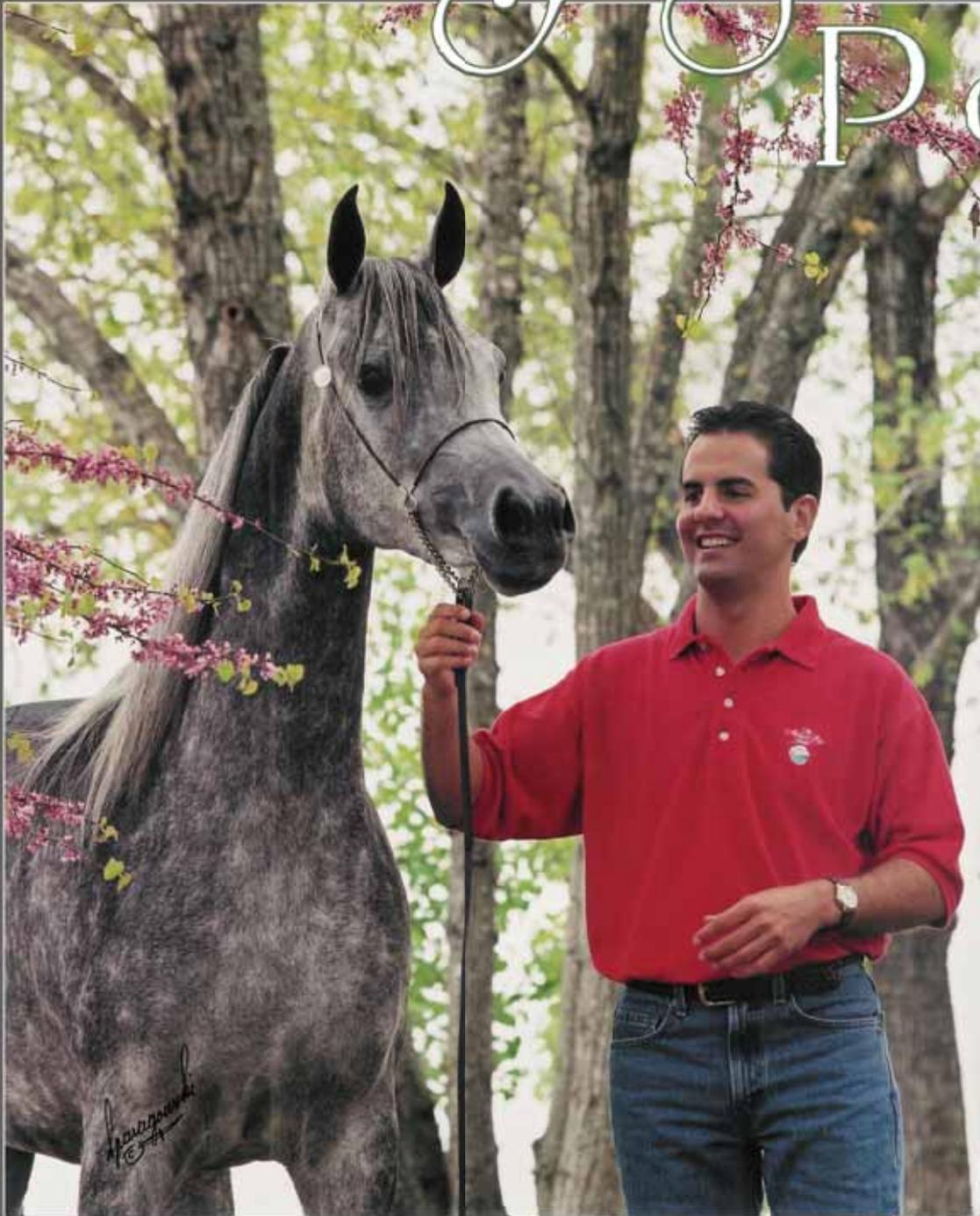


An Interview with

# Joseph Polo



by Laurie Schmelzle

**Mr. Joseph Polo began his journey into the world of Arabian horses 27 years ago. In this interview he shares how his career progressed to independent trainer and international judge. The following is a discussion in which Mr. Polo offers his opinions on showing, judging, breeding, and marketing.**

## History

**Laurie Schmelzle: Mr. Polo, would you begin by describing briefly your background, and your introduction to the Arabian horse?**

Joseph Polo: I was first introduced to the Arabian horse by my aunt and uncle, who were Arabian horse breeders in Pennsylvania (USA), where I grew up. At the age of 13 I was invited to work at BruMarBa in California by Bruce Clark, the owner. I worked there every summer between school years until I graduated. After graduation, I returned to California to work at BruMarBa full time.

