

THE PYRAMID SOCIETY OF MOROCCO'S 1ST ARABIAN BREEDERS FORUM 2024

SHARING THE DREAM

by
JUDITH FORBIS



photo by Diana Cantey

“AS TIME GOES BY”



PYRAMID SOCIETY MOROCCO
STRAIGHT EGYPTIAN ARABIAN

Flying home from the Arabian Gulf on Qatar Airways last year, I searched the movie list and found the beloved classic film Casablanca. This love story, set in Morocco during WWII, brought back poignant memories of growing up when "the greatest generation" won that war and ushered in a new era for the United States - and the world. Watching this film once again, words of the song As Time Goes By reminded me that more than ever in life and in breeding Arabian horses "the fundamental things apply - as time goes by!"

Strangely enough a few months later I received an invitation from Youcef Laghzal, President of the Pyramid Society Morocco, to speak about breeding Straight Egyptian Arabians at their forthcoming Breeders Forum. I've traveled the globe lecturing and judging for decades and my friends keep telling me it's time to say "no" to invitations. However, Youcef convincingly mentioned there were many enthusiastic newcomers who needed - and wanted - education from experienced breeders - rather than getting it off the internet willy-nilly. Indeed, it did seem fate to receive this request when the refrain from the movie was still dancing in my head: "Please come back to me in Casablanca", and love of the Arabian horse, "on that you can rely, no matter what the future brings".



Desert Heritage

A Land of Horses

Morocco has a long history of Arabian horses tracing back to the 8th century AC when the warriors of Islam burst forth from the Arabian desert and the Arabian horse was king. Horses have always flourished in this land; however, during the last century there was very little breeding of Straight Egyptian Arabians except for those of HM King Hassan II who kept his valuable herd at the royal stud in Bouznika. Some had been imported from the Egyptian Agricultural Organization in Egypt, and others from Gleanloch, Imperial and Ansata in the USA. The current king, HM King Mohamed VI is also passionate about horses and was instrumental in founding the organization SOREC (Societe Royal d'Encouragement du Cheval), to promote horse breeding in

association with ARMECPSA (Association Royale Marocaine des Eleveurs des Chevaux pur Sang).

In this thriving atmosphere of enthusiasm and support for the horse, five years ago the Pyramid Society Morocco was formed to further the breeding and preservation of Straight Egyptian Arabians that had previously thrived in the country under HM King Hassan II. Furthermore, his son and heir, HM King Mohammed VI decreed that horse breeders should receive monetary assistance for food, and breeding expenses including a 50% subsidy of the price of imported frozen semen. Breeders also receive a substantial amount for each foal born. There are no taxes on horse sales, and registration papers, horse shows and many



other things relating to horse keeping are free. These incentives certainly encourage one have a horse farm in Morocco!

Coming Back to Casablanca

Contemplating the trip I wondered if the country had changed much since my husband Don and I had first been there in 1990 as guests of HM King Hassan II, and again in 1995 at the World Arabian Horse Organization Conference - both unforgettable experiences.

Arriving in Casablanca with my long-time friend Jane Winegardner on April 18th, I learned that some things remained the same: Ricks Cafe, of Casablanca fame, still featured a piano player singing As Time Goes By, in Morocco "a kiss is still a kiss", the glorious Grand Mosque

Hassan II still beckons "come back to me in Casablanca", and love of the Arabian horse "on that you can rely, no matter what the future brings, as time goes by." However, the city among others we visited, had changed dramatically since we had visited nearly 30 years ago. So had the Arabian horse scene. Youcef and Nawfal Al Cherqui met us at the airport. For the next two hours we drove past endless landscapes of yellow rocks before reaching a magical oasis - the Laghzal's Koheilan Lodge - that was constructed of the same rocks we had been witnessing along the way. Set amidst a variety of lush plants and trees we felt right at home. Rescued cats and dogs happily greeted us throughout the day while some of the 20 resident peacocks took a note from - Casablanca, that "moonlight



and love songs are never out of date" as they serenaded us each night.

Youcef , his wife Lise, and their son Noam were wonderful hosts, and their Shahada Farm's Straight Egyptian breeding program of some 20 years reflected their love and dedication. The stables were immaculate

and the entire farm indicated their artistic talents had governed its planning. Their breeding program consisted of carefully selected mares and stallions, including their main stallion, Ajmal Sahaab, now 16 years old and a proven sire and grandsire for many Moroccan breeders.



