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photos by EAO, Erwin Escher, Dr. Nasr Marei, Yasmine Shaarawi

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An Interview with Ahmed Hamza Chairman of the EAO

The Egyptian Agricultural Organization (EAO) originally the Royal Agricultural Society RAS has been regarded for over 100 years as the Source of Egyptian Arabian Horse breeding. Occasionally it has had a troubled existence fighting to survive through political upheaval and changing fortunes through the years. However, to many breeders, the image of EAO conjures the image of great history with the names of the incomparable stallions and mares who founded the dynasties which are still thriving today throughout the world. There is a mystique to the farms, the old photos and the descendants of the original horses that is evident even today among breeders throughout the world.

Since the mid 19th century, the Arabian Horse was the provenance of nobility with the breeding being carried on by the rulers of Egypt through their private farms and later the RAS. The Royal Stables of Kafr Farouk and Inshass are still highlighted in pedigrees that trace their roots through Egyptian breeding. It was only through the love and devotion of many of these people that we still have the Egyptian Arabian Horse. They preserved the precious bloodlines very often to their own detriment.

A group of highly devoted people struggled and managed to save the Egyptian Arabian at its time of great crisis. In 1952, after the deposition of King Farouk, the RAS became the Egyptian Agricultural Organization. Through the turmoil of the 50's and the 60's many of the horses suffered a terrible fate. One of the people who strove to rescue and preserve the horses was Ahmed Pasha Hamza, a great horseman and former Minister of Agriculture who had been breeding his own pedigreed horses since 1942.

One of the most memorable stories from that period was the repeated rescues of the stallion Hamdan (Ibn Rabdan x Radia) who was purchased at auction by Hamza Pasha at the dispersal of the EAO horses when the stallion was desperately ill and quite literally at death's door. With care, love and his own incomparable will to live, the magnificent Hamdan survived and became the treasure of Hamza Pasha's life. During a particularly difficult period in the mid 60's, a starving and dying Hamdan was hours away from being fed to the lions at the zoo when he was rescued through the efforts of Sara Loken and Doug Marshall. He was not allowed to return to his farm but ended his days at the EAO with dignity at the advanced age of 31 years



where Dr. Mohamed Marsafi stabled him in the Stallion Barn.

The foundation mares of Hamdan Stud were Bint Yosreia (the last of her line at the EAO) as well as the three Tahawy mares: Fulla, Futna and Bint Barakat who were the only Tahawy mares ever recognized by WAHO and the Pyramid Society as Straight Egyptians. The Farm still exists today under the care of the grandson of Hamza Pasha and his daughters.

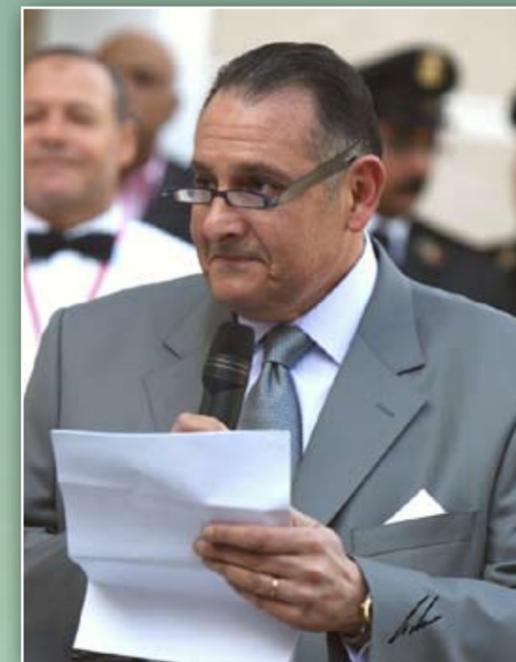
The newly appointed Chairman of EAO Ahmed Hamza is carrying on the tradition of his grandfather by embarking on an ambitious multi-faceted program which he hopes will return the EAO to what he refers to as "The Days of Glory of El Zabara".

In a recent interview with Mr. Hamza, he reminisced about the great love for horses that he experienced all of his life through his grandfather and father. When he was most actively involved with Hamdan day to day operations, their leading stallions were: Ashour (Anter x Aida by Nazeer), Seif El Din (Shaarawi x Bint Yosreia by Nazeer) and Marshall, affectionately known as "Joe", a well known racing stallion out of Bint Fulla (Hamdan x Fulla). Today the farm is under the care of the same staff who has been with them throughout the years.

