

# Aires HEIR



*More than  
a Pretty Picture*

# Afires Heir

by Nancy Ryan

As photographs go, it was pleasing enough. A pastoral scene — with 11 handsome young Arabians, the dust still settling as their paddock play is interrupted, and all attention focused on the man capturing their image. On the far end of the group, a lanky bay colt casts his singular gaze. There is just something about him. Wide eyes transmit a calm intelligence, and send a hidden message meant for some special person, although he knows not who. Who could predict that this one look would influence not a few, but perhaps generations to come? And who could possibly know that this snapshot — this moment in time — would kindle spectacular moments in the future, for the colt and for the people in his life?

The colt in the Michigan pasture that day was none other than Afires Heir (Afire Bey V x Brassmis). He and the rest of the group represented the foal crop of Maroon Fire Arabians, home of Shea Stables and the legendary halter and performance sire Afire Bey V (Huckleberry Bey x Autumn Fire). Later, the photo would be used in an ad campaign with an accompanying headline asking readers which horse in the group would become the next National Champion. As it turns out, there is likely more than one correct answer to the question.

Marty Shea remembers the photo well. “Javan came to the farm and went out in the pasture by himself and took the picture of all those colts standing in a row,” she says.

Marty kept a copy of the photo and showed it to Joel Kiesner. “It all started at Nationals, when Marty Shea showed me what she thought was a cool picture of a whole group of Afire Bey V foals,” Joel remembers. “I looked at it and I said, ‘I want that one.’ They were all standing facing the camera and he was down at the end of the line. This colt’s legs were a little longer, his neck was a little longer and he just had — everything. Then Marty told me he was the one I should come and look at right after Nationals.”

Joel had been shopping for a national-caliber horse for clients Bill and Shirley Reilich of Houston, Texas. For about a year, the Reilichs had been patiently waiting for the right



*The photograph that started it all —  
yearlings at Shea Stables in Michigan,  
with Afires Heir on the far left.*





*Afires Heir (Afire Bey V x Brassmis) and trainer Joel Kiesner.*

horse to come along. For many years they had been active in showing and breeding mostly straight Egyptians, but gradually downsized due to Shirley's demanding travel schedule as an IBM executive. "It seemed like I would just come home and pet the mares before I was off again," she recalls. "So each time we moved," adds Bill, "we would downsize the farm a little bit."

But not too much. "I was born riding a horse," Shirley says, "so when we started moving around so much I decided it was best to keep one horse with a trainer.

"I met Joel at U.S. Nationals in 2000 and told Joel what I wanted to do and what my ambitions were," she explains, "and he found my Half-Arabian riding horse MSF Gaylanna Bask (Starbask x Musical Gala). I went top 20 with her in Albuquerque the first year I had her. I was Regional Champion at Region 15 and got some Top Fives and did a lot of winning at a regional level. That's when Bill and I decided we needed to move it up a little, but we moved it up a lot!"

They did indeed. It was the end of 2004 and in Afires Heir, Joel had found the Reilichs a top-notch horse. On paper, the pedigree is a recipe for the perfect performance horse. Year after year, the colt's sire, Maroon Fire Arabians' Afire Bey V, consistently sits atop the list as the leading sire of halter and performance champions and has been the number one performance sire at U.S. Nationals for the nine consecutive years. His dam is the exquisite Brassmis, a Brass daughter out of the MHR Nobility daughter EE

Msindependence, owned by Marty Shea. This incomparable mare has produced five full brothers and sisters to Afires Heir, including the chestnut mare Afire Storm, U.S. and Canadian National Champion Junior Mare.

"I went and looked at him and he was just a striking individual," Joel remembers. "I called Bill and Shirley up and told them, 'I found you a very special horse. There are only a couple of problems. One — he is a lot more money than we had talked about, and two — you're never going to get to ride him, because he is going to be an open stallion and he will be so valuable, you won't want him in the ring as an amateur horse.'"

