

Written in 2004

Basenji Pedigree Database on the Web!

(or 'How I got in to All This!')

Sally Wallis — www.pedigrees.zandebasenjis.com

About 20 years ago my electric typewriter gave up the ghost and Marvin persuaded me into buying a madly expensive computer. They are cheaper now and, largely thanks to the Database I am now on about the 6th new one – excluding upgrades, larger hard-drives, more RAM and faster systems.

To pay for the new extravagance, I learned to do my own accounting, recovered more than enough from Inland Revenue to buy the next computer and sacked my accountant, thereby saving a fortune in annual fees – so you could say I got a good deal.

While all this was going on and our pack of Basenjis increasing in size, a frequent visitor was Elspet Ford. She brought some really old, hand-written-on-wafer-thin paper, Basenji pedigrees and a sheaf of more modern ones in her own handwriting. I committed these to computer using a basic system of tabs and we printed them out and lay on the floor in what used to be an elegant dining room and is now a chaotic office, fiddling them into shapes and studying them. Our objective was to try and trace the common denominator behind some unexplained deaths. I

think there were about 11 of them within quite a tight time-frame. Before anyone asks, we weren't pointing blame in any direction, nor have we ever done so – but it is true to say that two particular animals did appear in every case. Having subsequently submitted the pedigrees to Wright's (line-breeding co-efficient calculator) I now realise there was a definite pattern of genetic influence. It is possible that these two were just a 'filter' which, when they appeared together in a pedigree, allowed things from the past to re-emerge.

Marvin came home one day, triumphantly carrying a shareware diskette - Version 2.09 of Charles Orange's brilliant programme, Pedigree. As this programme accepts individual entries, dog by dog, but then regurgitates them as pedigrees, litters, siblings, descendants and permits all kinds of searches, it seemed sensible to transfer, not only all the old hand-written pedigrees but every pedigree we had, into this programme. Also available was a data on all UK dogs, saved from the Kennel Gazette and the Breed Record Supplements published over the years by the Kennel Club. Elspet had cut Basenji data out, pasted the

pages into files and then transferred the data into huge loose-leaved folders. It must have taken her years because in those days breeders tended to register a litter as individual puppies, as and when they were sold or bred from, so sometimes the entries of a single litter covered a year of monthly publications. As she came across yet another puppy for a particular litter, Elspet's hand-writing, never very large, became smaller. Having entered these dogs into Chuck's programme, I checked all the data again and added notes on imports, exported Basenjis, awards, titles, stud book entry dates and more besides.

'Pedigree' advanced through many revisions, Chuck incorporated all sorts of useful features for me and finally brought out 'PEDWIN', which is a windows based version of the old DOS 'Pedigree'. I still use the two programs in tandem because they complement each other. Pedwin has also gone from strength to strength and is now an extremely powerful tool.

The next milestone was the purchase, from Bunty Bowers, of Book One of 'The Years of the American Basenji' (YOTAB). I spent one winter entering all those pedigrees into the database, and many years writing letters to all kinds of people around the world, Pat Bright, Dawn Clark, Wilma Bauer among them. Wilma put me in touch with Jim Stromberg who had been working faithfully from the AKC Stud Books over many years and we combined our databases. It was very exciting – Jim was delighted that I could fill him in on almost all, if not all, his 'gaps' in the very early days, and I was happy to have a great many US dogs. Dawn put me in touch with the New Zealand Registration authorities and one day the postman brought me hard-copy, computer print-outs of some 1100 New Zealand Basenjis! These were not as complete as I'd hope but help was available. Lauris Hunt was over in this country and knew off the top of her head the parents of enough dogs to fill in almost all of my gaps. Missing are still a few parents back earlier than 1959 but I never give

up hope! Now the data is (as I always intended but was never sure it was extensive enough – 20 years of collecting is an arbitrary cut-off) on the web, I am hoping not only to fill in the New Zealand data from the Jordan and Clendon hey-days but also 1969 Canadian records. I understand there was a fire which wiped out 1969 records, not only in Basenjis but in most Breeds. Lynn Arrand, Sue Wilcox and Greg Nein have, over the years, managed to find dusty, in some instances mouldy, copies of the CKC stud books hidden away, forgotten in Club rooms. These are incorporated into the on-going History of the Basenji Breed as it appears on my website.

