

A BREEDING PHILOSOPHY

INTERVIEW WITH WIGDAN EL BARBARY

By Khaled Assem

“BREEDING IS AN ART”. THAT IS WHAT WIGDAN EL BARBARY CALLS IT. WIGDAN, KNOWN AS DANI, IS ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT BREEDERS OF ARABIAN HORSES IN EGYPT AND MOST PROBABLY, IN THE WORLD. AT NEARLY 80 YEARS OF AGE, DANI HAS BEHIND HER 8 GENERATIONS OF PURE BRED ARABIANS. WITH A MUCH FOCUSED VISION AND ENORMOUS DETERMINATION, DANI HAS TODAY SOME OF THE FINEST BRED LINES IN THE WORLD.



Dani:

When it comes to breeding, I work with my feelings and sentiments. This along with experience and knowledge is what defines a true and genuine breeder. For 8 generations I have worked very hard, day after day to build what I have today. 45 years of dedication to my dream and my passion.

My philosophy behind breeding is to preserve our heritage, our history and our culture. Culture is particularly important when breeding is involved because the two concepts are very interrelated.

Our Arabian horse has deeply rooted traits, qualities and characteristics; he is smart, alert, friendly, agile, tough, courageous, proud, and built for the desert. I am trying to keep all those traits when I think of breeding the Arabian horse. It is not about make-up or posing to the crowd.

A story that was misinterpreted by a few people is the story of ‘Al Mansour’; a horse that I bought a long time ago from Spain. I instantly fell in love with the horse while judging a class over there and even though the horse was disqualified from the show by another judge, I still bought



the horse to be a riding horse for me and actually, for so many years he was my friend and my companion. I never presented 'Al Mansour' in my breeding programme until he died, nor did I have any intention of showing him, and actually I never did; there were no shows at that time.

My dear friend Khaled bin Laden asked to use 'Al Mansour' to cover one of his mares on several occasions. Finally I agreed. The progeny of 'Al Mansour' was a beautiful mare named 'Al Shaimaa' whom we had some difficulty registering in the stud book.

Khaled asked me to enter 'Al Shaimaa' at one of the shows back then and I totally refused saying that, "we breed Arabian horses to represent our culture, our lines and our own vision of what an Arabian horse really is. If we do present 'Al Shaimaa' then we'll be defying our goal." Khaled and I discussed presenting 'Al Shaimaa' at some shows as she was such a beautiful horse, yet we both decided not to as this would defy our goal; promoting our vision of what an Arabian horse really is.

Things have changed since that time, the fact that they allowed imported Arabians to compete locally changed the whole concept, and consequently, there was no point in keeping 'Al Shaimaa' out of shows. This mare won Supreme Champion twice in row.

What you will read below are some words written by me some 40 years ago defining my perception and fears for the future. The future back then is our present today. I am still as adamant about my cause as I have been 40 years ago, I am still passionate about my cause, yet and unfortunately, my fears are much worse.

Guest editorial by
Wigdan El Barbary reprinted
from Arabian Horse World
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As you travel in pursuit of the Arabian horse, likely as not, one day you will meet Dani El Barbary. A well-known figure among international Arabian horse breeders; she is a WAHO member and a respected international judge. In 1983, she judged the Polish National Show at Janow Podlaski and the Salon du Cheval in Paris for the second year in a row. Dani El Barbary owns one of the few private breeding farms in Egypt, the Shams El Assil Stud, where she stands her Wagag son, Misk (X Nazeema).

He is the true and faithful companion and friend to whoever loves and keeps him. He is the father of all good horses in the world, and like symphony of pride, courage, grace, refinement, substance and power. This symphony is played at its best, very well studied and perfectly balanced. It is the work of God no man can do better. Stressing one note would be at the expense of another.

Here lie my fears. People love the Arabian horse. It's not difficult to do so, in fact it's hard not to. But people have to learn to love him the way he is, with his faults as



THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR GIVING ME THE CHANCE TO SHARE SOME OF MY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE ARABIAN HORSE WITH YOUR READERS. I AM NOT AT ALL AN AUTHORITY, AS YOU KNOW, OR MUCH OF A WRITER, BUT AS A LOVER AND BREEDER OF THE ARAB HORSE I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS SOME OF MY FEELINGS AND FEARS FOR HIM. TO ME THE ARABIAN HORSE IS THE DESERT HORSE; A NOBLE CREATURE AND THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CONQUEST OF MAN.

well as his good qualities. Of course, we all think he should be bred to perfection, but what is perfection? Perfection is relative to what one thinks or imagines, or needs.

Caught between everyone's beliefs, this heavenly gift of God will be lost. He is small, we say, he does not have much of a neck, he has not the greatest movement in the world, etc., etc. We seem to be always looking for faults, faults which could be in fact his qualities as a desert horse. The desert horse small and exquisite, dainty, dry, light, and very refined eats little, drinks little, is able to

fly without wings, carrying his friend in the vast and extremely hot deserts of Arabia. No sweat, no short breath, always



full of spirit and head high, with his fine, densely-boned legs that do not sink in the sand and graceful high movement like his desert companion the gazelle, for which he does not really need a long neck.

If everyone keeps on breeding him the

way we conceive he should be, instead of the way he was meant to be, we might as well honestly confess to ourselves, we are breeding a different beautiful horse to fit our needs of today, close to the

blood, but not the pure Arabian that over the years and ages has inspired kings

and sultans, poets and painters and to whom we owe all the good breeds of the world today.

I pray and hope that the breeders of pure Arabians will always keep in mind that he is a desert horse. He should be loved and appreciated for what he is really, because he simply cannot be better.

He, who keeps a mare for the love of God, is asking to he who prays, fasts, and gives the poor. This is one of the most beautiful holy sayings I have ever heard about the Arabian. He is blessed by God, and I believe that if we keep him as he is, pure as we can, for the love of God, we also will be blessed. **HT**