

Meet Your Breeders

Sandra L. Bridges & Penelope C. Inan - JATO Basenjis

1. How did you get started in Basenjis?

Our first introduction to dog shows was by our Aunt Billy (Wilma), who bred Pomeranians in the fifties and sixties. She took us to the Pasadena K.C. show at Brookside Park in 1956 when I was 8 and Penny 7. Then there was a Basenji that kept escaping its home and coming to the boarding school where we lived in 1960. Having read "Good-Bye, My Lady", we both found the little dog captivating!

Penny bought two Basenjis during her first marriage while living in Southern California. After the divorce and losing the dogs, she moved to Northern California near where Sandy was living with her husband and two small children. Penny took Sandy to the Golden Gate K.C. benched show at the



Cow Palace in 1973, where she found the breeder from whom she bought her next Basenji, Rameses Konde of Pongara, CD. Yes, Penny put an Obedience degree on a BASENJI back in 1976! A show bitch came next, and that bitch became the dam of Sandy's first Basenji, Rameses Bakataten-Ra of Jato, after she helped Penny raise the litter.

2. Why did you start breeding? When?

Sandy and her husband bought their first house in 1975 and Penny rented a room to help out. When Penny remarried in 1977 and

moved further north with her husband, the sisters continued studying the breed together. We split our endeavor into JatoSouth (me) and JatoNorth (Penny), because Penny was living north of San Jose in Hayward. Sandy's first litter (1976) was a line breeding out of the bitch she had bought from and co-owned with Penny. She finished one male from that, Ch. Jato Jebu D'Moor, but wanted to do better. Sandy went to handling classes, studied pedigrees and talked to other breeders. She then bought a male, Ch. Asari's Ntare, from Russell Hendren. Ntare had been a stud puppy back to Russell, sired by a son of Ch. Shikari's Black Mamba and out of a bitch from Rancho Rest breeding. Penny's next two litters (1977) were sired by Ntare and Ch. Pero Regal Image and were born at exactly the same time in different rooms. They produced three Champions, including the first two Jato-(co)bred Specialty winners: Ch. Rameses Jato Malindi was BOW at the 1978 BCOSC Specialty owner/handled by John Sommer, and her sister, Ch. Rameses Jato Menhet was owner/handled by Penny to BOS in BCONC's First Specialty Sweepstakes later that same year.

When Jeri Crandall bred a beautiful typey bitch of hers to Ntare in 1978, she was kind enough to allow Sandy her pick of the litter as a stud fee.



That puppy, Ch. Delahi's M'Bari Jato, was JatoSouth's real foundation. In 1979, Bari was Best In Futurity at the Evergreen BC Specialty, Best Bitch In Sweepstakes at BCONC's Specialty and Best In Sweepstakes at the BCOSC Specialty under three different breeder-judges: John Fenney of Canada, Minnie Hill (*The Basenji Magazine's* co-

founder) and Damara Bolte', respectively. This "Sweep of the West Coast Sweeps" was never duplicated. M'Bari was also Sandy's first Specialty winner, going BOW at the 1980 BCOSC Specialty a week after winning her first five point major the day following the BCONC Specialty. While Sandy and Bari were down at the 1979 BCOSC Specialty, Penny was home awaiting the (late) arrival of her son. Scott's busy childhood then more or less interrupted Penny's dog breeding for a number of years.

3. What persons influenced you most strongly?

SANDY: Russell Hendren taught me how to groom to perfection and handle to advantage. He single-handedly raised the quality of handling in Northern California with his handling classes. He was very generous in sharing his expertise with those of us willing to listen and learn. Pat Cembura and I joined in a quest for a similar type of Basenji. We both produced our top



dogs (Ch. Arubmec's The Victor and Ch. Jato J'Mira), born the same year, by breeding to Russ' Ch. Asari's Envoy, and years later bred that pair twice to produce a total of six Champions. We also interbred to advantage a number of times, since our dogs were

related and seemed to "nick" well.

Penny had always been the "dog nut" in our household, from the time she was in kindergarten! She had been doing rescue work when in SoCal and brought the spay/neuter ethic with her. The first pet puppy Jato

sold went on a spay contract that specified she was to come back if she ever left their home. The "Jato Guarantee" is to buy back any puppy we've sold at any time during the dog's lifetime and our contracts are worded so that is legally enforceable. Penny and I continued then to bounce things off each other as we studied the history of the breed. We noted the fact that the early pioneers found Bongo of Blean to be the most correct dog of his time.

