

Lifetime Achievement Award

Belesemo Arabians Dirk & Kimberly Johnson



Cedarlane Gay-Gi~Miss Nateza~Mulaana

Belesemo Prelude~Belesemo Postlude~Velvet Dawn

Belesemo Trad

How does one write about a fairy tale – especially when you have been so fortunate and blessed to have lived it? As I sit on my back deck trying to write this story, I am looking out at green fields dotted with white, bay, black and chestnut coats. I am attempting to write a history of Belesemo Arabians for the ECAHS Lifetime Achievement Award – for which we feel so humbly honored. The words incredible come to mind - both the people we have been so blessed to know and the horses we have been so blessed to have had in our lives.

Our fairy tale starts with two wonderful women that are primary in the story of Belesemo Arabians. One is my mother, who convinced my father to purchase a wild, 10 month old stud colt named Belesemo Trad for his horse crazy girl's 16th birthday present and the other is Lillie "Dusty" Slifka, who owned the wonderful stallion Las Trad, that she was willing to breed a 4-Her's grade thoroughbred/morgan mare to for \$50 – that is the beginning of fairy tales.



Belesemo Trad

I don't think my parents ever had intentions of keeping Belesemo Trad a stallion, but it happened, and the rest as they say "is history". Ten years of experiences and life lessons were packed into the next period of life - learning about bloodlines, pouring over magazines, stallions, going to college, getting to visit the great west coast breeding programs such as Al-Marah, Waltons, Gainey, Pattersons, Vantage Point, Valhalla and many, many more of that era. It was getting to experience Scottsdale, the Reno Horse Fair (where I first saw Overlook Farwa) and taking Belesemo Trad to a clinic that featured Tom and Rhita McNair. It was also showing in the "Good Old Days" when arabians were shown in every class from english to western, from versatility to costume, and driving all with the same horse. Both the stud colt and the resultant part-bred filly from the breeding were subjected to every experience available to horses by a young, single horse crazy gal - from showing to trail riding and parading to drill teams. You name it, we got to experience it.

Everything I wish kids of today could experience to keep that "fire in the belly" churning.

Belesemo Arabians was officially born in 1972, but in actuality became a breeding program in 1982 with marriage to my husband Dirk. He is the other "founding individual" in this fairy tale that has brought it to fruition. Having been raised on a dairy farm where he had to milk cows every day before school, he vowed never to have to feed animals routinely again, but low and behold he fell in love with a girl whose passion for Arabians was greater than he could overcome. He is the "wind beneath the wings" of this almost 40 year program. He is the hay procurer, pasture irrigator, gopher catcher, fence and facilities repair man, and mare handling holder. However, he is the first to admit that he really doesn't like horses all that much. However, Belesemo Arabians would not exist without him. He is the cog that makes the whole wheel turn. Belesemo Arabians has been a "family affair" in every way possible.

The breeding program started with Belesemo Trad, a true gift in every sense of the word, and the acquisition of two Ga'zi daughters and two of their daughters. Many times in the past 40 years I have looked at the horses that have come through our program and wished I could have those horses back now. In the early years we were extremely blessed to have as our foundation five Abu Farwa granddaughters – Zimara (Ga'zi x Bint Shammar by Antezeyn Skowronek), ZiKeeta (Ga'zi x Kayeta by Utez), Farweyna (Antezeyn Skowronek x Mizima by Mizal), Charmeyna (Antezeyn Skowronek x Mizima by Mizal) and Cedarlane Gay-Gi (Abu Baha x Gigi by *Serafix) They were all dowagers (20+ years old) when we acquired them, as we could not have afforded them if they had been younger and breeding sound. But interestingly enough, all of those mares went on to produce Belesemo Trad sons or a daughter that have

played large parts in our program down through the years. We did not have ultrasound back then or uterine flushing or any of the things we use these days to get older mares in foal. We just kept breeding them and keeping them on lush green grass and let nature take its course, which it did. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to these older mares that helped us get our start. The Abu Farwa mares figured strongly in the early years of our program and still do today. Belesemo Trad on those linebred Abu Farwa mares was our original meal ticket and is what made Belesemo Arabians what it is now 40 years later. We now have fourth and fifth generation descendants of some of them in our program. We were blessed to have some of those old girls featured in a Dowager Article in Arabian Horse World back in 1991.

Belesemo Trad was truly a sire of sons, as he had some great ones out of the old Abu Farwa bred mares. We have had Belesemo Magic, Belesemo Image, Belesemo Reflksn, Belesemo Farwa, Belesemo Epic+++ and Belesemo Ibn Trad all in our breeding program producing national winning offspring in both endurance and the show ring. It is hard to believe that we are now down to only 3 living Belesemo Trad sons all 24 years old and older with just one owned by us. However, with the years have come practices such as semen freezing that helps in our prolonging the lines of these sons.

Down through the years, several of the great horses in our program are the result of other individuals' generosity to us. In 1989, our next "golden cross" was RD Arizon (Perlezon x NaWarda by Comar Garit). A super sweet stallion that originally came to "just board" with us, he eventually turned into a wonderful gift that produced some outstanding offspring for our program. It helped intensify our Crabbet breeding through the *Raffles/Ferzon lines. His offspring went on to win national endurance and performance championships with his sons, Belesemo Obsidian and BA Fantizon being major sires for us. We have several third and fourth generations of his offspring in the program today.

