

## An Exceptional Sport Horse Stallion Aazrak AHR #10821 (1956-1975) © Kat D. Walden 2006

Overcoming obstacles was a specialty of a versatile stallion that started out as a pony horse and ended as a field hunter and sire with a remarkable show record. **Aazrak** AHR #10821 was foaled July 22, 1956 and died in the summer of 1975. He is registered as a roan; he was in fact a chestnut with considerable roaning in his coat. His sire **Aaraf** was by **\*Raffles**, Ibrahim D.B. sire line, and out of **Aarah** (Ghadaf x Nadirat by **\*Rizvan**). His dam **Aazkara** was by the **Rahas** son **Azkar** and out of **Aarah**, making his sire and dam half brother and sister. **Aarah's** dam line is Dajania D.B. through the famous endurance mare **\*Noam**. Outcross elements in his primarily Old Blunt pedigree are Skowronek, Sidi and **\*Aziza**. Aazrak appears to have been the kind of CMK stallion one would expect from his pedigree. He had a blaze extending over his muzzle to his lower lip, white on his right hind to partial fetlock with rising strip, and his tail may have been light enough to be called flaxen. Roaning is visible behind his elbow and in his flank. He stood 14.2-1/2 hands, was wide between the eyes, had small well-shaped ears, big jowl, good bone, good-sized feet and a powerful hindquarter with good tail carriage. Aazrak was clearly a very handsome horse with a sterling disposition and great athleticism.

Although Indiana Thoroughbred breeder Richard F. Gieselman owned the stallion for the first 11-1/2 years of his life and is listed by The Arabian Horse Registry as his breeder, the stallion is actually a product of prominent early breeder Blanche M. Tormohlen's breeding program. Mr. Gieselman is not listed by the Registry as having owned or bred any other purebreds. Whatever his reasons for having one Arabian on his farm, Mr. Gieselman cared very much for Aazrak. When someone else's carelessness in putting Aazrak away hot with too much water to drink resulted in founder, he loaded the little horse into a trailer and drove hours from Bloomington, Indiana to the University of Kentucky to save his life.

At the Gieselman farm, Aazrak earned his keep from the time he was three as a pony horse for the Thoroughbreds. Pony horses are nearly always geldings, usually older, steady ones with some size. The mere fact of having been used as a pony horse at such a young age speaks volumes for Aazrak's disposition. By all accounts he was smart and brave, although his intelligence, boldness and knack for opening latches got him into trouble more than once. He suffered bad cuts to a hind fetlock one time when he escaped and became tangled in wire. All in all, he had more than his fair share of injuries as a young horse, including splints, the founder, and injuries resulting in boggy hocks.

Aazrak also worked as a tease stallion on the Gieselman farm and banged up his knees in that role. Apparently he was handled with a chain through his mouth during teasing, a risky practice that can severely damage a horse's mouth and tongue. This and a lack of quality riders early in his training gave the stallion a hard mouth. The miracle is that all of his early injuries didn't leave him permanently lame.

Young Ann Harnly (later McKay) became aware of Aazrak when she went to work for Gieselman. A young Ann Harnly schooling Aazrak over jumps. galloping horses on his farm one year. Soon she was working with the young horse, schooling him as a pleasure horse and potential racing as a four year-old. Aazrak did make one start in an Arabian race, but with his scarred mouth, the jockey could not rate him, and this ended any hope of a racing career, although he showed plenty of speed, which was an asset later on.



Later on, he somehow injured a nerve in one front leg, which sidelined him for several seasons. With all his injuries, some caused by his own actions and some caused by less-than-stellar handling by a few employees of Mr. Gieselman, he was a real hard-luck horse. This makes his lifetime accomplishments that much more impressive.

When Ann decided not to return to college in Indiana that fall, she persuaded Mr. Gieselman to allow her to lease Aazrak. Ultimately, she leased him for six years, moving him first to New Jersey and later to Maryland, before Mr. Gieselman finally agreed to sell Aazrak to her in 1968. In the meantime, she went to work for Jim McKay and eventually married him.

McKay and Aazrak achieved an exceptional partnership that resulted in an amazing show record. He was the horse to beat in Hunter, Jumper, Dressage, Hunter Hack, English Pleasure, Western Pleasure, Pole Bending, Stock Horse, Trail Horse and Harness classes. He was Champion or Reserve Champion at numerous competitive trail rides of 25 and 50 miles, qualified for national championships and was a New Jersey High Point award winner in the early 1960's. In addition, McKay hunted him regularly for years with the Elkridge-Harford Hounds in Maryland, where he was much admired for his impeccable manners and calm bravery over all obstacles.

