Stables

Native Dancer

Native Born

Next Move

Chinook Pass

\*Turn-to

Yu Turn

Iyearn

**Race Record:** 25 starts, 16 wins, 4 places, 1 show

**Career Earnings:** \$480,073

**Trainers:** Bud Klokstad, Laurie N. Anderson

**Tracks:** Longacres, Portland Meadows, Hollywood Park, Los Alamitos, Turf Paradise, Santa Anita

**Jockeys:** Michael Baze, Danny Sorenson, Chris Loseth, Jerry Taketa, Gary Baze, Jody Davidson, Basil Frazier, Bill Shoemaker, Chris McCarron, Laffit Pincay Jr.

### STAKES VICTORIES:

Stripling Stakes, Longacres

Washington Stallion Stakes, Longacres

Speed Handicap, Longacres

Governor's Handicap, Longacres

Meteor Handicap (turf), Hollywood Park

Palos Verdes Handicap, Santa Anita (now G2)

Sierra Madre Handicap, Santa Anita (later G3)

Potrero Grande Handicap, Santa Anita (now G2)

San Simeon Handicap, Santa Anita (now G3)

Bing Crosby Handicap, Del Mar (now G1)

Longacres Mile (then G2), Longacres

### RECORDS:

Set world record of :55 1/5 at Longacres on 9/17/82, currently the North American dirt record

Routinely set or equaled track records throughout his career

### HONORS:

Eclipse Award Champion Sprinter (1983)

Washington Horse of the Year (1982, 1983)

Washington Champion Sprinter (1982, 1983)

Washington Champion Three-year-old (1982)

Washington Champion Handicap Horse (1983)

Sprinter of the Meet, Santa Anita Park, (1983)

Washington Horse of the Century (2000)

Washington Racing Hall of Fame (2003)

Chinook Pass Sprint Stakes at Emerald Downs

Believed by NTRA to be oldest living Eclipse Award winner



Duane Hamamura

Hallin and Chinook Pass on his 30th birthday.



Duane Hamamura

Many gifts brought by loyal fans sit on a bench with Chinook Pass in the background.



Duane Hamamura

Bruun looks at scrapbooks, as the 1983 Eclipse Award trophy as Champion Sprinter sits amid other memorabilia.



John Loftus

Chinook's stallmate, Ellie, joins in the festivities. He has outlived two other companion goats.



Duane Hamamura

Chinook Pass wraps his head around Shannon Jurpik, one of many visitors to the 1983 Eclipse Award winner's 30th birthday party.

"I have always thought that he might've been the fastest Thoroughbred that ever lived."

Chinook was a sensation at the Santa Anita meet of 1983 – "more popular than John Henry," trainer Bud Klokstad recalls. The belief that he was the fastest horse in the world became contagious, leading to offers of million-dollar pay-per-view match races against champion Quarter Horses and an invitation for an all-expenses-paid trip to Britain's fabled Epsom Downs for the sole purpose of racing against the clock in pursuit of a new world record.

The mood surrounding Chinook Pass at Santa Anita that phenomenal spring was described by a contemporary turf writer as a "circus atmosphere." Current Santa Anita Park president Ron Charles, then a much younger man, was there to witness it all.

"I'd like to give you special recognition," Charles wrote recently in a birthday message to Chinook Pass, "as I would rank you one of my five all-time favorite horses. I'm not sure you've received the acknowledgment that you should have for being one of the fastest horses – if not the fastest horse – that ever lived."

The connections of John Henry were at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City on that same chilly January evening in 1984 when Chinook Pass got his Eclipse Award. Their "Grand Old Man" was picking up his fifth. John is gone now, and Chinook Pass is believed to be the oldest surviving Eclipse Award winner. He is our Grand

Old Man, our John Henry, and we all love and cherish him so.

Happy Birthday, Chinook Pass, our living legend, our treasure, our friend! ■



John Loftus is the biographer of Chinook Pass and, according to Jill Hallin, is also his "number one fan." Chapters of Chinook's biography are being published in our magazine as they are completed. Chinook Pass, the grand old man of Washington horse racing, invites your e-mails at [chinook.pass@earthlink.net](mailto:chinook.pass@earthlink.net).