Then, Veronica Tudor-Williams awarded the six-month-old Dogo Birocco of Sun Diata Best of Breed from the puppy class at the Evergreen Basenji Club Specialty in 1976.



This brought the entire basenji world up short and forced the U.S. breeders to look at the direction they had been heading.

The dogs had become much larger and longer, and had lost the characteristic "worried" look. Veronica was the premiere living authority on the breed, having

spoken to and studied with the long-ago pioneers who wrote the original standard. Her comment regarding Dogo Birocco was that "he was the only one there of the proper size if he had been an adult." I met Veronica at a local reception when she was visiting the Northern California area, and corresponded with her for a number of years thereafter. She was passionate about the preservation of the correct "breedy" Basenji. She had seen the longer bodied, rangier dogs with low set ears and uncurled tails when she brought Fula out, and was concerned that American breeders were going backward rather than forward. Veronica really influenced my desire to remain true to the "proper" Basenji and try mightily NOT to put in the ring those dogs that I knew tended towards that wrong "Basenji-type" pariah dog.

4. What have you seen improve in Basenjies over the years?

SANDY: Temperaments have improved immensely since I began in 1974. Other things have improved for a short period, then gone wrong again with each new influx of "novice" breeders. Sadly, many of the newer fanciers of the breed have not done their homework and learned about the history and original function of the breed. The primitive ancestral pariah dog that became the Basenji did NOT originate as a true "sighthound", and I fear that breeding for the sighthound conformation has dramatically changed what was once a small, compact forest dweller and driver of game into a taller, rangier, galloping plains dog with a further forward set-on of shoulder, long body and over-angulated rear. Basenjies did NOT "trot for great distances over the African plains". They were the small, dark red *forest* dweller, carried over their masters' shoulders to the hunt wearing a bell and set free in the deep dense underbrush to drive the game into a net. Afterwards, the natives carried them back to the village the same way. Illustrated in Paul Schebesta's Among Congo Pygmies (1933) is a pair of "rather attractive Basenjies, small and very fine-limbed, with wide white blazes, having enormous hunting bells tied round their necks by their pygmy owners." (Veronica Tudor-Williams, Basenjies: The Barkless Dogs (1946).

PENNY: I feel very little has improved - perhaps temperament, although I am uncomfortable seeing how "soft" some of the current Basenji temperaments are.

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

SANDY: *Cohesiveness*. Overall, they need to look back at the first Basenjies brought out of Africa. They were not overdone in any way, their front and rear matched, their backs and loins were short, they were SQUARE, with fine textured, loose skin that fell in wrinkles on their foreheads when they pricked their small, hooded ears FORWARD towards new sounds. In short, what is missing in many areas is TYPE, as well as the knowledge of what it truly IS. For me, the essence of correct native Basenji type is that they are a prick-eared, "reachy-necked, short backed, tireless, active little dog, really agile, alert, springy and quick, with a deep brisket" (Olivia Burn), wrinkled head and high-set, curly tail. This is the description that I find brings to my mind the ideal of the Basenji my long time study, observation and research has led me to form.

PENNY: Heads - heads - heads and SQUARE dogs. . . Most of the heads in this country have lost their "typey" look. We had a very interesting discussion with Ed Gilbert last year. Ed mentioned that he had spoken with Jack Shafer about Basenji heads years ago. Jack told Ed that Bob Mankey came home one day, frustrated over losing in the Group, and exclaimed that the judges all preferred a head with equal length of skull and muzzle. Bob declared that he would breed such a dog, and so he did. The Cambria dogs retained their square body type, but the heads tended to be approximately equal in muzzle and skull length. In a later conversation with Veronica Tudor-Williams, Ed learned that the original writers of the Basenji standard had intended it to read, "the proportions were [that] the distance from stop to nose should not be more than one-third of the measurement from stop to occiput." I can use an exact quote because that is what Veronica wrote in Basenjies: The Barkless Dogs of Central Africa (1976), attributing the quote to Mr. K. B. Smith, first secretary of the Basenji Club of Great Britain. He also noted that "The foreface is small. . ." In the same chapter of this book, Veronica writes, "A very, very slight dish face is far more in character than any convex look about the muzzle." Unfortunately, any sort of "dish face" is seldom if ever seen these days. However, I have noticed a distressing tendency to a "convex" look in modern U.S. Basenji heads.

SQUARE: Basenjies have lost an overall look of squareness. In Basenjies, proportion is extremely definite: 17 inch high and 17 inches from front of chest to point of buttocks for males, and corresponding 16 inch measurements for bitches. The "high on leg" look is best achieved by good angles at BOTH ends, in coordination with a short back and short coupling in the middle. You can see this for yourself by drawing a stick dog with a straight front and straight rear. It will look considerably longer than the same stick dog drawn with proper angles at each end.

