



Serenity Farms

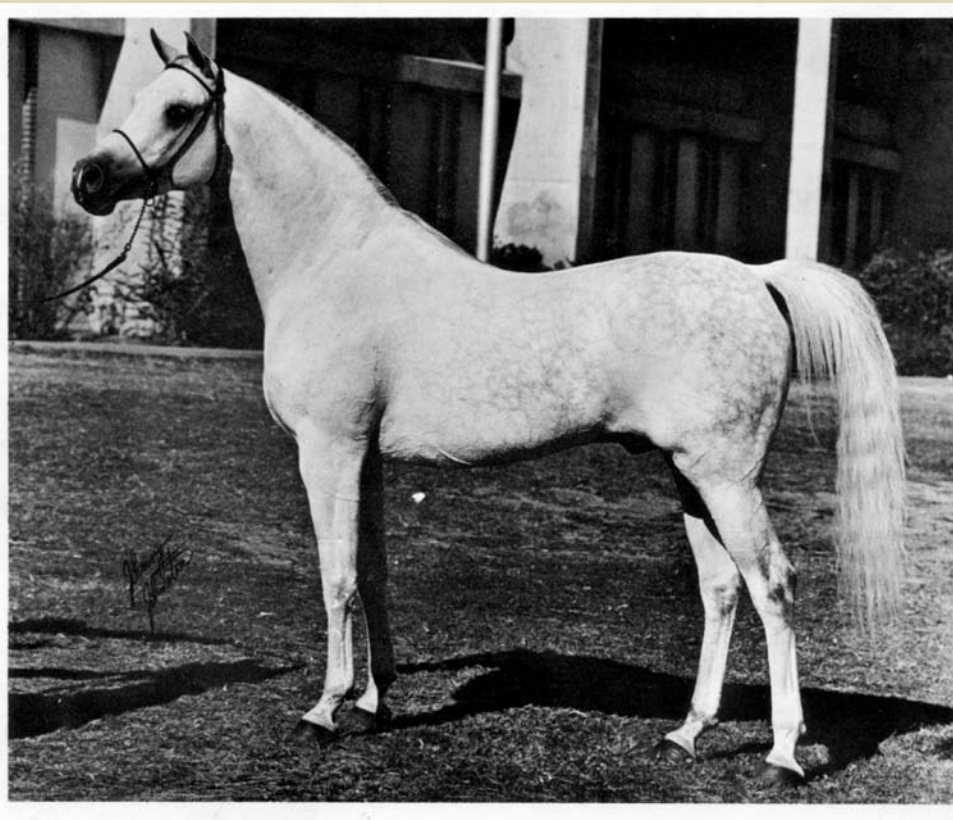
"FOR PUBLIC RELEASE by Mr. & Mrs. Bradford D. Heck of Serenity Farms Limited, Queensville, Ontario - 23 Arabian horses, mares, stallions, fillies and colts of 100% pure Egyptian blood arrived at 6:30 p.m. Toronto from Cairo... This transaction represents the largest single importation of blue-list, 100% pure Egyptian Arabian horses in the history of the North American continent."
 - The Canadian Arabian News, Nov/Dec 1968

It began in 1967 when lifelong horsewoman Mrs. Hanna Loise Heck, affectionately known to all as 'Hansi', purchased a 165-year-old estate farm in Queensville, Ontario. After Hansi built new stabling and three new indoor arenas, the property was christened '**Serenity Farms Limited**' and was intended to be a top-class breeding and training facility, putting Queensville, Ontario, Canada on the map. Hansi's grandfather, Dr. E. Lentz, had established *Landesgestuet Rastenburg* (an historic Trakhener stud farm) in Germany in 1877 and Hansi had inherited his passion and love for horses. An article published in the *Khamsat* magazine (Vol. 20, No. 2) describes Hansi's equestrian career as "extensive... her first-hand knowledge has been gained through her lifetime as a horsewoman, Grand Prix dressage and jump-

ing equestrian, trainer, and teacher, holder of a racetrack license, and decades of riding with the Eglington Hunt Club in Canada."

Serenity Farms was originally purchased to be a warmblood breeding and training facility, but fate intervened later that same year. "In 1967 while driving through the Texas countryside," writes Hansi in one of her articles, "I saw the most beautiful horse I had ever seen in my life playing happily in the green pastures of Gleannloch Farms." It was one of those moments when fate intervenes to unite a special horse with their destined owner, the moment when Hansi first saw **Khofo++*.