In California I mainly groomed, worked on the farm, worked with the foals, and so forth. I was at BruMarBa for more or less a year. Bruce had imported \*Simeon Shai and he arranged for me to go work for Marion Richmond at Simeon Stud in Australia. At Simeon I apprenticed with, and learned a lot of horsemanship from Glen North. This was in approximately 1988. I lived in Australia for about a year, and then I left Australia to go to work for Ferdinand Huemer in Austria. At the same time I brought the stallion El Perfecto from BruMarBa in California to Austria, and El Perfecto became a very influential stallion in Europe. I worked off and on for Ferdinand, and then he organized for me to go work in the south of Spain for a breeder. While working and schooling horses in Spain, the owner schooled me further on riding and vaulting. Then I came back to the States. I met Willis Flick at the Nationals in Louisville in the early 1990's, and Willis arranged for me to go to South America to work in Chile for Carlos Montt.

**LS: What did you do for Mr. Montt?**

JP: I prepared horses to show, and showed several horses at the Chilean Nationals. I showed the Chilean National Champion Mare and the Reserve Chilean National Champion Stallion that year.

I then returned to the States and went to work for Midwest Training Center. At Midwest I learned more about proper grooming, conditioning, and how to finish a horse. Then I went to work in Ft. Wayne, Indiana for Four Star Arabians, where we stood Padróns Psyche. At Four Star we also had a Russian horse by the name of Front Page, who was the sire of Hidden Jewel, a World Champion Mare in Paris owned by Shirley Watts of Halsdon Stud. I was at Four Star for nine or ten years.

**LS: Was Four Star the last place you worked before you became an independent trainer?**

JP: Yes, with the exception that I did work briefly after that for Cadron Creek, where I was helping them prepare for the Egyptian Event. But, I had essentially already gone out on my own at that point. This was about 2001.

**LS: And what year was it that you went to California, just to give some scope to the journey to independence?**

JP: 1984. It seems so long ago.

**LS: Which people had the greatest influence on you as you began your career?**

JP: One of them is Bruce Clark. He is one of the two people who really influenced me heavily within the horse business. Glen North was the second person in my life that has been very influential and a close personal friend.

**LS: In what ways did these different people influence you along the way? Obviously part of it would have been just pure skill, craft, and training, but were there other ways that they influenced you, like a moral or a business influence?**

JP: Bruce became like my father. He had a moral and business influence on me. Glen North, who became a very close friend, taught me true horsemanship. Along the way I learned something from everybody. David Boggs of Midwest, clearly one of the best marketers today, and horseman... Obviously there are different approaches to marketing horses. With Bruce, he had folks who truly loved the Arabian horse and wanted to further their own breeding programs by incorporating the blood of his horses. Jim Deegan was also one of the best marketers I ever came across. With someone like Jim Deegan, he was in the business to sell horses and he emphasized the tax advantages and lifestyles people could have through ownership. Regardless, in the end, most of the people who got into the horses loved the horses, whether they were spending \$1,000 on a horse or \$200,000 on a horse. In one way or the other they were drawn to the animal.

**LS: What did you learn from Mr. Huemer?**

JP: Ferdinand Huemer was a very sharp man. I learned some business elements from Ferdinand. At that time, he was really starting to put some thought into the show he was organizing in Wells, Austria. He was going after some great horses for his program. Ferdinand had a direction and he was on track to get where he was going. Additionally, he studied a lot about the horses he was looking at purchasing. Ferdinand, at that time, was really growing his program and was destined to be a successful breeder.

**LS: What were some of the first memorable horses you showed early on?**

JP: Let me say that with my showing carrier, I remember what it was like when I couldn't buy a ribbon, and I also remember what it was like when I went to Scottsdale and won. So each year of my career was a little bit at different levels. You can probably talk to every handler out there who has one or two special horses in their life that has maybe made them, or helped them along the way. I have three, maybe four of these horses that I was involved with. One was Padróns Psyche, who helped me get ahead by my having the ability to show some of his babies. Another one was a daughter of his, FS Mystique Lady, who went on to be a National Champion Mare.

**LS: When did you show FS Mystique Lady?**

JP: I showed her as a yearling, and I showed her as a three or four year old in Scottsdale when she won her class. Then she was sold to Brazil where she was National Champion-Gold Female.

