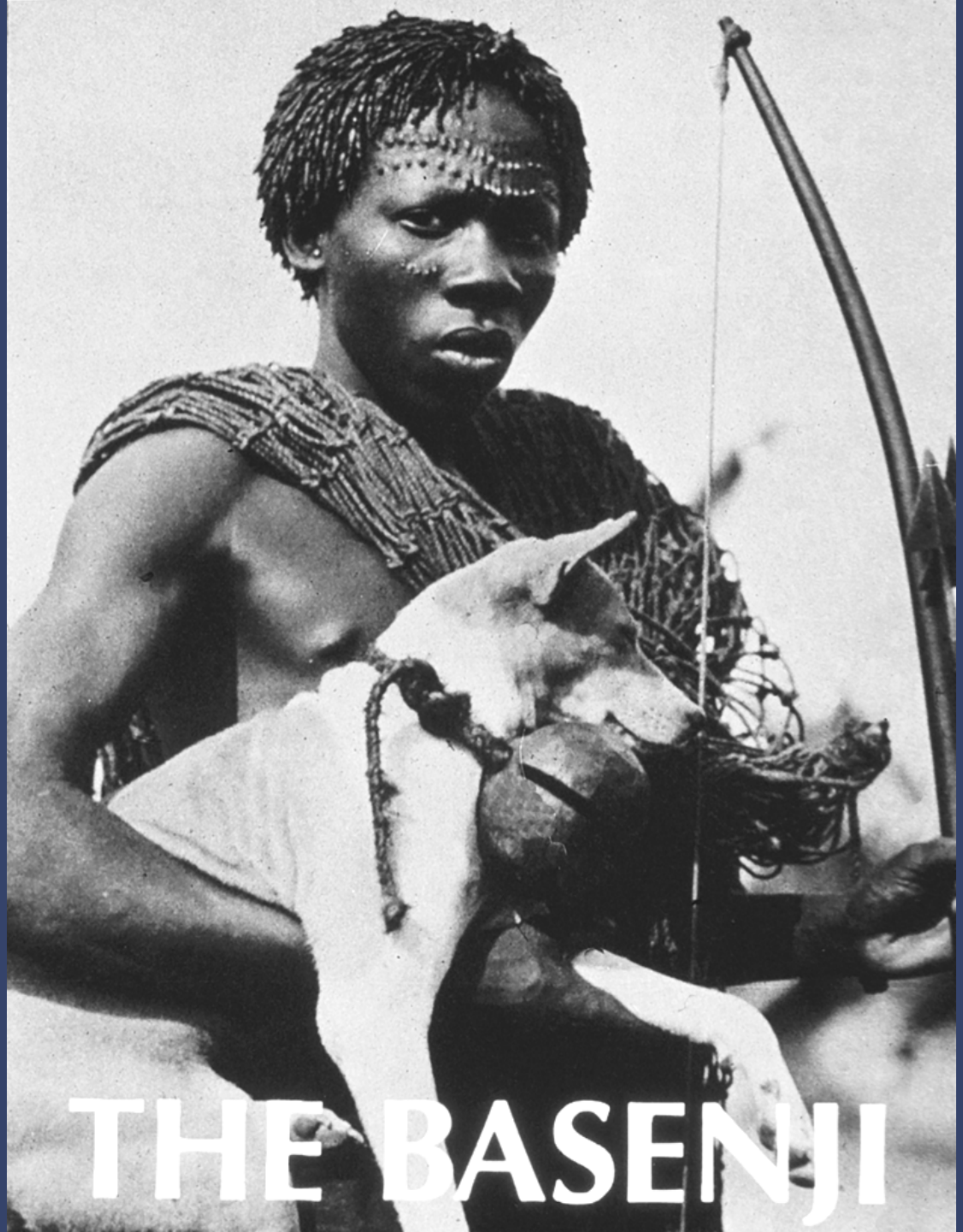


THE BASENJI

1983 © AKC

Purpose of the Basenji Slide Show

This slide show has been put together with great care in a collaboration between the American Kennel Club and the Basenji Club of America in 1983.

Taken as whole, an accurate appreciation of the correct Basenji can be garnered from it. There are many outstanding slides in this presentation. No one of them is the ideal Basenji described in the breed standard, for the simple reason that the ideal is just that, something to be striven for, perfection sought but not obtained.

This slide show has been thoroughly reviewed by numerous experts on the Basenji. They have approved every slide in the program. This does not mean they agree when analysing every slide in detail, but they have reasons for their views. It is important for you to objectively look at each slide and form your own opinions, then refer to the text. Whenever possible, view the slides slowly with someone more knowledgeable about Basenjis than yourself. Discussing the slides with experts is a way to more fully benefit from the program.

