

SIGI SILLER AND Om El Arab

Last May, the Arabian world lost one of its greatest breeders, the indomitable Sigi Siller. Join us as we recount her many contributions to the breed we love on the following pages.

Sigi's acquaintance with Arabians came early. Her father Franz Siller, a German horseman and breeder, owned an Arabian mare Dindara, purchased from the world-renowned Marbach State Stud in Germany. In the late 1960s, Sigi read Carl Raswan's *Trinker de Luft* (*Drinkers of the Wind*) and, at her father's suggestion, enrolled in a horse-husbandry school at Marbach. This course gave Sigi a solid foundation in equine conformation, nutrition, horse care, reproduction, riding, and stable management.

Sigi visited many private studs in Germany and was the model of the good listener as she absorbed information on breeding programs, bloodlines, and the importance of certain stallions and mares in Europe. Soon another book influenced Sigi's life: *The Arab Horse in Europe* by the late Erika Schiele, a celebrated Arabian horse authority in Europe. Descriptions of the bloodlines of Arabian horse breeding programs in Spain were of special intrigue and, in 1971 with the help of Mrs. Schiele, Sigi visited the farms of a number of prominent Spanish breeders, and brought home 18 mares from six different breeders — the largest exportation of horses from Spain to a European country to that time.

The quality of the Polish-bred stock also attracted Sigi, and a 1971 visit to Poland netted two mares and the stallion Laos, the last *Naborr son in Poland. Egypt was next,



Sigi Siller with *El Shaklan

where through the assistance of Dr. Ameen Zaher of the Ministry of Agriculture, the stallion Shaker El Masri (*Morafic x Zebeda by El Sareei) was purchased from the Egyptian Agricultural Organization and five mares from Dr. Sayed Marei, a private breeder. Those animals (plus 11 more Spanish mares imported in 1978) comprised the breeding stock at the stud Om El Arab in the Black

Forest of Germany.

From that foundation stock emerged a type specific to Om El Arab — a type characterized by a dished and finely chiseled head, short back, strong loin, long flat croup, well-shaped neck, straight legs, deep barrel, a pleasant disposition, charismatic personality, proud movement, and a naturally high-set tail carriage.

Within ten years, Om El Arab was in a leading position in European showings, much of that distinction coming through the Spanish/Egyptian cross, particularly that of Shaker El Masri on Spanish mares. The combination soon proved the most outstanding in the stud's program and became the new "golden cross" of Europe, particularly as demonstrated in the mating

of Shaker El Masri to the Spanish mare *Estopa (Tabal x Uyaima by Barquillo).

Among the many successes of this breeding is *El Shaklan, a 1975 grey stallion. *El Shaklan and eight of his offspring were brought to the United States late in 1982 so that they might compete in American shows. Sigi followed a bit later and Om El Arab ("mother of Arabians" in the Arabic language) became one of the many notable breeding farms in the Santa Ynez Valley in California.

Much would be different today if not, 47 years ago, a young novice breeder had set her faith in an equally young, unproven mare that was not of fashionable bloodlines. In doing so, Sigi Siller created something entirely new, something totally different and uniquely her own, that would profoundly change Arabian breeding throughout the world ... how many breeders would dare to take such a chance today?

From "Om El Arab International," by Mary Jane Parkinson, *Arabian Horse World*, December 1991.



*Sigi Siller and *Estopa
(Tabal x Uyaïma).*

THE GLOBAL INFLUENCE OF *Estopa

And How Sigi Siller's Breeding Choices
Profoundly Changed Arabian Breeding Throughout the World

by Betty Finke

**Abha Qatar. AJ Mardan. Ajman Moniscione. Belladonna AT.
*CR Jasmineah. Da Vinci FM. *El Dorada. *ES Harir. Esteema.
*Excalibur EA. FA El Rasheem. Fadi Al Shaqab. FS Bengali. HL
El Ganador. Khidar. *Jullyen El Jamaal. *Lawrence El Gazal.
*Kanz Al Bidayer. Luigi. RFI Farid. Shanghai EA. *SMA Magic
One. Navarrone P. Tehama Ballalina. Trussardi. *Valentinos Angel
MI. Versace. Vittorio TO. WH Justice.*

What do these horses — bred in such various countries as Spain, the Emirates, Italy, Britain, the U.S., Poland, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Brazil, Qatar, Austria, Belgium, South Africa and Australia — have in common, beside being household names in the global Arabian breeders' community? They are all descendants of *Estopa, a mare who influenced the breed more than any other in the 20th century.

It's safe to say that you will not find an Arabian breeding country on earth that does not number *Estopa descendants among its most successful horses. The list above could have been easily extended to fill the entire page, and I am certain that if one were to examine the leading sires of all Arabian-breeding countries, one would find one or more *Estopa descendants near the top of the list, if not in top position.