Driving to the ranch house, she was introduced to Doug Marshall and inquired if the two-year-old was for sale, only to be told that he was not. Gleannloch was planning to keep



Sire *Morafic
(Nazeer x Mabrouka)

*Khofo ++

Dam *Nabilah
(Anter x Farasha)

the young *Morafic son as a replacement should anything happen to his sire. Promising that *Khofo would be sent back to Gleannloch should anything happen to *Morafic, Hansi was eventually allowed to purchase the colt. From that moment, the Serenity Farms breeding program was dedicated to the pureblood, asil straight Egyptian Arabian.

In 1968 the first historic straight Egyptian imports began arriving at Serenity Farms, which had been certified as the only private quarantine facilities in Canada and the US. That year saw the importation of twenty-three horses to Hansi's quarantine facilities, including five Serenity foundation mares: ***Serenity Sonbolah** 1967 (*Sameh x Bint Om El Saad*), ***Serenity Sabra** 1965 (*Sameh x Sheherezade*), ***Serenity Shahra** 1966 (*Antar x Sheherezade*), ***Serenity Sagda** 1966 (*Antar x Samia*), and ***Serenity Montaha** 1966 (*Galal x Mona [x Inshass]*). All of the imports shown became multiple champions, and when crossed with *Khofo, these mares would form the foundation of Hansi's breeding program, producing the next generation of Serenity champions.

Also brought over in the 1968 importation was Gleannloch Farms' ***Magidaa** (*Alaa El Din x Maysa*), who became *Khofo's first wife while she was in quarantine. This cross would produce Bint Magidaa, dam of **Ruminaja Ali** (1979 US National Futurity Champion Stallion and 1983 US National Reserve Champion Stallion), **Ruminaja Bahjat**, **Ruminaja Majed**, and **Alidaar**, among others.

Hansi has always acknowledged the important role the Canadian government played in facilitating the importations. The 1968 press release states, "...without the assistance of Dr. R.J. McGlenaghan, Director of the Contagious Disease Division, Agricultural Dept., Ottawa, and his staff in Ottawa and Weston, Toronto (Dr. Callacut and Dr. Kelton), this importation could never have come about. Our government at once recognized this tremendous importation and the 100% pure Egyptian Arabian blood that Canada will gain. They helped in every way possible. We must salute these gentlemen."

When the straight Egyptians hit the North American show scene, there was an immediate reaction. "The non-straight Egyptians in America and Canada were by and large excellent horses but of a different type," relates Hansi. "So the judges could only do one thing, either pin the Straight Egyptians first or give them the gate... They hardly ever got the gate."

The most successful of Serenity's mares was the jewel in their crown, ***Serenity Sonbolah**, US National Top Ten Mare (third by 2 points) in 1970 and US National Champion Mare in 1971. She was, in fact, undefeated in her halter classes during 1970 and '71, according to an article in the January 1973 *Canadian Arabian News*. She was also quite fond of peppermints.

"When *Serenity Sonbolah showed at the US Nationals in 1971," says Hansi, "I took *Serenity Sabra and *Serenity Luftia along to place one in front and the other behind Sonbolah, so that she had the 'proper room' to show off. Sabra was 9 months in foal and so was Luftia – all three made the cut!



SF *Bint Sonbolah*
(*Khofo++ x *Serenity Sonbolah)

Sire Sameh
(El Moez x Sameera)

* *Serenity Sonbolah*

Dam Bint Om El Saad
(Nazeer x Om El Saad)

Sonbolah stood first, Sabra 12th, and Luftia 13th place – that out of 120 entries divided into three sections. Mr. Gainey was sitting in his booth looking down on her and offered me a free breeding to his top stallion, but I declined, stating that my *Khofo would be jealous as Sonbolah was his wife.”

Another large importation was made in 1970 by Doug and Margaret Marshall and Gleannloch Farms’ trainer, Tom McNair, whom Hansi once described as “the nicest 6’2” Texan anyone could wish to meet.” This time, Mr. Marshall went with a list of ALL straight Egyptians in Egypt and where they might be located, a list compiled by Hansi. The list was incredibly important to the success of the trip. Only the Marshalls were permitted to buy stock directly from the Egyptian Agricultural Organization (EAO), including stock they purchased for the Serenity and Ansata imports (this due to his multimillion-dollar contributions to Egypt). Other horses that passed through the farm’s quarantine came from private breeders who acquired them from EAO auction sales and other original, recognized breeding farms.

Their efforts were made ten-fold more dangerous by the fact that Egypt was at war with Israel over land they had lost during the Six Days’ War, namely the east bank of the Suez Canal. At one point, Hansi relates, “the war was some five miles away from the EAO. I was told he [Doug], Margaret, Jim Kline, Judi and Don Forbis, and Tom and Rhita McNair risked their lives to load some 34 horses for export into my quarantine in Canada. The pilot had a ‘Silence Order’ until he got over the Suez Canal

and one mare, Cleopatra, was ready to foal. She foaled one day after arrival in my quarantine – the foal was named Pegasus.”