**LS: So these were horses that people entrusted to you, which gave you a chance with a really great horse, and that became a pivotal moment that advanced your career to the next level?**

JP: Yes

## Showing

**LS: Why were you initially drawn to showing halter as opposed to showing performance?**

JP: I actually love performance. I could sit and watch riding classes all day long, just to see a good horse perform well. It's not that I chose halter over performance, that's just the direction it went. To this day I own performance horses. When I judge, I love judging halter and I love judging period. But, to see a great horse perform well under saddle can be just beautiful and elegant.

**LS: So from a career standpoint it was just that halter chose you, essentially?**

JP: Yes.

**LS: What does it take physically and conformationally for a horse to make a great show horse?**

JP: You can have the best conformed horse in the world, but if it doesn't have a show attitude it's going to be difficult for that horse to win. The horse to some degree has got to want to be a show horse.

**LS: Is that a horse which enjoys being in front of a crowd and that can also relax back at the stalls, or what kind temperament makes a show horse?**

JP: It can be a combination, and that horse can be influenced by many different factors. It can be trained in such a way that it loves showing, and it can be trained in such a way that makes it not quite as comfortable with being in the show arena. So I think training is an important thing. And, they have to have a willing attitude.

**LS: Do you mean a willingness to please?**

JP: Yes.

And sometimes, the horse just isn't bred to have the heart or the mental attitude to do it. Even if they don't have the breeding or the training to be a show horse, they can still be a good breeding horse.

**LS: Is a horse's inclination to show random, or does it tend to be inherent?**

JP: You can have a horse that has inherited a great attitude from its sire or dam, and it can go on to be a great show horse, or it can have a sire or dam with a bad attitude that produces it. It is very possibly inherent, but there are also those outside elements that come into play that can take the good attitude out of a horse, or those outside elements can also take the bad attitude out of the horse and give it a good attitude.

## Judging

**LS: When did you start judging, and did you begin judging in the US or internationally first?**

JP: I judged in Brisbane, Australia first, and then I received my US judge's card in 2004.

**LS: When judging, how important is that initial first impression when you look at a horse?**

JP: It's very important. The first impression to me means a lot, but it's not my final decision. In a lot of cases you'll see a horse that gives you a great first impression, but when you go to judge it, it just falls apart and it's not quite the horse that you first thought.

**LS: What are some of the biggest challenges when you are judging?**

JP: The biggest challenge is...well for example when you have the opportunity to judge Scottsdale, and you are judging a big class of yearling fillies or yearling colts, and there are many horses that you like but you can only pick ten. This is a challenge at times. You know that you can only pick ten but there are maybe sixteen that you like, and you are going to leave six horses off your card that are nice horses.

**LS: How do you pick in such a close field?**

JP: It comes down to a close evaluation of each horse. You want to pick the best horses in the arena. To go Top Ten at a show like the Scottsdale show, in my mind it is quite an honor. There are so many good horses. People should not be disappointed with a Top Ten. To win at a show like Scottsdale is a great accomplishment.

**LS: What strengths and weaknesses are you personally more impressed by and critical of in a halter horse when you are judging a close field?**

JP: When trying to evaluate a horse in a large class and deciding on the winner, I consider that this is an Arabian horse show and for me type is number one. Then I'll break it down from there.

**LS: When type is equal, and conformation comes in, what things are you most critical of?**

JP: You have to have a horse that's conformed well, that's built for what he or she is. Movement is a big thing for me. And it's not just the horse's movement itself, but it's how he carries himself with that movement. A perfect example of this for me was Emigrantka. If it can come in with its head up, its ears up, and just give a beautiful picture when it's moving, and be moving free and driving off the hind quarters...this is also an important thing.

**LS: Are there any points that you personally are especially**

**tough on?**

JP: There is one thing. It's an Arabian horse show, so bring me a horse that looks like an Arabian.

**LS: Where are some of your favorite places to judge?**

JP: I love judging overseas. I have judged in Bogata, Columbia at the National show. It's a beautiful country. Brazil, Uruguay, and Australia are also wonderful places to visit, with great horses. When judging overseas you have the ability not only to see excellent horses, but also the chance to visit other places and cultures. I can't tell you one particular place that I have not enjoyed. There are so many places around the world that I would encourage people to take the time to travel to, and I hope they will visit some of these other farms abroad, and go to the foreign shows.



FS MYSTIQUE LADY IN SCOTTSDALE

**LS: What are some of the most controversial traits to assess in the show ring?**

JP: In my opinion, something I have witnessed, are legs. Leg points, or how legs are evaluated is always a point of contention with people.

**LS: Why are legs scores always low?**

JP: What you just said backs up what I just said with regards to legs being a very contentious point among people. Legs are evaluated differently by different folks. I don't mind a judge giving low marks in a certain area, but that judge needs to stay consistent.

