

Thanks for the Memories

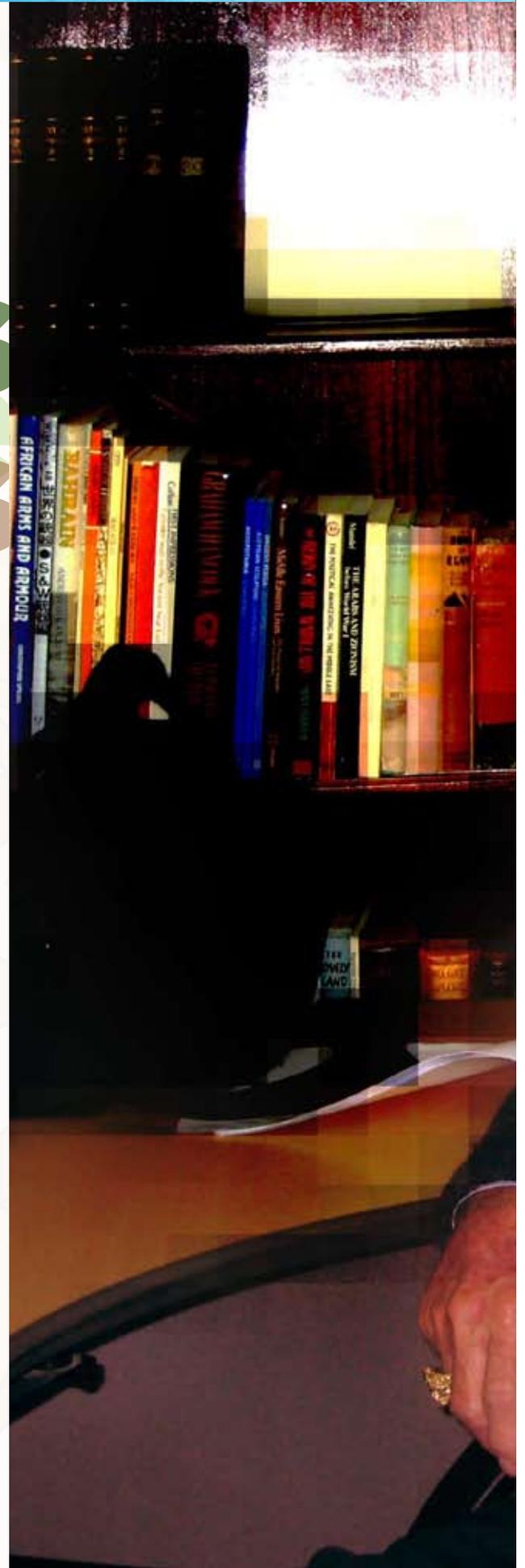
a tribute to Don Forbis

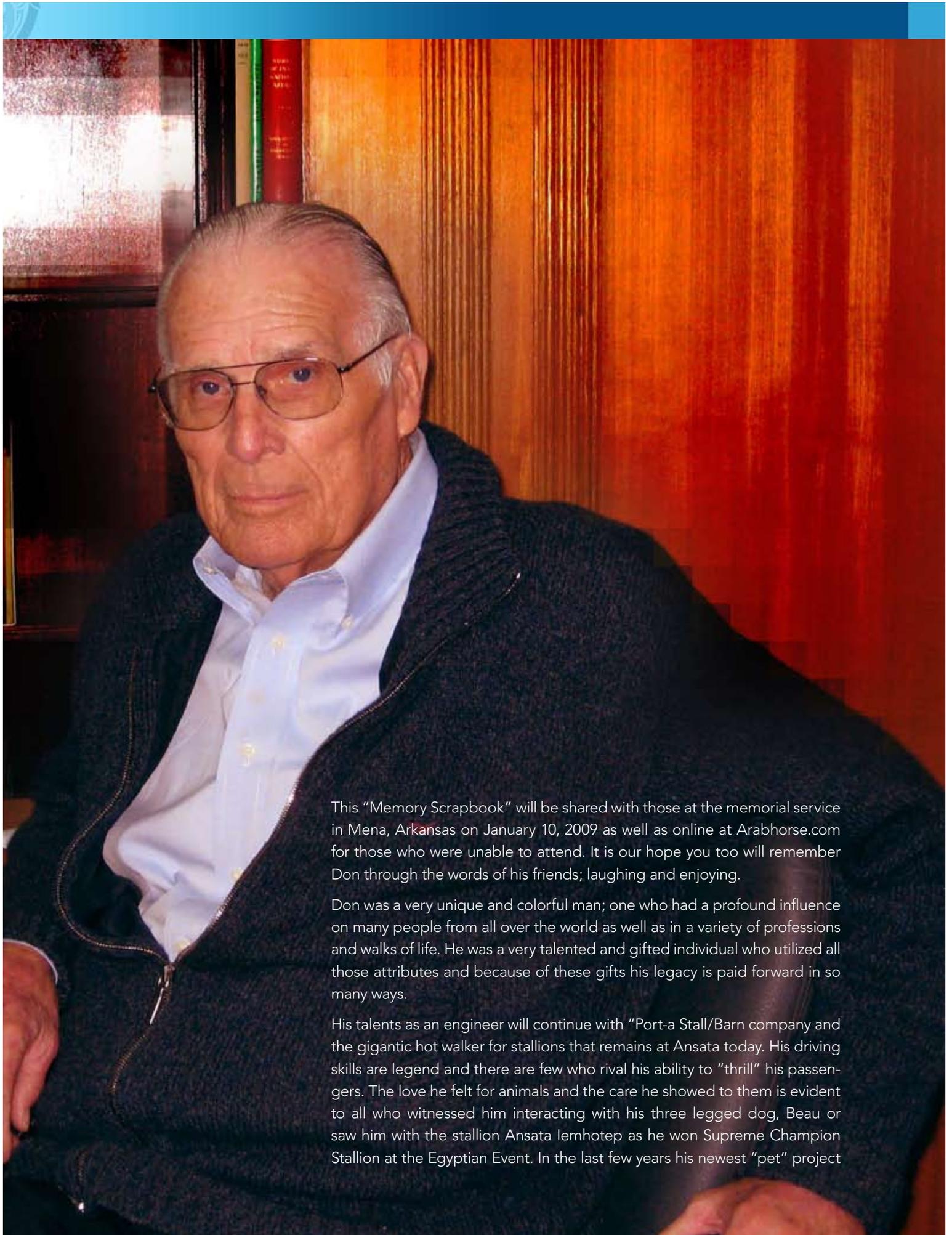
by Christie Metz



After talking with Judi soon after Don passed away the two of us began recalling unique "Don" stories; we laughed and cried together, it helped to ease the loss of Don.

Out of our conversations in the following days the idea grew to ask friends to write down their personal memories of Don to be shared. Judi and I identified some of the questions we would use to trigger those memories so they too could enjoy remembering. Off I went to my computer to email the questions to invite folks who knew Don well to share their personal memories. Our idea is to create a "Memory Scrapbook"; a written tribute to this very important man within our straight Egyptian Arabian horse community.





This "Memory Scrapbook" will be shared with those at the memorial service in Mena, Arkansas on January 10, 2009 as well as online at Arabhorse.com for those who were unable to attend. It is our hope you too will remember Don through the words of his friends; laughing and enjoying.

Don was a very unique and colorful man; one who had a profound influence on many people from all over the world as well as in a variety of professions and walks of life. He was a very talented and gifted individual who utilized all those attributes and because of these gifts his legacy is paid forward in so many ways.

His talents as an engineer will continue with "Port-a Stall/Barn company and the gigantic hot walker for stallions that remains at Ansata today. His driving skills are legend and there are few who rival his ability to "thrill" his passengers. The love he felt for animals and the care he showed to them is evident to all who witnessed him interacting with his three legged dog, Beau or saw him with the stallion Ansata Iemhotep as he won Supreme Champion Stallion at the Egyptian Event. In the last few years his newest "pet" project

was a blond female named Elizabeth. This Chihuahua metamorphosed from an aloof and cranky dog into an amazing companion for Don; she became his caretaker and she took her duties very seriously. He was not above bribing her with food at the dinner table to gain her trust and affection and the result was that she gave Don her total devotion. Liz went to see Don daily at the last and lay right by him during her visits.

