

An Interview with DR. HANS-JOACHIM NAGEL

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photos by Judith Wich-Wenning, Joanna Jonientz

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel is globally respected as a true connoisseur of Arabian horses. His famous breeding programme started already in the 1960s. When he bought the filly Hanan (Alaa El Din x Mona) at the Egyptian state stud of El Zabara, the foundation for „Nagel's Katharinenhof“ had been laid. True icons descend from this breeding programme, as for example Jamil (Madkour I x Hanan), Salaa El Dine (Ansata Halim Shab x Hanan) or NK Hafid Jamil (Ibn Nejd x Helala). The idyllic studfarm, situated close to Bremen, Germany attracts numerous international Arabian horse enthusiasts year by year. Horses from Katharinenhof are treasured worldwide as important cornerstones for other stud farms.

Dr. Nagel is a highly esteemed show judge, President of WAHO since 2004 and was President of the German Arabian Horse Association for 20 years. In 2009, Dr. Nagel received the Arabian Horse Breeders Association Lifetime Achievement Award. Furthermore, he is the author of the new highly acclaimed book „The Arabian Horse, Nature's Creation and the Art of Breeding“ (available through www.nawalmedia.org).

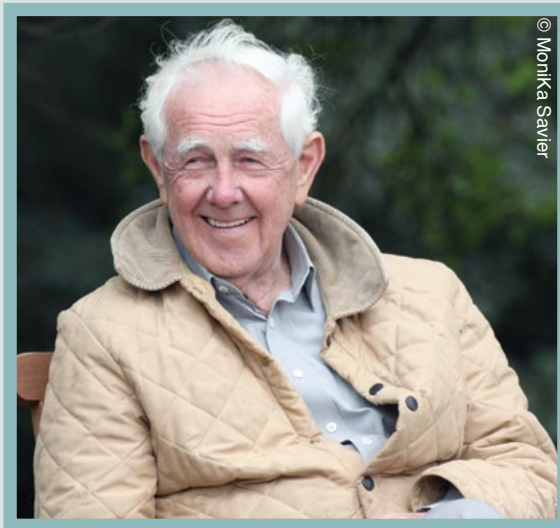
Being interviewed by Judith Wich-Wenning, Dr. Nagel

talks about his breeding programme and shares with us some personal thoughts on his guidelines and the future of the Egyptian Arabian horse.

Judith Wich-Wenning: *The Open House Presentation at Katharinenhof in summer 2013 was a great success, with visitors being very enthusiastic. What were your personal thoughts on this special day?*

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: *I was very pleased that so many people, from all parts of Germany and even from far away countries, have followed my invitation, and it was definitely necessary and wise to make all possible efforts in order to give a very special presentation of our breeding stock on that day, given people made efforts to travel so far.*

We made a similar presentation a few years ago on the occasion of Salaa el Dine's 20th birthday. In the meantime several new stallions have been raised and used in this stud; it must be of interest to present the progress in breeding due to this new generation of stallions. I am sure that many people are interested to know how this exceptional and until now unique breeding programme of Katharinenhof is developing – exceptional because this programme is, since 1985, closed, which means that no



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other horses from outside have been added to the breeding herd.

Judith Wich-Wenning: *On the same day, your new, much sought-after book “The Arabian Horse – Nature’s Creation and the Art of Breeding” was presented to the public. What were your most important motives for writing it?*

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: *As many other people I am very interested in the well-being of the Arabian horse breeding and it is worrying to notice that in the course of time the number of Arabian horses bred worldwide is decreasing; in the old traditional Western countries, even in a dramatic way. So many major breeders and breeding associations are concerned about this negative trend which has been prevailing now more than 10 years.*

One of the reasons may be the fact that the Arabian horse is caught as well by a trend and ambiance, where specialization and standardization are prevailing. The Arabian is advertised mainly to be a show horse or possibly a performance horse in the first place, and has to qualify for these purposes, but all its other merits and reasons why to keep or to breed Arabian horses are not finding much recognition any more.

All magazines and major publications are concentrating on show horses and show results, and there are special magazines for performance horses, even when these two activities are attracting only 10 – 15 % of the horses and their owners or breeders. The remaining 90 % has practically no forum and a newcomer and outsiders may think that they are not existing.