**LS: Are legs controversial due to a great difference in subjective opinions about what makes a good leg, or is it that the legs are hard to judge in the ring?**

JP: I think people's priorities are a little different when it comes to legs. Some people are really tough on a horse that toes out, and some get really caught up with club feet. And a lot of people forget about the back legs. The back legs are a very important part of the horse, and we have to remember that the horse has four legs.

**LS: What do you think is one of the worst leg faults?**

JP: Probably back at the knee.

**LS: Do you adjust what you look for in a winning show horse depending on what country you are judging in? For example, is there enough differentiation in what is perceived as the 'ideal' Arabian from one country to the next for you to also adjust your judging standards?**

JP: No

**LS: So you go with your ideal no matter where you are?**

JP: Yes

**LS: Does the Arabian horse differ significantly from one country to the next?**

JP: There can be different styles. But overall, a good horse is a good horse.

**LS: What is it like judging halter horses handled by professionals as opposed to judging amateurs?**

JP: The professionals in a lot of cases can take a nice horse and make it look really nice. The amateurs can do that sometimes, but it's difficult to do...so not usually.

**LS: Do you have to work a little harder when judging professionals than when judging amateurs?**

JP: No, not in my experience.

**LS: What is the biggest mistake amateurs make?**

JP: With either riders or handlers, when they are riding and they are over-mounted, or where they're handling a horse they shouldn't be.

**LS: What makes a great handler?**

JP: A great handler is not just somebody that goes out there and wins. It is somebody who has the ability to form a good relationship with his or her horse. You know when you watch the person exhibit that horse

to you as a judge or spectator, that the horse is conscious of the handler. The horse is well trained, done without instilling fear into the horse. They have a good, harmonious relationship.

One example that I will give you is this. Years ago Larry Jones showed \*Kawalkada to 1983 US National Champion Mare. Larry and that mare were like one. It was a great presentation of a great mare by a man that you could tell had a great relationship with his horse.

**LS: Should judges be breeders, or trainers, or just competent judges?**

JP: In the US, there is a little bit of a push by some people for judges to be breeders. And in Europe you can only be a breeder to judge. But yet, there is a lot of discussion in Europe among people I have visited who feel that criteria needs to be opened up...not just to breeders.

It is funny how one country like the United States now feels that judges should just be breeders. Then you go to Europe where there are mainly just breeders judging now, and they feel it should be opened up. It will be interesting to see how this evolves.

**LS: How do you feel about it? Who should be able to judge?**

JP: I know plenty of great breeders, and people who can competently assess a horse, but when it comes time to write it on paper or to evaluate a big class, they can't do that.

**LS: So you would select the most proficient person, no matter what their background is?**

JP: It's not just about going out there and saying 'that's a good horse.' It's about evaluating a horse against the standard, putting your evaluation on paper and being able to support your

decision. There are many educated horsemen and horsewomen, either trainers, breeders, or owners, who are judges and do a commendable job. Also, the education system of our judges is one of the best among breeds

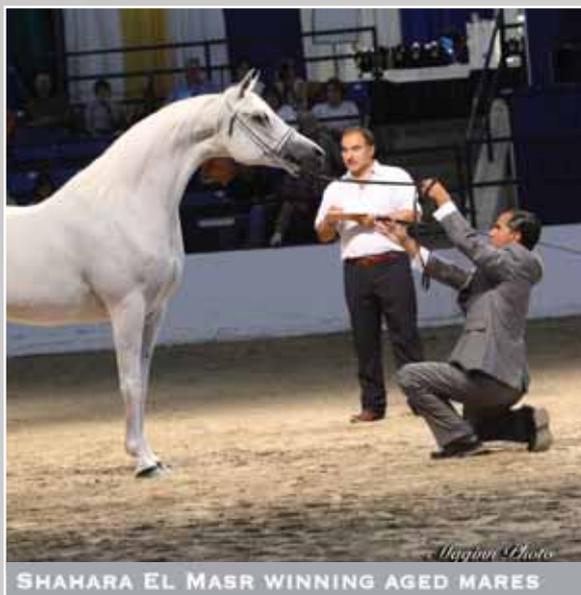
**LS: What makes a great judge?**

JP: A great judge is somebody who can go out there and pick the best possible horse and do it in an efficient manner. The judge needs to also know the environment that he or she is in, to engage the spectators, and to be courteous to the exhibitors. There is a whole spectrum of things that judges need to be conscious of in today's world. I have never been to a horse show where you haven't heard discussion about a particular judge. Therefore, as much as the judge is judging the horses, the judge is being judged by the people on the rail. So it is important that as a judge you are not only honest and knowledgeable of the Arabian horse, but again, that you know the environment, engage the spectators, and do the best possible job you can do.