That's not bad going for a mare imported in 1970 by a pair of German breeders who were just starting out. *Estopa was just one of 18 mares imported by Sigi Siller (or Merz, as she was then) and her first husband Heinz Merz, and one of the few that were from the start registered in Sigi's name. There was nothing to single her out initially. While she may have been the most beautiful of the lot, her breeding was no more (or less) illustrious than the others. It was Spanish breeding, which was little known and not exactly flavor of the moment. She was five years old and had not yet produced a foal, and she turned out to be a difficult breeder. She was, however, a wonderful show horse and in her brief, but brilliant career achieved the titles of both German National Champion and International Champion. It is well known that mares of extraordinary beauty who win huge show accolades, are not always the best broodmares. After all, if you have a mare like this in the first place, there's nowhere to go but down. Few champion mares even manage to produce anything their equal,

*Estopa tended to give her size, her disposition, her action and her showiness. Even today, at 23 years of age, *Estopa still snorts and blows and wants to be the queen of the ranch. She always has her head up — she's just a dream. Shaker El Masri, on the other hand, was distant — he really didn't want to socialize. But he had a wonderful body (he stood 15 hands), a lovely, very refined, long neck, and a very level topline. — Sigi

much less better.

But *Estopa, it seems, was the exception to every rule. Despite being both a champion and not easy to get (and keep) in foal, she delivered the goods, and then some. All of the 12 foals she produced in her life became successful breeding animals. Not only that, but they changed the world.

In 1971 the natural thing for Sigi and her husband to do was breed the mares to the stallions of Marbach State Stud. Marbach was the place where they had first

encountered, and fallen in love with, Arabian horses, it was not far from their farm in the Black Forest, and since it was a state stud, the fees were affordable. Most of the mares were bred to the chief sire, the straight Egyptian Nazeer son Hadban Enzahi. *Estopa, however, went to his more glamorous half-brother Ghazal, who was regarded as the most beautiful Arabian stallion in Germany at the time. However, this was one of the occasions where she remained barren. Since Ghazal was a great sire in his own right, we can only speculate what magic might have occurred, had the breeding been successful. It was never repeated, because one year later, Ghazal was dead, and Om El Arab now had its own resident Egyptian stallion, the *Morafic son Shaker El Masri. In 1972, he covered all the mares at the farm.

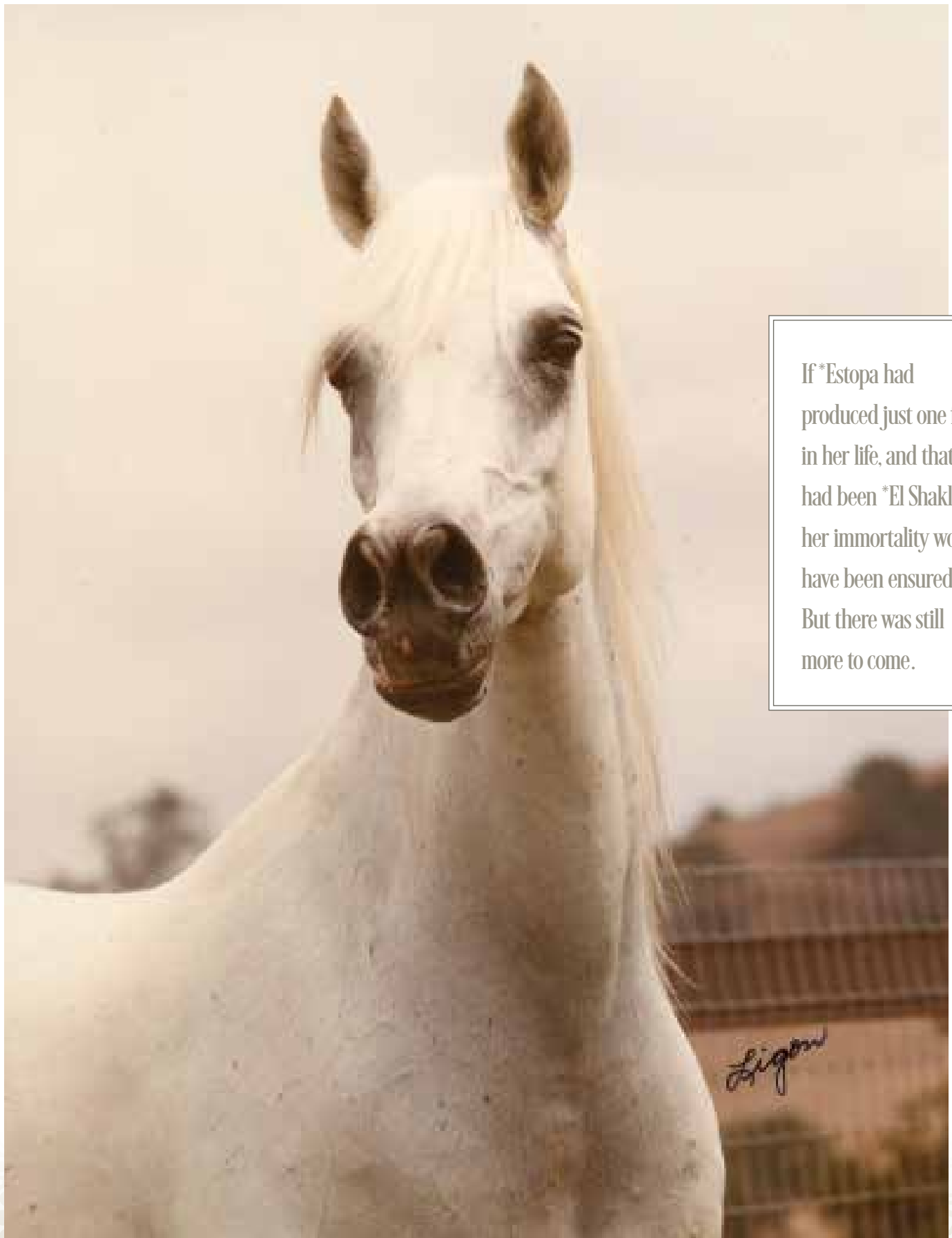
*Estopa's first foal was duly born in 1973, when she was already eight years old. There used to be a belief among



