

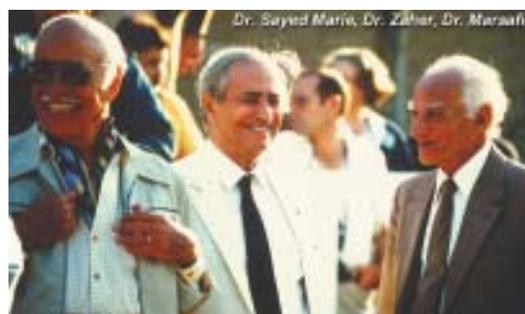
“Practice makes perfect”
 a saying, which throughout ages has lead great people to great victories. How much time may a person give to perfect something? Looking across the decades, one will notice many great men, remarkable institutions, and noble endeavors, but few will shine to rival those of EL Zahraa stud with its remarkable history and track line of supreme Arabian horses.



“Many men came together and put forth a standard of excellence. Today many men are coming back to celebrate 100 years of that excellence.”



Every man makes a difference and in the past century the notable men have significantly contributed to the equation of El Zahraa’s horse line. It all began with Dr. A. E. Branch, a Scotsman and a renowned horse breeder and veterinarian. Dr Branch was the first manager of the Royal Agricultural Society (RAS) stud farm. The stud farm was established at Bahtim near Heliopolis. Due to a definite lack of suitable stallions, the task of developing a breeding program became quite difficult for Dr. Branch. This lead to his trip to England in 1919 to purchase horses of the Ali Pasha Sherif’s strains. It was the first and last purchase import of Arabian horses that the RAS made from the western world.



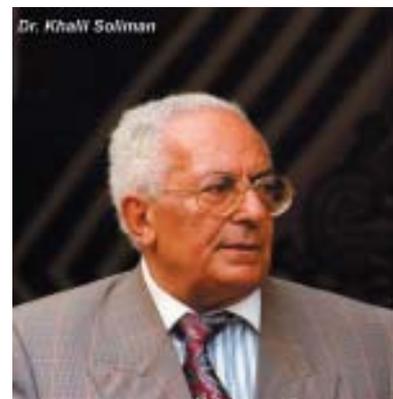
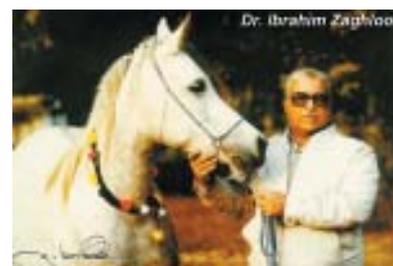
The stud farm was moved to Kafr Farouk at Ein Shams in 1930. Its proximity to the desert was ideal for the breeding of Arab horses. It was named “Kafr Farouk” honoring King Fouad’s son and heir Farouk. It gained a wide international reputation mainly from two specific export destinations, the USA and the Italian government.

Dr. Branch retired in mid 1930’s. The Board of the RAS, fearing the deterioration of their horses due to the continued inbreeding, sent Dr. Ahmed Mabrouk, then in charge of the stud farm, on a quest for possible additions of pure Arabian horses to the current line. He realized, after visiting Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon that Egypt reigned supreme in breeding classic Arabians and found no wisdom in acquiring inferior stock just because it was pure. Up until his time all records were being kept in English, Dr. Mabrouk, therefore, initiated an additional stud book in Arabic, which is the basic record system of the stud farm today.

Dr. Mabrouk and his successor Dr. Ashoub were both accompanied by the intelligent Dr. Ameen Zaher. He served as an irreplaceable consultant for many years and his experience from living in the USA was undeniably effective and evident in the way El Zahraa was run. The very qualified Dr. Abdel Alim Ashoub headed the farm during the years when the world was at war for the second time. He compiled the first printed RAS studbook, a book of facts, both in English and Arabic and photos, it became a collector’s item in the Arabian circuit. In 1949, General Tibor Von Pettko Szandner took charge of the stud farm. He is remembered for introducing new methods of feeding, harvesting, daily exercise and keeping records of the horses from nose to tail. He thoroughly noted their positive and negative elements starting at early stage and onto maturity (still kept at the “Egyptian Agriculture Organization” E.A.O.).

