



# To Share

Interview by Monika Luft

Photos: Equus Arabians archive



**A**LBERT SORROCA, the creator and owner of the Spanish stud of Equus Arabians and the breeder of stallion Shanghai E.A., All Nations Cup and European Junior Champion, as well as World Junior Reserve Champion, began building his breeding program ten years ago. Its foundation consisted of Polish mares. Today he tells [polskiearaby.com](http://polskiearaby.com) about his road to the circle of the world's horse breeding elite.

**Monika Luft:** When did you become enchanted by an Arabian horse for the first time?

**Albert Sorroca:** It was about 20 years ago. Even now I have that horse before my eyes! Or rather her, as it was a 3 year old mare, which I saw during an event called Equus Catalonia, a large horse show, organized annually here in Catalonia. By then I already knew that I would like to breed horses – this passion was instilled in me by my grandfather and father in my early years – but I had not yet made a decision as to what breed it would be. The presentation took place to the rhythm of guitar music and I was certain that the mare, which moved as though she hardly touched the ground, was specially trained for this occasion. She literally flew over the ground! I was astonished: how was anyone able to train a horse so that it would show such phenomenal movement of its own accord? Today I laugh at this, but it was love at first sight. A teenage love – I never saw that mare again, I don't even know her name. But her gracefulness and the impression she made have been forever engraved in my mind.

**M.L.:** Did you also ride horses?

**A.S.:** Yes, but only as an amateur, for pleasure. Horse hacks were in my family a way of spending time together. Also both of my daughters have ridden horses since they were four years old. I know the pleasure that a ride on a good horse among beautiful landscapes can give. A particular bond forms between man and horse, incomparable to bonds between man and other animals. Since I fell in love in Arabian horses, they were the only breed I rode. Earlier, during my military service which I served in the cavalry, I also rode atop other breeds.

**M.L.:** When was the first time that you participated in a show with your own horse?

**A.S.:** My first show season with my own horses took place in 2004. I entered two excellent yearling fillies which I purchased in Germany – **Tamina Bint Taman** (Taman II – Prestynia/Present) and **Lamira** (Laman HVP – Miriam II/Mirok Monpelou). They both took the show arenas by storm with superb results, winning everywhere they showed. Which actually came as a real surprise for me. I bought the fillies, because they fit my breeding program, which I have been carrying out for some time. I thought that their participation at shows would be a good promotion for my Equus Arabians stud, but I completely didn't think of winning. Rivalry on the show arena was alien to me to such a point that I didn't even attend the first events – in Wels, Great Britain, Germany and Denmark. My trainer (at the time I worked with Scott Allman and



# the Success



Mary Lang) called me and said: we won! Of course, I was overjoyed, but I still didn't quite see the significance of it all. I also didn't completely understand what it's all about. I focused on building the breeding program of Equus Arabians – I searched for mares, I visited European studs, I learned. It was not until several victories later that I realized that something important is happening and that I shouldn't let it go. By autumn I was accompanying my fillies to all the shows. Tamina got very far, placing in the Top Ten at the World Championships. Nevertheless what I am still most interested in is breeding. I have to admit that since I began attending shows I have learned a lot through observation, by analyzing and comparing. I always try to make notes, which are often very useful later on. And not just notes – I also have short videos from my first visits to Polish studs with foals from 8-10 years ago, who today are stars of the show arena. It is very instructive material.

**M.L.: What was your first Polish horse?**

**A.S.: Zenobia** (Endel – Zuela/Probat) from Michałów. Unfortunately I lost her recently, she died during labor. But luckily the foal survived and was bottle-fed. He is doing great. Zenobia captured my heart with her expression, she was sweet and charming. I was told that back in Poland she once nursed two foals simultaneously – her own and a second, orphaned foal. Zenobia left me a lot of daughters, so her line has been prolonged.

**M.L.: How did Zenobia find her way to Equus Arabians?**

**A.S.:** I bought her during the August auction at Janów Podlaski in 2002. I came with my entire family; it was a very emotional experience for all of us. At the same sale I also purchased **Dąbrowa** (Probat – Dębówka/Eternit), **Cygarniczka** (Monogramm – Cygaretki/Fanatyk) and **Ekola** (Pamir – Ekade/Arbil). My daughters were 11 and 14 years old, I have beautiful pictures from that first auction. Next year I bought the Janów-bred **Arabeska** (Eldon – Arina/Palas) and **Petycja** (Pers – Petycja/Palas) from Białka. The Polish mares became a foundation of the breeding program of Equus Arabians.