**Estopa, above and facing page.*



*The Egyptian stallion Shaker El Masri (*Morafic x Zebeda), when crossed with the Spanish lines of *Estopa, became the new "golden cross" for Om El Arab.*



If *Estopa had produced just one foal in her life, and that foal had been *El Shaklan, her immortality would have been ensured. But there was still more to come.

breeders, which (quite rightly) is mostly forgotten today, that first foals never amount to much. In *Estopa's case, that couldn't have been farther from the truth, because *Estopa's first filly, Estasha, turned out to be one of her most significant daughters, both in terms of showing and breeding achievements.

Estasha, the first product of what would later become known as the "Golden Cross," was an extraordinary mare whose extreme type and refinement were far in advance of her time. When she came of breeding age, Sigi took the unusual risk to breed her back to her own sire, Shaker El Masri, resulting in two fillies in two consecutive years: the grey *Bint Shaker in 1977 and the chestnut *El Masra in 1978. Both fillies were very successful in the showing, with *El Masra becoming one of the most celebrated show mares in her time. She was in fact the first mare to win the World Championship at Paris both in the junior and the senior category. However, she did not have many foals, and most of them were colts. The best-known of them was her first, Masran El Shaklan, who was sold to Denmark and became a popular sire there. *El Masra herself was later sold to Paolo Gucci and produced two more colts that

At Egypt's El Zahraa Stud in September 1971, EAO's Dr. Marsafi paraded 20 stallions before us. I made notes on all of them, and the nicest one, the most beautiful type-wise, was Alaa El Din, but of course he was not for sale. My second choice was an eight-year-old chestnut stallion named Shaker (*Morafic x Zebeda by El Sareei). The next day we found out that Shaker was for sale. There was no hesitation — we bought him right away. We imported him that year, and when we registered him in Germany, we added to his name, calling him Shaker El Masri, which means 'Thankful for Egypt.' — Sigi

were used as stallions, but not to a very large extent. It was the older sister, *Bint Shaker, whose contribution was to prove more lasting. She was one of the mares that came to California in the early 1980s and remained at Om El Arab International all her life, where her family is still alive today. In 2017, her great-great-granddaughter Om El Sultanah (WH Justice x Om El Sofia) foaled a filly by Om El Shahmaan which represents Om El Arab's 7th homebred generation in tail female line from *Estopa! Two of *Bint Shaker's daughters by *Carmargue were exported, Omel Shiva Estopa to Britain and Oml Sanaya Estopa to Germany. Omel Shiva Estopa is the grandam of the stallion Aja

Shakakhan, who was the first stallion used by the Russian Tersk stud after it became privatized.

By the time *El Masra was born, her sire Shaker El Masri had died. As a replacement, Om El Arab brought in the straight Egyptian stallion *Malik (Hadban Enzahi x Malikah by Ghazal), and Estasha's next two foals were by him. Both were colts and were exported, Estasha to Australia and Ibn Estasha to the Netherlands. Ibn Estasha became a very successful sire in Holland and is today the second most frequent source of *Estopa



**Bint Shaker (Shaker El Masri x Estasha) was one of the mares that came to California in the early 1980s. She remained at Om El Arab International for her entire life.*



**El Masra (Shaker El Masri x Estasha) became a celebrated show champion. She was the first mare to win the World Championship at Paris both in the junior and the senior category.*



*Masran El Shaklan (*El Shaklan x *El Masra) best-known and first offspring of *El Masra, who was sold to Denmark and became a popular sire there.*

Top left: *Malik (Hadban Enzabi x Malikab), straight Egyptian stallion brought in to breed to Estasha.



Top right: Estasha (Shaker El Masri x *Estopa) *Estopa's first filly who turned out to be her most significant daughter, both in terms of showing and breeding achievements.