PC: You are coming to this position at a time of major decision for the programs of the EAO. Even though your appointment is relatively new, you have been involved with the EAO as a private breeder for nearly thirty years

how do you view your role at this point in your tenure?

AH: I recognize that this is a tremendous responsibility which I do not take lightly at all. My primary concern now is that I want to do everything I can to run the EAO in the best interests of Egypt. I want to put El Zabara in its rightful place in the Egyptian breeding world so that we again command the respect that we have known. I am trying seriously to remedy many of the mistakes which were made in previous years without putting blame on anyone.



Ahmed Hamza Chairman of the EAO at Nov. Show

PC: What are some of the areas in which you will try to effect change?

AH: To begin with, I am tightening the administration. Things were quite loose and so I am establishing lines of accountability. Too many things were handled with a lack of care and left to chance. One of the primary functions of El Zabara is the registry of the horses. The mechanics were often taking too long and breeders had to wait for paperwork and their official certificates. Of course, we have grown to an unimagined number of farms

with 480 currently accredited. And so, we have upgraded the procedures and incorporated the DNA testing and reporting into the tighter processing.

PC: One of the areas that concern the breeders is veterinary care at their own farms. With the increasing number of breeders and horses, the availability of knowledgeable and experienced vets is lagging behind. What are your plans in regard to making information and training available?

AH: Without question, one of the most important areas to be addressed is the veterinary care both here at El Zabara



EAO Mare Paddock

and at the farms. We need to have proper and effective medicines and proper training for the veterinarians. Protocols will be established with other countries so that we can take advantage of any advances being made. We will be able to have an exchange of doctors, farriers, trainers and even grooms. It is essential that people learn to do their jobs with the latest knowledge and techniques.

One of the first areas to be addressed is that we will have available imported vaccines for the first time. We will have Flovac and the multi-vaccines that are necessary to establish immunity and protection for the horses. Last year we had a serious outbreak of influenza that came in from outside the country with some racing horses. Hopefully we will be able to handle a situation like that much better from now on with information and medicines.

PC: Another area of concern is the feeding of the horses. How will you handle what could be a problem both of supply and quality at El Zahraa and for the breeders as well?

AH: It is part of the over-all health care that we have to improve. We are going to study nutrition and learn the best approach to feeding and the right rations for the horses. With so many new farms and horses, we have to make better use of the feed that is available in order to maximize

the benefits. The growing population of horses will require that we use all of our capabilities.

PC: Now we come to the key area that is on the mind of all Egyptian Arabian breeders. It is widely acknowledged that the EAO has most definitely lost a lot of its prestige and command of the breeding world in general. What will you be able to do to remedy this and what is going to happen with the breeding program of the EAO?

AH: I recognize that this is the crucial thing that I have to deal with. The EAO is most definitely not what it has been or what it should be. I am not putting blame on any individual or administration. The decline over the past years has been the result of bad administration and poor breeding decisions. In many cases they were not even decisions. Mares and stallions were put together with no clear goal in mind.

We still do have a good number of excellent mares such as Tee who is the daughter of two of our most well known horses: Adl and Bint Ibtisam who is regarded by many as the Queen of El Zahraa. We also have some strong old bloodlines carrying through in: Karamella (Omayr x Karma), Rasha (Rashdan x Enayat by Adl) and Akham (Serag El Din x Irtihal). My dream is that we can breed another Safinaz and of course, another Moniet El Nefous.

Among stallions we are still using those who have produced well for us including: Baydoun (Gad Allah x Bint Ibtisam), Rawwah (Rashdan x Ramiah) '97 and Serag El Din (Mourad x Safinaz). One of our most promising young stallions is Tagweed (Gad Allah x Tee) is under great demand by the breeders.

PC: How will breeding decisions be made and who will be involved? Which lines will you focus on?

