



# Pyramid Society Founding

by Judith Forbis



The idea of The Pyramid Society developed in the 1960s when we realized there were few horses left in America tracing entirely to the early Babson, Brown, Borden, and other Egyptian imports bred or used in Egypt. These precious few mares were being bred indiscriminately to all bloodlines, thus using up the nucleus of what remained. Aside from Egypt, the Marbach State Stud in Germany, and a few other German breeders, Egyptian horses were minimal in comparison to the overall Arabian horse population. Furthermore, the Egyptian Agricultural Organization (E.A.O.) itself had been in danger of being disbanded under the Nasser regime.

In 1957 Carl Raswan suggested to his friend Richard Pritzlaff that he acquire some Egyptian horses directly from the E.A.O. The subsequent arrival of a stallion and four mares at Pritzlaff's ranch in New Mexico sparked curiosity about these new Egyptian imports. We (the Forbises) imported three yearlings in 1959, also as a result of correspondence with Raswan, and when we began showing and advertising them, the spark burst into flaming desire. The Gleannloch imports soon followed, among others in the mid-60s, setting the stage for a renaissance of these bloodlines. By now, as the late Doug Marshall noted in his historical perspective letter of April 17, 1997, to The Pyramid Society, "it became obvious to us and other importers that the previous genetic pool of Egyptian horses in America had almost been lost through interbreeding Egyptian mares with other bloodlines." Undeniably, the Egyptian horse was in need of preservation or the nucleus would be gone. A study of bloodlines in America and abroad, then and now, reveals that the underlying foundation of most all Arabian bloodstock rests to some degree on Egyptian bloodlines. They are constantly returned to for the maintenance of classic type.

This new group of importers and enthusiasts began meeting at Gleannloch Farms and visiting together about their breeding programs and the future of the Egyptian horse in America. As Doug Marshall further stated in his letter: "One afternoon in 1969 Douglas and Margaret Marshall and Judith Forbis were looking at Gleannloch Farms' Egyptian horses in Spring, Texas. Judith Forbis suggested it might be a good time to form a breeder's group dedicated to preserving Egyptian horses in America and for the future. It was further discussed that evening and we concurred such an organization would serve a purpose and fill a need. Names were considered and Douglas Marshall recommended The Pyramid Society, which was immediately agreed upon. This was officially adopted by the subsequent



DOUGLAS MARSHALL AND \*MORAFIC (NAZEER X MABROUKA).

founding members who were listed in The Pyramid Society's Articles of Incorporation: Douglas B. Marshall, James M. Kline, Judith E. Forbis, Willis H. Flick, and Bradford Heck." He went on to say, "As living founders it is our position that The Pyramid Society was co-founded as a result of that suggestion and that meeting between us in 1969."

There were, of course, challenges to this new Society that defined itself as a fraternal breeders organization and published the qualifying criteria for what we considered a Straight Egyptian Arabian horse. Consequently we met with opposition and were considered by some as "divisive" within the breed. The popularity of the rare Straight Egyptian horse began to reach new heights, and with its success "marketing" groups for other bloodlines followed: Pure Polish, Straight Russian, the Spanish Golden-Cross, the Lasma Star Program, etc. However, The Pyramid Society's motivation and goal was purely fraternal and for preservation and perpetuation of these bloodlines. The fledgling fraternal organization was generously funded through voluntary donations and dues of its founding and supporting members until The Egyptian Event became a happening and a fundraiser. Today The Society has celebrated and passed its 40th anniversary while the "marketing groups" of other bloodlines have gone with the wind. Only the Al Khamsa organization and the Asil Club (both highly comprised of Egyptian bloodlines) and whose primary purpose was preservation of the desertbred Arabian horse, are still alive and active.

The original founding members of The Pyramid Society were totally dedicated to its founding principles. Douglas Marshall and his late wife Margaret's magnificent Gleannloch Farms in Spring, Texas, was the flagship Straight Egyptian farm, leading the way in imports, including the influential stallion \*Morafic (Nazeer x Mabrouka), and promoting and showing their horses across America. They were gracious hosts to Society members at home and at shows and to countless international visitors, and they were instrumental in moving The Society forward despite various obstacles. Doug was the first Pyramid Society President, and he went on to serve the Arabian breed as President of the Arabian Horse Club of America (now AHA).