The Arabian breed offers much more and highly interesting aspects when one studies this breed in its totality of merits and abilities. The concept of my book “The Arabian horse – Nature’s Creation and the Art of Breeding” should open a wider view into this well appealing breed and to make known which are the extraordinary qualities of this horse with an amazing history which cannot be found in other horse breeds; all this is due to its territorial isolation – the Arabian Peninsula – in which this horse developed over centuries as a combination of environmental influence and selection by humans, and later on to the efforts which were made in the past in the Western world and today by dedicated breeders to keep the momentum of the breed alive. I feel a publication, where these items are discussed, would give a helpful orientation.

Judith Wich-Wenning: *Which guidelines led you when you built up your world-famous breeding programme?*

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: *The Arabian horse must be cle-*



At the idyllic stud farm Nagel's Katharinenhof

arly recognizable as such; there should be no doubt that one faces an Arabian horse, if such a horse is presented. Therefore one should know very well what are the typical characteristics and features of an Arabian. This question should be studied, and if doing so, one will find out that there are different types of Arabian horses. One should think first about its own preference and then decide for one of these types and make sure that the typical characteristics of the breed are represented in such a chosen horse. My choice was, 50 years ago, the Arabians of Egyptian type.

Judith Wich-Wenning: *Which are the cornerstones – the most important mare families – at your stud farm today?*

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: *Our stud is built on four mare families, all four tracing back to the State Stud El Zabaraa in Egypt. Only after having studied properly the breeding herd of this important stud, these four mares were chosen to become the foundation mares of our breeding herd. We are using stallions which are all belonging to the sire line of Nazeer, and this from the very beginning, which means with the appearance of Nazeer as one of the greatest and most influential stallions of El Zabaraa in Egypt. As a sire, Nazeer was known to breed good mares and good stallions*



The author Judith Wich-Wenning with the group of Kuwaiti breeders at Dr. Nagel's open house presentation in August 2013

at the same time. He was a horse expressing finest Arabian type, which means dryness on one side and harmony on the other in a perfect way.

Judith Wich-Wenning: Which stallions do you currently use and what do you especially appreciate about them?

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: We are presently using our older stallion NK Hafid Jamil, and also his three sons: Jamal el Dine, NK Kamar el Dine and NK Nadeer. The dams of these Hafid Jamil-sons are among the best mares we have in our stud, as Ansata Ken Ranya or NK Nadirah. Each stallion must have one or two very specific characteristics in their features, which we like to introduce into our breeding herd. They must be able to transmit them to their offspring. A stallion which does not have one or two highlights or is not able to breed them onwards will not be used.

Judith Wich-Wenning: Please tell us about some of the most promising young horses at your farm.

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: Every breeder's pride would be to see some exceptional young horses grown in his stud. What is exceptional in our case? We prefer our young horses to expose the main characteristics of an Arabian, but also, besides these outward features, they should be gifted with a very likeable behavior and an easy, happy temperament. Both traits should go together. It needs some time and a very well considered selection scheme over several generations to bring such horses forward. In principle, all our younger stock is fulfilling nowadays the above mentioned requirements.

Judith Wich-Wenning: What does a normal day at Nagel's Katharinenhof look like?

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: We are annually breeding about 12 – 14 mares, which is only a slight increase compared to the last 10 years. We have divided our stud into five different stables, the main reason of which is the sanitary control. It is easier for any kind of disease control to have the herd divided into smaller groups. All our horses have ample space for grazing every day for a certain time as far as the yearly season is allowing it. Our stud is located on a rather meagre ground with only medium fertile vegetation. Like this, we can have the horses grazing for a long time during the day, and not to limit their outside time so much for reasons of body weight control. We like our horses to be slim and try to avoid any tendency to heaviness.

We take them into their stables every evening for additional or special feeding, if needed, but mainly for safety and control reasons. Yearlings, older foals, mares with foals, pregnant or empty mares, each group is kept onto its separate paddock. This applies to the stallions as well, each stallion has its own paddock and stays there for a certain time per day. We are not training our mares for riding or other special purposes, but all have learned to behave well and they can be easily handled in all situations. For stallions, however, we apply training like riding and/or lounging.

Judith Wich-Wenning: What do you enjoy most about



being with Arabian horses?

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: My main profession was the agricultural business, poultry production as one activity and contracting by building agricultural projects in East Europe and in the Middle East as the other one. My Arabian horses I have kept, since the very beginning, for pleasure and my personal entertainment. However, this interest has developed in a way I never had expected. The closer I got to these horses, the more I wanted to know about them, including how to breed and select them. My close connection to other agricultural livestock which I was breeding professionally was definitely an incentive to include also Arabian

horses into such thoughts.