The Reilichs had complete trust in Joel. "We were in the market for an open horse that could compete at the National level," Bill says, "but I am not sure anyone is in the market for a horse like he is! Joel has bought tons of horses and knew exactly the kind of horse we were looking for. Joel is very

levelheaded and always presents the facts. But when he came across Afires Heir, he was just as excited as I had ever seen him. He told us about this great two-year-old and we told him to buy him for us — sight unseen."

"They called me back in five minutes and said, 'OK, go get him,'" Joel says. "I was kind of blown away by that."

In fact, Shirley and Bill didn't actually see their new addition in the flesh for a couple of months. "In February 2005 we were living in California at the time and we went to Joel's," Shirley says. "He had a party for all the exhibitors,

and he asked us to stand in the middle of the arena. I saw Afires Heir come out of his stall and he put chills up and down my back. Joel trotted him in-hand and as a baby he just did naturally what he does now. He seemed to trot everywhere he went."

But could this colt live up to his incredible image under saddle?

"In his training he always picks up on everything right away," Joel notes. "He took to every piece of new tack, whether it was a full bridle, a new bit, a different saddle, a crupper — at every stage of the game he has

accepted it. And he likes his work. Every single day I can hop right on him and get to work. He is an unusual animal."

It took some more patience for the Reilichs to wait until Afires Heir was ready to make his English pleasure debut. "Bill and Shirley have been exceedingly patient," Joel says. "I know it was not easy. I told them last year that we were going to show another junior horse, and that I thought it was the best thing to do. Do you know, they stood and they cheered for the other horse and clapped for him as he won the Buckeye, Canada, and U.S. Nationals? I know they wanted their horse shown, and when I told them this was the best thing to do, they did it and stayed with me."

It was entirely worth the wait.

Scottsdale — February 2007. "We had high expectations for Afires Heir at Scottsdale," Bill says. "We knew what he was and what he was capable of doing." Shirley adds, "It was incredible to see him. We had seen him working at the farm,

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*"If I didn't know I was watching a junior English pleasure horse class, I never would have gotten the impression he was a young horse getting started. He was so solid, so strong and so into what he was doing, and brilliant."* — Duane Esser

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# Afires Heir

but it was incredible to see him out there, finally getting out and in front of everyone. It was like, whoa! It was good to see that he likes to show off in front of that crowd, too!”

Maybe it was because he had been in only one class before the big show, or perhaps because very few people had actually seen him in the flesh until then, but the sensation Afires Heir caused the second he set foot in the Scottsdale arena seemed to come like a bolt out of the blue.

“When he trotted in, nobody had seen anything like him,” Joel explains. “Before the class, I simply got on him at his stall and walked him over to the arena and I went in at the gate. Maybe I should, but I don’t do a warm-up. He is not a horse that has to warm up so that he can canter right, or get one side of his mouth or neck loosened up. He walks out of his stall ready to do what he was *born* to do. He was born to do it. God put him here so he would keep his head up, put his ears forward, flag his tail and trot around the arena like a superstar. So all along I figured it was just my job to adequately fit him, teach him a few things about the tack and basically just stay out of his way.” That they somehow found each other was fortunate for both horse and trainer.

People who were there to witness the Junior English Pleasure Championship at Scottsdale say they will not soon forget the pair’s ride. “People talk about Afires Heir in an historical sense,” Joel says. “Some say he is the best saddleseat horse they have ever seen.”

That includes Duane Esser, whose vantage point was center ring, and who considers himself fortunate to have had the pleasure to judge the class. “I had heard of Afires Heir but never seen him in person. The first thing I thought when I first saw him enter the ring in Scottsdale was, ‘Who is that?’ and then of course when they announced the winner it was no surprise. It was one of those classes that when the class was over there was no questioning the outcome.”

