



Memories

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British Columbia, Glenairley Basenjjs

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One of the interesting things about growing old is that one's memory is continually being jogged by daily events. Sometimes these memories are extremely pleasant as happened to me the other day.

Quite unexpectedly I received an envelope from France which contained color photos and a most charming letter from Madame Aletti whom I had never met. She told me she owned two Basenjjs and how excited she and her husband were when they found that their friend and house guest Han Suyin, the famous author and lecturer, knew all about Basenjjs because of mine which she had known in Hong Kong.

Madame Aletti sent four lovely photos of herself (such an elegant and beautiful woman), and her two handsome Basenjjs. In one photo Han Suyin is holding Veronica Tudor-Williams' blue book on Basenjjs opened at the page which shows me with Joss and Orange Fizz. That this gave me enormous pleasure goes without saying, but an extra bonus which Madame Aletti's kindness gave me was jogging my memory of the early 1950 Basenjjs days in the United States.

I was particularly reminded of Mrs. Evan Westlin writing to me in 1952 telling me she had just read a beautiful and moving love story in a book entitled, "*A Many-Splendored Thing*," by Han Suyin (Little, Brown; First Edition 1952). She wanted to know if the dogs in the book were mine – "Tattibogle, the most beautiful Greyhound, Lotus of the

Congo, a Basenji playful as a kitten, with paws soft as lilies and more deft than human hands,” Niko and Dainty, the Dalmatian (Dainty Dancer was named after her). When I wrote back and said she was quite right – the dog were indeed ours, and that the James and Fiona Manton in the book were my husband and myself. Mrs. Westlin was very thrilled, and got some good publicity for the breed in canine magazines by drawing attention to the fact that the breed was mentioned in a book that was fast becoming a best seller. Han Suyin always regretted that in the film versions of her book *“Love is a Many Splendored Thing,”* which starred Jennifer Jones and William Holden, the dogs were given no part. They had played an integral part in our lives in Hong Kong and had helped Han Suyin in their own small way in those desolate days after her lover, Mark Elliott, was killed in Korea.

It was a pleasure remembering Mrs. Westlin, a very charming woman and a great devotee of the Basenji. Some contemporaries of hers in those early days were names come flocking back in my memory and whose influence and devotion has paved the way for present-day Basenji owners to have a much easier time in the show ring than they did: Mr. and Mrs. Altbie, Mary McWain, L.H. Scisco, Mr. and Mrs. John Caldwell, Mr. and Mrs. A. Phemister, George Gilkey, Ralph and Joe Lepper, Eloise Gerry, Mr. and Mrs. Leo Shadic, Dr. and Mrs. Wessman. Walter Philo, John Rich, Roberta Jenkins. I do believe some of these people are still in Basenjis, but sadly some are no longer with us on this earth like that great power of the breed, George Gilkey.

I salute with great sincerity these early Basenji enthusiasts and hope by recounting this little story how Madame Aletti jogged my memory, present day Basenji lovers have additional reasons for enjoying this splendid breed.