E.A.O. el Zahraa STUD THE MYTH BEHIND 100 YEARS

BY FATEN EL-ZEJUD



In 1959, Dr. Mohammed El-Marsafi took over the administration of what had become El Zahraa. He was also director of the animal breeding section of the EAO, and had worked closely with the men preceding him. In other words, he practiced both new and the proven old methods of breeding. His era witnessed some significant changes and additions. Buildings were constructed to house the breed that was nearly doubling in size. In addition, the second Egyptian studbook was completed, as well as plans for a library compiled from the book collection of Prince Mohammed Ali, which were bequeathed to the RAS. It would serve, till this day, as a definitive source of research for the students of the breeding field. Dr. Marsafi's years as head of El Zahraa were long and prosperous and brought the Egyptian breed worldwide recognition and universal acclaim.

Dr. Ibrahim Zhagloul became the next head of El Zahraa in 1982 and also a member of the Executive Committee of the World Arabian Horse Organization (WAHO). By that time, nearly 270 horses were under his supervision, of which there were 120 mares and about 60 stallions. He had witnessed and was well aware of the production boom of the horse market in the 1970's. Therefore, the quality of the individual horse became a decisive aspect to the horse's price. He developed a renewed breeding program to revitalize the influence of the former great sires.



Dr. Zhagloul implemented better nutritional diets, an updated studbook, and a riding school. He also emphasized the value of the fact that the stallions were to be ridden - it revived and dignified the old culture to test horses for the purpose of riding. In the 1980's, even though El Zahraa's surroundings had evolved from desert like to bustling metropolis, the sandy arenas within the farm where the horses practice their right to freedom of movement, ensured that the horses retained their typical features of the original Arabian. The rock hard hoofs and tendons and the dignified dry image are just a few of what El Zahraa had preserved in the Arabian horse's beauty.

The respected Dr. Zhagloul had brought the traditions of the past in harmony with the foreseen future. Now Dr. Khalil Soliman carries El Zahraa through the turn of the century. Dr. Soliman takes supreme pride in what El Zahraa has to offer and more so in what it has come to symbolize through the years. El Zahraa's horses are "super quality" today and often fetch tens of thousands of dollars of purchasing prices. Dr. Soliman explains that the more refined the quality, the better the market. He also indicated that the local appreciation has increased and therefore the value and prices of horses have risen. Today, national breeders are buying and selling at prices high enough to compete with foreigners locally and abroad.

The intensity of El Zahraa recent accomplishment began with the 350 horses representing the most important strains. It is the only authority responsible for registering Arabian horses and registering the proper documentation and evaluations necessary for the horses' imports, exports, and customs. Today, El Zahraa has an updated fully equipped veterinary clinic with instruments to measure and monitor pregnancy and internal organs through ultra sound, the only device of its kind in the region. El Zahraa has a riding school, offers board for visiting mares, and hosts private horses. It also has a database center in connection with the WAHO database, a video unit for catching horses and their offspring on film, and a book library with literature covering any and all aspects to the Arabian horses (some dated back to the 17th century).

Dr. Soliman's era is among those recognized in the 100 years of serving and preserving the tradition of the Arabian horse. The 100th Anniversary festival is scheduled in the international calendar, drawing spectators and Arabian horse lovers from all over the world. They come together to celebrate the creature that was refined by history, and polished by endeavors human and natural.

The EAO and El Zahraa have achieved the pinnacle of perfection for the last 100 years, and they have every intention to remain there.

“Governments have come and gone, leaders have risen and fallen, wars have began and ended, but the legacy of the Egyptian Arabian horse bloodlines lives on in history.”



And it will continue to do so as long as there are people as dedicated as Dr. Soliman, Dr. Zhagloul, Dr. Marsafi, and Dr. Branch, and the many others that brought life to El Zahraa continue to understand, and love this magnificent creature: the Arabian horse.