It's safe to say that you will not find an Arabian breeding country on earth that does not number *Estopa descendants among its most successful horses.



Middle left: Ibn Estasha (*Malik x Estasha) became a very successful sire in Holland. He is considered to be the second most frequent source of *Estopa blood in modern horses after *El Shaklan.

Middle right: Estashan (*Malik x Estasha) was exported to Australia.

Bottom: Estasha Bint Masri (Masri x Estasha) was the most significant among Estasha's last 10 foals. She was a broodmare for Paolo Gucci in England and later for Aja Arabians.

blood in modern horses after *El Shaklan. For example, he appears twice in the pedigree of double World Champion and international sire Khidar. Khidar is the maternal grandsire of Shanghai EA, who has a total of five crosses to *Estopa — two through Estasha and another three through *El Shaklan, but I'm getting ahead of myself here.

Estasha produced another 10 foals: two daughters by her full brother *El Shaklan, one daughter by the Spanish stallion Quebec, two sons and one daughter by her full brother Ibn Estopa, one daughter by the straight Egyptian Nabya Ibn Gharib, two daughters by the straight Egyptian Masri, and one daughter by Rastano Ibn Estopa. While all of them have living descendants today, none of them matches up to Bint Shaker or Ibn Estasha. The most significant among those last 10 foals was Estasha Bint Masri (1988 by Masri), who was a broodmare for Paolo Gucci in England and later for Aja Arabians along with her daughter G Estarreja (by *Carmargue). G Estarreja is the second dam of the Triple Crown winner Aja Justified, who has three crosses to *Estopa.

Estasha's full sister Estawa was born in 1974. Unfortunately

she died young after producing just two fillies, Bint Estawa (1979) by *Malik and *Bint El Shaklan (1980) by *El Shaklan. Bint Estawa produced four sons and five daughters, most of whom were exported. They went to Spain, the U.S., Britain, Australia, Italy, France, and Switzerland and most probably have descendants in these countries, but they have been less prominent than Estasha's tribe. As for *Bint El Shaklan, whom Janina recalls as her favorite filly from her childhood days, she was very successful at shows and was sold to Brazil, but sadly died before ever producing a foal.

Only a year later, Estasha and Estawa were followed by their full brother, who was the real game-changer: *El Shaklan. You might say he was a horse so far ahead of his time that it was necessary to create a new age just to accommodate him — which is exactly what he did. Taken to several international shows as a youngster, he caught the eye of British breeders

As special as all of *Estopa's foals have been, the one that captured my heart was her first colt. We were especially proud of her pregnancy that year. It was late September 1974, and our farm manager was gone on vacation. *Estopa was still not in foal, and so for the first time in my life I had to handle the stallion for breeding — and I was a little scared. A friend helped by holding *Estopa, and I handled Shaker El Masri. Luckily, *Estopa settled, and on August 10, 1975, she presented us with the most beautiful foal I had ever seen. This was *El Shaklan, and I always believed he would be a famous horse one day. He had *Estopa's disposition from the very beginning — she is very people-oriented, very trustful, and she wants to be petted, to be part of the family. It is the kind of disposition that Spanish horses are known for. — Sigi

Pat and Joanna Maxwell, who wanted to buy him. And they might have, if Sigi hadn't put her foot down very firmly! *El Shaklan was most certainly not for sale, but the Maxwells did lease him for two years. In Britain, he was an instant success in the showing and with the breeders, or at least some of them. Being so radically different, he naturally polarized — people either regarded him as a revelation or an aberration.

Although his lease

was cut short by the untimely death of his sire, which led to him being shipped back to Germany a year earlier than planned, he changed Arabian breeding in Britain for good. He left several sons and daughters there that were to have a huge impact on British breeding, first and foremost his son Maleik El Kheil. From El Shaklan's first crop, he was the leading sire of winners in Britain for many years and one of the most used stallions whose influence is still very much in evidence today.



**Aja Justified (WH Justice x Aja Beneja), a Triple Crown winner boasting three crosses to *Estopa.*



*Estawa (Shaker El Masri x Estopa) was a full sister to Estasha, and died young after producing just two fillies, Bint Estawa by *Malik and *Bint El Shaklan by *El Shaklan.*



*Bint Estawa (*Malik x Estawa) produced four sons and five daughters, most of whom were exported and have descendants in many countries.*



The real game-changer: *El Shaklan. You might say he was a horse so far ahead of his time that it was necessary to create a new age just to accommodate him – which is exactly what he did.