All during these years, Aazrak stood at stud and covered a half dozen or so mares a year. He was also a family horse, and Ann's young daughters hacked him bareback through the fields of horses at home. He understood all his various roles.

In September, 1970, McKay sold Aazrak to Raymond H. and Helen G. Smith; it was in their ownership that he sired eight of his 13 purebred offspring. He never actually left Ann's care, as the sale had been made to close friends to protect Aazrak during a legal dispute. One of his earlier daughters, though, is the most successful at stud to date, and his three oldest daughters between them produced 23 offspring in the first generation and 139 in the second. **Aazfreya**, a 1962 chestnut mare out of **Freya** by **Al-Marah Rooz**, produced 10 foals, among them the reasonably well-known sire **Aazkaborro**, who stood in the U.S. and Canada. Of Aazrak's younger get, the stallion **Sunset Enzo**, a 1972 chestnut out of **Lamia-Kay (Ibn Baruk x Never Die Holly)**, has been the most prolific, siring 27 get with the youngest foaled in 1994. As of January 2006, he has 35 grandget comprising five purebreds, 22 Anglo-Arabians and eight Half-Arabians. Altogether, Aazrak sired 28 get, 69 grandget and 202 great-grandget, so chances are good that he will continue to contribute to the Arab breed in some small way. In addition to his purebred offspring, Aazrak also sired at least 15 partbreds: Half-Arabians (seven, including **Wickeri** who is registered with IAHA but with no data) and Anglo-Arabians (eight), which are included in the totals above. It is possible that there are other unregistered Half-Arabians, but it is impossible to confirm that through available sources.

One of Aazrak's greatest accomplishments was impressing respected horsewoman and author Margaret Cabell Self sufficiently that she included him in the 1973 edition of her book **The Hunter in Pictures**. Aazrak is the only Arabian profiled, although Self gives credit to the Arabian influence on the Thoroughbred and most other light horse breeds. She also used a photo of a Half-Arabian Aazrak daughter, **Wickeri** IAHA #1A49786, in the section on Crossbreds and Half-breds. Self stated that Aazrak was a prepotent sire who passed along "all his good qualities and his jumping ability."

With his exceptional disposition, tough constitution and talent, Aazrak was the kind of horse who won friends for the Arabian horse wherever he went during his lifetime. As an older horse, he even befriended an orphan foal that had been rejected by all of the mares and geldings on the farm. The foal was depressed from loneliness and in danger of dying before Aazrak was tried as an equine companion. He was a stallion whose continuing influence can only benefit the breed as a whole and the Arabian sport horse in particular.

(Continued below)

In this photo of Aazrak ridden by Ann McKay from the Self book, one can see a typical CMK stallion exhibiting beautiful form to function. His hunter form is nearly perfect; Ms. McKay, hampered by a cheap saddle flying up in the back, shows exceptional ability by maintaining her form and not hampering her mount.



After writing Aazrak's story for the Winter 2000 ASHA Newsletter, the author was lucky enough to track down and correspond with Ann McKay's daughter Chris Donovan, and through her, with Ann. According to Chris and her mother, Aazrak died in the summer of 1975 as a result of breaking his neck in a freak accident. He was only 19 years old.

Sadly, the Aazrak son **Sunset Enzo**, out of Lamia-Kay, is also dead, euthanized in the spring of 2000 after suffering a mild stroke. He was nearly 28 years old. Ann McKay wrote that, as a young horse, he showed as much working ability as his sire. She regretted that she never had the time, money and health to take him as far as he could go. (Ann's back was permanently damaged by a bad fall one year, which eventually ended her ability to ride over jumps, and her husband died in 1975 leaving her a 35 year-old widow with two small daughters, Patricia and Chris.) Although he may not have reached his full potential, Enzo did compete successfully in Dressage through 4<sup>th</sup> Level, eventing through Preliminary Division, Combined Driving and even some Competitive Trail. Few horses given every possible chance in the competitive arena accomplish as much or show such versatility. Enzo also inherited his sire's exceptional disposition; Chris described him as her mother's best friend and a true gentleman of a horse. The last year Ann evented on Enzo, in Training Division to spare Ann's back, they came second three times to a USET team rider with the difference in penalty points being less than two points for the three events. In the early 1980's, Chris also competed on Enzo at Preliminary level before he retired from eventing.