I came by New South Wales' wonderful books of Australian Champions and National Basenjis Club published books – Scandinavia, Bohemia, etc. and copies of them all line my office together with the newer books which I have had great fun proof-reading before publication. Noel Baaser's German pedigrees, Pia Wright's Danish, Anne Lindeberg's Norwegians – contact facilitated by the speed of email communications.

Despite all these books and the wonderful websites maintained by several Basenji Clubs listing the dogs bred or imported into their countries, it seemed sensible to try to have one single publication – actually a website – incorporating as many Basenjis from as many countries as possible, not only regular data which is readily available (even if only for a fee!).

Basenjis deserve no less.

Christine put about 360,000 Dobermans onto a website with the help of a truly wonderful programme, Jim Trethewey's 'Alfirin'. She warned me it wouldn't be easy to get my data extracted and into an acceptable format and indeed she was right! It took several weeks to get it all into Microsoft ACCESS, check it for anomalies (parents younger than the litter they spawned!) and then to .csv files. The very size of the base mitigated against it - my

version of EXCEL only takes about 63,300 records to a spread sheet and I had many more. But Jim and Christine were very patient with my phone calls and emails of despair and now it's all up in the web!

I would love to be able to obtain data from Russia – where I know more and more breeders are involved with Basenjis, Japan (I LOVE their affixes!) and South America. Recently I found several websites showing pictures of Basenji puppies and have managed to make contact with some breeders but getting bulk pedigree data is not easy. Any help will be most gratefully accepted – I couldn't have done this without help and if I have only mentioned a few people, it is because there were so many pedigree enthusiasts.

The website is on-going and has already generated a plethora of new data, updated titles information, filled in gaps and photographs.

Keep 'em coming — please!

More recently Sally Wallis added this:

Since then the database has gone from strength to strength, fed by breeders, owners, Rescue Groups and helpful individuals who get puppy data from catalogs and show superintendent websites. Accuracy is paramount and if I come across two spellings of a name, I try to go to the official registry to check it and if I steadfastly refuse to allow anyone else to add or amend data it is because of what amounts to paranoia on my part to preserve the database as a true history of the Basenji Breed.

I do welcome corrections (!) and am more than happy to adjust the database to show whatever people ask for – if possible. I did experiment with COIs but this wasn't easy – I tried using Wright's Co-efficient but the number of 'unknown Africans' which show up as Dad or Mom

confused and corrupted the readings so I gave up. I even tried numbering them 'unknown African dog 1' and 'unknown African bitch 2' and so on. But it got into double figures and became too unwieldy so I gave that up too. However, over the years, country of origin, date of publication (in stud books) and other minutiae have crept in.

Since the Fanconi DNA marker test became available, it seemed a good idea to include a coding which shows up in pedigrees. Permission from the CPP was obtained. I also have an immense amount of verified health data and absolutely NO intention of making any of it public. My intention in gathering it has always been to keep it for the use, maybe, of generations of Breeders as yet unborn. More likely, though, my collection will become superfluous as openness prevails.

Photographs are always welcome – any photos: coursing, action, cuddles, stacked poses. It all adds interest to the data-base.

The amount of space allowed by my very accommodating server has been increased over time but a disadvantage now is that the increased number of dogs and amount of data on each means the speed of searching decreases. You need to pick the least-used word in a Basenji's name, not the affix.

As more people come across the database on line – perhaps while idly browsing the web on a wet Sunday afternoon in midwinter – the number of contacts across the globe is helping tremendously. South America remains difficult but slowly and surely we are getting in more data – Russian breeders are providing data from the other side of the world or translating 'form letters' for me but there are always pockets of breeders remaining very difficult to reach. Spain, Portugal . . . even France are not as easy to obtain data from as you might think. A big help can come from stud dog owners who chase breeders to send me litter data.