Whenever you view the slides, you are in effect judging: That is, looking at the pictures critically and evaluating the dogs. This process must be based on a thorough understanding of the breed standard. The more you study the standard and look at the slides, the more you will internalize the standard. Your knowledge of the standard must be *expert* and *unequivocal*. You must know *exactly* what the standard calls for, not generally or approximately.

1983 © AKC

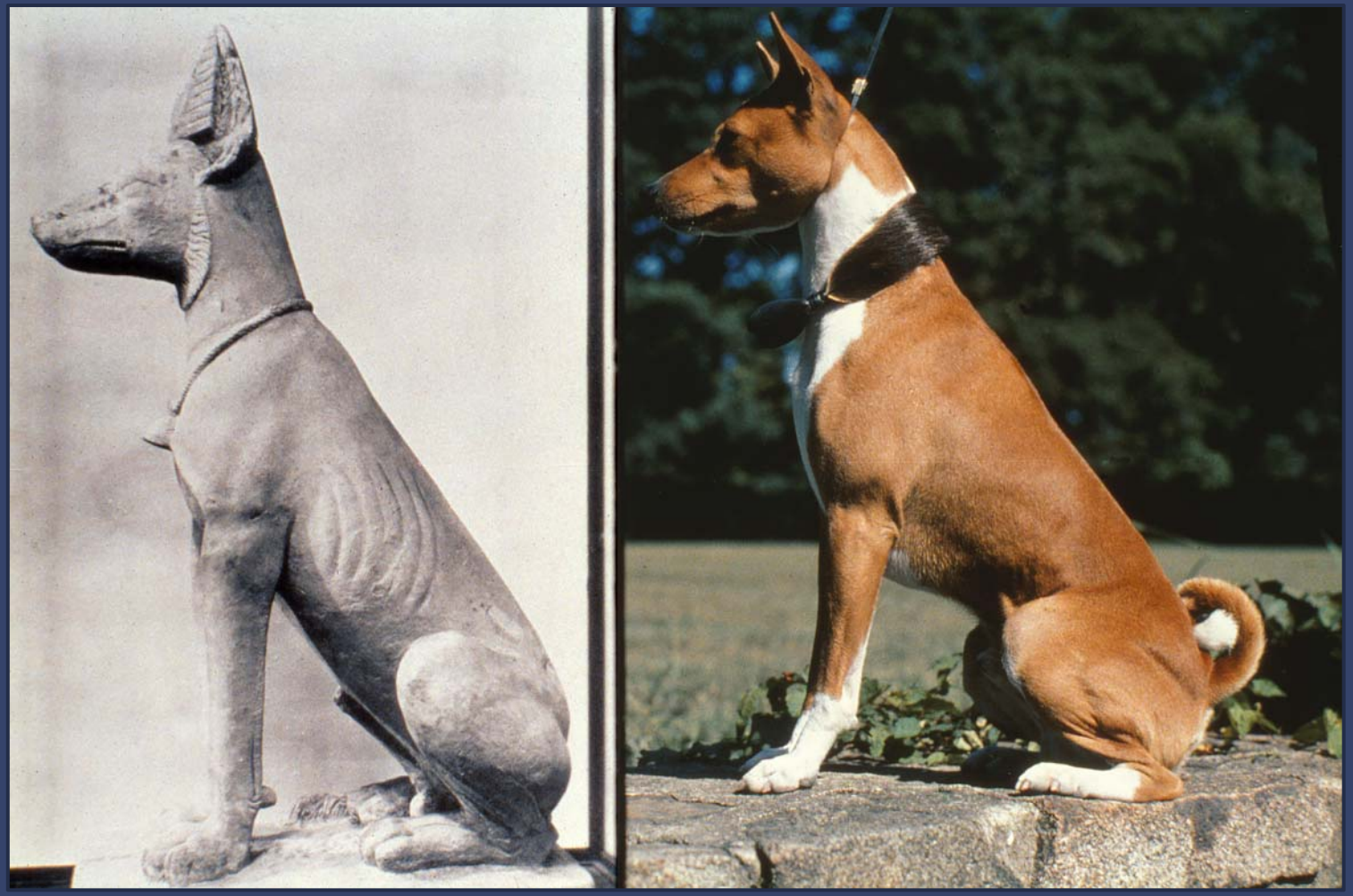
A standard is a description of the ideal dog of each breed, intended to serve as a word pattern by which dogs are judged at shows. This is a visual presentation of the Basenji Standard (1954). Roughly it follows the same sequence as the published standard. The text in white comments on the standard and the pictures you see. The text in gold color is the actual text of the Basenji Standard.

1983 © AKC

But before we examine the Standard, let's find out a little more about these unusual dogs. How old is the Basenji breed?