AH: We have a Board of Trustees which consists of Dr. Ibrahim Zaghloul, the former Director General of Al Zahraa, Dr. Nasr Marei and myself along with some of the senior veterinarians. We will take counsel from breeders but for the time being, I will be making the final decisions. We will focus on our premier bloodlines that trace back to the great horses that formed the treasury of the EAO. We



Rawwah (Rashdan x Ramiah) - stallion

have already approved of AI here in Egypt, but we lack the proper facilities for doing this at El Zahraa. I am trying to raise funding that can help with this and in the meantime we are collecting semen from the leading stallions so we will be prepared when we are correctly equipped.

PC: There has been a lot of discussion among the breeders about the possibility of bringing in outside stallions tracing back to the original horses. From what I have heard, there are strong and mixed feelings on this subject. Where do you stand on this subject?

AH: We recognize that there are extremely strong feelings on this issue. It is something that is under active consideration but I can tell you honestly that no decisions have been made. If in fact it does happen, there would have to be extreme care taken to insure that it would be done only in limited cases and only for the betterment of the breeding program. We are aware that EAO still is the source of so much of the breeding in the Arabian horse world and as such all decisions will be made to benefit the Straight Egyptian and return our position in that world.

We have to carefully study the pedigrees as well as the in-

dividual horse to understand what works and why certain matches look right. We are in the process of cleaning out what is no longer relevant and making a stronger foundation.

PC: You recently held an auction for 27 females and 28 males. The prices were mixed with some mares going for good prices such as an Adl daughter in foal to Shamsun and two fillies by Rawwah and the highest price going to a Gondoul filly. In recent years, all sales have been made at the two auctions that are held with no private treaty sales. As you raise the standards again, how will outside breeders be able to purchase EAO horses to continue the heritage outside of Egypt?

AH: We hold these auctions in order to sell those horses for whom we have duplications or else those for whom we have close replacements. This last auction was extremely



Tagweed (Gad Allah x Tee) - stallion



successful as we sold some very good horses to breeders to incorporate in their programs and still managed to earn over \$1,000,000. As for private treaty, I insist that we have complete transparency in our dealings and so we are exploring the possibilities of selling privately again but with very strict regulations. We can not afford to deplete our blood lines again.

PC: What do you consider the function of the EAO towards the breeders?

AH: We must do everything to re-establish the EAO as the center of Straight Egyptian breeding. As an organization, we must function efficiently regarding the Registry and all official procedures. One area that we have already improved is the importation and exportation of the horses. The procedures at the Customs Department have been streamlined so that horses will not have to stay in quarantine for long periods. The owner will place a certified check in escrow to cover the duties to be charged. He will be able to take the horse to the farm immediately. That is already in place.

The Veterinary Department is being revised so that they will recognize the passport including medical history and all papers of the horse as is standard in other countries. This is in the process of being put in place.

Another basic function is to educate the breeders of all facets on the horse and its care. We have so many new people who have come into this without the proper knowledge and background of what is involved. I want to be able to do workshops and seminars so that breeders will be able to make informed decisions on breeding programs, health care, training and showing. They need to learn to see their horses objectively as the judges do. They need to know what to bring to the show and how to win or lose with respect



Bint Ibtisam (Akhtal x Ibtisam) - mare

and dignity. In every class there is only one winner and some days the horse may not show as he did another day. When I was actively showing, there were good days and bad days but that is how one learns and it must be done with grace

The world of Egyptian breeding is not only about shows. It is a life style and it must be done with ethics and principles. The horse comes from the world of nobility and it should be treated in that way.

PC: These are very ambitious programs you are trying to put into action. How are you going to be able to do this?

AH: With the help of well intentioned horse people, I hope to implement as much of this as I can. Fortunately, I have the great aid and support of H.E. Amin Abaza, the Minister of Agriculture. He is quite knowledgeable enthusiastic about what we are doing and he comes from a family history of strong involvement. His uncle, Fouad Pasha Abaza was Director General of the RAS back in the early 1930's and he cares about returning the EAO to its position in the world of breeding by helping to implement the government approval to these programs.

PC: For a number of years, there has been talk about moving El Zahraa to another location. If in fact you do this, will you be able to maintain the history and nostalgia that is so strong among many of the visitors throughout the years?