Enzo's success as a sport horse is hardly surprising, given his sire's show record and his dam's breeding. **Lamia-Kay** was out of **Never Die Holly**, a product of the Asmis breeding program. The partnership of Carl Asmis and Never Die Holly's sire **Rafmirz** was well-known for elegant exhibitions of FEI level dressage, and the family is still very involved with dressage today, sponsoring a USDF scholarship to allow talented American riders to study in Europe. Lamia-Kay's sire **Ibn Baruk** was a great-grandson of **\*Sulejman** and **\*Fadl**, who were both athletic and versatile riding horses. Ibn Baruk also had lines through his dam to action sire **\*Berk** and multiple crosses to the exceptional hunter **\*Naomi** through the inbred mare **Haaranmin**.

With his youngest purebred get now just 12 years old, it is possible that Enzo will be the strongest breeding contributor to Aazrak's legacy of purebred Arabian sport horses. But the purebreds are only part of Aazrak's dynasty.

The first, and certainly not the least, of Aazrak's Anglo-Arabian offspring was **Arzab**, a gelding foaled in 1965 out of a Thoroughbred mare named Fable-Lass. Arzab placed quite a bit in halter classes as a two year-old, and Ann started him out in baby hunter classes after she had him going under saddle. She had become interested in Combined Training and Dressage but hadn't had an opportunity yet to take any lessons in either. However Mrs. Bedford, the founder of the Elkridge-Harford Pony Club, had C-rally size fences built around the hunt club, so Ann was able to school there, and she built smaller copies of fences she saw pictured in the *Chronicle of the Horse*.

With this background, Ann entered Arzab in their first event, at Preliminary level, the New England Three Day Championships. Arzab placed fifth in spite of one stop cross country and taking down a fence in stadium due to his youth and inexperience. His next outing was at Fair Hill, where he still had one stop cross country, but a clean round in stadium under bad weather conditions. Next Ann entered him in an event near Washington D.C. at the old Potomac Horse Center, where Arzab was brave and jumped clear on the cross country, but Ann came off at a big log fence on a curve—the only time she

ever fell during an event. Arzab was startled by the sudden appearance of two jump judges chatting in the landing zone and made an enormous, twisting leap over the log, unseating Ann enough that she slid off when he landed. She remounted and they finished the course.

About this time, Ann and her husband, Jim McKay, who had operated a foxhunting and teaching barn together, stopped making their living with horses. Ann also injured her back during this period, and as a consequence, was unable to ride nearly as much as before. So she lent Arzab out to Essie Perkins in Vermont for her daughters to ride. Beth and Bea Perkins both evented on him, one to Advanced and the other to Preliminary. They took him to training with the USET team at Gladstone, New Jersey. A couple of their working students also evented with him. Arzab stayed with the Perkinses for eight years, eventually coming home to enjoy a harem of mares, do some hunter trials and even win the Masters Class two years running at the Elkridge-Harford Hunter show. He showed a few times at All-Arabian shows, where the one horse who beat him was another Anglo son of Aazrak, and in his 20's he was still winning 25 to 50 mile ECTRA competitive trail rides. Obviously, he inherited his sire's toughness and basic soundness, as the only thing that ever seemed to slow him down was a terrible knee injury from opening a gate and leading his mares down a road, where he was hit by a jeep. Daughter Chris did such a good job with his rehabilitation that he won the Masters Classes after the injury healed.

**Waterfoot Larrikin**, owned by Ann's friend Jeanie Gore, was the Anglo that outshone Arzab at All-Arabian shows. He evented successfully up to Prelim, when it was discovered that his hocks had arthritic changes. Accordingly, he moved "down" to foxhunting and was a regular with the Elkridge-Harford Hunt, winning a couple of hunter paces as well. As an older horse, Larry introduced several students to eventing at the Beginner Novice and Novice level, and he rounded out his career as a lesson horse for selected beginners a few times a week. Despite the arthritis in his hocks, careful management allowed Larry to be ridden up into his twenties. Jeanie Gore evented at Preliminary level with two other Aazrak Anglos, **Discotheque ("Sam")**, out of Skilful Eagle by Talon, and **Choreographer**, out of a Cormac mare.

Two other Aazrak Anglo offspring owned and ridden by Chris McKay Donovan were **Goshen**, a full brother to Discotheque, and **Gadd John Dee**, out of Debbie-K. **Goshen**, who Ann describes as a "lovely big kind fellow," was Chris' Pony Club mount, and she evented him to Preliminary, then sold him as a foxhunter to pay for college. **Gadd John Dee** was another stallion. Chris took him up through Preliminary as well, and finished in the money at Essex on him her last time out.

