

THE HEIRLOOM INDEX

AN OVERVIEW

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June 1995

Abridged and edited by Cheryl Fippen and Debra Kay Schrishuhn from the article originally appearing in Khamsat, 12: 3 (August 1995): 21-26.

The central source document of Heirloom from which all others flow is the Heirloom Index, a database containing records on all extant and *sheradu* (extinct) horses descended from 57 qualifying Al Khamsa Foundation Horses.¹ Lady Anne Blunt first used the name “Heirloom” when referring to her early Egyptian horses as a closed gene pool. Rewriting her will in 1915, she intended to urge her daughter Judith to “maintain as a permanent stud them or their produce to be called ‘The Heirloom Arabian Stud.’”²

Originally we created the Index to develop a tool that would be useful to breeders in many ways. For example, we would know which horses were available within each strain and family; the percentage of Abbas Pasha (and other exporters) blood in each horse; which horses were bred by a certain breeder; and current owners, to the best of our knowledge. These are but a few of the questions we wanted to answer, and with trepidation I began to construct the first database in 1993. I was then 71 years old, and although I knew the Macintosh³ computer fairly well, I had no idea how to run a database program. But the mission was of urgent importance, and so I decided to give it my all.

After a crash two-month learning period, I finally began to grasp our chosen program, FileMaker Pro.⁴ By now I could see that the task was so monumental that I might not complete it in my lifetime. Along came Debra Schrishuhn, a young woman who had purchased a horse from us several years before, who held B.F.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Illinois and was very familiar with the Mac.⁵ She quickly gained the knowledge to start working with me on the Heirloom Index, and in a year we had it mostly done!⁶ Enormous credit goes to my wife Elizabeth for putting up with me during this year.

The effort was worth every penny and every hour that it took to do this monumental work. Consisting of some 3,000 records and over 160 fields, the Heirloom Index contains approximately 480,000 discrete pieces of information on both extant and *sheradu* horses. *Sheradu*, an Arabic word

meaning “lost forever,” is used to indicate deceased horses that have not bred on within Heirloom lines.

There are 1,477 extant horses in the Index; 835 are living and 642 are deceased, but their blood is extant: that is, they are horses who have living descendants in the Index.⁷

The current Heirloom herd may look relatively strong, but first glances are often deceiving, and in fact we are not in nearly as good condition as the broad numbers indicate. Of the 835 living horses, only 114 mares have produced more than one extant Heirloom foal, and only 90 living stallions have any extant offspring within the Heirloom gene pool.

Having been given a brief glimpse of the Index, you can see its power to aid us in making intelligent, knowledgeable breeding decisions regarding the continuation of the living herd. Surely it is an advantage over the early breeders who did not have timely access to such helpful information. But having information at our fingertips and using it are two different things. If we can't get our thinking caps on we will lose these great horses to neglect. The Heirloom Index is a powerful way of looking at historical data and then using it as a beacon pointing the way to the future. It is our extreme good fortune to have these remaining horses of the pashas and the Blunts, and hopefully thinking people will work together to keep the herd viable.

¹ See definition of Heirloom in “Origins of The Heirloom Arabian Stud” by Joan Schleicher. Reprinted with permission, Part One, pp. 16-21. In this publication, extant horses are listed in “The Heirloom Index,” pp. 173-247, and extinct horses are listed in “The *Sheradu* Index,” pp. 437-485.

² Rosemary Archer and James Fleming, ed., *Lady Anne Blunt, Journals and Correspondence 1878-1917* (Cheltenham, UK, 1986), 366.

³ Macintosh is a trademark of Apple Computer, Inc., registered in the U.S.A. and other countries.

⁴ FileMaker is a trademark of Claris Corporation, registered in the U.S.A. and other countries.

⁵ Mac is a trademark of Apple Computer, Inc., registered in the U.S.A. and other countries.

⁶ Jack was always an incurable optimist. —Debra Schrishuhn

⁷ All herd statistics have been updated as of June 1, 2002. See Part Two, Chapter 2: “Construction of the Database,” pp. 163-172.