I used to love hearing him say to Judi and me "You girls, if only you would slow down enough to focus there isn't anything you could not accomplish"! Or the "Now Judi, this is how we ought to go about this"!

My first memory of Don is when I visited Mena to see an Ansata Ibn Halima daughter and to see their famous stallions. Judi and I stayed up quite late in the night talking of horses and life in general. In the mornings Don would say to us "How late did you two stay up? It seems like you never went to bed because you are still talking"! "Boy oh boy can you two talk"! He would repeat this on many occasions over the years.

Don loved that farm and enjoyed showing it to you whenever you visited; he loved telling stories about the different staff and the experiences they created for Don and Judi during their employment. Some stories were astounding and they were always entertaining. He loved the earth moving equipment or any machine for that matter; as evidenced by all the different types of vehicles seen there

on the property. I know he was a regular at "Fat Boys Tire Center" because the rocky roads were forever ruining tires!

Several years ago he mourned when an ice storm destroyed so many of the beautiful trees on the farm; the clean up was a huge undertaking. He loved to recall the change in scenery from the house to the barns when they first built Ansata. He told Henry and me that after the ice storm he saw that he and Judi could once again see the vista of the barns as they had when they first moved into the house. The setting for Ansata is in beautiful country indeed. However, a vivid personal recollection of Arkansas is rocks that reproduced over night and every type of fly in size, shape and color imaginable. All of this along with the gorgeous mountains, abundant wildlife and sunsets to end your day by! The extremes and drama of this land echoes the lives that Don and Judi have led, Mena is a perfect place for them.

I cherish the memories of Don checking in with me when our farm was being built in Naples, Florida. He knew it was a huge task and how stressed I was during this project so he would call me now and then to touch base. We both enjoyed talking about building structures and the different requirements for weather related issues. Don always had great practical suggestions for construction! Judi was not so helpful in that way but she was great for adding hilarity by pretending to be your new neighbor calling to complain about the Muscovy ducks and the mess they made on her patio! She

really loved to fool Henry by being a government agent for the EPA or some other agency. Of course we both fell for these gags at least once.

Now that we live in California I will remember with fondness Don's last visit which was during Thanksgiving in 2006. He complimented us on our breeding program and encour-

aged Henry and me to continue striving for improvement while maintaining the special characteristics of the straight Egyptian Arabian horse. Don offered suggestions and saw things to compliment that we had not even noticed.

His gentleness with me when I was a balloon shape from treatment for a blood disease was very touching; he was always positive, saying to me "you will beat this"!

For me I will remember almost twenty years of his contributions to our lives in a myriad of ways. Not only with the breeding of Arabian horses which Henry and I both enjoyed hearing his thoughts and experiences on but his basic interest in us "kids". His sharing of his own life experiences not only to entertain but to benefit you, there was knowledge and wisdom shared. He cared deeply and you felt like family whenever you were with him and Judi.

Family is not only made up of the one you are born into but it is added to with those whom you adopt and those who adopt you along life's journey. Don was rich in family because he adopted so many into his own personal family. I realized this after two men whom I respect tremendously recently shared that they consider Don a father figure; a wonderful mentor. Don adopted so many of us into his family; he truly was a father/mentor in many, many ways.

