



*The Pyramid Society's  
2012 National Egyptian Breeders Conference*

*Creating Excellence:  
Standards in  
Egyptian Arabian Breeding*

*Text, Photos and Design by Lisa Abraham*







The 2012 Fifth National Breeders Conference beginning Friday October 12-14, was yet another opportunity for quality education offered by The Pyramid Society. In 2007 The Pyramid Society had its first conference hosted in Maryland at the late Imperial Stud titled "Foundations of Excellence: American Traditions in Egyptian Arabian Breeding, 1900 -1973." Since then in 2008 it was in Waco, Texas and titled "Conformation and Quality in Straight Egyptian Horses"; in 2009 it was in Lexington, KY and titled "Genetics and Reproduction: Breakthrough Strategies for Successful Breeding"; in 2010 it was in Atlanta, GA and titled "Back To The Future: Building Blocks For Egyptian Arabian Breeding"; and most recently in Tomball TX, sponsored by Markel Insurance and hosted kindly by Hank & Sandy DeShazer of DeShazer Arabians, The Pyramid Society has maintained its teaching tradition with "Creating Excellence: Standards in Egyptian Arabian Breeding."

Keri Wright, of Cariswood Arabians and the Educational Director of The Pyramid Society shared, "The Pyramid Society's slogan of 'Your Passion is Our Purpose' really is the impetus behind all that we do as an organization, and it couldn't possibly have greater appli-

cation than in our commitment to meeting the ongoing educational needs of our members. We earnestly strive to quench the thirst we all have for greater knowledge and understanding as it relates to our passion for all things pertaining to our involvement with the Egyptian Arabian horse."

The Conference began on Friday as a classroom day. After the initial meet-and-greet while enjoying delicious pastries and coffee, we assembled for a day of stimulating lectures. One of the purposes of this conference was to introduce "The Standard Of Excellence: A Guide To The Pyramid Society Straight Egyptian Arabian Horse" (hereafter referred to as "The Standard"). Thus all facets of the weekend's itinerary were not only related to each other, but also to the development, explanation and usage of The Standard itself.

On Friday, Cynthia Culbertson kicked the conference off with an arousing lecture titled, "The Desert Tradition: Reality and Romance." Both Cynthia's name and work are widely respected throughout the entire Arabian breeding and showing world, making the honor of being present for her scholarly presentation all the more significant. Although the author of countless works, she most recently co-curated "A Gift from the Desert: The Art, History and Culture of the Arabian Horse"-- an international exhibition which featured several

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hundred objects from some of the most prestigious museums and private collections in the world.

Cynthia passionately challenged conference attendees to consider the source(s) of both the many and varied feelings shared regarding our Egyptian horses. She asked us to consider if we are sacrificing traditionally prized desert qualities, which serve important utilitarian purposes, for those that are more cosmetic in nature. Her points were illustrated with period prose, literature, art and historical artifacts depicting Bedouin values for the Straight Egyptian horse.

Then, as both Rebecca (Becky) Rogers and Lisa McCracken Lacy were instrumental in developing The Standard, they were most qualified to share the process in a lecture titled "The Making of Standards: A Model from The Pyramid Society." Becky Rogers, who is the farm and breeding manager of Kehilan Arabians and has been breeding Egyptian Arabian horses for 30 years, was the first to speak.

She began by explaining in detail, why a breed standard is necessary. By quoting another breed organization, The British Cavy Council which is the governing board "Championing the exhibition and promotion of purebred cavies (guinea pigs)," she read, "Without clear standards, all breeding and judging of exhibition livestock would come down to a simple matter of opinion. Standards provide the fundamental basis of all forms of livestock competition in which the appearance of the animal, as opposed to its ability to perform tests, jump obstacles or run more quickly than its peers, determines suc-



Opposite page: Saturday's Judging Demonstration  
Directly above: Cynthia Culbertson  
Below left: Lisa Lacy  
Below right: Emma Maxwell







cess or failure. Standards state what breeders and exhibitors should look for in the perfect specimen."

Lisa detailed the development of The Standard itself. Lisa's resume with the Straight Egyptian horse is notably deep. Her family began breeding SE's as Al Karim Arabians which later became the famed Bentwood Farm, where Lisa worked till it's dispersal in 1988. From 1989 - 1995, she served as a Pyramid Society Board member while her father Jarrell McCracken served as its Director, President and Trustee. Lisa has also earned a PhD in Middle Eastern History from the University of Texas, at Austin.