Duane observed a style and maturity beyond Afires Heir’s years. “If I didn’t know I was watching a junior English pleasure horse class, I never would have gotten the impression he was a young horse getting started. He was so solid, so strong and so into what he was doing, and brilliant. He did not look young and up-and-coming. He is already there. What struck me the most was how he carries himself. He is obviously a horse with superior conformation and is a great example of correct Arabian

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*“... he hit the arena with the most awe-inspiring performance I have ever seen. When he lined up, you couldn’t help but think, ‘I was there. This was living history that will be talked about for decades and I was here. I saw it.’” – Tim Shea*

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Steve  
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*Afire Bey V*



*\*Bask*



*MHR Nobility*



*Brass*



*Wisdom*

*Afires Heir*

Afire Bey V

Brassmis

Huckleberry Bey

Autumn Fire

Brass

EE Msindependence

Bay El Bey

Taffona

\*Bask

Sparklingburgundy

\*Bask

Tsanar

MHR Nobility

Miss Wisdom

Bay-Abi

\*Naganka

Raffon

Waneta

Witraz

Balalajka

Fadjur

Taza

Witraz

Balalajka

Tsatyr

Naritha

\*Elimar

HAR Nahra

Wisdom

Bay-Feliciti

Errabi  
Angyl

Bad Afas  
Najada

Gazon  
Vadraff

Bagdad  
Rhadna

Ofir  
Makata

Amurath-Sahib  
Iwonka III

Fadheilan  
Bint Sahara

Ghazamar  
Treyf

Ofir  
Makata

Amurath-Sahib  
Iwonka III

Tsali  
Imamara

El Dinari  
Hamatha

Celebes  
\*Elizaa

\*Bask  
\*Portulaka

\*Bask  
Wizteria

Bay-Abi  
Gayfaba

SUZANNE PHOTO



# Afires Heir

English pleasure saddle type. He gave such a towering impression with strong steps front and back. Just how he uses his shoulder is impressive.”

Mary Trowbridge was alongside Duane judging at Scottsdale. “The beauty and quality of the Afire Bey horses is at its greatest in Afires Heir,” she says. “High-headed and strong, he certainly made a statement when he came through the gate at Scottsdale! Big, strong, high motion — he’s sure going to be a fun one to watch!”

Trainer Johnny Ryan, of Springwater Farms, says, “In my opinion Afires Heir has set a new standard in the English

pleasure division. He has it all — beauty, manners, attitude, and athletic ability.”

Afires Heir’s performance stunned veteran horsemen and -women, including Tim Shea, the stallion’s breeder. “Afires Heir is the most extreme young English horse I have ever

seen,” he says. “He has a tremendous ability and showring presence, but is extremely calm and intelligent. I had the good fortune of watching his ‘warm-up’ for the English Pleasure Championship at Scottsdale. Joel got on him right outside his stall and walked up to the barns close to the showring. Afires Heir stood there motionless before the class, never fidgeting, never fussing until the bugle blew. Then he hit the arena

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*“When evaluating a potential breeding horse, we are taught to chart transmissible strengths and monitor weaknesses. The horsemen of yesteryear told us to study their pedigrees from the bottom up and to evaluate them schooling from their hind ends forward. When looking at Afire Heir’s sire and paternal grandsire, it’s clear that he inherited their length of leg and long, laid back shoulder. Heir’s dam Brassmis is sired by Brass, clearly one of the prettiest siring sons of \*Bask. His second dam is sired by the \*Bask grandson, MHR Nobility, arguably the most athletic and exciting park horses of all time. His third dam is by the \*Bask son Wisdom, the horse Dr. LaCroix specifically bred to perpetuate the blood of \*Bask. In addition, Wisdom’s mother was a seven-eighth sister to \*Bask. It now begins to make sense. A tall, blood bay, linebred \*Bask colt — sired by the most successful sire of National Champion performance horses, himself a grandson of \*Bask!” – Mitch Sperte*

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with the most awe-inspiring performance I have ever seen. When he lined up, you couldn’t help but think, ‘I was there. This was living history that will be talked about for decades and I was here. I saw it.’”

Ray LaCroix remarks, “There are a handful of sires that are capable of siring an excellent English-style Arabian. Of them, Afires Heir, in my opinion will sire the roundest, most upright, loose-jointed athletes with superior trainability. This is one of the loosest, most flexible yet strong and trainable Arabians I have ever seen.”

