



Pinning Bev Bland down is like trying to hog tie one of the flying monkeys of Oz, it's near impossible to do. I persevered and corralled her one Sunday afternoon at her home, where I found her barefoot on rough desert terrain, assisting her son and grandson in pruning a large, overgrown tree.

**A**FTER WATCHING BEV manhandle some rather large branches, I eventually steered her away, where she promptly took me to her corner side yard to show off her most recent 100% Avongara acquisition (from Australia, no less), Redial Avongara Badrani, or Rani, who was busy leaping vertically 4 to 5 feet in the air, at the tender age of four-and-a-half months. An agility enthusiast myself, Rani's springing ability duly impressed. Rani is a son of the black and white girl, Avongara Opal of Brushy Run. Yes, Virginia, Bev's pure Avongara line produced a litter containing three true recessive black and whites. Rani was bred by Opal's owner, Australian breeder/judge Len Reddie. After a few more diversions, we finally managed to head out the door for a bite to eat and some conversation before we headed over to the Basenji Fanciers of Greater Phoenix 2013 Specialty.

#### About Bev Bland

Bev has been breeding under the kennel name Brushy Run since 1968 (having owned Basenjis since 1962) and was one of the founding members of the Basenji Fanciers of Greater

Phoenix. She produced her share of AKC Champions in a very small breeding program, many of which were also Canadian and Mexican Champions, including a Mexican Best in Show. She even garnered a CH/CD Basenji in one of her first litters, CH Brushy Run's Sir Chadwick, CD. Through selective breeding, and stringent health testing, Bev has maintained one of the healthiest domestic lines still in existence. I have always wanted to know why someone, who developed a conformationally correct, healthy, and long-lived line of Basenjis, would be remotely interested in what some within the fancy used to disparagingly refer to as "African mutts." What moved her to not only consider adding genes from unproven native stock directly out of Africa but continue breeding these genes some 23 years later? I set about asking questions.

#### What drew you to the original Avongara imports?

This answer has many different levels. My first domestic litter of Basenjis had one puppy that was extremely anemic. I had three very young sons at the time and had to "lie" to them about sending the pup off to live elsewhere, when in truth the pup had to be euthanized. I would come to learn there was a fatal "blood" problem in

the breed. It was called Hemolytic Anemia (HA).

Later I discovered Dr. Gene P. Searcy in Canada had developed a test for HA, but could not offer it to the breed fancy until he could prove its accuracy. With a heavy heart, I cooperated with Dr. Searcy by repeating the breeding, and sending him the two HA affected puppies from the ensuing litter. I knew what the emotional cost was, yet I also knew the ultimate cost to the breed if I did not try to make a difference for future generations. Until he received these girls, Dr. Searcy had never been able to keep an HA-affected female alive long enough to produce a litter. Together, these two girls produced ten HA affected puppies which allowed Dr. Searcy to prove his test was accurate; he was then able to offer a test to all Basenji breeders. Eventually HA became known as Pyruvate Kinase Deficiency and I believe it is now very rare to find a carrier in our gene pool.

But more importantly, I've always believed genetic diversity was the key to the long term survival of any breed. I was at a stage in my domestic breeding program where I wanted to introduce an outcross into my line. I was concerned that going "outside" to other lines could mean the risk of introducing Fanconi, the next looming

can pup who became Avongara Mwanzoni (Zoni). Zoni produced very well for me and she has figured rather prominently in my pedigrees through her daughter, Avongara Nafuu of Brushy Run, who went on to produce Avongara Rease of Brushy Run; Zoni's genes are now carried on in many countries. Zoni was a terrific introduction to the Africans. She claimed me as "hers" and become my forever African "heart dog".

#### What has been the most challenging in breeding a pure Avongara line?

Having to choose which of my dogs to maintain and apply in my breeding program. My dogs are family first; breeding stock is a secondary consideration. The Africans offered so many valuable traits it was a challenge deciding which ones to go forward with as I have always wanted only the healthiest and most conformationally correct dogs to include in my breeding program.