*Top: *El Shaklan (Shaker El Masri x *Estopa), was the first Arabian stallion to become a truly global sire.*

*Right: *Sanadik El Shaklan (*El Shaklan x *Mohena), became *El Shaklan's successor at Om El Arab in the U.S. and arguably his sire's most significant son.*



To do justice to the influence of *El Shaklan would almost require a book; all one can do within the confines of an article is scratch the surface. He was the first Arabian stallion to become a truly global sire, quite a feat at a time when AI and shipped semen were not yet the order of the day. *El Shaklan traveled the world: from Germany to Britain, back to Germany, to the U.S., to Brazil, and finally to Argentina. He was a National Champion both in Britain and Germany, and a National Top Ten stallion in the U.S.. Wherever he went, he left his mark. He also left it where he didn't go, because his get really went everywhere. Another son from his first crop in Britain, the brilliant chestnut Amir El Shaklan, was one of the most popular and successful sires in the history of Australian breeding, and he was just the first.

To single out his most influential German-bred son is surprisingly easy, because *Sanadik El Shaklan was without doubt the heir to the throne. No, he never sired a foal in Germany, but he became *El Shaklan's successor at Om El Arab in the U.S. and arguably his sire's most significant son. He also has the distinction of being the horse that brought

When I saw his magnificent face I thought he was a filly because he was so pretty. He had a balanced body, great legs, and a long, elegantly-shaped neck. He had a very fine feminine look as a foal, but his personality was all boy, and sometimes a little obnoxious. I knew *El Shaklan had a worthy son when I saw this colt.

— Sigi, about *Sanadik El Shaklan

*Estopa's blood to Poland, where he sired several lovely daughters, foremost among them the great *El Dorada PASB. Sanadik's influence eventually extended across Europe, beginning with the World Champion mare Om El Sanadiva, who founded an entire dynasty in Germany. The best known of her many champion offspring is U.S. National Champion *FS Bengali. Today Sanadik's offspring are just as globally distributed

as *El Shaklan's.

While in the U.S., *El Shaklan sired more notable daughters than sons. One of them was Precious As Gold, the dam of Versace and Trussardi. Versace's dynasty has also gone global, including Australia and Britain. In Britain it has outranked WH Justice and *Marwan Al Shaqab for several years now, its most prominent member being triple British National Champion Master Design GA, who is also one of the country's most prominent and successful sires. Another British super sire is Vivegas (Vervaldee x La Dolce Vita), who is a double Versace grandson, which also makes him double *El Shaklan. His sire Vervaldee traveled on to the UAE, where his legacy lives on



**El Dorada PASB (*Sanadik El Shaklan x Emigrantka), one of *Sanadik El Shaklan's most successful daughters.*



*Maleik El Kheil (*El Shaklan x Muneera), *El Shaklan's first son and pictured here at the grand age of 36, was the leading sire of winners in Britain for many years and one of the most used stallions, with influence to this day.*

*Top left: Amir El Shaklan (*El Shaklan x Sascha) was one of the most popular and successful sires in the history of Australian breeding.*

Bottom left: Versace (Fame VF x Precious As Gold), the founder of a global dynasty.



Right column, from top to bottom:

*Om El Sanadiva (*Sanadik El Shaklan x De La Reina) founded an entire dynasty of champions in Germany.*

*Precious As Gold (*El Shaklan x Autumn In Gold), a significant daughter of *El Shaklan and the dam of Versace and Trussardi.*

Master Design GA (Versace x Bea Society Belle), one of Britain's most prominent and successful sires.

Vivegas (Vervaldee x La Dolce Vita), British super sire and a double grandson of Versace.



in AJ Mardan, another international champion and sire of champions, and others. It should be added that the Versace dynasty also extends to performance, Versace being one of the leading sires of western pleasure horses at the U.S. Nationals during the past five years.

Another notable U.S.-bred *El Shaklan daughter was Espresso, the dam of the stallion Essteem (by Fame VF). Imported to Austria by Ferdinand Huemer, Essteem was a Triple Crown winner and left excellent get in several European countries. The best-known is of course his daughter Essteema, the first filly to ever win the Triple Crown and now herself the mother of a whole dynasty of winners. Essteema's full brother Esstashan sired Psadisho Ibn Esstashan, a German National Champion who was sold to Britain and became a very successful sire there.

Mention must also go to Atlantica (*El Shaklan x Aliha), who was bred by the Maxwells in England, but not when they actually had *El Shaklan at their place. While *El Shaklan was in the U.S., they sent their champion mare Aliha over, and Atlantica was foaled during *El Shaklan's stay. She became one of his most celebrated daughters, winning the World Championship both as a filly and as a mare and producing many champions herself.

One U.S.-bred *El Shaklan son did have an impact that rivals that of Sanadik, for all that he was criminally overlooked in his lifetime: the beautiful El Sher-Mann,



who was out of Gazira by Ga'zi. His single claim to fame is his daughter Vona Sher-Renea, who produced another extraordinary global super-sire: WH Justice. His impact on the breed today is certainly equal to that of *El Shaklan in his time. One might say that in this respect, he among all stallions alive today is the natural successor to *El Shaklan, even if the descent is in a roundabout way through his dam. With this in mind, it seems only fitting that Sigi and Janina chose to use him for Om El Arab.