“When I see this horse perform — Oh my God!” exclaims David Boggs. “To say he gives me goose bumps is an understatement — a massive adrenaline rush is a little closer to the mark! I believe that through Afires Heir we were given another chance to enjoy the magic of \*Bask. For nearly three decades, we’ve been hoping and praying for an heir to the \*Bask legacy. I believe that Afires Heir could be the stallion to fill this long-felt need.”



# Afires Heir

Gary Dearth of Pine Ridge Arabians first saw Afires Heir as an early three-year-old. "He was one of the most impressive horses in-hand that I had ever seen," recalls Gary. "I was very pleased when I saw him show at Scottsdale this year that he has grown and matured into everything he appeared to be two years ago. Afires Heir is the real deal. That is why we are breeding our best Cease Fire (\*Bask x KJ Royal Emerald) daughters to him this year."

"Every year at Scottsdale it seems a special horse emerges that puts a standard in your mind," observes Rob Bick of Dolorosa Arabians. "Afires Heir set the bar in the English division. Having shown his full sister Afire Storm in halter and knowing the kind of pedigree he possesses, I am sure he will make the same type of impact in the breeding barn as he has in the showing."

Mare owners are anxious to see if this history can be repeated. "We have bred a lot more purebreds so far than Half-Arabians," explains Joel. "I think he is going to make the greatest, truly rideable purebred saddleseat horses. It is so easy for him. I knew it from the first moment I sat on him."

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*"The beauty and quality of the Afire Bey horses is at its greatest in Afires Heir."*

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— Mary Trowbridge

Afires Heir bred about 60 mares last year and will probably breed more this year."

Donna Kitchel of Richmond, Indiana, had sworn off breeding purebreds in favor of Half-Arabian saddleseat horses. That is, until she saw Afires Heir's performance at Scottsdale. "After all these years I had to eat my own words," she confesses. "He is the most exciting horse I have seen in many years. Afires Heir is naturally athletic, so sweet, and has one of the best personalities I have ever seen. I think he will go on to do a lot for this industry. He is young, athletic, and so fun to watch!" Now Donna will breed a couple of mares to Afires Heir, including her Promotion daughter PVS Priboja (x IPA

Poezja). "It doesn't matter what breed you are in," she says. "Anyone can appreciate this horse. I can't afford *not* to breed to him. If he does as good a job breeding as he has in the ring — oh my, my, my!"

Susan Johnson of Venture Farms in Pilot Point, Texas, is as pleased as she can be with her brand-new Afires Heir foal born on Easter Sunday. "We have a Half-

Arabian colt out of our beautiful Saddlebred Center Ring DDA daughter. This colt is very pretty, upright, and beautiful. We couldn't be happier with the result."

"The multi-National champion Barbary daughter Dancing Rain X (x Dancing Melody), produced a filly this year that is outstanding," says Brett Becker of Becker Stables. "She is upright, long-legged and beautiful. Afires Heir is destined to become the English sire of the future."

*First Heir EWA (Afires Heir x La Scatta), 2006 colt, bred and owned by Eric Wolfe Arabians. La Scatta is the dam of Rapid Fire EWA, 2005 U.S. National Reserve Champion English Pleasure Junior Horse.*



SUZANNE STURGILL PHOTO



ALEX MCGEAGH PHOTO

*I bred five Dutch Harness mares to Afires Heir last year. I couldn't find a spot in that pedigree that didn't say 'trot.' Seeing him under saddle at Scottsdale made us extremely pleased. All five foals appear to have more length of neck than we have gotten before in an Arabian cross. The foals are more vertical, too, and even at the walk, they look like they are picking up their feet. They are all pleasant-looking horses and have a lot of bone and substance. We will be breeding all the mares back to Afires Heir this year.*

*Afires Heir is a horse in the right place at the right time. Not only is Joel at the top of his game, I have never dealt with a farm that is better to deal with. They are always accommodating and everything takes place without a hitch.*