**M.L.: How many Polish horses do you have in your stud today?**

**A.S.:** I have a lot of horses with Polish origins and most of all daughters of the initial six. None of the six remain now, but last year my herd was enlarged by two new mares from Michałów, **Eryka** (Eukaliptus – Emilda/Pamir) and **Empiryka** (Monogramm – Emanacja/Eukaliptus). When 10 years ago I made the decision to buy Polish mares I had in mind their perfect build, fantastic movement and genetic potential. I decided to breed them with a world renowned sire, which was **Khidar** (Ansata Sinan – Elizja/Esta-Ghalil). I thought that he stood a good chance of mating well with Polish blood, especially that there are numerous Polish accents in his pedigree. I was right. Today I have his daughters and granddaughters at my stud.




**M.L.: How much did the foaling of Shanghai E.A. (WH Justice – Salymah E.A./Khidar) change your life?**

**A.S.:** Very significantly for sure! We all strive for perfection regardless of what we do. I also pursued a dream about a perfect Arabian horse. Shanghai turned out to be the personification of these dreams. It is a great satisfaction. A huge effort, costly expenditures and a lot of devoted time – all this did not go to waste, it was worth it. Of course I do realize that we were lucky – Shanghai could've been born but just as well could've not been. But then his being born was not a chance incident, but a result of carefully planned matings. I know that if not for my persistence, invested resources, passion – there would be no Shanghai. It is a great joy when you can pat yourself on the back for a job well done. However the birth of a good horse is not all there is to it. There are very many good horses born all over the world every day. Later comes the time of rearing, planning their career and achieving the designated goals. If not for the fact that a lot of people did a great job, Shanghai wouldn't be the Shanghai that we know today. And it is definitely thanks to him that the position of Equus Arabians has changed on the breeding map. A lot more people visit us, ask about our breeding program and about our foals, which we happily show because we are proud of their quality. The previous year and this one have proved totally amazing in this regard.

**M.L.: Shanghai causes you to literally sleep on your suitcases, moving from continent to continent. How do you endure these constant travels? Have you always been a globetrotter?**

**A.S.:** I am a born traveler. I love to meet people, taste foreign cuisine – I like everything that enriches my knowledge of the world. Of course this year my travels are even more intensive than the usual, which is definitely tiresome for someone who is no longer 18 years old. But there are still many places that I hope to get to. Before I used to travel for sheer pleasure, as a tourist or on business. As a matter of fact I always had a packed suitcase waiting for me. In my office there was always a small suitcase with several clean shirts inside, because I often had to suddenly travel somewhere in the matters of my clients. Today Shanghai is the main reason for my travels, or his get. For instance his yearling son **Excalibur E.A.** (out of Essence of Marwan E.A. by Marwan Al Shaqab) was shown this year in the Middle East and is now in the United States, where he will participate in the US Nationals in October and next year at Scottsdale and Las Vegas. Excalibur is sort of Shanghai's ambassador, because he showcases the traits which are passed on by his sire. I very much value the contact with other breeders, an exchange of experience, conversations, positive energy. I probably wouldn't experience any of this if Shanghai was





sold. Because although almost every week a rumor goes around about his sale, he is still the property of Equus Arabians.

**M.L.:** *How large a motivation and willpower does one need to have in order to refuse a high offer? The sums offered for Shanghai were not small, to say the least.*

**A.S.:** *Maybe what's required is a bit of craziness... But the motivation is this. If you work on a project for many years, devoting your time and putting in a lot of effort and the result turns out to be a success, you want to share it with others. Each time when a purchase offer for Shanghai comes up, I make a condition: before we begin talking about money, let's first of all talk about respecting the already signed breeding contracts and second – about the horse's further breeding career. If from this moment on he was not to be generally available, then I'm not interested in such a proposition. I cannot disappoint the people who put their trust in Shanghai and me. Also, I'm afraid that no one besides me will care about realizing my vision. And I'm truly convinced that Shanghai has a chance to join the historic sires which have contributed to improving the Arabian breed and raising it to a new, higher standard. When you say "Monogramm", everyone immediately sees his contribution. Similarly El Shaklan or Padróns Psyche. So if you're asking me about my dream, then I would like Shanghai's name in the future to be associated with what he brought into breeding. I wish that he will become a myth, a breed legend. That is my goal.*

**M.L.:** *During this season Shanghai was one of the most fashionable sires in world, also in Poland, where a record number of breedings was sold. Not many people are aware that it is not only a great success, but also a logistically complex operation.*