My original intent was not breeding full African litters. I started out breeding the Africans to my known domestic stock to draw out the African's genetic characteristics. Knowing how many years it



UKC CH Avongara Rai of Brushy Run, JC



Brushy Run's Nirvana James

*"I couldn't resist doing full African breedings as I felt the pure Avongara genes should be shared with other breeders."*

health crisis within the breed.

When the first African imports were brought back to the US, I saw them as an opportunity to improve the genetic diversity of the breed. I had no indication, at that time, there would be more trips to Africa so I assumed it would be my only chance to acquire true diversity. Although the genetics of the native dogs were unknown, the sheer fact they had survived in the jungle gave me hope they offered healthy genes; so I took a chance on the Africans.

In 1990 I approached Wilma Bauer, who owned native import Avongara N'Gola, and made arrangements to purchase a full Afri-

can had taken to reveal less-than-desirable genetic traits in domestic lines, I wasn't sure how many generations of domestic/African out-crosses it would take to uncover the good and bad secrets African genetics might hold.

After producing blends like Brushy Run's Que and his son Brushy Run's Indubitable sc, I couldn't resist doing full African breedings as I felt the pure Avongara genes should be shared with other breeders.

Just about the time I felt I'd achieved the conformation I desired in my full African pups, I was diagnosed with stage four ovarian



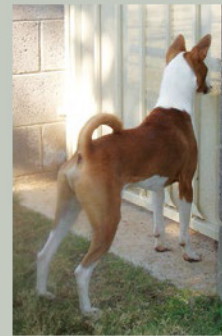
Avongara Black Opal of Brushy Run



Avongara Siri of Brushy Run, JC



Avongara Pepe of Brushy Run



Avongara Ding of Brushy Run

*"Probably the most exaggerated misconception is the belief the Avongara are the product of mongrelization of European dogs ..."*

cancer, which put a halt to everything except focusing on getting well. Many of those quality pups, which I'd intended to include in the gene pool, went to pet homes instead. Thankfully, and in spite of my ills, there are a number of Brushy Run Avongara residing with breeders around the world.

#### *What has been the biggest surprise?*

The biggest surprise has to be those unusual "Avongara colors." Yes, I have produced some non-standard colors with the Avongara, and while I have never buried their existence, I do not purposefully breed for these colors either.

The first time I encountered a truly rare color was with Avongara Siri of Brushy Run. Her litter mates were your typical red and whites, but right from birth it was obvious Siri's color was unusual. Siri's coat color looked very much like a light blue fawn with typical Irish white markings. She had tan eyes, and charcoal eye rims and nose leather. Siri was registered as a cream and white because blue fawn was not an AKC color option for Basenjis. While I personally found her color attractive, reactions from the fancy were mixed. In many breeds, dilute colors are associated with chronic skin issues and/or overall health problems. Not wanting to throw the baby out with the bathwater based purely on color, nor wanting to perpetuate, or breed, solely for/against color, Siri was bred only once, with her red and white offspring going to several well-known US breeders. Siri lived to the ripe old age of 15 years, without chronic skin issues or health problems, as did her sisters, Avongara Njozi of Brushy Run and Avongara Mwezi of Brushy Run, who lived until age 16 and 15, respectively.

The second color surprise occurred in 2007 when a 5th generation Avongara x Avongara breeding resulted in three true recessive black and white puppies in one litter (true to mean not a speck

of tan hair can be found anywhere in their coat unlike the better known "Fula blacks"). After seventeen years of experience and five generations with my Avongara line, I was floored with such a unique result, just as I imagine VTW was when the first tricolors appeared. Two of these recessive blacks have been bred, Avongara Black Opal of Brushy Run and Avongara Pepe of Brushy Run.

Another very important attribute my Avongara have surprised me with is their ability to produce well angulated, extremely sound fronts and rears in every generation. Oh, and one more thing: they are not totally deaf to the word "come" as they do seem to like to please their owners; well, most of the time.

#### *What is the biggest misconception of the Avongara?*

One misconception is the Avongara are aggressive or ill-tempered. If one was to research my full Africans on the African Stock Project pages via the BCOA website, more often than not you will find words/phrases like, "loves people!; extremely gentle with toddlers and babies; playful, gentle, loves the attention of all people; friendly and accepting of strangers." Aggressive/ ill-tempered Avongara have not been my experience when breeding purely African lines, but then I always recommend a lot of early socialization with Basenji puppies be they domestic, pure African or blends.

