

Jewels of the Desert

PHOTOS BY JUDITH WICH

EXCERPTED FROM THE BOOK, "JEWELS OF THE DESERT — THE MAGIC OF EGYPTIAN ARABIANS" BY JUDITH WICH

WHEN YOU COME TO PARADISE, YOU WILL MEET A WINGED RUBY-COLORED HORSE TO MOUNT AND TO FLY WHEREVER YOU WANT.
— AL-DAMIRI

THE BEAUTY AND CHARISMA OF EGYPTIAN ARABIAN HORSES HAVE ALWAYS INSPIRED POETS AND WRITERS. AN OLD TALE RELATES THE STORY OF A FABLED STUD FARM THAT WAS LIKE A TREASURE TROVE. THE STABLES WERE FILLED WITH THE NOBLEST ARABIAN HORSES. IT WAS SAID THAT THESE ARABIANS WERE OF FLAWLESS DESCENT, PURE LIKE DIAMONDS. THEY WERE CAREFULLY SELECTED FROM THE BEST DESERT LINES AND HAD BEEN HARD TO FIND, LIKE THE RAREST OF GEMS. THEIR BEAUTY WAS MESMERIZING — THEY HAD EYES AS DARK AS ONYX AND THEIR SILKEN COATS SHIMMERED, LUSTROUS LIKE PEARLS. WHEN CHALLENGED, THESE ARABIANS PROVED TO HAVE ALMOST ENDLESS STAMINA AND BONES AS DENSE AS IVORY. THUS PEOPLE CALLED THEM "JEWELS OF THE DESERT."



The Egyptian Arabian has a long and eventful history. While we do not know the exact origin of the Arabian horse, one thing is for sure: everything began in the almost unending expanse of the Arabian Peninsula. The harsh environment there demanded the evolution of a superior equine with exceptional endurance and intelligence. Life in the desert meant often going for many days with little food and water. If any horse was to survive in this unforgiving terrain, it had to adapt to its surroundings. Anything superfluous such as a large body or fat melted away under the desert sun. Thus a horse of great physical fortitude developed, with thin skin and a perfectly balanced body. The final outcome was the Arabian horse we know — an athlete with refinement, elegance, and hardiness.

The Bedouins' life was also a daily struggle for survival. They needed a very reliable companion in order to survive. The intimate coexistence between man and animal demanded a horse with a kind, friendly disposition. Arabians of noble origin meant a lot to the Bedouins: their horses were their wealth and essential in

LEFT TO RIGHT: **GHAZALAH** (*AL ADEED AL SHAQAB X NAJDIYAH), OWNED BY AL RAYAH ARABIAN STUD, KUWAIT, AND **FARASHA AL RAYYAN** (ASHHAL AL RAYYAN X CLASSIC FARIDA), OWNED BY AL SHARQ FARM, KUWAIT.

2 • PYRAMID • WORLD

ANSATA OSIRON (ANSATA IEMHOTEP X ANSATA SELKET), OWNED BY AL ARAB STUD, KUWAIT.



times of war and peace. Raids against other tribes played an important role in nomadic culture. During these battles, the Bedouins' lives depended on the bravery, courage, and swiftness of their mounts. So it comes as no surprise that the Arabian horse unites both gentleness and bravery. An old Arabic poem summarizes this phenomenon:

*Be composed and your horse will be serene —
charge him, and he will fly.*

Arabian horses were known in Egypt for centuries. The modern Egyptian Arabians, however, descend from desert horses who were imported to the land of the Nile in the early 1800s as spoils of war, and later as gifts or purchases. New breeding programs of unimaginable proportions developed. Legendary Arabians were born and dynasties unfolded. High-quality horses from regions like the current Saudi Arabia, Syria, Bahrain, etc. were imported continually. Egyptian breeders possessed talent and passion. They developed a valuable genetic pool and became the guardians of precious lines and families.

Breeding Egyptian Arabians today does not mean to imply that they are better than other bloodlines. However, Egyptians are a proven and prepotent source of desirable characteristics. They represent a small nucleus that must be preserved for the future. Only four percent of the hundreds of thousands of registered Arabians are straight Egyptians. Nevertheless, they play a key role in the international array of shows. For example, Egyptian Arabians have been incredibly successful at the World Championships in Paris in recent years. They won nearly 50 percent of all titles, with that number climbing to almost 70 percent if Egyptian-sired champions are included.



WAFAA ELKUWAIT (ANSATA HEJAZI X ANSATA WHITE NILE), OWNED BY ARABIAN HORSE CENTER, KUWAIT.

3 • PYRAMID • WORLD





TOP LEFT: **TARAF AL NAIF** (SAFIR X BINT BINT IBTISSAM), OWNED BY AJMAL STUD, KUWAIT.

TOP RIGHT: **ANSATA AZALI** (ANSATA IEMHOTEP X BINT FARAS AZALI), OWNED BY ORIENTA ARABIANS, GERMANY.

BOTTOM: **ANSATA MALAHA** (ANSATA HALIM SHAH X ANSATA MALIKA), OWNED BY AL SHAQAB STUD, QATAR.

Egyptian Arabians are different in many ways. Due to their high intelligence, they must be treated with great sensitivity and respect. Besides that, Egyptians are often slow to mature; some reach five or six years, or more, before they develop their full potential. But as an Arabian proverb says: Patience is the key to happiness.

Royals and kings, sheikhs and emirs have been captivated by Egyptian Arabians — from times past to the present day. Egyptians are faithful companions and a pleasure to watch — at home or at shows. They are

kind friends for children or athletic partners at sports competitions, gifted with a versatility that cannot fail to amaze and charm!

Egyptians have made a triumphant march around the world. They touch people's hearts and their magnetism transcends the laws of time and space. Egyptian Arabians are treasures, just as the old tale says. True jewels of the desert.

Oriente Publications, Eichenbühl 26, 96352 Wilhelmsthal, Germany
www.OrientePublications.com, ISBN 978-3-9811137-0-9 © 2008 Judith Wich

Jewels of the Desert, a must-have for every Arabian horse enthusiast, includes a short history of the Egyptian Arabian horse as well as a pictorial journey to spectacular stud farms in the Arabian Gulf.

Containing 176 pages, it is available through The Pyramid Society for \$95.00, plus s/h.