## Breeding

**LS: What made you decide to focus your business exclusively on straight Egyptian Arabians?**

JP: I love the history of the Arabian horse. The Pyramid Society has been a great support organization. The Egyptian Event over the years,



while maybe it has gone up and down, overall has remained strong. The people involved with the straight Egyptians (here in the United States I'm speaking of) really try to breed good horses. The mentality of the breeding is something that I like. When talking to people about breeding a certain mare to a certain stallion, that mentality overall within the straight Egyptian community here within the United States is something I have a passion for.

**LS: Specifically regarding your clients who breed straight Egyptian horses, are your clients trying to produce show horses, are they breeding a horse that most appeals to their own ideal, or are they producing breeding stock whose purpose is to produce great show horses when outcrossed into the general Arabian breeding population?**

JP: The people that I work with have different goals. Some people want to bring back more of the older look of the straight Egyptian of years ago, maybe with a little more stretch and a little bit more leg. Some of the people I work with just want to breed for the market, the show market.

I see people in the United States and abroad who just breed for the market and have been very successful at doing that.

**LS: Do you think that some of these breeders who are just breeding for the market need to travel more, and really see what is out there?**

JP: I do. I think if a breeder has the ability to travel, and let's face it sometimes conditions don't permit them to travel, but if they have the ability to travel there are so many great horses around the world, and great breeders, and knowledgeable people to visit with and talk to. It's not just the people you see in the magazines today, it's the chance to see other stallions, and other mares...I enjoy it.

**LS: Of course it would be extremely vital for perspective too, correct? Somebody might come home and say, 'Well, it's time to start all over again,' or other people might say 'OK, let's keep going in the same direction.'**

JP: Absolutely!

**LS: Do you advise any of your clients to breed their straight Egyptian mares to purebred (non straight Egyptian) stallions? If so, which purebred stallions would you like to see crossed with which particular straight Egyptian mares for the purpose of producing a show horse?**

JP: There are clients that I work with who I have, at times, recommended that they try a particular purebred stallion that is strong at producing the type I like to see.

A good horse is a good horse whether it's domestic bred, Russian bred, Egyptian bred, or whatever the case. As far as different stallions outside the straight Egyptian breeding population, there are some great stallions out there. You have a horse like Marwan Al Shaqab who has really done a lot around the world. You have a horse like Padrons Psyche, or like Magnum Psyche, and then you have a horse like WH Justice.

**LS: What type of straight Egyptian mare would you pick to breed to a purebred?**

JP: I love 'pretty...' pretty...typey...elegant...sexy. I'd like to take something like that and mentally try to come up with the best cross for her, whether I'm involved with that mare or not.

**LS: Just 'off the cuff,' and for fun, which straight Egyptian mares would you pick to breed to one or two of the stallions you mentioned above? If you assumed, 'OK, we are going to keep this**

**mare in a straight Egyptian breeding program most of her life, but one time we are going to try this stallion.' Which crosses would be interesting to do?**

JP: There are a lot of great straight Egyptian mares in different parts of the world. I think a good majority are in the Middle East today. You have a mare like Bint Saida Al Nasser that would, for me, be very interesting to see bred to Marwan once. I'd like to think of a mare in this country that has produced well, like Savannah CC, with many champions at the Egyptian Event. I wouldn't mind seeing her bred to a horse like WH Justice.

**LS: Can you give us a couple of examples of straight Egyptian horses you are involved with today, whose careers you helped direct?**

JP: One would be Nader Al Jamal. I was involved with helping the mare owner pick the stallion, Ansata Sinan. And then another horse would be \*Hadidi. I helped the owner acquire the stallion, bring him back to the States, and with breeding mares to him.



**LS: We often hear that breeding horses is not for the faint of heart. What about your involvement? What were some difficult moments for you?**

JP: One time I was driving through Ohio to look at some horses, and I went past a farm that had a sign out front that said 'Arabian Horses.' So I went in. The man had two or three horses, and I asked him to show them to me. In the barn was a horse that I recognized immediately, and her name was NH Love Potion. She was a National Champion Mare, and at the time was one of the highest selling mares at public auction. I knew NH Love Potion by reputation and I had worked with her at one point when she was at Midwest. But this mare, I knew, was a great horse. I got them to let me take her to Four Star Arabians, where we bred her to Padrons Psyche and got her pregnant immediately, even though she had always had, in her lifetime, some breeding issues....