The trip was difficult right from the beginning – the plane that Hansi had chartered was sabotaged in Amsterdam and destroyed. “I had to beg a merchant to loan us his plane, destined for Khartoum, and a \$20,000 award made him agree. But there was no loading equipment at Cairo Airport, so they borrowed it from the Russians in Alexandria. ‘Catering equipment’ balanced those fragile horse boxes with three horses in each, on it and loaded. It was like a cloak and dagger situation. Of course it was Tom McNair who did the absolute expert loading. When the plane arrived in Canada, the floors were frozen solid and Noha fell, turned upside down, and had to be pulled out that way.”

The horses had come from hot and sunny Cairo to the midst of a Canadian winter. “They had never been stabled, did not understand English, and wanted to go back to Egypt,” says Hansi. “I had a leather couch placed in the middle of the indoor arena where temporary stalls, loaned from the Royal Canadian Winter Fair were erected, and we cuddled up in a heating blanket. My students and I held the watch.” With the horses brought over in 1970, Serenity gained five more foundation mares: *SF **Bint Mamlouka** 1959 (*Mashhour x Mamlouka*), *SF **Bint Hemmat** 1957 (*Nazeer x Hemmat*), *Serenity **Luftia** 1967 (*Nasralla x Nazeera*), *Serenity **Bint Nadia** 1960 (*Sameh x Nadia*), *Serenity **Bint Noha** 1969 (*Nader x Noha*), and the stallion *Serenity **Abu Simbel** 1969 (*Ibn Maisa x Bint Shaams*).

Hansi eventually went looking for an outcross stallion for the daughters of *Khofo. "I went to Egypt in 1973 to buy **El Safi** 1961 (**Morafic x Mona [Inshass]*), a gorgeous 15.3 hand chestnut powerhouse, but he was barren. So Gulson Sherif arranged for me to see another stallion. He was ridden 50 kilometers through the desert and the middle of Cairo and was 20 years old. When I saw him, my blood went from the head to toes and back again. I had to have him!" The stallion who made such an impression was ***SF Ibn Nazeer** [EAO registered as **Lateef**] 1953 (*Nazeer RAS x Lateefa RAS*).

"He had the best rear end of any of the Nazeer children I had seen, and looked very much like his sire. Perfect legs, I mean perfect legs," Hansi relates. "At that time, everybody and his uncle were in Cairo to buy horses. I was so afraid of losing him that I hid him at the Brooksville Veterinary Hospital and gave rewards so that nobody knew where the stallion was." Then, after fighting to get the export papers put through, the stallion's flight was delayed.

"He was to leave that Tuesday and I instructed that he NOT be tranquilized," says Hansi. "The plane came but never stopped, so he had to wait another week and I had to go back to Canada. When I arrived in Montreal, I was told that he broke down in Frankfurt, was overly tranquilized and all marked up. I gave instructions to find the best horseman/woman in Europe to bring him over for me regardless of cost. Circus Bush obliged and the horse arrived; I trailered him 300 miles home to Queensville to my quarantine."

"We had a two-foot blanket of snow, and when he got out of the trailer, he tried not to put any one foot down. This was so funny! He was the only horse I knew which would exercise himself in a collected canter in his stall, which was 12x18 feet, without breaking stride. He was an absolutely superb match for the *Khofo daughters," says Hansi. "His rear end is seen to date in his offspring, five generations further." In 1975, the year of his death, *SF Ibn Nazeer was the Leading Sire in Canada and had sired forty-four purebred foals in the past two years.

*SF Ibn Nazeer had not left a breeding son in Egypt, but after producing several fillies for Hansi he had a crop of seven Straight Egyptian sons, four of which would go on to influence the Serenity program: **SF Benibn Nazeer** 1974 (*Serenity Shahra*), **Serenity Monzeer** 1975 (*Serenity Montaha*), **SF Ibn Lateef** 1976 (*Serenity BtSagda*), and **SF Untouchable** 1976 (*Serenity Kamila*), who all became halter and performance champions and producers of such, save for SF Untouchable – he was successfully shown as a youngster, but a yearling injury ended his show career. He was, however, used at stud, ridden and kept by Hansi for his entire life, until he passed away in 2002.