When Sigi and her husband separated, *El Shaklan was sold to Nagib Audi of Brazil, much against Sigi's wishes. He was heavily used in Brazil, but there again, his strongest influence comes through his daughters. Mares such as Roxana El Shaklan, Lakmee El Shaklan, and the German import Lydira El Shaklan became foundation mares for Lenita Perroy's Meia Lua Stud and



Top left: Vervaldee (Versace x Giavanna), a significant sire in the UAE with a legacy including AJ Mardan, another international champion and sire of champions.

Bottom left: Esteem (Fame VF x Espresso), a Triple Crown winner with excellent get in several European countries.

Above: Atlantica (*El Shaklan x Aliha), one of *El Shaklan's most celebrated daughters.

After Shaker died in 1978, I thought no other stallion deserved the right to breed *Estopa except her son *El Shaklan. *Estopa bred to *El Shaklan produced *Bint Estopa and then Estopa Son, both champions in Europe. — Sigi

between them produced such notable sires as Ryad El Jamaal, *Lethyf El Jamaal, and Ludjin El Jamaal. Of these, Ludjin in particular has also gone global, his get including the dams of such well-known horses as *Abha Qatar, *Jullyen El Jamaal, and *Lawrence El Gazal,

At his final home at Zichy-Thyssen Arabians in Argentina, *El Shaklan sired a large number of foals, again including several daughters of note. ZT Shabrosiaa is the dam of *ZT Ludjbrosiaa, a hugely successful broodmare in Britain. ZT Shakmontelite is the dam of the stallion *ZT Magnanimus, now in Saudi Arabia. Last but not least, *El Shaklan's youngest son, *ZT Shakfantasy, is an equally successful show horse, both a World and Scottsdale Supreme Champion, and sire. His daughters Shak Lavanda and Shak Shakira have been among the best producing mares for Osterhof Stud in Germany, whose progeny have been exported all over the world. Another daughter, Foxbriar Shakita, is the dam of the stallion FA El Shawan, sire of the young superstar FA El Rasheem.

All this is really just the tip of the iceberg, because there is no getting past the fact that if *Estopa had produced just one foal in her life, and that foal had been *El Shaklan, her immortality would have been ensured. But there was still more to come.

After one year's pause, *Estopa delivered a full brother to *El Shaklan in 1977. Aptly named Ibn Estopa, he grew into a snow-white male version of his dam. Although he was always overshadowed by his full brother, he was a brilliant show horse and superb sire in his own right. He was World Champion Stallion in 1988 and sired stallions and mares who found their



*Top left: El Sher-Mann (*El Shaklan x Gazira), has one claim to fame — his daughter Vona Sher-Renea, who produced global super-sire: WH Justice.*

*Bottom left: Ludjin El Jamaal (Ali Jamaal x *Lydira El Shaklan), successful global sire, especially of broodmares including the dams of such well-known horses as *Abha Qatar, *Jullyen El Jamaal, and *Lawrence El Gazal.*

way into breeding programs across the world. Globally speaking, his most successful descendant was his granddaughter Navarrone “P,” dam of World Champions Eternity Ibn Navarrone-D and Escape Ibn Navarrone-D.

The last full sibling of the Shaker El Masri/*Estopa cross was Estara, foaled in 1978. She was the least significant of the five siblings, but that is relatively speaking, and only because the others were so outstanding. Estara was German National Reserve Champion Mare and a winner at Aachen and produced five foals, of which one son was exported to Australia and one to Italy. Her most significant offspring was her oldest daughter Estana El Shaklan, by *El Shaklan, who was later exported to Belgium. There she produced Estania El Shaklan by Om El Extreem (with a total of five crosses to Estopa), who is the dam of European Futurity winner Atheena.

The last two *Estopa foals born in Germany were both by her son *El Shaklan. It was another inbreeding experiment that paid off, because *Bint Estopa, born in 1981, proved to be one of her best producing daughters. Her daughter Om El Amira Estopa (by *Sanadik El Shaklan and thus triple *Estopa) was a broodmare first for Om El Arab International — where the

*Top right: WH Justice (Magnum Psyche x Vona Sher-Renea), among all stallions alive today is the natural successor to *El Shaklan.*

*Bottom right: *ZT Shakfantasy (*El Shaklan x RH Light Fantasy) *El Shaklan’s youngest son, both a successful show horse and sire.*

line is continued through her daughter Om El Akiva by Estopasan and her daughters — then for Redwood Lodge Arabians in Australia and finally for Marieta Salas in Spain. Two *Bint Estopa daughters by *Carmargue, Om El Sabiya Estopa and Oml Camila Estopa, were exported to Britain, producing excellent offspring there, and their full brother Om El Abadan, who was World Reserve Champion Stallion in 1997, went first to Australia and then to Germany. Om El Bandeira (by Sharem El Sheikh) upholds the second branch for *Bint Estopa at Om El Arab International together with Omel Bint Bint Estopa by *Sanadik El Shaklan. Bint Estopa's full brother Estopa Son was chief sire at Om El Arab in Germany after Sigi and her first husband separated and ranks as *El Shaklan's most successful son in Germany.

