

Meet Your Breeder

Klassic Basenjis - Sue Kite

Q. How did you get started in basenjis?

My sister and I were visiting a dog show in Marion, Ohio and heard a very strange noise coming from a station wagon. We went to see what it was and it was four beautiful prick-eared, dark-eyed dogs staring at us. We went to ask what they were and met the owners, Bill & Judy Stine, who were associated with the famous Ross Neuman of Betsy Ross Kennels. We became fast friends and I learned a lot about the breed. A year later, I found a bitch through another dog friend and that was Winnie. A year after that, we bred Winnie to the brother of Ch. Bazimbas Pride and Joy and had 5 beautiful tri babies. That was our beginning in purebred dogs.



Ch. Kukuk's Sweet & Lovely.

Q. Why did you start breeding? When?

I was so enthralled with this beautiful breed, I decided in 1972, when our first litter was born, that this was the breed for me. Now, 39 years later, I know I made the right decision. I just couldn't imagine life without my kids. They give me so much joy.

Q. What persons influenced you most strongly? Why?

Besides, the Stines, I bought my first show bitch from Bill and Doris Kukuk and they became my mentors for a lot of years. Over the years, I've met Veronica Tudor-Williams, Lauris Hunt, Doreen Duffin, Elspet Ford, Shirley Chambers, Damara Bolté, John Harper, and others whose love of the breed I have so admired have been friends and men-

tors, as well. I feel so grateful that I have been around long enough to meet people and dogs who have so influenced our breed. While traveling in England, I've met the pillars of the Basenji world there, also.

Q. What have you seen improve in Basenjis over the years?

Temperament, temperament, temperament. I applaud the breeders who have worked so hard on this issue. When I first started, there were a lot of issues, but now it's the rare occasion that this pops up.

I have seen so much evolution in the styles that people liked over all these years. At first, they were more bodied, a little bigger, then it went to very model-like, thin and very narrow fronts, and evolved



Left: Ch. Klassic's Rooty Toot Toot winning '04 National. Right: Ch. Klassic's Slam Dunk Atlanta specialty win

into what we have today. But even though we have a standard, people put more weight on certain traits of the breed. This is fine, but they should look like what the standard says and, being a hunting dog, they are a movement breed.

I was very, very impressed with the Africans they brought back in the late 80s. I got to see most of them and again and was so impressed with the temperaments. Some of our present-day Africans seem to have very good temperaments, and some don't. Environment could play a very important part in it, as the ones that Jeff and I have are, with the exception of two, very outgoing and social butterflies.

Q. What do you think today's Basenji breeders need to pay special attention to?

Don't get stuck on one thing. Look at the overall dog; type and movement are so important.

Q. What advice do you have to a new breeder getting started?

Don't be in a big hurry to "know it all". It takes a lot of time to "get it", so talk to everyone you can and learn as much as possible. Not everyone agrees, but get lots of opinions and then go back to the book, develop what is

important to you, and if you are starting a breeding program, learn as much as you can about what you have, what you need, and where you can go to get it.

There is no perfect dog, but strive for the best you can breed.

Q. What dogs you've seen or owned stand out as outstanding examples of the breed, and why?

There are quite a few, for so many reasons: Mamba, Changas Mamba LuckaLot, Bravo, Vikentor's Country Rose, Dan Patch, and Johnny. Mine who were so special: Ch. Reliant the Right Stuff, who gave me so much; Ch. Klassic's Eye of the Tiger, who made history as the first brindle group winner; Brittany, Samantha, Poobuckers, Pooka and Little Tiger were all my special kids, who loved so much and were loved so much. My very special Ch. Klassic's Rooty Toot Toot, the queen, has been the consummate show dog, the great brood bitch, and my bed buddy. She has proven herself in every way, by producing #1 children in several countries, specialty and best in show winners, and being the dam of 2 daughters, who, for 2 years in a row, won the breed at both Crufts and Westminster, a feat no one else has ever accomplished, in any breed.

“Don't be in a big hurry to “know it all”. It takes a lot of time to “get it”, so talk to everyone you can and learn as much as possible.”



Tony, Lady, and Tiger – Stud Dog at the Sighthound specialty in Canada.

Q. What do you feel are your most significant achievements with the breed?

We have bred many champions, who excel in the show ring, but are also healthy and have wonderful temperaments. We have won at many venues, but the best part of all of it: it's still a thrill, no matter the win. Our pets go to wonderful families and live long lives and give their owners a lot of joy.

Q. Your chosen Kennel Name is Klassic. How did you choose this name? Why? Does it have a meaning?

My sister and I chose this name, way back when. We just liked it and shared it until a couple of years ago, when she stopped breeding her Keeshonden. It just seemed like the right name and it certainly does mix with a lot of names.

Q. Anything else you would like to say?

I take great pride in our dogs and I want to thank Jeff Gillespie, (my breeding partner of the last almost 10 years, and friend for longer), for being there and helping me make good decisions. We are a huge Basenji family and hope we can be here for many years to come, making good breeding decisions along the way, and helping each other however we can.



Millie and pups.