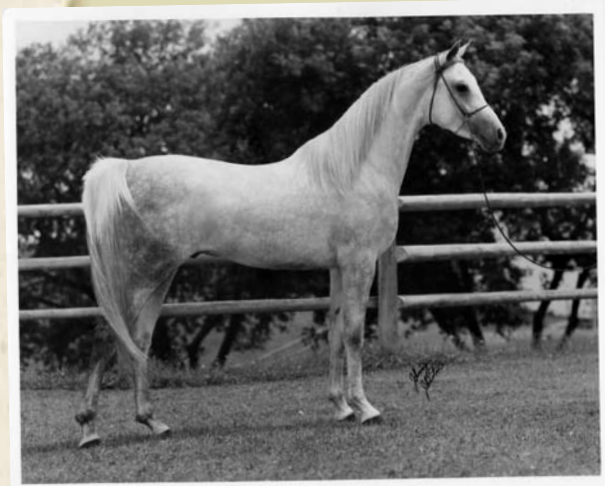
In the end, the results of their efforts certainly did them proud. "The 1968 and 1970 importations became the most famous of all," says Hansi. "When I see what these horses did and produced, my heart is overwhelmed." In addition to too many Class A Halter champions to list, the Serenity program produced **Serenity Habib** 1983 (*Khofo++ x Serenity Bt Mamlouka*), a halter and dressage champion exported to Europe in 1992, where he was leased for three years by the Famous Marbach Stud, Germany, producing some excellent offspring. He was licensed by the Hungarian Government



Serenity Shahra
(Antar x Sheherezade)



Serenity Bt Shahra
(*Khofo++ x *Serenity Shahra)



Serenity Nohad

(*Khofo++ x Serenity BintNoha)

1973 stallion



Serenity Sagda (Antar x Samia)

Stud in Babolna for breeding over Shagya mares, the only stallion licensed that year out of many. Serenity Habib also became a gold medalist at the famous Aachen show. He is a full brother to **Serenity IbnKhofo** (1977, still alive), who became an undefeated race horse, halter champion and Grand Prix Dressage horse, and a maternal brother to **Serenity Mamlouk** 1979 (*x SF Benibn Nazeer*) still alive, and also a mile race winner and producer of champions.

Other champions, to mention a few who had particular influence on Brazilian breeding, were **Serenity Mashour** 1977 (**Khofo++ x *Serenity BintNoha*), Brazilian National Performance Champion; **Imperial Sagdor** 1977 (*Serenity Osiris x Serenity Sagda*) and bred by Hansi, Brazilian National Halter Champion in 1980 and 1981; and **Serenity Mashalla** 1971 (**Khofo++ x *Serenity Shahra*), producer of over a dozen National and Reserve Champions in Brazil. Serenity Mashalla was named Leading Sire of the Century in Brazil at that time, as published in their newspapers.

Serenity Farms' export record is also exceptional. Hansi has exported over 300 horses to Germany, Switzerland, Italy, England, Hungary, the United Arab Emirates, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Panama, Venezuela, and Argentina; many of them became champions at halter and performance. The ones that remain in Canada and the USA have become valuable foundation breeding stock.

It is truly the mark of an exceptional breeding program when its' horses excel at such diverse and demanding disciplines – but, as Hansi will point out often and with great emphasis, ALL breeding stock at Serenity was tested under saddle for athleticism, movement, and trainability. If the horse did not pass the test, it was not bred.

Hansi established a second Serenity Arabian Stud Ltd. in Hawthorne, Florida in 1976 and moved her herd down there to escape the harsh Canadian winters. That same year, she met her husband, William B. Melnyk. In 2008, after more than forty years of dedication to her beloved straight Egyptians, Hansi has made the difficult decision to disperse many of the remaining herd, though they have retained some of the older horses as well as some younger mares for a few new foals each year.

A founder of the Pyramid Society, Hansi is one of the world's foremost authorities on Egyptian Arabians and has invested countless hours into pedigree and historical research. She has published twenty-four books including the *Straight Egyptian Index*, Volumes I-VI and the *Index of Partbred Arabians Registered Internationally as Purebreds and Their Partbred Ancestors* (the Pindex), Volume I, with several more books (including an autobiography) currently in the works. They are available through her website, www.serenityarabianfarms.com.

Thank you to Hansi Heck-Melnyk for her kind contributions to this article. Many stories used here were collected by Samantha Winburn of Blue Pyramid Egyptians, who published an article on Serenity Arabians in Khamzat magazine, Vol. 20, No. 2. A very big thank-you to Samantha for allowing us to use this source material. The article, as well as Hansi's comments on some horses that passed through her quarantine, can be found on the Blue Pyramid website, www.bpeah.com.



**SF Ibn Nazeer*
(Nazeer x Lateefa)

Having given over 40 years of my life and millions of dollars for the preservation of the Straight Egyptian Arabian horse, having helped and assisted many people internationally with education to learn and understand these incredible 'Desert Breds. I pray that my colleagues worldwide will continue to treasure these horses and continue breeding only from the very best, to breed only from tested stallions and forego artificial insemination and embryo transfers, which have in my opinion in many cases degenerated the Straight Egyptians. And, that at all time full disclosure of any of these horses must be maintained.

Hansi Heck-Melnyk
June 10/2008