

Al Jazira Arabians

by **Cynthia Culbertson**
photos by Gigi Grasso

Many people around the world are enchanted with the exquisite beauty of the Arabian horse. Some of these move beyond their initial admiration and make these horses part of their lives. A few decide that their passion for the breed should include breeding and they produce a few foals each year. But fewer still have the dedication, patience, discriminating taste, and sheer time and energy to become devoted breeders. Mr. Talal Abdullah Al Mehri, of Al Jazira Stud, however, is just such a person. Seriously committed to the Arabian horse, and to the straight Egyptian in particular, he is well on his way to becoming a breeder of significance. A keen observer of both horses and pedigrees, he has carefully gathered a select group of breeding stock at his farm in Kuwait.



*Surrounded by graceful date palms, Al Jazira Stud has a bevy of beautiful mares, including the lovely Ansata Selma, a full sister to Ansata Selman and one of the farm's five prized Ansata Hejazi daughters. Another exquisite mare at the farm is RN Marwa, an Ansata Halim Shah daughter, and both of these mares have given Al Jazira excellent daughters with which to continue their legacy. All of the mares at Al Jazira come from strong damlines especially selected by Mr. Al Mehri to aid in achieving his goals as a breeder. His group of mares also includes daughters of Salaa El Dine, Safir, Adnan, as well as Amaal and *Soufian daughters bred by Gleannloch Farms.*

An Interview with

Talal Abdullah Al Mehri

Mr. Talal Abdullah Al Mehri



A great admirer of the breeding program of Al Rayyan, Al Jazira is fortunate to have several horses which represent this landmark program. A particular star on the horizon is the typy and balanced young stallion Sinan Al Rayyan. Sired by Ansata Sinan and out of the wonderful Safir daughter, Wajba Al Rayyan, this stallion is already proving to be an exceptional sire. As a continuing example of the cooperation between breeders in Kuwait, Al Jazira has generously allowed the use of Sinan Al Rayyan by other breeders in the country. This resulted in an initial foal crop that was remarkable for the uniform quality of the foals - typy, balanced, with short exotic heads, and charismatic movement - it seems Sinan Al Rayyan is most definitely a stallion to catch the eyes of astute breeders.

An Interview with



Talal Abdullah Al Mehri
Mr. Abdullah Talal Al Mehri

When meeting and writing about such a young and enthusiastic breeder, it is always fascinating to ask a few questions about how their passion began and the rationale behind the acquisition of their breeding stock as well as their goals for the future. The questions and answer below provide a fascinating insight into this exciting program and its owner.

When did you first become involved with Arabian horses and what attracted you to these magnificent animals?
Horses have always played a major role in my life since

childhood. My family had a farm and horses and I spent every free minute at the farm with the horses.

What attracted you to these magnificent animals?

The Arabian horse is a part of our culture, history and tradition and this is of great importance to me. I have always been attracted by their beauty, charisma, elegance and harmony, and of course their special character. Arabians are quite attached to humans because they lived very closely with the Bedouins. The horses and men needed each other to be able to survive under the harsh conditions of the deserts of the Arabian peninsula. A gentle character is still very important to me and is an integral part of my breeding concept.

Tell us about your first Arabian and the horses with which you began your breeding program.

My first purebred Arabian horse with the mare Dunja, who originally came from Egypt. In 1996 I started planning to build my own breeding program. At this same time many of my friends in Kuwait were also excited about setting up their own farms and establishing their breeding concepts based on straight Egyptians. Many of us, myself included, were impressed by the horses of my friend Sheikh Abdul Aziz of Al Rayyan Farm in Qatar.

What do you look for in an Arabian horse? What characteristics are the most important to you?

As I mentioned before, the noble and gentle character of the Arabian is the most important to me. In addition, I am looking for elegance and harmony in conformation, as well as refinement, overall beauty and big, dark expressive eyes. I truly believe you can see the soul of the horse in its eyes.

What farms and breeding programs have been an influence in developing your program?

Certainly Sheikh Abdul Aziz and his breeding concepts at Al Rayyan Farm have been a major influence in my decisions of how to begin my own program and which bloodlines and horses to choose to hopefully have a good start. He has become a good friend of mine and we visit each other often or speak on the phone to discuss horses.

Can you tell us some of your favorite horses and why? Do you use the blood of these horses in your program?

There are many horses I have seen that impressed me so much that I will always keep them in my memory. It is difficult to mention only a few, as that is unfair to so many others which are also wonderful horses. But to give you an answer I can name the following as just an example of the

many horses which have inspired me:

RN Farida because of her exotic beauty, her refinement, and unbelievable charisma.

G Shafaria as she combines charm and elegance with solid conformation, balance, and light but powerful movement.

Kamla II impressed me greatly with her dignity, great personality and charming character, as well as beauty.