Probably the most exaggerated misconception is the belief the Avongara are the product of mongrelization of European dogs traveling with their white owners throughout Africa. Since the first imports were brought back in 1988/89, at least seven generations of Avongara x Avongara have been bred. And while there have been expected source population variations such as amount of tail curl, amount of white, "non-standard" colors, etc., these Avongara x Avongara breeding's have always produced consistent Basenji type. More to the point, they act and sound like Basenjis, too.

on to a number of his descendants such as Avongara Ding of Brushy Run, Avongara Bizi of Brushy Run, Avongara Buddy of Brushy Run (to name just a few). Another, Avongara Adabu, didn't quite match Z in movement but his son Brushy Run's Que and his grandson Brushy Run's Indubitable SC certainly did.

#### *What traits do you feel the breed should have?*

Basenjis are hunters. I appreciate their elegant look with their relatively short muzzles and fine skin producing diamond shaped wrinkle on their forehead while small alert ears stand at attention above eyes that don't miss a thing.

Conformation wise, they should be a strong, sound moving dog, able to easily navigate different types of terrain.

I breed for a very sound dog with well laid back shoulder blades and upper arms, producing an elongated beautifully crested neck followed by a level topline, high tail set, and good shelf with powerful, well angulated hind quarters. This combination lends itself to very easy, clean flowing movement.

#### *What is your goal for your line of Avongara?*

When I first started in the breed, my goal was to produce a healthy Basenji who displayed a sweet, steady temperament, longevity of life, and the conformation necessary to accomplish the job they were originally intended for in Africa.

I have always been proactive regarding the health of my Avongara; I incorporated OFA testing for patella's, hips, and heart before breeders had begun to bring these genetic issues out into the open. Hip Dysplasia in Basenjis appeared in the early 1960's but most breeders did not talk about it, much less test for it. At last count there were thirty-nine Avongara bearing the Brushy Run suffix in the OFA database, which comprises roughly 138 test results (cardiac, elbow, patella, hips, CERF—all normal; thyroid all normal sans one equivocal; Fanconi, all DNA clear/probable clear; and PRA, all DNA clear). All of my Avongara breeding stock have also had their parentage verified via parental DNA testing. I feel my continued integrity and adherence to the health and welfare of the breed lend themselves to the preservation of the breed.

#### *What do you want to be most remembered for?*

My goal, and what I want to be remembered for, is doing no harm to the breed, while leaving diverse, sound moving, healthy, long-lived genes for future breeders, be it with pure domestic, pure African or African/domestic blends. I want this wonderful breed to still be around, healthy and functional, for eons. 🐾

Yes, there are occasionally some who are a bit short on leg/long in body, or show a slight drop to the tail, or even less curl to their tail, but even our original breed founders of the late 30's didn't have traits such as triple curled tails, rich red coats, or clear demarcation between the red and black of the tricolors right out of Africa. Single loop tail curls were very common back when the breed was first developed, reds were not a rich bright red, and eyes were sometimes quite light, while sizes and weights also varied significantly.

I guess what I am meaning to say is—the Avongara do not have the cookie cutter look of the current domestic population. However, I see this as a plus to the breed, not a minus. Just as we used to be able to recognize Basenjis from different kennels from a distance, these variances in kennels and in the Avongara signify different genes which ultimately can offer the breed more diversity in the future.

So many dog breeds are experiencing wide-spread health issues and are so inbred they have no unrelated lines to breed to. Basenji breeders are very fortunate to have a means of introducing new genes to the breed by way of native stock.

*So often we hear long time breeders talk about proper movement, referred to as "floating" movement, which we see very little of anymore. Have you seen this movement in any of the Avongara and if yes, which one?*

This floating movement is easily felt through the leash. I equate it to a kind of lightness at the end of the lead. AM/CAN/MEX CH Arizongo's Zeus was my domestic that best typified this movement, while Avongara Zindika Brushy Run CGC CDX, or Z, came the closest of any Avongara I have seen, or felt, on lead. Z passed this soundness of movement, proper reach and drive, and effortless gait