AH: The decision has been made to move but it will take some time to do it the way we need to. The current setting has become overrun due to crowding from outside the facility. The project is now under the auspices of three Ministries: Agriculture, Tourism and Housing & Development. It will be an enormous project of everything that is equine



Breeder "comments"

related including: a race track, polo field, hotels and a museum. However, El Zahraa will be the centerpiece of the project with 507 fully developed acres allotted to us. We will have much more room to house the horses and provide pastures so that they can be free for long periods of time. We will do everything possible to keep the heritage in tact while improving the facilities for the horses.

I recognize that this is an enormous task but I feel that I must do whatever I can to bring El Zahraa and its horses to a return to the Glory Days we have enjoyed. With the help of good people who care about the tremendous legacy and history we have here, I am hoping to make a real contribution to the Egyptian Arabian Horse. □

Ali and Yasmine Shaarawi, Shaarawi Arabians

Although Ali Shaarawi has had a life long involvement with horses, he has been seriously breeding his own program of Straight Egyptians for over 20 years. His philosophy is to preserve certain lines of Inshass and RAS bloodlines and to improve within them. He especially favors the Moniet El Nefous family for type and fine bones as well as the Bint Samiha line for strength and movement. Ali strongly favors an approach to preserving the extraordinary look of Maaroufa, the treasured mare of Prince Mohamed Ali. He feels that the horses of today must represent their ancestors or there will not be a sufficient gene pool to carry on.

PC: How do you view the EAO as a factor in your breeding program?

AS: To my thinking, in the same way that the Nile is the source of all water to Egypt, the EAO is the source of these bloodlines for all Straight Egyptian breeders throughout the world. As I study the history, I still believe that the Inshass horses brought the strength and power to add to the conformation of the RAS horses. The bloodlines that I focus on are still the old lines coming from Mabrousa Insh. through Magidaa as well as Shaad Insh. for size and type and most recently, from the Bint El Bahreyn lines through

Dalal and Maisa for stamina. It was very hard to find these bloodlines since most of it was exported and so we brought it back from Canada and the U.S.

I have always been most interested and preserving the best of Inshass because that is our heritage. And then through great serendipity, I met my wife Yasmine who is the grand daughter of King Farouk. Together we have an even greater passion to conserve and protect this extraordinary resource of history and tradition.

We have been using EAO blood through the years by breeding to some of their stallions. And recently we have introduced the young stallion Turath (El Ragel x Tobama) to see how he will cross with my mares. It is still early on but we are getting a range of results that I will continue to develop. The EAO is in a difficult situation but they still have great potential with some very good mares. These mares have good toplines and hind quarters and well as good balance. You can still find the classic type along with good legs that you do not often find outside.

The EAO is still a unique resource because it has been closed to outside and so the genetic pool of SE's is small. It can provide the World with horses to regenerate the horse of today. El Zahraa will always be the place to go when breeders realize that they need to use a crossbreeding in their modern programs.

PC: What do you feel that the EAO can do to help the breeders?

AS: The EAO needs to maintain the integrity of the SE by preserving and improving from within. They need to go back to a solid program based on research and analysis of what we already have with no expectations of fast results. If we all succeed, it will help the Arab breeders worldwide not only in Egypt.

We as breeders expect help from them as the Mother Farm



for SEs. In addition to preservation and improvement of their program, we need help from them in all areas of horse care including vets, medicines and vaccinations, dentists, farriers who know how to correct problems, nutrition and especially a research lab for evaluating blood and fecal samples as well as researching new viruses so we know how to treat them.

It is a large scope to areas to cover but it is truly critical for the world of the Straight Egyptian to continue its unique heritage and continue into the future.

Mohsen El Gabry, El Gabry Stud

PC: You have been a serious breeder of Straight Egyptians for nearly fifteen years beginning exclusively with EAO lines. In recent years you have imported a substantial number of outside horses all with the EAO lines in their pedigrees. What are your reasons for doing this?

MG: Of course I started with all EAO lines. To me they will always be the best. The EAO is the Center for all SE breeders. When I want "type" and "movement", I will always go the EAO blood. That is why I concentrated on Bint Ibtisam, Alaa El Din and Bint Bukra blood for "type". I go to the Adeeb line for "body" and to Akhtal lines for "movement".