(sighs)...this was the type of mare that if you were in a hundred acre field and she was at the far end of the field, when she saw you she would run all the way to where you were to be with you. She loved people. This was a very special mare because she was so personal and she had done and seen so much in her life, from the auctions to the show arena, to different farms in the United States, to different owners. And here I had her, and she ended up...as the baby matured inside of her she ended up colicking and dying. That was a serious, tough, difficult time for me in the horse business. I truly had gotten to where I loved that mare, and when she died I ended up leaving Four Star and I really kind of slowed down a bit with the horses because it was such a difficult time.



**LS: In the straight Egyptian breeding population, there are certain dam lines with a heavily proven track record for producing quality. What are some of your favorites and why?**

JP: There is one dam line that for me, I believe is a very good producing line. It's the \*Magidaa line. I don't think anyone can argue it. Typically if you have a colt from this dam line, it can be a good producing stallion. The \*Magidaa line has been exceptional for producing not only many famous stallions, but also the mares. From the stallions Ruminaja Ali to Bahjat to Alidaar, to Nabel, and the mares Bint Madigaa, Miss Maggie Mae, Savannah CC, and MB Kateena, there have been so many successful horses. In addition, the \*Magidaa horses have typically been able to cross over to the open show arena from the Egyptian Event.

**LS: How important is it that a breeding stallion comes from a great mare?**

JP: I think it is very important.

**LS: What criteria are most important for determining whether an Arabian stallion is suitable for breeding or not?**

JP: A good pedigree is important. The horse overall needs to be a good horse.

**LS: What about fertility?**

JP: That is something you need to be aware of when you're breeding, because there are certain lines within the straight Egyptians that haven't had strong fertility and it has passed on.

**LS: How stringent should we be in culling stallions that tend to pass subfertility along to their sons? Should we only use their daughters and try to get away from their colts?**

JP: It depends on how important that stallion is for your mare. It is up to the judgment of the breeder. If infertility is a concern, perhaps avoid that.

**LS: How many colts does a breeder have to produce to get one good stallion?**

JP: I don't know the exact numbers on that, but the percentages are very low. It could take 300, 400, 500, or it could take two.

**LS: How many of those stallions will turn out to be stallions of real significance?**

JP: You may get three over a ten year period, and that is if a person would agree with me on those three horses and which ones have been most influential on the breed these past years.

**LS: How important is temperament?**

JP: For me, it's very important. You want to have a horse with a good temperament to be around, to work with, even for breeding and showing. It's very important.

**LS: What is something straight Egyptian breeders need to pay special attention to?**

JP: I think being conscious of breeding for good, laid back shoulders is important for the straight Egyptian community, as well as being conscious of small eyes, and movement. With regard to length of neck, while maybe it has gotten better, we've also gotten straighter shoulders. So instead of having a horse with a short neck that comes up out of a proper shoulder, you have a horse with a long neck that's maybe a little bit ewed because the horse has a straight shoulder.

**LS: What is the first thing you look for in a pedigree? Is it structure, is it dam line?**

JP: The dam line. Then I want to know how strong the dam is.

**LS: What do you think about breeding 'like type,' or would you prefer to look for a stallion or mare that possesses strengths where the other has faults?**

JP: I think you always have a better chance if you breed like to like.



**LS: We have seen small breeding groups of the past dwindle into extinction due to a depleted gene pool. Is the straight Egyptian breeding population large enough to sustain itself long term?**

JP: There are breeders I have spoken to in Egypt about this same thing. I think there are people who are highly dedicated to breeding straight

Egyptian horses. I do believe that the breeding of straight Egyptian horses is strong enough throughout the world.

**LS: How has shipped semen affected the gene pool?**

JP: While it has been a good thing with regards to allowing people to breed to a stallion that maybe they otherwise wouldn't breed to due to geographic challenges, I think it also has not helped the gene pool. Therefore it has hindered the small breeder, or small stallion owner, from breeding maybe five or ten mares. Now the argument from some people is that maybe those stallions shouldn't be breeding mares. And that's fine, but if we go back in history there are a lot of stallions that weren't great show horses that produced well.

**LS: We have amazing tools at our disposal now, including transported semen, embryo transfer (ET), intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), and sex selected semen. How have these technologies helped and hurt the breed?**

JP: I think they've definitely given people the opportunity to breed horses with breeding problems. It's given people the opportunity to breed to horses that died. Science has been great, and there are so many good things. However, there are a few things that haven't helped. The transported semen thing is a big deal with me. I do think that over the years in different parts of the world there were some horses that went on to make history, not just in the show arena, but in the breeding shed. And these horses were by a stallion that was just owned by a backyard breeder, and out of a mare that lived ten miles up the road. So would they have bred those two if transported semen was allowed back then? Maybe, maybe not.

