

A Mule Trainer Visits Egypt



STORY AND PHOTOS
COURTESY STEVE EDWARDS

Arizona mule trainer Steve Edwards and his family recently returned from a visit to Egypt. There, he was able to train a mule in at a farm in Cairo, ride around pyramids in the desert just outside of the city, and then voyage down the Nile, deep-sea dive in the Mediterranean Sea, visit Saint Catherine’s Monastery on the Sinai Peninsula to see ancient Bibles, and climb Mount Sinai.

Steve had been invited to Egypt to train a mule owned by Bill Keyes, an American working for an oil company there.

“We stayed in an apartment less than 500 yards from the Nile River, and could look out the window and see pyramids and lots of sand, people and cars. Cairo has more than six million people,” writes Steve.

On Steve’s second day in Egypt, he accompanied Bill to a farm in the agricultural district of Cairo where Bills boards his molly mule. The owner of the farm,



Top: Steve Edwards rides a young mule in the desert near pyramids with Marianne, the mule’s boarder, on an Arabian. Right: Steve trains the mule to to move forward and through a gate. The big house behind the farm belongs to a Saudi neighbor. Above: Egyptian Arabian Stable. Left: Sheep, goats and a donkey rest in the shade with their herder in Cairo.



Marianne, is the widow of an Egyptian, and speaks fluent Arabic. She holds dual citizenship in Egypt and the U.S., and is a life-long horsewoman who gives riding lessons to oil company employees.

Bill’s mule, out of an Arabian mare, had been having problems leaving the farm. She insisted on being led or following another equine. Steve had brought one of his mule saddles and tack, and he and Marianne (on an Egyptian Arabian) headed out on a training session into the desert.



Steve and Marianne ride a brick path through a lush neighboring nursery.



Navigating the sand streets brings encounters with many animals. Here a young boy pulls a calf out of the way.

“I began teaching the mule from the saddle what I expected of her. Using hands, legs and seat, I spent about 10 minutes training this mule until she willingly went through the gate,” writes Steve.

“There were donkeys, horses and mules pulling wagons and carts everywhere in the traffic. It was difficult to navigate all the roads and people as we rode to an Arabian Horse stable, where we could access the desert.

“We rode around the pyramids and the desert for about an hour, and then went back to the stables, where the stable hands told Marianne that I should be riding a fine Arabian. I explained that my preferred saddle animal was a mule.

“Visiting Egypt was never something on my ‘bucket list’ but I am so grateful that I was given the opportunity to travel there and meet the people of this land steeped in tradition. My visit to Egypt gave me cultural experiences I never knew I was missing and spiritual insights I had never known before.”

Steve Edwards will soon have a new DVD available for purchase: “Training Mules in Egypt.” Visit www.muleranch.com for more information, or call 602-999-6853.