Judith Wich-Wenning: Please describe for us your ideal Arabian horse!

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: My ideal Arabian horse is the one which represents in its best way all the brilliant features and traits which such a horse has developed in its maybe 2000 years' history. It should reflect that this Arabian is an exotic horse seen from a European point of view. The influence of its original homeland, Arabia, should still be present and visible. In addition, its inborn close relation to men, acquired in its history together with its Bedouin



Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel with Mrs. Fatma Hamza (left) and Mrs. Judith Forbis (right)



Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel with a group of international guests at Nagel's Katharinenhof

breeders, must still be felt in an Arabian of today: A nice, smaller, dry head, a high tail carriage, a good pigmentation, four black hooves, the most appreciated elegant and powerful movements and a dry appearing body structure are important selection criteria in our stud.

Judith Wich-Wenning: Which of your horses was – or is – closest to your heart?

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: I favour a stud farm of limited size, this allows to know every single horse very well. Therefore I will limit myself to about 15 mares, 5 stallions and their offspring. I know each one in every detail concerning behavior, their positive or sometimes negative traits, their qualities in heritability and as a broodmare. Being in this situation, I can recognize each horse in its own personality and I know well that they, in this respect, all differ from each other. My preferences have always been those horses when behavior and their other required qualities are united. To such preferred horses belonged my old mare Hanan, her son Jamil, and at present I would mention our stallion NK Nadeer and the mares NK Nadirah, NK Habiba and NK Lina.

Judith Wich-Wenning: Which advice would you give to a newcomer of Egyptian Arabian horses?

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: If I can give any advice to a new breeder, this advice should not be limited to Egyptian horses, it would apply to all Arabian breeds, no matter from which breeding programme they ever originate. All depen-

ds, first of all, on the interest of each person, why he thinks to buy an Arabian. If he is a person liking competition, he should choose a horse with high show qualities, since he will enter with this decision into the very specific section of Arabian show horses. He would need to own a horse which has show qualities, which should be given later on to a professional trainer, otherwise his success in the show rings of today would be very, very limited.

Another person might be more interested in sporting activities. In such a case, the Arabian horse offers the quality to be the best performance horse in long distance events worldwide. In such a case, his contact and relation to his horse will be very close, since he has to train this horse for a long time, and it takes years to prepare a performance horse in order to be competitive in major events. Such an activity takes effort and a lot of sacrifices in personal life. Somebody who decided to choose this direction and does it in a proper and responsible way should be given a lot of credit.

A third group might like and be attracted by the Arabian breed as such with no distinct professional interest and no specialization. He likes to keep his Arabian as his companion so-to-say, maybe as a small breeder, maybe as horse for leisure-riding or for sharing his Arabian with his whole family, as one does it with a good friendly dog or cat. The love and the attachment for an animal in these categories is the same, it does not depend on body size or features. In such cases a newcomer should look for an Arabian which should



have basically two main characteristics:

a) He should decide for a horse which really looks like an Arabian. It should be a good representative of this breed, so that everybody can recognize easily that this is a specific breed, different from all other horse breeds worldwide: a typical Arabian.

b) He should decide for a horse which is totally reliable in its character; not vicious, not aggressive and friendly towards its owner. A good Arabian must have such a mentality.

Regrettably in the past and nowadays, these mental qualities of the Arabian horse were neglected and many people nowadays do not know or have forgotten that the Arabian horse was once famous for these qualities, due to its position inside a nomadic society.

Judith Wich-Wenning: What is your opinion regarding the current situation of Egyptian Arabian horses?

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: I strongly believe that the Arabian horse has found again a solid and lasting place in the society of the Arab countries. This renaissance is new and maybe the interest is overheated to a certain extent. Many young breeders and newcomers should be a little more careful in what they choose. In the long run, only a better quality of Arabians have a good future. In so far there is no difference between the US, Europe and the Middle East. However, the relative number of Arabians in the Middle East will be higher, compared to the countries in the West; at first since the Arabian is their horse, a part of their culture and history, consequently the interest and commitment should be higher. Secondly, in the Arab countries other competitive horse breeds do not exist and it will be difficult to get properly settled, due to the climate and environment which is prevailing in Arabia to which these European breeds are not adapted. Therefore the Arabian is in a very unique position. Regrettably, certain developments can be observed in these countries which look very artificial or even abnormal and where even welfare and basic natural requirements for sound management in breeding are neglected. Such deplorable ill development remains hopefully only an exception. Definitely they will not disturb the overall positive situation of Arabian horse breeding in these countries, since the vast majority of the new breeders seems to be proud to own and work their historical horse.