**LS: Does your issue with transported semen boil down to the reduced gene pool on the sire's side?**

JP: I believe yes. Additionally, somebody who wanted to own a stallion and breed a few mares locally can no longer do that, because maybe those mare owners are going to a horse far away instead. So the result is that your small local breeding programs have fallen by the wayside.

**LS: Should a breeder using assisted reproductive technologies (ART) like ET or ICSI consider using sex selected semen simultaneously due to the elevated costs of producing an ART foal and the risk of producing a very expensive colt?**

JP: I think that's up to the breeder. If you have a great mare that you're going to put that much into, you would hope to think that a colt or a filly would be a good thing to have out of her.

**LS: Assisted reproductive technology is costly. At what point does that cost become counterproductive?**

JP: It depends on what you are after. As a breeding animal that horse might be priceless, or something you want to keep for your breeding program forever. If that is the case...then whatever it takes. Conversely, if you're breeding for the market you definitely have to be conscious of your expenses. If you know the market, or you're dealing with somebody who knows the market who is advising you, then you go with that.

**LS: Are we producing a higher percentage of subfertile horses by using these assisted reproductive technologies on horses that can't carry naturally?**

JP: I can't answer that because I haven't seen the figures.

**LS: Should breeders consider 'banking' tissue suitable for cloning in the future, even if the technology is not practical at present? Should this option be considered for the sheer value of preserving the gene pool within the straight Egyptian breeding population?**

JP: I'd be foolish to say not to do it. But I'm not sure it will be a benefit for the breed. It goes back to the transported semen thing. Right when



NATIONAL CHAMPION STALLION OF SOUTH AFRICA

we started it, it was a good thing. But over the long term, I just don't know how good it will be. Only time will tell that.

**LS: It is possible that future technology will allow horse breeders to extract undesirable DNA, and insert desirable DNA down to a specific gene. At what point are we taking it too far by reducing the role of natural selection in the breeding process?**

JP: I don't know yet where we should stop, or how far to go. I do believe that at some point we ought to let Mother Nature take an important role in this.

**LS: Are some breeders taking too dramatic of a stance by culling or refusing to breed to SCID, CA or LFS carriers? Of course it is important to reduce the incidence of any undesirable trait, that is a given. But if we hypothetically assume a 20% carrier incidence for CA, a 15% carrier incidence for SCID, and a 10% carrier incidence for LFS (within the straight Egyptian breeding population), wouldn't it be absolutely foolish to eliminate 45% of our breeding population? If we eliminated every undesirable bit of DNA from the horses, we would have no horses left at all. How serious do you rate a horse carrying SCID, for example, compared to a horse that carries other undesirable inherent traits like offset cannons, subfertility, heart valve defects, etc...?**

JP: There are a lot of great horses out there that have one thing or

another. Whether your horse carries CA, or an evident breeding fault, at the end of the day you need to know your mare. You just don't want your mare to have the same breeding fault as the stallion you are breeding to. The same thing goes for calf knees. If you are breeding to a horse with calf knees, you don't want to use a mare that has calf knees.

**LS: So we don't want to go around eliminating all of our calf kneed mares in the world either?**

JP: Correct.

Additionally, I was on a trip to Germany recently, and I found out that the German registry, I believe, records on the papers whether the horse has the markers associated with CA. This brought up something in my mind. It would be good for the registry of the United States, with regards to SCID, CA, and some of the new things that we are finding, to list these on US registration papers as well. This would help new owners going forward, and new buyers.

**LS: What would you tell an aspiring breeder who has not yet bought their first horse?**

JP: If you have the ability to travel abroad visit Europe, the Middle East, Australia and South America. There are great horses all over the world with breeders and trainers. Go talk to as many people as you can, as you figure out what direction you want to go. Don't be pressured



TS VIVIEN LEIGH - EGYPTIAN EVENT RESERVE FUTURITY CHAMPION

or swayed to go the direction somebody wants you to go because of market.

**LS: What makes a great breeder?**

JP: For me, a breeder isn't just somebody that breeds numbers. It is somebody who has vision going into the future...the next five to ten years. It is somebody that is thinking down the road. And it isn't just about somebody who has gone out and bred National Champions.

A great breeder is somebody who consistently tries to breed the best possible horses and isn't opposed to breeding outside of their program to bring something new in. Again, it is someone who can look ahead.

**Marketing**

**LS: What are some important ways that a breeder should market his horses?**

JP: In today's world, the internet is a strong tool. The breeder should continue to get out there, and go to shows in the US and around the world. He should have his farm brochures, his trainers, and use every avenue to market the horses.