The late Jim and Eloise Kline devoted much time to their Kline Arabians in Whittier, California. Jim traveled the world with his DiaLog company, often visiting Egypt on his journeys. He imported several mares and also became the owner of the famous stallion \*Talal (Nazeer x Zaafarana). Jim was also responsible for helping develop the first Reference Handbooks of Straight Egyptian Horses, overseeing the printing and publishing near his ranch. He served as the first Vice President of The



JUDITH FORBIS AND \*ANSATA IBN HALIMA (NAZEER X HALIMA).

Society and later became an active Director and Treasurer of the Arabian Horse Club of America.

As Ansata Arabian Stud, Don and I were instrumental in popularizing the Straight Egyptian through our first imports, including the legendary \*Ansata Ibn Halima (Nazeer x Halima). The showing success, breeding seminars, and my articles in Arabian horse magazines and numerous books brought Egyptian bloodlines further international recognition. I served as the first Secretary of The Pyramid Society, helping to raise the operating funds and overseeing the Reference Handbooks, before becoming President and trustee. I also served the overall breed as Secretary of The Arabian Horse Trust.

The late Willis and Jimmie Flick spent much of their time at their Glenglade Farm near Coral Gables, Florida, where the horses were an important part of their family life. Building their breeding and showing program around get of their popular stallion Ansata El Naseri (Ansata Ibn Sudan x \*Ansata Bint Bukra), they were often seen riding their horses. A family that plays together, stays together, was apropos to the Flicks, and they were fine ambassadors of the Straight Egyptian in the showing and as breeders. Willis became the first Pyramid Society Treasurer and his legal experience was invaluable to the Board. He also served the overall breed as an active Director of the Arabian Horse Club of America.



JIM KLINE AND \*TALAL (NAZEER X ZAAFARANA).



WILLIS FLICK AND ANSATA EL NASERI (ANSATA IBN SUDAN X \*ANSATA BINT BUKRA).

The late Bradford Heck and his wife, Hanna-Louise “Hansi,” were dedicated to the Egyptian Arabian horse from The Society’s inception, and Brad was on the initial Board of Directors. Their Serenity Farms near Toronto, Ontario, Canada, played an important historical role for the first major group of Egyptian imports by serving as a temporary quarantine station when these horses could not be brought directly into the U.S. due to U.S.D.A restrictions. Among Serenity’s important horses, and a drawing card to the farm, were their incredibly beautiful U.S. National Champion Mare, \*Serenity Sonbolah (Sameh x Bint Om El Saad) and their athletic senior sire \*Khofo (\*Morafic x \*Nabilahh).

The founding of The Pyramid Society in 1969, which actually defined what constituted “a Straight Egyptian Arabian horse” was national in conception at the time, but it was to have far-reaching ramifications worldwide. The Straight Egyptian became internationally accepted as “a breed within the breed,” and The Pyramid Society was recognized as THE fraternal breeders organization dedicated to the art of breeding, preserving, and perpetuating this unique nucleus of bloodlines.

A Pyramid Society based on the founding Pyramid Society’s principles was formed in Europe, Egyptian Events are now emulated in Europe and the Arabian Gulf, and the scope of The Society continues broadening with the probability of other societies on the horizon. In 2013, The Pyramid Society formed an alliance with the Egyptian Arabian Horse Pyramids Foundation of Egypt. The Foundation’s goals are similar to those that led to the founding of The Pyramid Society USA; both have in common the objective of preserving, promoting,



HANSI MELNYK AND \*KHOFO (\*MORAFIC X \*NABILAHH).

and perpetuating the Egyptian Arabian horse. The Foundation will support The Pyramid Society’s core values and objectives, including its definition of the Straight Egyptian Arabian horse. It is the opinion of the Foundation that this definition must be carefully guarded and its worldwide usage remain under the auspices of its originator, The Pyramid Society. This alliance will hopefully serve as a template for similar ventures in other regions, leading to a unified global network for showcasing this unique “breed within the breed.”

The Pyramid Society can be proud that it has always taken leadership roles on challenging issues within the industry. The welfare of our horses is, and always has been, primary. Our organization has remained vital despite tax changes, worldwide economic fluctuations and globalization. The vision of the Founders has been fulfilled beyond our initial dreams. We are now in position to further our leadership role internationally. Vigilance in maintaining the vision and expanding our global base entails dedication, contribution, and perseverance, and most of all — a continuing spirit of fraternity — the principle on which this organization was founded and successfully guided by its Founders.