In Love with Morocco

After two days of rest and delicious Moroccan cuisine prepared by the lodge's talented cook, we were driven to the opulent Mazagan Beach Resort to attend the Forum. Some 60 guests from USA, Germany, Switzerland, and France, as well as breeders from Morocco, had already gathered in the conference room . Youcef as President began the Forum by thanking HM King Mohammed VI for his continued support of the Arabian horse as well as other sponsors and breeders who made this event possible. Thereafter each speaker presented a unique program of interest to new and experienced breeders.

Judith Forbis spoke about *Sharing the Dream* - a short power point presentation of her life's journey with Arabian horses followed by *In The Eye of the Beholder*, a more detailed description of various breeding principles including the characteristics of certain families prominent in straight Egyptian Arabian bloodlines today.

Edouard Al Dahdah presented an informative lecture on *Breeding and Conformation from the Past to the Present: A Reflection on Abbas Pasha's Breeding Program*. A dedicated breeder of desert-bred Arabians he discussed his book *The Horses of Abbas Pasha* and demonstrated where some of the Abbas Pasha bloodlines



are found in modern pedigrees and breeding programs.

Dr. Saria Almarzook discussed some of the proven aspects of equine genetics that are important to consider when selecting individuals for a breeding program. Of particular interest was her commentary on matrilinear lineage and coat color in Arabians.

Mr. Keri Wright, President of the Pyramid Society Foundation, explained the current merger between the Pyramid Society and the Pyramid Society Foundation, that the Society's original mission remains unchanged but now greater emphasis will be placed on education, history and research.

Copies of *The Pyramid Society Studbook* were also gifted by the Pyramid Society Foundation to the organizers of the Forum as well as a special copy to HM King Mohamed VI. Additionally, a rare copy of *The Abbas Pasha Manuscript* by Gulsun Sherif and Judith Forbis, along with Edouard Al Dahdah's recent *The Arabian Horses of Abbas Pasha*, were auctioned off to the highest bidder. Menara Stud proved the lucky winner and the money was donated to the Pyramid Society Morocco for use towards future educational activities.

When the speakers had concluded everyone stepped outside to feast on a sumptuous array of Moroccan hors d'oeuvres. Several Arabian

horses were then presented in hand and under saddle ridden by colorfully costumed riders. All too soon the flickering shadows of eventide descended on the deep green lawn and brought this memorable evening to a close.

"You Must Remember This"

The line "You must remember this" - from the song *As Time Goes By* appropriately described everyone's memorable visits to several of the Arabian Stud Farms breeding Straight Egyptian Arabians: Mr. Mohamed Oumlazz's El Aaz Horse Farm, the Laghzal's Shahada Stud, (which included Mr. Nawfal Al Cherqui's horses until his new farm is completed), Mr. Youssef Manaf's Al Fawaress Arabians, and Mr. Karim Benlafkih and his son Mehdi Benlafkih's Menara Stud Farm. The hospitality and elegant decor at each farm was straight out of *Arabian Nights* - each host proudly presenting their stallions, mares and foals and providing lunches and dinners with lavish servings of Moroccan cuisine and the customary fragrant mint tea. These visits were further testimony that more gatherings of this kind are needed worldwide - not to replace horse shows, but to enhance friendships, educate new breeders and bring the Arabian horse community closer together...

"As Time Goes By".



PYRAMID SOCIETY MOROCCO
STRAIGHT EGYPTIAN ARABIAN

A very special thanks to the many photographers who contributed images to this article: Diana Cantey, Nicole Sachs, Amine Finini, Nawfal Cherqui, Keri and Carolee Wright, Christoph and Tamar Gerbershagen, Dr. Saria Almarzook, Barbara Cole, and other Forum participants.

(Note: *Morocco - A Country of Horses* by Monika Savier, is an excellent reference article and can be found in the 2015 Straight Egyptian Arabians issue of *Desert Heritage*).

AFTERTHOUGHTS BY THE FORUM'S SPEAKERS.

Youcef Laghzal

President, Pyramid Society Morocco
Breeder, Shahada Stud
Domaine Al Baraka Zawia
Saiss, Morocco



The first impression during this forum was the warm, family atmosphere of all the people invited and present on site. There was a real pleasure in meeting and discussing horses, breeding, and passion around horses. At the end of the forum and during the cocktail dinner I had the impression that no one wanted to leave the place ... that a certain person named Judith Forbis had praised the place with her generosity and caring passion - always responding and giving her energy to satisfy the curiosity of breeders. In summary, the days that followed were for me and I think for most of the guests, a timeless moment where the Arabian horse once again demonstrated its ability to magnify human relationships by giving them an unparalleled sincerity. I am still more convinced that the Horse is our bond and that its future depends only on our capacity for camaraderie and friendship beyond borders.

