

Wau of the Congo

Veronica Tudor Williams writes in her book *“Basenjjs, the Barkless Dogs”*

In January 1952, fortune again seemed to smile on us. Mr. and Mrs. MacGill, friends of mine who had seen the English dogs, but whose home was in the South Sudan, sent me a photograph of a magnificent Basenji, Sueh, telling me he was such an outstanding specimen they had been advised by the Basenji experts of the Sudan to get him to England. Would I co-operate and look after him? There is no need to elaborate upon my reply. Quarantine was arranged and all was planned. But again the gods of Africa frowned, as I received a cable to say that Sueh, who had previously been bitten by a rabid dog, had developed rabies just before flying to England.

In spite of such a bitter blow, the MacGills set to work to find another good Basenji, as by this time they had become really interested in helping the breed in England. An SOS was sent out in the South Sudan, and several puppies were brought in from the country around the sources of the Nile, but none of them filled the exact requirements.

Then a puppy was found near Tembura, on the border of the Sudan and French Equatorial Africa, less than 100 miles from where they both converge with the Belgian Congo, and about 200 miles from Meridi, where Lady Helen Nutting's Basenjjs were found in 1923.

The puppy was nicknamed “Fatty.” Heaven knows why – nothing could be slimmer – possibly because at that time he was less skinny than his brother. Here is Mr. MacGill's description of the circumstances: “Fatty was found by a Greek merchant. He was told of an old woman, living near Tembura, who had just got two (or more) newly born Zande puppies, somewhere in the forest. He went off and bought two, Fatty and Flopsy, who were then put into an empty Gordon's gin box with some raw bones, and nailed in. They were minute and very young, about three weeks old. They travelled the odd 170 miles on bad roads without further food or water, and arrived at Wau in the nailed-up box on a Sunday morning some 24 hours later.”

Fatty arrived in England in November 1952, leaving the boiling heat of the Sudan and landing in snow and fog twenty-four hours later. Talk about ‘not turning a hair.’ He took our climate in stride, except that his super-fine coat became twice as thick, and he very sensibly grew a woolly under-vest within a couple of weeks of his arrival, all of which he cast the following spring upon his release from quarantine. He was registered as Wau of the Congo. Wau was his nearest ‘home town’ and so-called as it was originally a slaving station, with the wretched captured slaves pathetically calling ‘wau, wau.’



Two snapshots of Wau of the Congo

Wau was a very handsome and particularly well-made dog, though not without typical Basenji faults. His first pups were obviously pure-bred, with no doubtful specimens among them, but opinions are now very mixed over his descendants. As his owner, I was not particularly taken with them, feeling that they were too mixed in type – some with very small ears, some with very large ears, some with very fine coats, some with very heavy coats, some with lovely dispositions, some not so good, some with very good tails, some with poor tails. One thing,

however, was that they all had super movement like Wau himself. Even so, I felt there was a sort of Jekyll and Hyde situation about his offspring, either very good or very bad, so he was never placed at public stud, and was only used with the right batches by special permission. In spite of this, other breeders, especially in England, Canada and the United States cannot say enough in praise of his descendants, so it seems fairly certain that this new blood did quite a lot of good to the breed.



Ch. Wayfarer of the Congo

Wau x Eng. Am. Ch Frivolity of the Congo

A littermate of Wayfarer, Widgeon of the Congo went to Sheila Anderson in Canada. Widgeon is in the pedigree of the famous best in show winning: Am. Can. Ch. Dainty Dancer of Glenairley. Tinas Coma is another early kennel which was based strongly on Widgeon and had a great deal of future influence in the breed.