

THEN AND NOW

ENDURING BEAUTY – DR. NASR MAREI AND HIS LEGACY AL BADEIA STUD OVER THE YEARS

By Bridget McArdle McKinney





"A true horseman does not look at the horse with his eyes; he looks at his horse with his heart."

~ Author Unknown

Celebrating our 20th Anniversary we look back at the people, horses, events, and topics covered in HorseTimes, a true walk down Memory Lane. It reminds us that while so many things change, so much remains the same - our passion for horses, our love of horse sport in all of its forms, and our admiration for all of the stalwarts, experts and heroes of our profession who persevered through good times and bad to breed, train, and compete for the love of horses. One such hero is Dr. Nasr Marei, one of Egypt's greatest Arabian horse breeders, renowned Arabian horse judges, and published equine photographers, a horseman of great achievement and history, knowledge and grace.

AL BADEIA ARABIAN HORSE FARM

HorseTimes has been proud to showcase Dr. Nasr Marei over the years. Indeed, we've interviewed, highlighted and learned from Dr. Marei in no less than seven articles, starting with HT's very first issue, in an article entitled, *"An Arabian Affair"*.

Twenty years ago we wrote that Al Badeia Arabian Horse Farm is considered to be the oldest private breeding farm in Egypt. Located in Tere'et El Mansoureyia in Giza, the farm has specialized in breeding pure blood Arabians since it opened in 1935. Describing Dr. Marei we explained that he is an active member of the Egyptian Arabian Horse Breeders Association (EAHBA), and helps organize local shows as well as participate in them.

About his programme at that time he said, *"We breed according to the horses type and quality... It's been 10 years today since I started introducing my horses to local shows and the overall results are very honorable, a reassurance that I'm on the right track."*

In March 1998, Sakkara Country Club hosted the Tenth Annual Show for the EAHBA and Marei himself, participated with 14 of his horses. *"This is the 4th time in a row to win 1st place as far as number of classes and championships are concerned"* said Marei proudly. 13-year-old stallion Farid Al Badeia was a favorite among the judges. Having won 4 consecutive shows, his offspring too have had their share of success in the show ring.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF ARABIAN HORSE BREEDING IN EGYPT

Over a decade ago for our February 2006 Issue No. 19, Dr. Marei gave HT an exclusive in-depth interview that is a classic primer on the history and development of Arabian horse breeding in Egypt and Dr. Marei's own experience, extensive knowledge and breeding programme. Here are a few gems from that interview.

"I think a breeder is an artist in a way. With the gene pool you have in hand, I think that each serious breeder tries to portray or interpret a vision of what an Arabian horse should look like. I give you a canvas and a brush, provided you can paint, but everyone will draw a different Arabian horse. The talented or successful breeders have to be artists. They should have a feeling for the sense of beauty, balance, agility, and movement which composes a good horse. Some people are fixed on certain characteristics of an Arabian horse. Let's say, the head, beautiful big eyes, good forehead, small head, small ears, big nostrils and big jaws, which is really the description/quality of the perfect Arabian horse. But many breeders are really fixed on the head, completely forgetting the body and other elements that make a good horse. The horse is not a head, the horse is a WHOLE."

"My program is very dynamic I change every day. I have to be very thankful to what my father and grandfather did as I learned a great deal from them. When 'change' occurs, it should mean 'improving' and I do this without significantly affecting the characteristics of the 'Albadeia' type. The stagnant breeder in my view is not a good breeder. Once you are critical of yourself and your horse, then you shall improve."

THE CLASSIC ARABIAN

Next, over the course of 2006 and 2007, Dr. Marei graced our HT readership with a three-part series on a subject he knows best, *"The Classic Arabian"*, detailing the attributes, characteristics, and qualities of the Arabian show horse from an expert and experienced judge's point of view, including the chief points of judgement: type, movement, and head and neck. An Arabian horse judge's textbook on the subject written in his delightful and down-to-earth style, a true classic.

“THE ARABIAN HORSE OF EGYPT” - DR. MAREI’S BOOK OF EQUINE PHOTOGRAPHS

On top of being a top breeder, judge, and all-around good guy Dr. Marei is an expert equine photographer as well! In our summer 2010 edition we profiled his book of photographs in our article “Capturing a Free Spirit”. In 2010 Dr. Marei launched his impressive book of photographs entitled “The Arabian Horse of Egypt” published by American University in Cairo Press.

When asked what inspired him to publish such a book, Dr. Marei explained, *“My pictures capture some of the essence of this noble creature. It is my way to capture the free spirit, pride, beauty, and charisma of the horse and freeze that instant in time. By doing this I can relive it for years to come and share the passion and beauty with everyone. It satisfies my artistic and aesthetic love of the beauty that abounds in nature.”*

Which shows that Dr. Marei is a poet as well!

ARABIAN HORSE BREEDERS ASSOCIATION LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

In the Summer of 2013 (Issue 42) HT warmly applauded and congratulated Dr. Marei for his newest accolade and achievement, the prestigious 2013 Arabian Horse Breeders Association (ABHA) Lifetime Achievement Award. In offering its highest award, the ABHA paid tribute to the remarkable contributions and achievements of Dr. Marei with these words:

After obtaining his PhD in the USA, Dr. Nasr Marei returned to Egypt and a career as a professor in business. But his heart was always with the horses, and in 1990 Albadeia breeding programme began a new era under his direction. As the third generation Arabian horse lover dedicated to the breeding programme, he felt a great responsibility to carry on the heritage and legacy of Albadeia. Yet, Dr. Nasr Marei did much more than simply preserves the breeding programme. Through his discerning eye, astute breeding choices, and pure passion for the Arabian breed, he elevated Albadeia programme to new heights.

The rich and concentrated gene pool of the Albadeia herd ensured that the farm’s horses had a distinct look, yet Dr. Nasr searched the world to carefully add the blood of selected stallions that would refine and improve the existing qualities of the herd. His breeding decisions resulted in horses that garnered multiple national and international championships throughout the show rings of Egypt, Europe, and beyond, including the exquisite World Champion mare, Gelgelah Albadeia. The extraordinary horses bred by this historic farm have been exported to more than 17 countries around the world, and are influential not only in the realm of Egyptian Arabians, but within many of the world’s most notable breeding programs.

Along with the world-wide success of the Albadeia breeding program, Dr. Nasr Marei remains a tireless ambassador for the Arabian breed. Along with his father and brother Hassan, he was a founder of the Egyptian Breeders Association. He is also a life member of the World Arabian Horse Organization (WAHO), has held numerous positions within the European Conference of Arab Horse Organisations (ECAHO), including member of the Executive Committee and head of the Judging Systems Revision Group, and is a long-time member of The Pyramid Society, the premiere international breeders organization dedicated to the preservation, perpetuation and promotion of the Straight Egyptian Arabian horse.

As one of the most highly sought-after Arabian horse judges in the world, Nasr has judged more than 200 shows on five continents since 1990. These shows have included the breed’s most prestigious competitions, such as the World Championships in Paris, which he has judged six times, the Nation’s Cup, which he has judged 5 times, and many other important national and International shows.

The Arabian horse world is fortunate indeed for the enduring contributions of Dr. Nasr Marei and Albadeia Stud.

Indeed, he is! 🏠

‘I congratulate HorseTimes on its 20th Anniversary. I love the magazine and I love what Khaled has done. It’s an excellent magazine. He has done an excellent job’.
Dr. Nasr Marei