I have been bringing outside horses because a lot of what I want is no longer at El Zahraa. The bloodlines are there but not the individual horses. For a number of years, the breeding there was done with no knowledge of past history of the different lines, pedigrees or good conformation. They kept making the same mistakes because of either bad decisions or no decisions.



Tee (Adl x Bint Ibtisam) - mare

They still have some wonderful mares like Tee (Adl x Bint Ibtisam), Mangooma (Gad Allah x Wadba) and a Rashdan daughter named Zaada. But they must look for stallions. If they decide to bring in some outside stallions, they must all be EAO blood and only those that are needed to fill in the program.

The horses at EAO also need to be put into better condition. They need good veterinary care and nutrition. They should bring in good trainers to make the horses into something that can be shown outside so that other breeders can see who we really are in Egypt.

PC: How do you feel the EAO can help the individual breeders?

MG: By making the breeding program the best it can be. They need to help new breeders with good information. We need a lab to do all the

testing we can't get done properly. We need a good hospital that we all can use. Maybe they could make an auction to help the breeders to sell their horses because with all the new farms, it is too much to do by ourselves.

The breeders do a lot to support and help the EAO because it is our home. Now the EAO must give something back to help us do our jobs well. We all must do whatever we can to be sure that the Straight Egyptian horse can live forever.

Sh. Khaled bin Laden, Rabab Stud

Since the early 1980's, Sh. Khaled bin Laden has had a great passion for breeding the horse which captures his view of the heritage and great persona of the Egyptian horse. Through the years, his program and vision have evolved into a collection of horses which exemplify type, movement, beauty and the charisma which appeal to his image of the horse. Originally breeding only from EAO horses, he has



been adding to the collection by bringing in horses from Europe and the United States but always with bloodlines tracing back to the originals. He has also been a great supporter of the EAO through the years by always participating in both National and International Shows.

PC: You have been a very involved breeder for nearly thirty years and seen many changes in the world of the Arabian horse. How do you view the EAO at this point in time?

KbL: The EAO should always be important to breeders as the repository for the bloodlines of the Straight Egyptian horse. Unfortunately, some of these lines have been lost because there were some people who were not aware of the need to preserve and the trust that they carried. The lines were either sold outside or lost through lack of a good breeding program. They should have been kept. Some of the blood is still there in Omayr, and the Ibknaton and Akhtal lines. And there are certainly some very good mares but there are gaps in what they have and what we can use. You can still see the wonderful mare Adalat who is a classic even at the age of 25. I have her grand daughter, Ya Halla Kheir to preserve that extraordinary line.

The weaknesses that come from what we have lost are obvious. Fortunately, Egyptian breeders have been able to bring back most of what was missing but we need to know whether the EAO is ready to cooperate to help in returning the rest of what was lost. There needs to be an exchange of strengths between the EAO and the local breeders so that the "Roots" of the Egyptian horse continues on his land. We also need to be aware that we need to preserve this "Virgin" or untouched horse because one day there will be a demand for them and they must be available in their own land. These horses must be kept away from shows and far from



Adalat (Ameer x Adaweya) - mare

the Mode of today's show horse. It is certainly alright to join in the show world but not at the expense of destroying the original horse forever.

I am currently using a three pronged breeding program. The largest division is using the SE horses that I am bringing from outside with my EAO bloodlines. I am carefully returning what I feel is missing from the stock that I have. The second group is all original EAO blood. I never breed them outside those lines and they are my strongest. The thing is that they bring the so called "flash" only once in a while like my two year old colt from Adl out of Nelly (Omayr x Anwa). But it is worth waiting for. The third group is SE mixed with some Polish blood to bring the flash that I need for the current show world.

Unfortunately, there are some new breeders who are not doing their own research and they are following the words and misinformation from people outside who have an agenda. They say that horses from certain lines are not good without having any real or factual information. Instead of just talking, they should bring their horses to the show grounds and beat what they say is "bad".

PC: How do you feel the EAO should help the breeders of today?

KbL: By strengthening their role as the Preserver of the Straight Egyptian Horse. They also need to support us by keeping an open mind on what can be done to improve our programs. For example, they allow the importation of stallions to be used on our farms and yet they do not allow the importation of frozen semen from these same stallions. There needs to be consistency and help for us to develop to be the best we can for the sake of the Egyptian horse. □