It is all too common now to see a dog with a long second thigh and good rear angles attached to a far-forward, straight front assembly.

This makes for a very attractive "flying" mover, but it is NOT correct. Again, to quote Veronica, "The action must be straight and free, with the forelegs swinging well forward from the shoulder in a straight line, and the elbows under the body, so that the utmost length and lightness of stride is obtained (emphasis is mine - PCI)." A dog flying around the ring like a German Shepherd may be attractive, but it is not moving "lightly". Quick turning is essential in the jungle. A long-bodied dog with great length of stride will lack the agility necessary to avoid predators. The AKC standard of 1954 included three important phrases: "short backed" (General Appearance); "The body should be short. . ." and "short coupled. . ." (Body). The current FCI and Australian standards both state "high on leg compared with its length", leaving out the word "appearing"; thus a square dog would be considered too long under these standards! ▶

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

First, study the *history* of the breed. Find a really GOOD seminar on canine structure and movement; attend and *listen*. Purchase or borrow videos of BCOA National Specialties from past decades, then study them in stop and step motion. Acquire or visit with every back issue of "The Basenji Magazine" (starting with the *sixties*) and become familiar with the many different breeders and the dogs each one produced. Look at how they produced them, i.e. look at pedigrees and pictures of the dogs those breeders used in their breeding programs. The result of all this study should be that you formulate your idea of the correct Basenji, and that idea will then be based on *fact*, rather than just what the breeder you bought your first dog from told you.

Then, buy the best bitch you can from one of the Australian breeders (where proper heads are still to be found), and breed her to a stud from one of the few Basenji breeders left in the U.S. with lines that have preserved correct type in addition to their quest for health. Finally, *select* carefully only those puppies that reflect your ideal to put in the ring. Don't rely on the judges to decide what is and isn't a show dog; it is **YOUR** job to choose the right puppies and then show them with pride and conviction. A breeder friend once remarked to Sandy while she was in the ring during Best of Breed with WB, "Sandy, you always have such pretty bitches!" Her reply, "Only the ones you see!" Not ALL Jato puppies were "show" puppies. We tried to show only those that conformed to our idea of the correct Basenji. In real estate, the three PRIME issues are location, location, and location. In breeding, it's very like, only it must be **SELECTION, SELECTION, AND SELECTION.**

You must first *select* a good bitch, then again *select* the right mate for her and, finally, *select* the right puppies from your litters. Selection is often the difference between real success and just "showing dogs". We have known breeders who actually kept and showed the pets from their litters, while placing the superior dogs in pet homes. It's so easy to be caught up in the current fads and fall for that "flying" puppy. Basenjis weren't *supposed* to FLY, they FLOAT!!! You need to look for

effortless movement, which is the result of balance and moderation in structure combined with good conditioning.

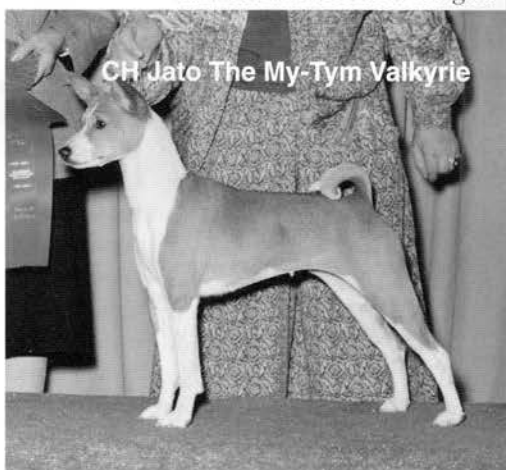
7. What dogs of those you've seen or owned stand out as outstanding examples of the breed, and why?

SANDY:

The absolutely most correct Basenji I ever saw was when I judged the New South Wales Specialty in Australia in 2003. He actually wasn't even entered in the show; he belonged to Kay Eldred, who had become ill right before the show. I saw him at her house after her husband Ross picked me up at the airport. He is Aust. Ch. Jebelmarra Harem Scarem, a beautifully



Basenji: correct head type, correct body of proper substance and correct wrinkling. I am also very proud of Am/Can. Ch. Jato the My-Tym Valkyrie, who was a Top Ten group winner in her day. Kyrie excelled in correct outline, short body and back and super balanced and effortless sidegait.