Also in 1989, Michael Bowling sent two mares to be bred to Belesemo Trad (no shipped semen then yet). Imagine our surprise when one of those mares that stepped off the trailer was the famous Miss Nateza (Abu Farwa x Natez by *Witez II) at age 26. Imagine our further surprise when we received her papers in the mail after getting her in foal to Belesemo Trad, with Michael's comment that "he believed she should be where her bloodlines would be appreciated". Her resultant colt, Belesemo Farwa went on to produce several champion offspring for us as well, keeping her blood in our program today.



RD Arizon

Another major gift to our program came in 1993 when Earl Guyton agreed to let us have Overlook Farwa (Abu Farwa x Al Marah Zaihaq by Indruff) on a lifetime lease. Again, we were so blessed that we were able to incorporate these "once in a lifetime" horses into our breeding program in their advancing years. To have had the last living Abu Farwa son and daughter on our place was a treasure beyond any price, and we owe such a debt of gratitude to these wonderful breeders. We had to pinch ourselves to believe that they were with us.

Down through the years, Belesemo Arabians has been fortunate to have a variety of different bloodlined mares come through our herd. However, one constant for us has always been the Abu Farwa/Antez/Ferseyn breeding. We have always advertised that as our core breeding foundation. We also have been blessed to have had three *Serafix granddaughters as well as two *Silver Vanity daughters that have infused more Crabbet blood into our herd. It is blood we highly prize.

In 2014 we were able to bring in BR Gold Sovereign (*Seffer x PR Silvern Dream by ***Silver Vanity**) adding an even greater infusion of Crabbet breeding to the program. Our gratitude goes to Susan Felker for contacting us about Sovereign originally in 2011. We arranged for him to go to Tom/Cindy Lempp for a few years as we had other stallions we were concentrating on at that time. When he came home to us, Cindy had him in masterful shape to win 3 U.S. Top Tens in Sport Horse stallion In Hand classes. So far, Sovereign's best cross has been with the Abu Farwa/*Serafix cross mares, especially our Belesemo Magic daughters. We are honored that one of them, Belesema Golden Joy, (out of Belesema Joyous by Belesemo Magic), just recently sold to Linda Mars of Oso Arabians in Australia to increase her PR Silvern Dream blood with her stallion, SDA Silver Legend.

We occasionally bring in an outside horse with a flair of Spanish or Egyptian blood as we see an outcross need now and then in the program, but at least 50% of the stallion's pedigree still has to be Crabbet breeding in some form – whether through the CMK element or other Crabbet sources. We are Crabbet breeders through and through, not only for the substance and temperament, but just "our kind of horse". Although pedigrees are very important to us, we will not make a mating if we don't believe the phenotype of the two individuals will be just as complimentary as the genotype.

Many years ago we competed in main ring with our horses, but with the ever increasing emphasis on type, almost to the extreme, and questionable training practices, we took to the endurance trail to prove our breeding

program. Endurance is a very long term proving ground for a breeding program, as the horses have to be so old before they can compete. And even then, the really good ones are usually in their teens, making their sires and dams always in their 20's before their siring or producing efforts are of note. However, we have had some fantastic riders that have taken our horses to regional and national placings and we are indebted to them for their confidence in our bloodlines. In 2006 we came back to the show ring on a limited basis since the sport horse nationals were instituted and it seemed a venue where our type of horse was more accepted.

With an average of 50 head of horses on the place, almost every horse holds Belesemo Trad in its pedigree somewhere, unless it was an outcross mare acquired specifically to breed to him. So obviously, he has been the literal foundation and most important breeding element in our program. We have had folks ask us who has been the most influential mare in our program and we would have to say it is a tossup between Velvet Dawn (Misimma Ibn Shiko x ZiKishta by Zironek) and Zimara (Ga'zi x Bint Shammar by Antezeyn Skowronek). Dawn was a small, beautiful classic headed incubator mare that had a penchant for twinning, but she always threw her great beauty to her foals along with the stallion look alike body and coloring. Although she had an Egyptian sire line, her three-quarter *Raffles/Abu Farwa breeding always came through. She figures prominently in our pedigrees through two sons and a daughter. Zimara only produced us three foals with two breeding on, but the one especially, Belesemo Magic has always produced national caliber offspring and his daughters are very prized in our program. The common theme in both these mares' pedigrees is the Abu Farwa element through Ga'zi.



Zimara

We were phenomenally blessed in Belesemo Trad being such a strong sire and just as equally blessed in the wonderful mares we were gifted to breed to him. The third blessing is the wonderful people that have believed in our horses, purchased them down through the years and taken them to their many national, regional, open show and/or endurance titles. Our breeding program would not be what it is today had it not been for these gifted individuals and we

owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

It seems like just yesterday we started this venture and looked at the titans in the industry for breeding guidance and knowledge. Now, it seems impossible that we have put almost 40 years into this endeavor as well and are looking back.

What does the future for Belesemo Arabians hold? With such a downturn in Arabian breeding - 35,000 horses bred in 1980 versus only 2,500 in 2020 just 40 years later, we are alarmed at the lack of young people entering our "fire in the belly" occupation and the loss of many of the good, old lines. We still get excited at seeing each foal crop. However, breeding horses is such a long term effort that today's instantaneous society does not adapt well to the length of time involved or inevitable losses that occur. However, we hope and pray that we can be the guiding influence in young folks coming up just like those who guided and supported us as well. We are so thankful for all of the Lord's many, many blessings, which includes both horses and people in our lives down through the years. Thank you for sharing this fabulous journey with us and blessing our efforts with this wonderful award.

Dirk & Kim Johnson



*Owyhee Pie Ride - 2019
13 Belesemo Bred or Owned*



Fillies at Belesemo Arabians



Belesemo Trad~Age 10



Kims Komet