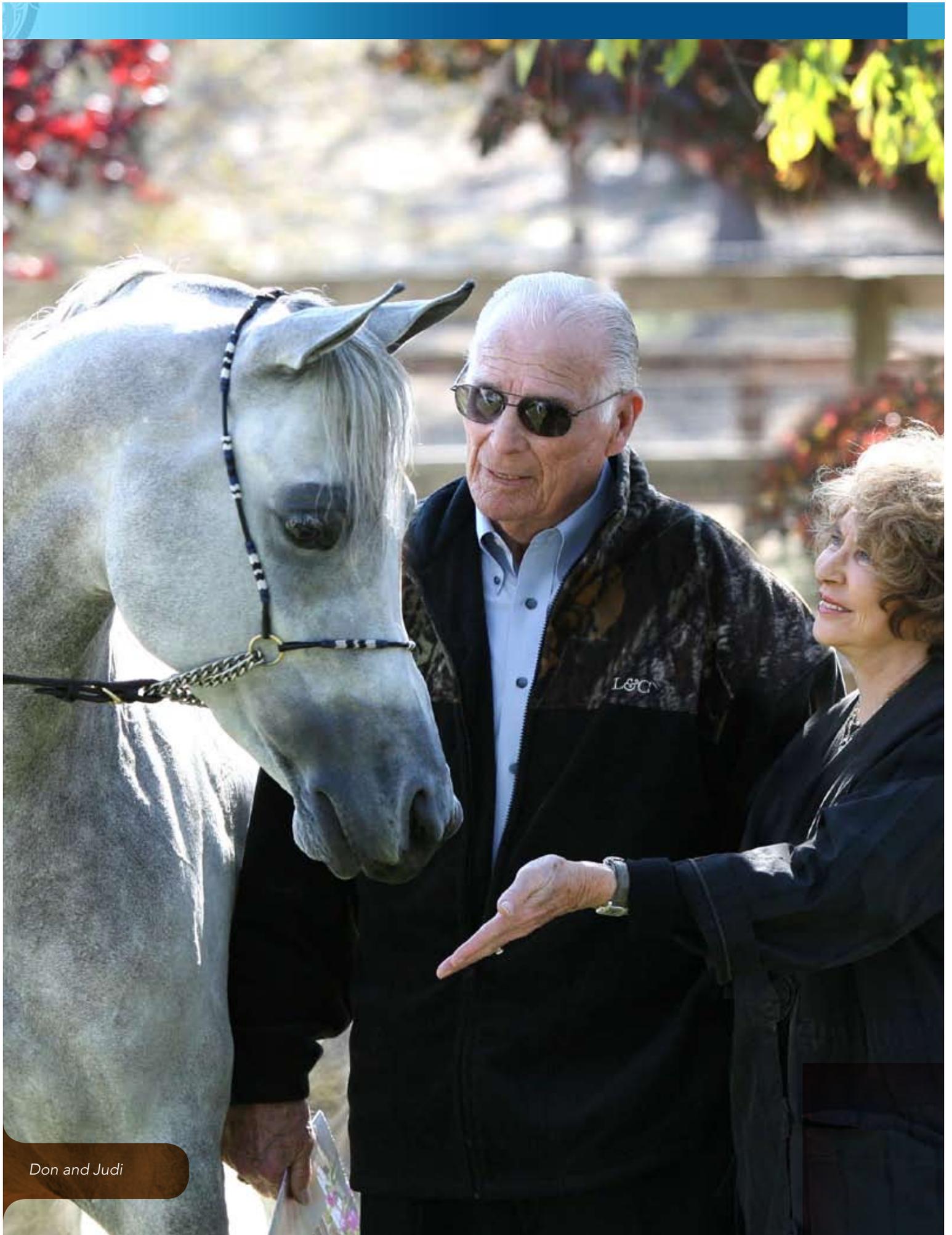
In the Mideast I have heard Don and Judi referred to as the Mother and Father of the Arabian horse; for sure they hold this position not only there but around the world. It is easy to see their influence on the straight Egyptian horses but less obvious to is the ability to measure their influence on the humans in their lives. Neither one of them boasted about this; or in my mind realized their impact on so many lives through the horses. It is fitting to pay tribute to Don and acknowledge his contribution to those of us who were adopted into his family by celebrating his memory. Thank you Don for being a part of my life, you will be sorely missed.



The incomparable Elizabeth Taylor with Rudy Valentino

Photo courtesy of Richard T. Bryant





Don and Judi