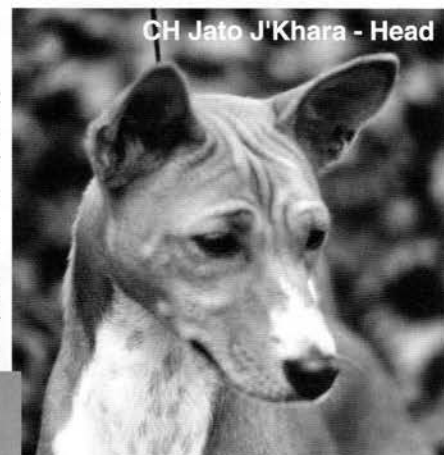


in correct head type, lovely, airy balanced gait, proper topline standing and moving and the correct outline type. In the

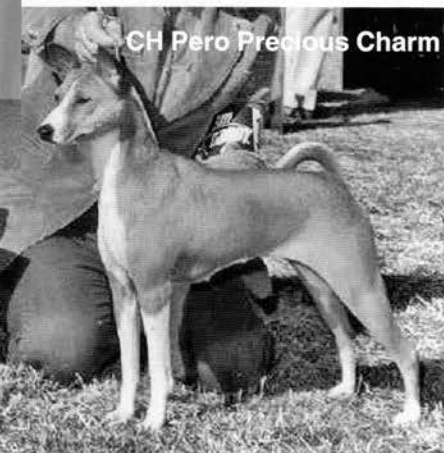


put together and true-to-type little dog who just screamed "BASENJI" to me.

The one dog most American Basenji breeders agree was correct was Ch. Aleika-Absinthe Rajah's J.R. He had a vivid red coat, a ton of wrinkle, a lovely outline with short back and long legs and a perfectly curled and set tail. My Ch. Jato J'Khara was BOS to his BOB at the 1983 National under Dr. Gerda Kennedy. Khara was featured three times in the AKC slide presentation on the



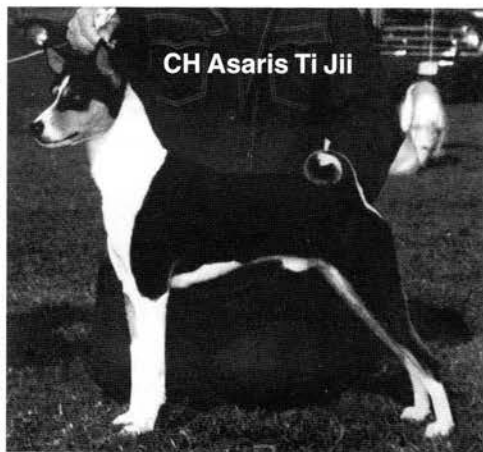
Other Basenjis through the years I particularly admired: Ch. Pero Precious Charm, Ch. Pero Forest Flute of Sun Diata and Ch. Arubmec's the Victor. These three are all related and excelled



1990's, Ch. Zindika's Johnny Come Greatly was a striking brindle and white with outstanding showmanship; Ch. Reveille Boutonniere was a lovely red and white dog of exceptionally correct type who has been very successful as a sire.

PENNY: Ch. Asari's Ti-Jii was the best example of functional balance I've ever seen in a Basenji. He truly was square, giving the impression of being high on the leg, with perfect tick-tock timing.

His angles were not exaggerated, but they were still sufficient to make him appear shorter bodied and high on the leg. I remember sometimes with wonder the years when Ch. Pero Precious Charm and Ch. Changa's Mamba Luckalot battled it out in the California show rings. Both bitches were exceptionally typey and their mark is still seen in the generations that have followed them.



CH Arubmec's Final Mission



Recently, we have both greatly admired Ch. Kazor's Baysenji Yuara Natural and Ch. Arubmec's Final Mission, both square and balanced with beautiful wrinkle and very correct overall type and movement.

The best Basenji we have owned (and bred, also co-bred with Jennifer Bridges-Vargas) was Ch. Jato

J'Mira. She started her career going Reserve in Futurity at Evergreen in 1984 under the legendary Bob Mankey of Cambria fame and Winners Bitch for 5 points at the same Specialty under breeder/judge Barbara Camp. She went on to win at four different Nationals: WB under Thelma Brown, 1985; BOS to her half-brother Victor's BOB under Ann Rodgers Clark, 1986; AOM from Veterans under Robert Stein, 1991; and another AOM from Veterans at the age of 12 under breeder/judge Lou Dye in 1995. Equally impressive as a brood bitch, she is currently the Number Three all time Top Producing Basenji bitch with nineteen AKC Champions to her credit. Mira was noted for her exquisite head type and wrinkle, her balanced, effortless gait with superb timing, her very correct square, leggy outline with short back and loin, arched neck and level topline. Her granddaughter, Ch. Jato Jenr'ly Speaking, was BOW at the 1999 National under breeder-judge Lauris Hunt of



Australia. "Gabby's" was the last litter of Jato Basenjis, as Sandy's husband's long illness and the uncertainty that went with it forced us to stop breeding.