Judith Forbis

Co-founder of The Pyramid Society, Trustee
Author, International Judge, Breeder,
Ansata Arabian Stud, Ansata Publications
Mena, Arkansas, USA



We stand on the shoulders of those who've gone before us. My presentation demonstrated - especially to newcomers - that lasting contributions to the breed have been made by dedicated long-term breeders. Because Ansata bloodlines form the basis of many foundation Straight Egyptian farms worldwide, and are influential in breeding programs of other bloodlines, the breeding principles used by Ansata were shown to demonstrate useful methods if implemented with care. The values of inbreeding, linebreeding, and outcrossing that produced world-class breeding and show stock were discussed along with photographs and pedigrees. We learn from experience - painful that it may sometimes be - what works or doesn't work. There is no success without successors, and the enthusiasm of this forum's attendees was a joy to see. Forums like this can indeed - as a Moroccan proverb states - "turn ears into eyes" for breeders that see and act wisely in developing their breeding programs.

Edouard Al Dahdah

Chief Economist at the World Bank

Breeder, Author

Senegal, Africa



The first seminar in my view, was a resounding success. The two well-illustrated and substantive presentations that Judith Forbis made about her lifelong trajectory with Egyptian horses and about the art and science of breeding horses of the highest caliber were well received by an audience of mostly newcomers from Morocco, and more seasoned breeders from Europe and the USA. My own presentation was closely coordinated with Judith's. It demonstrated the remarkable consistency in type and structured over four hundred years of art, literature and travel descriptions about Arabian horses, in Egypt and in Arabia, with a focus on the stud of Abbas Pasha I. The energy, curiosity, dynamism and eagerness to learn of the new generation of Moroccan breeders of Egyptian horses was inspiring and affirming. So was their belief that the lessons for the future are best found in the glorious past.

Dr. Saria Almarzook

Equine Geneticist, Researcher and Lecturer

Berlin, Germany



As a geneticist and a bilingual speaker, the significance of engaging with Arabian horse breeders from both the "East" and "West" resonated deeply. The forum acted as a melting pot of knowledge exchange, from ancestral lineages to cutting-edge breeding techniques. Each interaction unveiled the nuanced intricacies of safeguarding the Arabian horse's legacy amidst contemporary breeding challenges. Delivering my speech on the genetics and basics of the genetic mosaic of Arabian horses was an unparalleled opportunity for me to bridge academic knowledge with practical application. The event transcended geographical boundaries. As we ventured through the diverse landscapes of Shahada, Elaaz, Alfawaress, and Menara studs, we witnessed firsthand the kaleidoscope of breeding experiments and conformation traits. The myriad opinions exchanged underscored the dynamic nature of the "cosmopolitan" Arabian horse breeding community, where tradition harmonizes with innovation in an unending quest for perfection.



Keri Wright

President of the Pyramid Society Foundation,
Breeder, Cariswood Arabians
Las Cruces, New Mexico, USA



As we flew in to Casablanca I remembered Marguerite Henry's story King of the Wind. Each time Mom read from it I entered the world of the Arabian horse named Sham and the little mute groom, Agba. It was a magical place. It all started in Morocco - and on arriving here, I felt as though I'd come home. Watching the presentation of horses on the farm tours, I marveled that we were gathered here from many nations. And what draws us together? The Egyptian Arabian horse. We get each other! Whether it's the joy of a new foal, sorrow of a recent loss, hope for the future, the unity we find in studying horses and pedigrees, the thrill of a recent win or reminiscing about good times and the joint history we share, we're People of the Horse and we love the camaraderie we share with humans and horses alike.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE FORUM'S GUESTS.

William Richardot de Choisey

Founder European and World Arabian Horse Championship - Paris, WAHO Life Member, Consultant, Technical Counsellor Spodex, Paris, France

Those authorities who in years past established Egyptian Arabians here in Morocco would be happy if they could see the recovery of these bloodlines taking place here today. The Pyramid Society Morocco under the leadership of its President, himself a renowned breeder, aptly scheduled the 1st Arabian Horse Breeders Forum which highlighted the Straight Egyptian Arabian horse and attracted international participants. The quality of the program was ensured with the participation of personalities renowned for their knowledge, and with visits to several breeding farms. With good reason we must maintain the positive impact of this 1st Forum by scheduling a 2nd Forum that addresses the daily life of breeding, choice of bloodlines, foaling, feeding, the relationship to the breed standard, marketing, competitions, and other important subjects. My compliments to the Pyramid Society Morocco for this event which is a real spotlight in the diaspora of the global Arabian horse industry.