Judith Wich-Wenning: Where do you think Egyptian Arabian horse breeding is heading?

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: Until now, most Egyptian horse breeders show a very particular thinking and are judging

their horses under two aspects: first, the horse as an animal as such and second, on its history and genetic background as a pure-bred Arabian. The last point is often overestimated and the horse itself underestimated. One should not make such a mistake, especially since all what is written in the studbooks about a history of a horse is proper and correct information. If one looks into the studbooks of the last 100 years, one is on safe ground. These studbooks have been so much scrutinized by so many people, experts and also sceptical readers that any irregularity would have been detected. The Egyptian breed has breedingwise the advantage that this population is relatively small and closed for more than fifty years. Only a certain number of horses worldwide, maybe less than 2 % of all Arabians, are belonging to this group. Experience has shown that all positive traits which a good Arabian should have, are available in this population, and they can be determined easier than in populations which are wide open for additional influence from outside. Each additional horse, belonging to a different population, means the introduction of new elements which need a new evaluation and positive, and negative surprises in breeding results are not easy to anticipate. It is easier to build a breeding programme on animals which can be clearly defined and described in all their qualities. Therefore the Egyptian population, if properly handled, has a lot of advantages for further breeding. It is up to breeders, which horse they want to breed within this population: a taller horse, a stronger horse, a finer horse or following the standards of a show horse; all possibilities are open.

Until now, the Egyptian breed was known to incorporate a lot of type and in looking to the pedigrees of many show horses, then this fact is evident. To keep a certain type is therefore one of the main directives which should not be overlooked.

Judith Wich-Wenning: What are your plans for the future?

Dr. Hans-Joachim Nagel: In my opinion I have a well established breeding concept which is highly interesting and challenging at the same time. To continue with such a closed population on a small number of horses could be seen as a risk, but until now there are no indications of such mishappenings which are in the mind of many people connected with such a programme with a higher inbreeding factor. In evaluating this procedure in a positive way, such a population offers a solid base for very systematic interesting studies in applying new methods or procedures in selection.

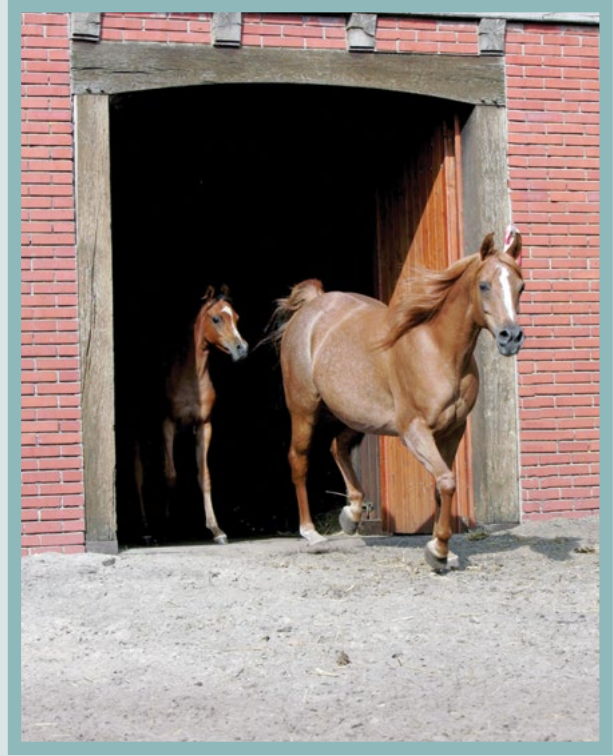
Therefore I will continue this programme with great care in the same size, applying my own particular concept.



The legendary *NK Hafid Jamil*



NK Nina
(NK Nadeer x NK Bint Bint Nashua)



Muneera Al Ariba
(Ken Assam x Ken Mufaji)



NK Nabeelah (Nahaman x Nashua)



NK Nefisa
(NK Nadeer x NK Aziza)





NK Kamar El Dine
(NK Hafid Jamil x Ansata Ken Ranja)





Jamal El Dine
(NK Hafid Jamil x Ansata Ken Ranja)





Salaa El Dine
(Ansata halim Shah x Hanan)



NK Ninnifee (Jamal El Dine x NK Nariman)