*— Dean Wikel, Berlin Heights, Ohio*

*Afires Heir has the talent, pedigree, quality, and "look" to take the English pleasure/park division to another level in our Arabian show horses. What makes him so exciting for me is his size, his high head carriage, and his ability to stay so light on his feet. Not only is Afires Heir well bred on the sire side (Afire Bey V), but his dam side is equally as strong. All of this, plus the fact that he's a proven show horse, is why we chose to breed our mares to him.*

*Joel, if you get in a pinch and need someone to catch ride him ... I'm your guy!*

*— Shawn Rooker, Fenton, Michigan*

*There were great horses that I never had the opportunity to see when I was growing up. When they're talking about Afires Heir 30 years from now, don't be one of those people who says, "Damn, I never got to see him."*

*— Stuart Vesty, Aurora, Ohio*

*Wanting to be certain I wasn't being fooled by a cool horse making a "barnyard" appearance at his first horse show, I watched Heir several times during Scottsdale week — in both his qualifying and Championship classes and two schooling sessions. He was impressive and more exciting each time.*

*Heir travels well above level with each stride matching the next and has true vertical carriage with extreme length of neck and a unique "double hinge" — the very reason the cutback saddle was invented.*

*— Mitch Sperte, Franktown, Colorado*



*Afires Heir and Joel at Scottsdale.*

# Afires Heir

Trainer Mitch Sperte adds, "Inasmuch as Joel has raised the bar in the English division, I guess it is only fitting he's astride a promising young stallion. I know one thing for certain — and that is, my clients will be breeding to Afires Heir."

Even though they are his breeders, Tim and Marty Shea want to grab hold of the comet's tail. "Tim and I own the mare, bred the colt and raised him up until he was two," Marty says. "He is great to see now. He is incredible. We are delighted that Joel has him and it makes it all the sweeter for us that we retained breedings. It is just a matter of a lot of pride. He will be National Champion for years to come. He does everything so effortlessly. It is easy for him. As Tim said at Scottsdale, Joel just rode him up to the ring, and he waited and then struck that big trot. He has a great mentality. He has a perfect under-saddle temperament. He is long-legged and high-necked. In the ring he is attentive and bright and has everything that goes with great show horses."

The Reilichs are expecting a foal of their own. "Peter Conway was very generous and let us use a Dutch Harness mare he had," explains Bill. "Peter and Lori are just great people. And that is one of the other great things about Afires Heir. We have been able to meet so many nice people through him. These are people we would see at shows but never get to know."

"Everyone I know who has had a foal has rebooked their mares," Joel declares. "His foals so far are a lot like him. They have long legs, long necks, a lot of style, a lot of carriage, big

straight tails, and they are loose-legged like he is."

Joel also wants breeders to know how he and his wife Ashton intend to stand by, assist, and follow through with clients after their Afires Heir foals are born. "I will be there to help train and market these horses. These are the kind of horses I want to train and ride."



*Afires Heir*



*Above: Afires Heir 2007 foals.*

# Afires Heir

Jade Creek Arabians' Manny Lawrence takes that promise to heart. "Jade Creek breeds for type and athleticism," he says. "We constantly strive for beautiful Arabians that can compete both in performance and halter. Everything we breed will have an opportunity to excel in both disciplines. We feel that Afires Heir gives us that best chance to produce a horse that will be competitive in both arenas. We also know that both Joel and Ashton will be very active in promoting the resulting foals."

For the Reilichs, the Kiesners, the Sheas, and everyone who has come to know the magic swirling around Afires Heir, it has been a fantastic year all the way around.

"We feel blessed that we ended up with him," says Shirley. "We don't know quite how it happened, but I am thankful it did." Bill adds, "I tell people that after 29 years, we finally got it right. We are ecstatic about what has happened this year. We are so happy to finally get to show Afires Heir and have fun and let other people see him. I think other people are seeing what Joel and we have seen in this horse over the last two years."