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

SANDY: The one thing of which I am most proud is the adoption by the BCOA of a "Code of Recommended Practices". When I first joined BCOA in 1975, this project was "being worked on". Over the years, the Ethics Committee chairman and committee members changed, but nothing was ever submitted to the Board for a vote. Finally, in 1994, I accepted Co-Chairmanship of the Ethics Committee with Pat Bright and put together a "Code of Recommended Practices". The problem of adopting or even approving a "Code of Ethics" was that NO ONE wanted to point fingers. There was also serious concern as to the legality of attempting to "legislate morality" for other Basenji breeders. I researched other national breed club's ethics codes and found a range from very strict, requiring a signature upon joining, all the way to no mention of ethics at all.

I had found a copy of the Afghan Hound Club of America's "Code" and thought that a *voluntary* code of "recommended practices" might be easier to get passed. I used the AHCA's as an outline and reformulated it to fit Basenjis and Basenji breeders. The Board adopted it, effective September, 1995, although my attempt in 1998 to have it become mandatory was not successful.

I am also proud of my handling as President of the BCOA of the "reformatting" of the standard in 1990. A version was put to the membership in 1988, although the membership as a whole had had no opportunity to provide input or feedback. It passed by a slim margin (a 2/3 majority was needed) and the membership was up in arms. I "accidentally" became President in 1989 when the then President-elect, Barbara Camp, resigned due to personal problems. I first reassured all and sundry that the passed new standard would not become *official* until and unless the BCOA presented it to AKC for their approval, then put it to a final vote of our general membership. I next issued a series of "Advisory Votes", breaking the standard into sections and asking each member to vote for or against and to include feedback as to what they liked and/or did not like and why. After several of these had been mailed out, then returned, tabulated and the input incorporated, the final new standard passed with 90 some-odd per cent of those voting in favor.

Finally, I am proud of the consistency of the 50 or so JATO-bred and/or owned/finished champions, most owner-handled to their titles, which were the result of my breeding an average of one litter per year for 25 years. I was incredibly amazed and delighted when a friend once referred to a dog of hers as the "Jato-faced" puppy! I did strive to maintain the type that I thought best preserved the original Basenji. I am grateful to those who founded their breeding programs on my stock. It is wonderful to still see dogs out there for which I was a small link in the chain of their production.

PENNY: It was my concept that began the "Bulletin Board" newsletter, to rectify the lack of communication between the membership and the Board, and I served as its Editor for a number of years. To my "Sister Sandy": You steered the "ship" of the BCOA through what was likely one of its most difficult times. This included the "new African imports", a new ▶



to be a shining example of how these things are properly conducted.

9. What is your chosen kennel name? How did you choose this name? Why? Does it have a meaning?

Our kennel name is JATO, which stands for "Jet Assisted Take Off". It's a term used in rocketry, found often in the science fiction novels we have read all our lives. We used it "in memoriam" when we started because it had been our aunt's when she bred the Poms. Aunt Billy named her first Pom bitch "Jet Net Suke"; hence, the reference to a "Jet" assisted take-off. Unfortunately, Jet was very unsound and never actually bred; whoops, guess that's actually "fortunately", LOL!

standard, a constitutional revision and the adoption of that dear-to-your-heart project, the Code of Recommended practices. (It was YOU, Penny, who taught me the importance of ethics in dog breeding - Sandy) All of this was accomplished without stirring up much rancor, and allowing all members to have a say in club business. Your calm during this "stormy" period allowed BCOA



10. Anything else you would like to say.

Thanks for asking us to participate in this series. We are sorry it has taken two years to get this completed and back to you. After Norm's death in

2004, Sandy was very withdrawn for several years. She is now back in the land of the living, just finished two of our Chinese Cresteds and looks forward to showing



our two new homebred Crested puppies. This is our third litter in the last eleven years, a total of seven puppies produced. It appears that breeding toy dogs only once a year doesn't actually work very well! They often miss conceiving and seldom have litters of more than three. We both also have several judging assignments ahead of us this year, and Sandy has decided to go ahead and apply for more breeds. Norm would have wanted - no, *expected* it! ♦

JATO Basenjjs (and Chinese Cresteds!!)

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