**LS: What is the value of showing? Does it do more to promote a particular horse, or is it a better tool for promoting the farm or breeding program itself?**

JP: The show arena is good to show off your horse and promote your breeding program. The show arena can be a good place to get the horse exposed. However, if you want to market your horse there are a lot of other marketing avenues out there besides the show arena.

**LS: How many colts will you sell for every 100 fillies sold?**

JP: It just depends on what kind of quality you have at that time, and what your buyers are looking for. There are so many factors that come into play.

**LS: How has the overseas market changed?**

JP: I do feel that the market has changed regarding what people are looking for from overseas. It has gone from breeders and buyers looking for breeding stock, years ago, to wanting show horses.

**LS: How important are real life, personal connections? Where are some of the best places for breeders to interact?**

JP: Very important. There are a lot of people out there who want to do business with someone they like and enjoy, who has good horses. Having a relationship with people and getting the word out that you are there, and where and who you are, is important. It's a good thing for people to get around a little bit.

**LS: Is it more important to concentrate marketing efforts on new breeders, or on developing relationships with established breeders?**

JP: Both. Keep in mind, though, there are a lot of established breeders who will consider breeding with an outside horse, but there are also established breeders who will only breed with their own horses.

**LS: Which countries currently have a good market for straight Egyptian Arabian horses, and which ones seem to have reached a 'saturation point.'**

JP: My experience today is that there is a market all over the world for a good straight Egyptian horse.

**LS: Can the small breeder sell good quality fillies out of a less well promoted stallion?**

JP: If the foal is a good horse, and if it can go out into the show arena and do really well, then yes, it can sell.

**LS: When buying show prospects, do most buyers look for young unshown horses with good potential, or already proven show horses?**

JP: There is an excitement to having a new horse that has never been shown before that is maybe a little bit older, that you bring into the show arena for the first time. Something like this is exciting for people!

**LS: What makes different people across different cultures, continents, and time drawn to the same Arabian horses?**

JP: Quality is quality, whether the horse lived 60 years ago or today. People recognize quality.



**LS: Knowing what it took for you to achieve your level of success, what would you say to a young, upcoming trainer?**

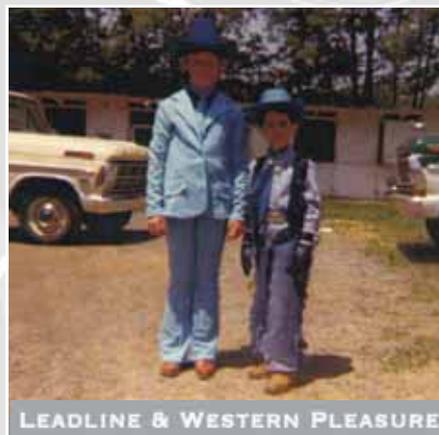
JP: My advice would be to go work for a top trainer. Find somebody that has great horses, where you have the ability to work horses daily, and work with somebody you can learn from. Take that knowledge and apply it, and take it with you to maybe another place. Go to a different country. Learn the programs that are in that country. Educate yourself in each place and gain as much knowledge as you can. And to get over the hump, you need that chance to have one great horse. When you get that first great horse be prepared to get the job done. So it's not just having a great horse and not doing anything at home with it. You need to know how to condition it, groom it, take care of it, feed it, teach it how to show, and put it all together...and you'll be successful.

**LS: Looking back, can you recall any humorous or memorable experiences in your showing or judging career that might serve to put things in perspective?**

JP: I remember judging a junior to ride Western class, and there were about eight to ten kids in the class. All of the riders were girls except for one little boy. When I called the class into the line, the little boy lined up right in the middle. So there were four little girls on one side, and four on the other. I walked the line-up and I was thanking each rider, and I got to the little boy and I said 'Good job, and by the way you're the only little boy in this class riding!' And without moving a muscle, only his eyes, he looked to his right, and he looked to his left, and then he looked at me and said, "I guess I'm in the right place!" Here was just a really little boy and I stood there and laughed and thought, 'You know, if only everybody could have as much fun as this little boy.' He was so relaxed, and was out there having a great time showing his horse. That's what it's about!



"Throughout the world I have met many breeders, owners, trainers, and horse enthusiasts who all have their own stories regarding horses. My comments here are my opinions and experiences that have allowed me to have a wonderful life. I want people to know that the horses have been my life, and they have given me everything in my life. They have enabled me to travel the world and back again. Bless the Arabian horse!" –Joseph Polo



Interview by *Laurie Schmelzle* of Al Badia Arabian Stud, USA  
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