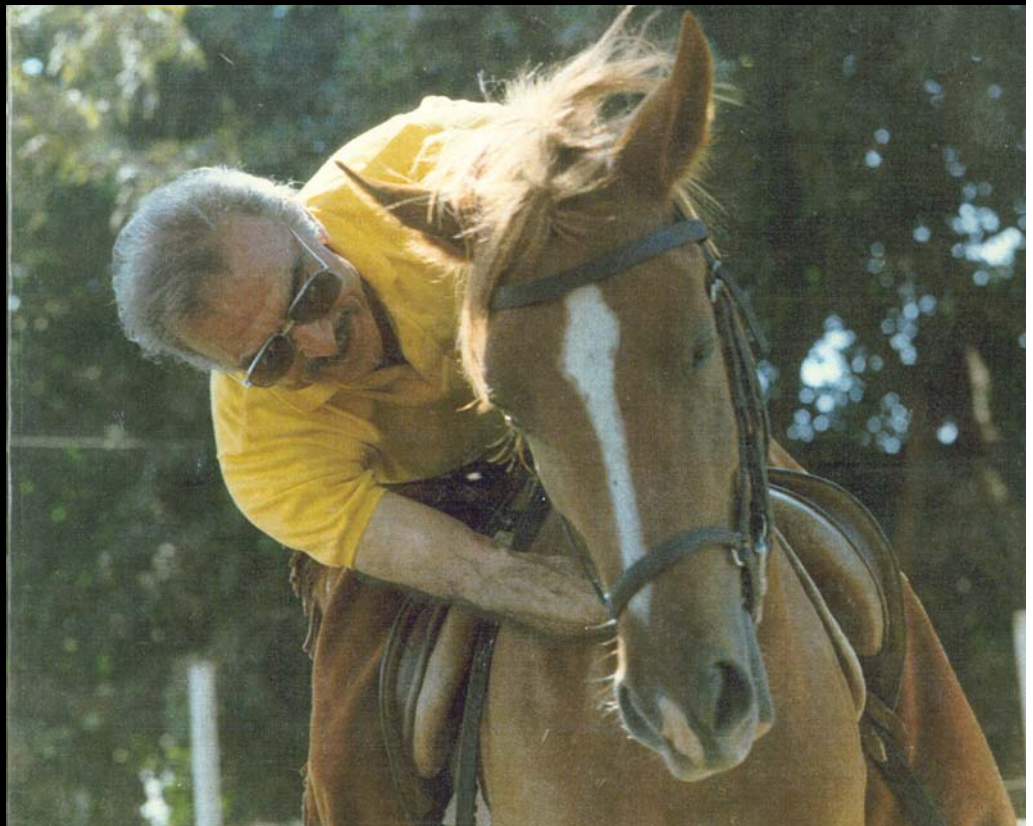


Ahmed Mazhar

A KNIGHT In SHINING Armor

By Mona Amin



To the Arab World, Ahmed Mazhar was considered one of the most important icons of the Egyptian cinema. He was an actor who managed to capture the hearts and minds of the public by starring in what many of us dub as the "classics". Those are the films that have carried the Egyptian film industry forward until this very day. If Mazhar was a star in the adoring public, he was even more so, to many riders in Egypt. His sheer dedication to the sport is what marked him.

One man who knew him well is Hussein Khairy. Their friendship dates back to when they were together at the Egyptian Royal Cavalry. Being a horseman himself, he knows exactly what it was that made Ahmed Mazhar stand out in the Egyptian Equestrian World. This is how he remembers him fondly... "Ahmed Mazhar was a gentleman in every sense of the word; he was courteous, dignified, and correct. He was always ready and willing to offer help and advice, whether it was in the realm of this sport or elsewhere. It was always performed and done with such sincerity and devotion. His advice has been invaluable to many riders, always stressing the importance of style, and the technical skills needed to achieve it". His knowledge about the technicalities and laws of international Show Jumping competitions was vast; he was instrumental in judging many show jumping events. He used to even take on the responsibility of designing many jumping courses himself.

When Ahmed Mazhar died he took away a special era; an era where dignity and honor were the norm and not the exception. Ahmed Mazhar was the personification of all this; he seemed to have touched the lives of so many of us leaving behind something very special for us to remember. In my case: magical childhood memories.

I had just arrived from England where I had been living, and having had the privilege of riding there, Egypt was an entirely different story. My uncle who is a horseman himself and finally given up on one of his racing horses, which I luckily ended up having. So there I was, an eleven

year old, with the most beautiful horse that had a temper of steel. A horse that earned a reputation of bolting off the most accomplished of riders at the Ferosia Club, a daily piece of entertainment indeed for a very amused audience. This was all happening in the Ferosia Club until a quiet, calm gentleman came along and offered his help. He, would train the horse and me, to be a bit more "civilized" and that, he did. That fine gentleman was Ahmed Mazhar. He was prepared to take time to train an eleven ear old, which he did on regular basis. His horse training methods were done with such grace, calm and patience that all the effort finally paid off: 'Fahr', my horse, was transformed.

The methods that Mazhar used in calming Fahr were numerous; it was a spectacular lesson that everyone watched and learned from. The whole exercise with the horse would evolve around one fact. You can get anything out of a happy contented horse that trusts its owner. So with each small progress that was made a reward, small carrot or lump of sugar, was offered to the horse. In jumping for instance, Fahr would stop to have his lump of sugar from Mazhar's pocket. He would keep a constant dialogue with the horse by talking to him and insist that I do the same. After riding he unsaddles the horse and leaves it to graze freely.

In short, Ahmed Mazhar was always trying to build slowly and surely this tremendous bond between the rider and the horse; a bond so strong that only horse lovers would understand. All this might sound common knowledge but you would be surprised to see many horse training methods that are very harsh not to mention vulgar. These methods are still used by some impatient riders. A very ennobled way to deal with a very noble animal.

So whilst everybody is remembering Ahmed Mazhar as a famous rider and actor; I have the honor to remember him as my riding instructor. A very important gentleman who was humble enough to train and instruct an eleven ear old on the gentle skills of riding ■

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