Lisa shared, "The Standard includes documented impressions and information from a wide variety of sources including references from other international Arabian standards. We used standards written by the British Arab Horse Society, the Arabian Horse Society of Australia, from New Zealand, various breed societies around the world including those of British Cavies and Rhodesian Ridgebacks. However, at all times, a basis of historical depiction has been sought with the intent to describe a horse distinctly bred for use in a harsh desert climate. Even though we are generations removed from the desert, those aspects of the horse for which he was bred in the desert, are what make him special to us



Top image: Hank DeShazer and Bridgette Orwig  
Image beneath: Lisa Lacy, Majid Alsaygh and Emma Maxwell





today."

Lisa also referenced Cynthia's lecture where they shared this perspective, "So much modern breeding marginalizes some of these characteristics. As we were making The Standard, we had this in mind. Where there may have been controversy The Standard chose the characteristic that would be desired for use as a desert war horse and Bedouin utilitarian and companion animal."

Among the many prominent speakers and participants,

we were very fortunate to have included Emma Maxwell. Majid Alsayegh, an Egyptian Arabian breeder and Pyramid Society board member, warmly introduced her and then later shared, "I met Emma for the first time in Paris at the Salon Du Cheval in 1989. She was at the show with her parents, Major Pat and Joanna Maxwell, showing a few of their own horses and a few horses for clients. The horses won several top placements, including a reserve Championship. Emma was only 19 years







old at the time, but was already one of the top handlers at the show. She had a special connection and bond with the horses. She has continued to be a breeder, a trainer, a judge, and a talented photographer. She is certainly one of the most skilled horsewomen in our Arabian community."

Emma gave a powerful lecture on the topic of character and temperament, titled "Standards: Out from the Tent." Very early in her informative talk, after reciting

several quotes illustrating the importance of temperament, she made the very strong point, "I would expect an explanation of the temperament and character of the Arabian to take up at least as much of The Standard as the type and conformation section—and it doesn't. But in common with nearly every other modern western Arab horse standard there are over 20 pages devoted in detail to what the horse should look like and a page each for endurance and character."

She continued, "Character is one of the fundamental features







of the Arabian breed. I meet many breeders who consider themselves to be ambitious, who will dismiss this idea. It would not be farfetched to link this attitude to registration figures that show that the Arabian horse is NOT a fantastically popular breed and it is NOT getting any more popular. Breeders like to think they are seeking loftier goals, turning their Arabians into luxury grands so that they have intrinsic value over and above their actual qualities which are: conformation, movement and temperament."

Emma referenced a story regarding the qualities of a "wilderness or desert" horse. From it she read, "Before looking at the horse's body you must insure it has five specifications of character: 1.Courage 2.Intelligence 3.Stamina 4. Spirit (And, above all) 5. Nejabat: (loosely translates to mean) Nobleness, gentleness and ethics of an aristocrat.



Opposite page: top left: Becky Rogers  
Opposite page: top right: Bridgette Orwig  
Top Image: Judith Forbis instructing on the subject of Judging  
Directly above: Joe Polo and Lisa Lacy  
Image directly to right: Keri Wright doing his Judging exercise







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If the horse lacks these virtues, no matter how pleasing he is to the eye, he is a worthless horse — do not waste your time. But if he does have them, then run your eyes over his conformation."

Emma's bold and honest perspectives were welcomed by several who also share strong feelings regarding this often overlooked subject. Bridgette Orwig, of Pure Gold Arabians and also a speaker herself, later shared, "Emma Maxwell's talk on the temperament of the Arabian horse was particularly interesting and thought provoking for me. No breeder would ever claim to not have regard for the temperament of the horses they breed. Emma pointed out that, perhaps unwittingly, we are breeding a poor temperament for life as a riding or companion horse -- the realistic life that most horses will live. Although today's halter show ring encourages 'animation,' few of us would want to ride an overly animated horse--certainly not a child or beginner rider. If animation is the result of self-confidence and a desire to show-off, than animation itself is not a problem. On the other hand, if it is because the horse is nervous and jittery — then it is very undesirable."