**A.S.:** To be honest I didn't imagine that it was going to be so complicated! First of all, great demand equals great pressure. Second, I chose a path that did not make the job any easier for me. There are two methods of fulfilling expectations in the case of a wide offering of breedings. The first is to collect as much semen as possible. The second, to collect but without an over exploitation of the stallion. Because I would like Shanghai to serve the duties of sire for many years to come, I chose the second method. I decided that he would mount a phantom twice a week only. This resulted in a limited supply. When I talked about this with other breeders, they mostly agreed with me. But their attitude changed radically when their mare was in heat and they wanted to breed her to Shanghai. Then their understanding quickly changed into demanding an immediate delivery. There was some resentment and grudges. My argument, that a month and a half ago we were unanimous in our thoughts, ceased to work. That's when rumors start to circulate that the semen is unavailable, because it is of poor quality. Whereas the reason is simple – we're collecting it twice a week. I have learned that developing the breeding career of a stallion is like a race with hurdles, but each next hurdle is higher than the one before. But our task is to overcome these obstacles. I feel that all inconveniences, which can arise from delays in deliveries, will be made up for when the foal is born. So far the breeders have been overjoyed! I have been receiving signals from many places about excellent foals by Shanghai and I can say the same about the ones born at home. We have just welcomed an absolutely magnificent full sister to the yearling filly **L'Emperatrice** (out of Lamira). I will name her **La Reina** (Queen). I'm aware that many people would eagerly trade with me for my problems. There are a lot of sires and a majority of them do not breed outside their maternal stud.

**M.L.:** *How does your professional lawyer community treat your passion?*

**A.S.:** Until recently, beside my closest friends, not many people from my professional circle knew about my passion. It was only the success of Shanghai that made the matter known. So on one hand I probably became seen as an eccentric, but on the other I began receiving a lot of congratulations from all around. I think that many people search for perfection in one field or another and that they are able to understand the sheer concept, even if they are not interested in horses. I noticed that when people know you have a passion, they begin to share their own fascinations with you, be it the art of bonsai or coin collecting. They open up, which results in a closer cooperation between the two of you.

**M.L.:** *How do you acquire the support of the crowds? We saw an unbelievable enthusiasm, which accompanied Shanghai's performance in Paris. That's something that can't be bought.*

**A.S.:** I don't know, I really don't! It was completely spontaneous. I think that it has to do with sharing your passion with others. Of course if the horse wouldn't appeal to anyone, there wouldn't be any applause or deafening cheers. There were people who totally

lost their voice from shouting Shanghai's name and yet no one forced them to do so. I'm sure that our policy of being open to people, the fact that Shanghai has always been accessible to those visiting our stud, that they could touch him, pat him and that we offered breedings on a widespread scale, initially at a non-exorbitant price, so that anyone interested could take advantage of it. We appreciate and respect the fact that Shanghai fascinates so many. It is a collective success of all those who were with us. The great lesson that comes from what happened in Paris is that you have to share your success. Many people felt that the success of Shanghai is theirs. And that's what it's all about.

**M.L.:** *Are you aware that you have challenged powerful forces? Did you feel like David facing Goliath?*

**A.S.:** No, it is not in my nature to challenge others, maybe only to challenge myself. I'm not so much a fan of competing as a fan of sharing the joy of a job well done. I am the first to congratulate the winner. Of course I am deeply convinced that my horse is the best – without that I wouldn't even begin in the first place. But this is a game, which has its own rules and I don't question them. I know that when competing at this level I have to have a horse which is not twice as better than the others, but three times, if I am to be noticed. However to me it is not the victories that are important, but building a stud of world renown. I think that we have already achieved a lot, but we can still achieve more. The closer you get to perfection, the closer you are to actually touching it with your hands. When I began the breeding business, I realized that I must first of all avoid making mistakes. That even if I don't achieve the effect that I was after, I still cannot allow myself low quality. That means I can breed a good horse, a very good horse or an excellent horse – but never a bad one. I achieved that goal several years ago, that's why I don't experiment too much these days. I study the pedigrees, analyze the phenotype of the mares, I research genetic issues – all this so that the horse from Equus Arabians was a brand in itself.

**M.L.:** *How much does one have to sacrifice to realize his passion?*

**A.S.:** You definitely have to devote a lot of time, therefore you sacrifice it in other areas of your life. Suddenly you can't do as many things as you did. But there is something beautiful in being completely overtaken by your passion. So the sacrifices I have to make aren't such a burden to me. They would be a burden if I didn't derive pleasure from what I was doing. If one day I discover that the sacrifices outweigh the joy and satisfaction, I will have to find something else... But that is not likely to happen in the near future. Just today, while drinking coffee, I found a filly who seems to be a perfect future partner for Shanghai, though she is just six months old. She is already mine, I bought her immediately. Since I am able to plan matings several years ahead, I shouldn't be concerned with a lack of enthusiasm soon. 