**Frolic**, a mare by Aazrak out of Paul's Dream (TB), started out as a Jr. Hunter in Maryland and Virginia, with wins under the coaching of Billy Boice. Sold to the Swedish national jumping team, she competed for them until she rebowed a rear tendon first injured when she was a foal, which ended her career as a jumper. She is believed to have stayed in Sweden as a broodmare.

Aazrak's influence on the Anglo-Arabian continues today. The bay stallion **Post Exchange**, by Enzo out of Thoroughbred mare Re-regret by Regret, competed the first time at the IAHA U.S. Nationals in Lexington, Kentucky in October, 2000. He went Top Ten in the Half/Anglo Arabian Regular Working Hunter AAOTR division. **Post Exchange** is owned and ridden by Ann's friend Peggy Ingles, and he is one of only a few stallions Ann has sold. He was sold primarily so he would get a chance to compete, as he is a very talented jumper. Besides his national title, Post Exchange has won at many open hunter shows. Peggy started a perpetual trophy in the Harford County Horse Show Association (Maryland) in Aazrak's honor a few years ago; unless she disqualifies herself it seems likely she might win it one year!

The handsome bay Anglo stallion, **Quartermaster**, by Yankee Lad—also the sire of Olympic gold-medal winner Touch of Class—out of the Enzo daughter Jane Morgenroth (she out of a TB mare), has been active in ASHAI as recently as 1996. Owned and ridden by Terry L. Gibson of Vermont, he was the 1996 USCTA/ASHAI Arabian Horse of the Year and won the Arrowhead Hildago Memorial Trophy sponsored by Vera Vann. He was competing at Prelim that year and is now standing at stud in Vermont, where his stable mate is **Discotheque**.

The above few examples show that Aazrak has had a strong positive influence on Anglo-Arabians on the East Coast. He also sired many Half-Arabians, although to date, I have information about only a couple of them. The first Aazrak foal that Ann McKay owned was a chestnut gelding out of a palomino Quarterhorse-type mare that she bought by galloping race horses to earn money. She purchased him as a two year-old, gelded him and trained him, initially as a pleasure horse. She later sold him in New



Jersey, where he competed in local 4-H and pleasure shows. There was also the chestnut mare **Wickeri**, previously mentioned, who was foaled in 1965, by Aazrak out of a crossbred mare named Lassy. Wickeri was purchased as a three year-old by Robin Stemler, who competed her successfully as a hunter in both recognized and unrecognized shows. Wickeri was champion and reserve numerous times at unrecognized shows her first season, and she also won hunter trials. Miss Stemler and the mare were a solid team and well suited to each

other. They are shown above in the John E. Zimmerman photo from the Self book mentioned earlier.

Although far from complete, the above illustrates that **Aazrak** was a sire of strong merit whose descendants are still successful in the East Coast sport horse scene today. It is strongly to be hoped that his grandson, **Admiral Harnly** AHR #559453 (Sunset Enzo x SS Magsheba [An Magno x Tochiba]), a 1994 chestnut stallion, will carry on this line. Admiral Harnly is named after Ann's father, who retired as a Rear Admiral from the U.S. Navy. He was bred and is owned by Ann McKay or her second daughter, Patricia. His dam line is Balkis, Desert Bred, through the French imported mare \*Babel, to whom he has three crosses. Although unshown as yet and unproven as a sire, both Ann and Chris believe he has just as much potential as his sire and grandsire. All he needs is a little luck to bring him a good rider and/or some good mares to produce the next generation in the Aazrak dynasty of Arabian sport horses. Let's all hope the future brings him what he needs.

*[Author's update, April 2006. This month the last Aazrak gelding that Chris and her mother had kept track of died at the age of 38, but this month they have also seen the birth of a fine strong Anglo-Arabian son of Admiral Harnly. Five more Admiral foals are expected this spring, including two purebreds and the sport horse dynasty begun by Aazrak continues.]*



Quartermaster, by TB Yankee Lad out of the Sunset Enzo Anglo-Arab daughter Jane Morgenroth and Terry L. Gibson of Vermont when they were eventing in Preliminary Division. He won the 1996 USCTA-ASHAI Arabian Horse of the Year and the Arrowhead Hildago Memorial Trophy sponsored by Vera Vann.