After coming to the U.S., *Estopa was bred for the first time to a Spanish stallion, *Rastano, resulting in two colts: Estopasan and Rastano Ibn Estopa. Estopasan was used as a

After his retirement from the showring, I was *El Shaklan's personal groom, which was a special honor. I brought him all my goodies from the kitchen — leftover corn or salad, carrots and apples. I hand-walked him for hours through the fields, and rode him every other day — he was just wonderful. I could sit my young daughter Janina on him, and he knew he had to be careful. — Sigi

sire in the Om El Arab International breeding program, while Rastano Ibn Estopa went back to Germany with Heinz Merz, but only sired very few foals there.

In 1988, *Estopa produced her only straight Spanish filly, Malika Estopa by *An Malik. She was sold to Redwood Lodge Arabians in Australia, where she produced the successful sire Espano Estopa, by *Bint Estopa's son Om El Abadan. Espano Estopa, who was World Junior Champion in 1998, was exported to Germany and is the sire of international champion

LVA Maximus, Sax Arabians' wonderful broodmare Espanna Estopa, the German endurance stallion Estopal Estopa, and the Redwood Lodge's prizewinning and top producing broodmares Redwood Lodge Romantik and Redwood Lodge Antigua.

*Estopa's last two daughters, Om El Shaina by *Carmargue and Om El Beneera by *Sharem El Sheikh, have been pillars of the Om El Arab breeding program. Every one of the current breeding stallions at Om El Arab is descended from one of

*Estopa's Last Foal — The All-Night Vigil

by Sigi Siller

Every evening I prepared a special meal for Estopa. A warm bran mash, with as many as 25 different items mixed into it — at least 20 cloves of garlic each day (good for circulation and a natural antibiotic), Chinese herbal pills, organic carrots, and whatever natural remedies I felt she needed. My vet laughs at me, but I do believe the herbal pills helped her to become pregnant for her last foal. After about seven months of the pills, and after two years of showing no interest whatsoever in any stallion, she had this wonderful heat. The object of her affection was her grandson *Sharem El Sheikh. Our veterinarian's pessimism became disbelief when an ultrasound showed *Estopa, at age 26, was indeed pregnant.

As *Estopa's due date approached, we decided to let her foal in her pasture — she'd long ago let us know she didn't intend to be confined to a stall for any reason. During her

last months of pregnancy, she became so large that her old legs could not push her body back up when she lay down to rest. We devised an elaborate harness and hoist arrangement for lifting her on those occasions and kept her on a surveillance monitor 24 hours a day. Sometimes we lifted her several times a day and throughout the night. She always nickered her thanks and marched off to do whatever she had planned.

For the foal watch, we set up a tent in *Estopa's pasture, equipped with all the usual items for a foaling, plus a lantern, flashlight, and portable telephone. The hoist was nearby. We knew *Estopa would be exhausted from foaling. Periodically, the beam of our flashlight found *Estopa grazing peacefully, but when we awoke from an after-midnight nap, she was gone. Gone! Finally, our light found not two but four eyes shining out of the darkness. *Estopa had delivered her foal unassisted.

*Sigi camped out in *Estopa's paddock when she was due to foal. At the age of 26, she successfully conceived to carry her last foal and in 1992, she delivered the filly Om El Beneera, pictured here just hours old.*



*The filly had such an exaggeratedly sculpted dish, she seemed unreal — like a painting or a bronze — but she was real, alive, and healthy. She nickered, and *Estopa was on her feet in an instant, her weakness and stiffness vanished. We toasted the occasion with champagne — just as we had the ultrasound image almost 11 months earlier — and left mother and daughter alone to become acquainted. By morning's early light, we found *Estopa standing protectively over her daughter.*

*To me, *Estopa will always be the most important and the most beautiful mare — a mare from the canvases of Adams, Vernet, and Schreyer. Who could ever forget her huge black 'Spanish eyes' with their many expressions, the thumbprint of Allah on her forehead (a distinction reserved for very special mares), her trademark high and proud tail carriage, and her intensity as she gazed far into the distance and dreamed of who knows what?*



*Janina Merz with *Estopa in 1991.*

these two mares. Om El Shaina is the dam of Om El Shahmaan (by *Sanadik El Shaklan), who was his sire's successor at Om El Arab and an international sire in his own right, and his full brothers Om El Shahlimar and Om El Shaheen, the latter a successful sire in Britain. Another full brother, Om El Shahzaar, has been exported to Qatar. Om El Shaina also produced no less than five broodmares for Om El Arab. The oldest, Om El Bint Shaina (by Sharem El Sheikh), is the dam of Om El Extreem, the second Om El Arab stallion to be used by the Polish state studs. Om El Bint Shaina's daughter Om El Excella (by Al Lahab) produced the filly Om El Erodite, who in February 2017 made headlines by selling for a record sum of 1.55 million dollars at the Marquise auction in Scottsdale. Om El Shadina (Sanadik El Shaklan x Om El Shaina), now owned by Al Khalediah Farms in Saudi Arabia, is the dam of South African National Champion stallion Om El Shah Dream and international champion Savio, among others. Three more Om El Shaina daughters are precious members of the Om El Arab broodmare band and have offspring across the globe. Of these, Om El Shadiva (by *Sanadik El Shaklan) is the dam of Om El Arab's young superstar Om El Sinon (by WH Justice), who is the most popular breeding stallion at the farm