Friday's final lecture was titled "Standards: Application Breeding Programs: In the Eye of the Beholder" and was presented by Judith Forbis and Rebecca (Becky) Rogers. Judith Forbis is one whose experience and contribution are immense. She co-founded The Pyramid Society; she was its President and is now a Trustee; she is the author of several books and innumerable articles; and, she is an artist. However, as the founder and breeder of Ansata Arabian Stud, her greatest contribution has been to the horses themselves.





There are few pedigrees that do not have the name Ansata somewhere in their lineage. Keri Wright introduced Judith by saying, "I don't know of another human being who has given back again and again and again to The Pyramid Society and to the horses that she loves."

Through programs that are both decades long and deeply influential, both women illustrated their individual paths to successful longevity as breeders. Judith's path was one of thorough research and methodical execution. While Becky started in the performance ring and through the result of being in the "right place at the right time," was introduced to the beauty and versatility of the Straight Egyptian horse, thus changing the course of her life forever.

As a speaker, Becky followed Judith. She began by expressing a critical sentiment as it relates to opportunities created by The Pyramid Society, most especially at conferences such as this one. She began, "I want to make a point of mentioning how fortunate we are to be a contemporary of someone like Judith Forbis. As some point far in the future, people will pour over her documents and her books. They will say, 'Gee, I wish I had the opportunity to pick her brain; I wish I could have sat at a conference and listen to her and see her photographs; I wish I could have



Opposite page: top: The Breeders led by Christie Metz

Opposite page: bottom: Shawn Crews

Top of page: left: the 23 year old stallion Ben Malik

Top of page: right: Cynthia Culbertson with Colleen Jackson (left) and Jackie Orwig

Bottom: Emma Maxwell



have listened to her.' It would be like one of us getting to travel back in time and talk to Ali Pasha Sherif — IT WOULD BE THAT SAME OPPORTUNITY. Such is the greatness that Judith Forbis has achieved with her horses and as the inspiration that she has become for everybody. This is an opportunity that you will look back upon and be grateful that you were here."

Saturday was an "in the field", two-part day devoted to judging. The first part titled, "Measuring Excellence: Scope, Focus, Process in the Show Ring" concentrated on judging horses from the perspective of showing in the ring. The panel of judges who served as teachers, included Shawn Crews of Arabians Ltd, Judith Forbis, Lisa McCracken Lacy, Emma Maxwell and Joseph Polo. Shawn Crews who began her career at Bentwood Arabians and has since been the long time farm manager of Arabians Ltd, managing stallions such as Thee Desperado and Mishaal HP. Joe Polo, who is from Indiana, has trained, shown and judged all over the world. He is involved in many influential Arabian affiliations and is currently concentrating on breeding, showing and marketing Egyptian Arabian Horses.

After introducing the panel of judges, Joe began, "I think there needs to be more understanding of judges, the systems being used and any situations that may arise. Judging is not easy, but it's a lot of fun." After each panelist, all experienced judges, gave a unique perspective and the primary score systems used around the world were discussed, horses were then walked into the ring, just as they would a show. As each horse stood to be judged, each judge took a turn explaining how they would score a horse and why.

After each horse was judged by the panelists, we broke off into smaller groups, with each judge being assigned one horse. The conference attendees were to

to take turns by rotating to spend generous time with each judge and each horse. In these smaller groups, first the judge would score the horse; then the conference attendees would do the same -- all to be followed with discussion. This was a unique opportunity to learn and understand from individuals such as Lisa Lacy and Judith Forbis, who have judged at the highest level in our industry.

Saturday afternoon we once again assembled in the presentation ring for the day's second session titled, "Assessing Excellence in Breeding Stock." Christie Metz, of Silver Maple Farm, introduced her fellow breeders: Allison Mehta-Westley of Talaria Farms; Hank DeShazer of DeShazer Arabians and conference host; Bridgette Orwig of Pure Gold Arabians; and, Janice Bush of both Somerset Farms and Kehilan Arabians.

Christie began, "We are going to look at the same categories used by the ring judges, but we will have the pedigrees. We are going to look at these horses from a breeder's eye -- what we like, what we want to do and how we would understand these horses according to the categories. Unlike the judges in the previous session who are required to make a decision on a short term observation, our nature is to make long term decisions which produce the best results."