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*This is one of the loosest, most flexible yet strong and trainable Arabians I have ever seen."* –

*Ray LaCroix*

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The feelings run deep for Joel Kiesner. "I am thrilled this horse is in my life," Joel says. "I really feel like we are part of something big. It is thrilling to be a part of. I think he is going to have a tremendous impact on our breed. His foals will be true saddleseat horses. They will be naturally high-headed, good-gaited, and easy to train. Horses with aptitude for their jobs are much more fun to ride. If we can make horses that are fun to ride, we will have a lot more of a market for them. To be part of making the kind of horse I like riding is very gratifying. I think he is a once-in-a-lifetime horse. There is just no question about it."

And as far as Shirley Reilich is concerned, "Well, Bill says it's like we caught lightning in a bottle." If that's true, then they let him out of the bottle at Scottsdale. More than a picture indeed.





*Many thanks to those who have purchased breedings to Afires Heir.*

*Afires  
HEIR*

Maile Aguila  
David Bandy  
Janet Stevenson, Becker Stables  
Jeanne Black  
Laura Brodzik, Lauran Arabians  
Buckshot Farms  
Patti Carlton, Saddlebrook Farm  
Tara Carpio, Center Stage Arabians  
Mary and Jim Dahling  
Andy Dearing, Dearing Farms  
Gary Dearth  
Susan Drake, Drake Farms  
Duane Esser, Esser Valley Arabians  
Mike and Iona Ferrero  
Hayley and Kirk Hubbard  
Nola Z. Gedeon, Panache Arabians  
Karlton Jackson  
Abby Jensen, Jensen Arabians  
Leslie Johns  
Pamlyn Kelly  
Joel and Ashton Kiesner  
Dick Kiesner  
John and Lynda Lambert  
Christopher LeVoyer, LeVoyer Ltd.  
Alex Longares, Fox View Farm  
G. Ellen McGee  
Ivan Nedds, Brittany II Arabians  
Edward Nunn, Nunns Training Stables  
Pegasus Arabians  
Douglas and Kathleen Peterson  
Red Tail Arabians  
Jerry and Loretta Reeder, Stargate Arabians  
Lindsay and Ruth Rinehart  
Shawn and Carmelle Rooker  
Johnny and Christine Ryan  
Mary Schroeder  
Tim and Marty Shea  
Glen and Sharon True  
Rose Taylor, R-A Aloha Arabians  
Tom Theisen  
Sheila Varian, Varian Arabians  
Russ and Cathy Vecsey, Hawk Haven Farms  
Venture Farm  
Jane Wardlaw  
Dan Whitt, TopLine Arabians  
Chris Wilson, ChriShan Park  
Rebecca Haines, Wind Valley Arabians  
Eric Wolfe, Eric Wolfe Arabians  
Jennifer Yeatman

Rodney and Candy Cole  
Brian and Diane Justice  
Joseph Kinnarney  
Steve and Diana Lazzarini, BL Ranch  
Karen Mahan  
Dave and Gail Liniger, Maroon Fire Arabians  
Liz Alward, Summerwind Farm  
Kristin and Joseph Bettridge, Performance Arabians  
Tony Bienvenue, Bienvenue Arabians  
Kathryn Bolinger  
Ginger Bryk  
Cedar Ridge Arabians  
Madeline Comeau  
Craig and Candice Demerly  
Rod Felding  
Randi Karson, High Horse Arabians  
Catherine Kennedy  
Donna Kitchel  
Ann Knoop  
Manny Lawrence, Jade Creek Arabians  
Christopher and Karen McLamb  
Laura Mickelson  
Don and Janey Morse, Oak Ridge Arabians  
Elizabeth O'Briant  
Robin Porter  
Bill Robinson  
Mark Schmitz  
Rhiannon and Andy Sellman, Argent Farms  
Steve Spensley  
Springwater Farm  
Marlene Staley  
Marilyn Timbs  
Marion Vatinelle and Fredrick Donner  
Mike and Nicci Waldschmidt  
Lucky and Raegen Lurken



*Afires Heir is owned by Bill and Shirley Reilich, Houston, Texas*



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