I don't think of *Estopa as a horse. She is a person. She's 26 now, but sometimes shows off for visitors as though she were ten. She's a little arthritic, but some special treatment each day helps her and she has no pain and is happy. As you might imagine, whatever *Estopa wants, *Estopa gets. At night, it's a bran mash. Warm, please. — Sigi

despite never having been shown. Om El Shaina's youngest daughter, Om El Aliha (by Om El Al Azeem), is the dam of Bronze Junior World Champion Mare Om El Aisha Aljassimya.

Om El Beneera (by *Sharem El Sheikh) was *Estopa's last foal, born when her dam was already 26 years old. She produced six daughters, first and foremost among them Om El Benedict, by Sanadik El Shaklan. Om El Benedict's son Om El Bellissimo,

by Om El Shaina's son Om El Shahmaan, was another Om El Arab stallion used in Poland, and the first to actually set foot on Polish soil himself. He sired Polish Junior National Champion Barok and many other successful show and even racehorses and also has get throughout the Middle East. Om El Benedict is also the dam of the stallion Om El Bahreyn (by CG Balih El Jamaal),



*Ibn Estopa (Shaker El Masri x *Estopa), full brother to *El Shaklan, grew into a snow-white male version of his dam, and was a brilliant show horse and superb sire in his own right, siring horses who found their way into breeding programs across the world.*



*Above: Om El Extreem (*Sanadik El Shaklan x Om El Bint Shaina), the second Om El Arab stallion to be used by the Polish state studs.*



**Bint Estopa (*El Shaklan x *Estopa) one of *Estopa's best-producing daughters.*



a successful sire in Britain, and maternal grandsire of the multiple international champion Luigi. Om Belusenadream (Dreamcatcher SMF x Om El Benedict) is a prized broodmare for Sandra Menzel in Germany, who also owns several of Om El Bahreyn's offspring, and her full brother Om El Bernini Dream is a successful Tevis Cup competitor and Best Condition winner. The full siblings Om El Beshaan and Om El Bernadette (Om El Shahmaan x Om El Benedict) were both exported to Saudi Arabia and have won at shows in Europe and the Middle East. Om El Benedict's Al Lahab daughter Om El Beladeena, herself a World Cup Champion at Las Vegas, produced the World Cup Junior Gold Champion Titan AS, by *El Nabila B, whose daughter Silhouette AS was high-selling lot at the Schoukens Training Center Auction on September 25.

After four colts — of whom Om El Bendigo was a successful sire in Germany and Om El Magic in Denmark — Om El Beneera produced Om El Berenice Dream (by Dreamcatcher SMF), a great broodmare for Om El Arab who produced only fillies. Her daughter Om El Bellatrix was sold to Al Thumama Stud of Qatar, where she produced the many times champion filly Belladonna AT (by Wade Al Shaqab).

Om El Beneera's black daughter Om El Bediya Dream, a full sister to Om El Berenice Dream, is currently establishing her own dynasty in Germany, and several other daughters still grace the pastures at Om El Arab. And not to forget, Om El Beneera's son Om El Al Azeem (by Al Lahab) is one of Om El Arab's best stallions, a Scottsdale Gold Champion and U.S. National Reserve Champion, and sire of champion offspring both in the U.S. and overseas.

And so the story of *Estopa's influence continues ...



*Top left: Sigi with Om El Shaina (*Carmargue x *Estopa), a pillar of the Om El Arab breeding program, right, and Om El Beneera (*Shareem El Sheikh x *Estopa), the other pillar of the Om El breeding program and *Estopa's last foal, left.*

*Top right: Om El Benedict (*Sanadik El Shaklan x Om El Beneera), one of Beneera's six daughters, has successful descendants in Britain and in Germany through her sons Om El Bahreyn and daughter Oml Belusenadream. She is the dam of Om El Bellissimo, and her daughter Om El Beladeena (by Al Lahab) is the dam of the *El Nabila B son Titan AS who is a World Cup Gold Junior Champion Stallion and whose daughter was the highest selling filly at the 2107Schouken's sale in Belgium.*

*Bottom: Janina and Om El Shahmaan (*Sanadik El Shaklan x Om El Shaina), the sire of champions all over the globe. His son, Om El Bellissimo, spent two breeding seasons at Janow Podlaski Stud in Poland. Om El Shahmaan was tragically lost in November, 2016.*