Ansata Hejazi who is a true gentleman combining power with elegance, harmony and exotic expression.

Salaa El Dine, who was a great horse and an influential sire who can give you something extraordinary.

I am using the blood of the above-mentioned horses in many breeding program because I admire the attributes I pointed out and it is part of my goal to fix them in my breeding concept.

How important are strains and families to you?

Strains and families are extremely important to me and my breeding program is based on mares from certain strains and families in which I believe very much. I only use mares from the families which I have observed for a long time and which have proven to me that they are passing on the characteristics I like.

Of your own mares, which is your favorite and why?

I would like to mention two of my mares: RN Marwa, born in 1995 by the legendary Ansata Halim Shah out of Baheyat Albadeia by Amir Albadeia; and Ansata Selma, born in 1998 by Ansata Hejazi out of G Shafaria by Prince Fa Moniet. Both of them have proven to be exceptional broodmares. They are excellent mothers and combine beauty with solid conformation and good movement. They also match very well with my young stallion, Sinan Al Rayyan.

What are the goals of your breeding program at Al Jazira?

Arabian type, exotic beauty, strong conformation, good legs and elegant, ground-covering movement as well as a noble and charming character are the most important features. I feel it is also most important to breed within the strains and families to consolidate and fix these attributes.

You have quite an exciting young stallion, Sinan Al Rayyan! Tell us why you chose him and why you believed he would be a good breeding horse?

I know his parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents

quite well and like his pedigree very much. I have always loved Ansata Sinan and how he produced. Furthermore I strongly believe in the damline. Sinan Al Rayyan's mother is Al Wajba Al Rayyan by Safir out of Ansata Sharifa. For me, this is one of the best producing families of Al Rayyan Farm. As an individual, I like Sinan Al Rayyan's beautiful small head, his elegant long neck and good topline, as well as his powerful movement. He offers me attributes which I like and his pedigree in the female line is linked to my best mares.

Although he is just beginning his breeding career, can you tell us about his foals thus far?

Perhaps it is a bit early to judge his breeding potential, as he is still young, but so far I can say that he has fulfilled my

An Interview with



Talal Abdullah Al Mehri
Mr. Abdullah Talal Al Mehri

expectations and most importantly, fulfilled the expectations of my friends in Kuwait who believed in him and used him on their mares. But I prefer not to talk about my own feelings regarding his foals - I would just like to invite people to come and see them and make up their own mind!

The breeders in Kuwait are doing a great job of working together. Can you tell us a bit about this?

The best word to describe the relationship among breeders in Kuwait is "friendship!" Most of us have known each other



An Interview with



Talal Abdullah Al Mehri
Mr. Talal Abdullah Al Mehri

since childhood. Some of us are relatives or our families have known each other for a long time. Many of us went to school together and even after school we still meet quite often. We have always shared the same passion and almost all of us decided at the same time to build up our farms and breedings programs. Our studs are very near each other - either located just on the other side of the road or just a 10-minute trip to quickly pass by to chat about our horses.

Also, since we do not have any shows yet in Kuwait, we are not in competition with each other. If we decide to show horses, for instance, in Qatar or elsewhere, we are acting as a team and compete as Kuwaitis together. We also help each other as much as possible. We offer our stallions to our

*Morafic and *Ansata Ibn Halima, as well as the outstanding mares like Bukra or Moniet El Nefous who founded their own dynasties. Of course I could mention many, many more, but these are among the first which come to my mind.

What do you enjoy most about your horses?

I spend every free minute of my time with my horses at my farm and I love to have them around me. I can relax and forget any troubles or stress - I simply enjoy their wonderful beauty, their sweet character. I especially like to watch the loving behavior between a mare and a foal or watching the foals playing together in the paddock. I always enjoy having visitors who share the same passion with me!



friends to use and if one is traveling he has to take his video camera along with him! As soon as he is back we cannot wait until the following weekend to meet and watch the video and listen to what our traveling friend can tell us from his tour. We feel happy for the success any one of us may have, and we share sorrow for any bad luck or loss. The atmosphere among us is just wonderful and we always hear from visitors that they also enjoy our camaraderie.

Which are some historical horses that you admire?

Firstly I want to mention Ansata Halim Shah, who stamped the breeding programs of the Middle East for the last two decades, as well as those in the United States and Europe. Further I have to mention legendary sires like

Give us your perspective on what you think are the most important things for a breeder to learn.

A serious breeder needs to understand pedigrees and the importance of families. Furthermore a breeder has to be patient. Especially with straight Egyptians which need time to develop. Because of this one should not make decisions about young horses too early!

The beautiful horses of Al Jazira, as well as their thoughtful and dedicated owner, definitely make this a breeding farm to watch in the generations to come. But, as Mr. Al-Mehri says, why not come and see for yourself? Visitors are always warmly welcomed at Al Jazira! □