Nicole Sachs

Artist, Sculptor, Author, Photographer, Hannover, Germany

There was a strong feeling of much fresh energy and enthusiasm at the Breeders Forum in Morocco. There is an impulse to continue to initiate events of this kind (Forum as well as stud visits) - also as an alternative to show events - and strengthen the Straight Egyptian Arabian community. There is a need for getting together and working together. Farm tours and open houses are a wonderful instrument for creating the feeling of being part of a big Straight Egyptian family. I found it interesting to see the contribution that stallions and mares, that were





bought in Europe long ago, have made to the Straight Egyptian breeding in Morocco. It was also a pleasure to notice the interest in ridden horses at the stallions presentation after the Forum, breeders telling that they enjoy riding and hearing about lovely rides at the beach. Needless to mention how enchanting the Moroccan hospitality has been!

Christoph and Tamar Gerbershagen

Breeder, Goschenhof Arabians, Wassertrudingen, Germany

We really enjoyed the event and were glad to see so many wonderful people and horses. It showed us once again how important it is to meet other breeders, share ideas, listen and tell stories, admire horses and stud farms. It's nice to learn from the experiences of older and experienced breeders and to try out the most convincing arguments in parallel with one's own breeding program. It was also helpful to look at the horses and read their pedigrees at the same time and decide for yourself which pairing is the right one. We would also like to highlight the harmony and friendliness among each other and the extremely warm hospitality. It's important to recognize what noble creatures we are dealing with and to respect and be grateful to our Creator God. Our horses should be a link to the good in our community.

Maya Jones

Breeder, Al Jabal Arabians, Switzerland and France

I can't thank the Pyramid Society of Morocco and their enthusiastic breeders enough, to organise such a wonderful and educational event with such high class speakers. On top of the educational experience, the Society organised fantastic farm tours with outstanding hospitality. I can just hope that this event was the first of many more to come.

Barbara A. Cole

Breeder, Attorney at Law, Plano, Texas, USA

The first notes of the theme song from the movie Casablanca ring true: "You must remember this" - The First Arabian Horse Breeders Forum 2024.

With gratitude we remember the Pyramid Society of Morocco's efforts for our education, inspiration and comfort during our time at the forum, the farms, and our stay at Koheilan Lodge and Mazagan Resort. Each farm greeted us with elaborate tents adorned with paintings, rugs, tea service, dining tables and food fit for royalty. The decorative colors were vibrant, matching the mood of the hosts and guests. The desire to breed horses of quality, balance and harmony was evident in each farm visit. The farm catalogs allowed us to study the pedigrees and familiarize ourselves with foundation breeding stock brought forward by each breeder's decision making. I am certain I speak for our entire group, our time in Morocco will be remembered with fondness, friendship, and beauty... "As Time Goes By"!

Jane Winegardner

Breeder, Arabians and Thoroughbreds, Lexington, Kentucky, USA

The lecture given by Judith Forbis was of particular interest as it covered the bloodlines of the Egyptian Arabian. She has proven through her breeding program that line breeding and inbreeding can consistently produce outstanding



individuals that are genetically prepotent. Further, that you must start with a knowledge of the bloodlines and animals that have good conformation if you wish to improve the breed. After the forum we toured several Arabian farms. Our hosts treated us like royalty as we sat under colorful tents while the horses were being shown, then dining on lavish displays of indigenous Moroccan cuisine.

Carolee Wright

Breeder, Cariswood Arabians, Las Cruces, New Mexico, USA

I was privileged to be part of the gathering of Arabian horse enthusiasts from around the world which convened in Morocco, a land that defied desert stereotypes with its lush agriculture and majestic mountains. The country's artistic heritage, diverse culture and warm hospitality left a lasting impression on me. Farms and owners welcomed us with delicious food, mint tea, captivating music as well as visual and living art. The horses surpassed all expectations, and the forum, led by four experts, overflowed with wisdom. Amidst the stunning architecture of the Mazagan Hotel, horses were paraded on the verdant green lawns beside the Atlantic Ocean. It was a moment etched in my heart's memory.

Diana Cantey

Breeder, Zajaddi Egyptian Arabians, Mount Vernon, Arkansas, USA

The Pyramid Society of Morocco should be commended for their outstanding organization and successful implementation of the Straight Egyptian Arabian Horse Breeder's Forum. It was an opportunity to meet new and established breeders, catch up with international friends and celebrate in a non-competitive, relaxed environment. The speakers were all interesting, the venue was top notch, and the hospitality made us feel very welcome. I hope they will consider doing it again in the future.