Janice Bush then strongly stated, "I want to make it very clear, that although we do have the pedigrees, we are not looking at these pedigrees with the idea of either including or excluding horses in the pedigrees. But without the pedigrees you won't know what characteristics are translated -- you will be focusing on qualities that you aesthetically like, but may not be able to reproduce."

The horses were walked by the breeders just as they had been for the judges and each breeder shared his or her individual thoughts on how to move forward with each animal. We then broke into the same group pattern as the morning session and had one on one time with the breeders and hor-







Top Image: Jackie & Bridgette Orwig, Cynthia Culbertson, Judith Forbis, Christie Metz and Anna Bishop, Executive Director of The Pyramid Society

Bottom Left: Fanus Crous of Rhodium Arabian Stud (NZ), Janice Bush, Jaleen Hacklander of Hadaya Arabians, Mary Ellen Chavez of Sonrisa Farms and Collen Jackson (AU)

Bottom Right: Janice Bush, Sandy DeShazer and Bob Miars of Miars Arabians and President of The Pyramid Society





ses. On a personnel note, it was thrilling that one of the horses used for this demonstration was the 23 year old stallion, Ben Malik (Malik X Nil Nour), owned by DeShazer Arabians.

Saturday evening saw a break in the conference schedule as we were treated to a world class horse presentation by DeShazer Arabians. To say the least, it was exceptional! It is a rare opportunity to view a program with such depth of comprehension. Hank arranged the

presentation such that it complemented the themes discussed thus far in the conference, giving us all yet another perspective on breeding. Compliments of both Hank and Sandy DeShazer, the remainder of evening were spent under the stars sharing a delicious meal and the company of one another.

Sunday morning was spent with presenters Bridgette Orwig and Louise DeRusseau of LD Arabians out of Cedar Creek Texas, on a topic titled, "Breeding Standards: "Size Matters or Not". Bridgette and Louise individually shared business cir-





cumstances from the often overlooked perspective of the smaller, or "boutique" breeder, which would generally include programs breeding five or fewer mares per year.

Bridgette, who was the first to speak, has been a horse woman for a greater part of her life. In 1998, she dedicated her breeding farm exclusively to Straight Egyptians. She has shown successfully and has bred horses that now live around the world. She serves as the Egyptian Event Show Chair and is a Pyramid Society Board Member. Bridgette is not only a mare owner; she has owned and stood stallions at stud. She is a breeder who has developed her own vision and her own program.

Louise DeRousseau, who has been in the business for 12 years, was able to illustrate a very successful program based on a strong tutelage with a larger farm. She and her husband Dan started in 2001 by purchasing 2 fillies, thus beginning a long and fruitful relationship with Arabians Ltd in Waco, Texas. Although many of the horses do live with them and they are deeply involved with their day-to-day care, they breed to the stallions at Arabians Ltd, where much of their marketing and showing is successfully managed.

Louise gave an in-depth look at their success in this business format. She also spoke of the satisfaction they have

experienced from the results of line-breeding to select horses, and the accomplishments they have achieved with the mares in their breeding program.

Following this final lecture, the conference ended midday. Snacks, pastries, coffee and other beverages were shared for the last time as one-by-one we gave our thanks and said our goodbyes. "Creating Excellence: Standards in Egyptian Arabian Breeding" was an educational achievement. It offered information which attendees will be able to draw on at all career stages.

In conclusion, Bob Miars the new President of The Pyramid Society shared, "The 5th National Breeders Conference continued the very successful legacy of The Pyramid Society educational commitment to our members. The educational content, social interaction and the incredible venue provided by our host Sandy & Hank DeShazer made this conference one of the best. I am very confident our new TPS Educational Chairman the pedigrees man, Keri Wright, is up to the challenge of continuing this excellent Breeders Conference series and the Egyptian Event seminars for the Straight Egyptian Breeder."



Opposite page: top: The weekend's final Q & A with presenters (l-to-r): Bridgette Orwig, Janice Bush, Lisa Lacy, Emma Maxwell, Christie Metz, Allison Mehta-Westley, Cynthia Culbertson and Gail Mailloux of Two Silos Farm  
Opposite page: bottom left: Rhita McNair and Shawn Crews  
Opposite Page: bottom right: Louise DeRousseau  
Above: A group shot of all happy conference attendees and presenters!