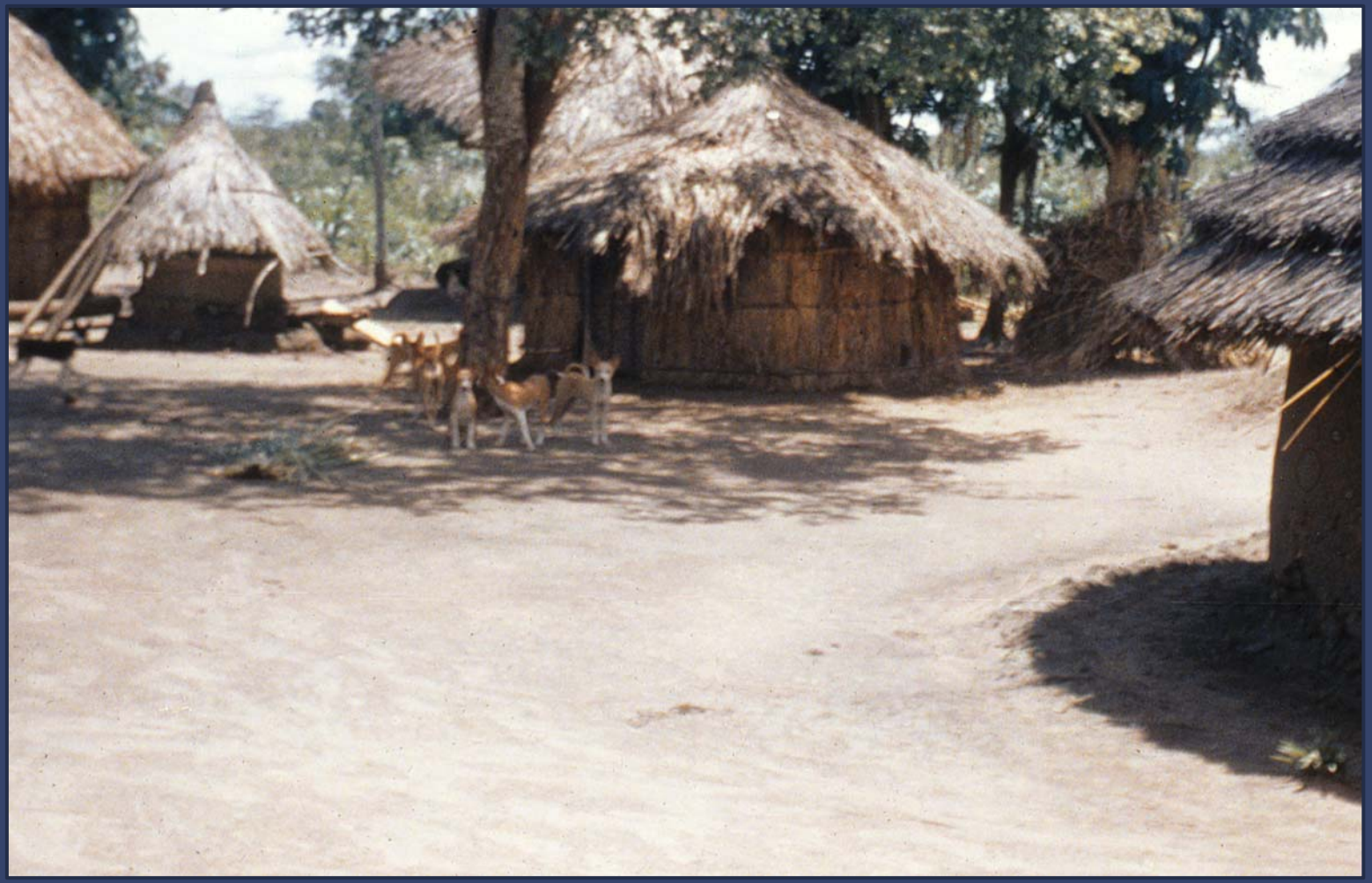
The Basenji must be placed among the most ancient breeds, for it is found among the earliest records of mankind, including Saharan Neolithic cave pictographs from as early as 5000 BC according to Forrest Johnson.

1983 © AKC



A handsome Egyptian statue of a Basenji with its characteristic hunting bell from 1600 BC is now found in the Louvre Museum in Paris. Since the Basenji breed was fully developed at the time of the Pharaohs, it could have had its origins much earlier.

1983 © AKC



However, the first living Basenjis were encountered by Europeans in central Africa in the 1870s among the Pygmy people of the Ituri Forest. No one knows where or how these people came by their first Basenjis, but they are among the most ancient races on the continent where man first emerged as Homo Sapiens.

1983 © AKC

What role did Basenjis play in village life?

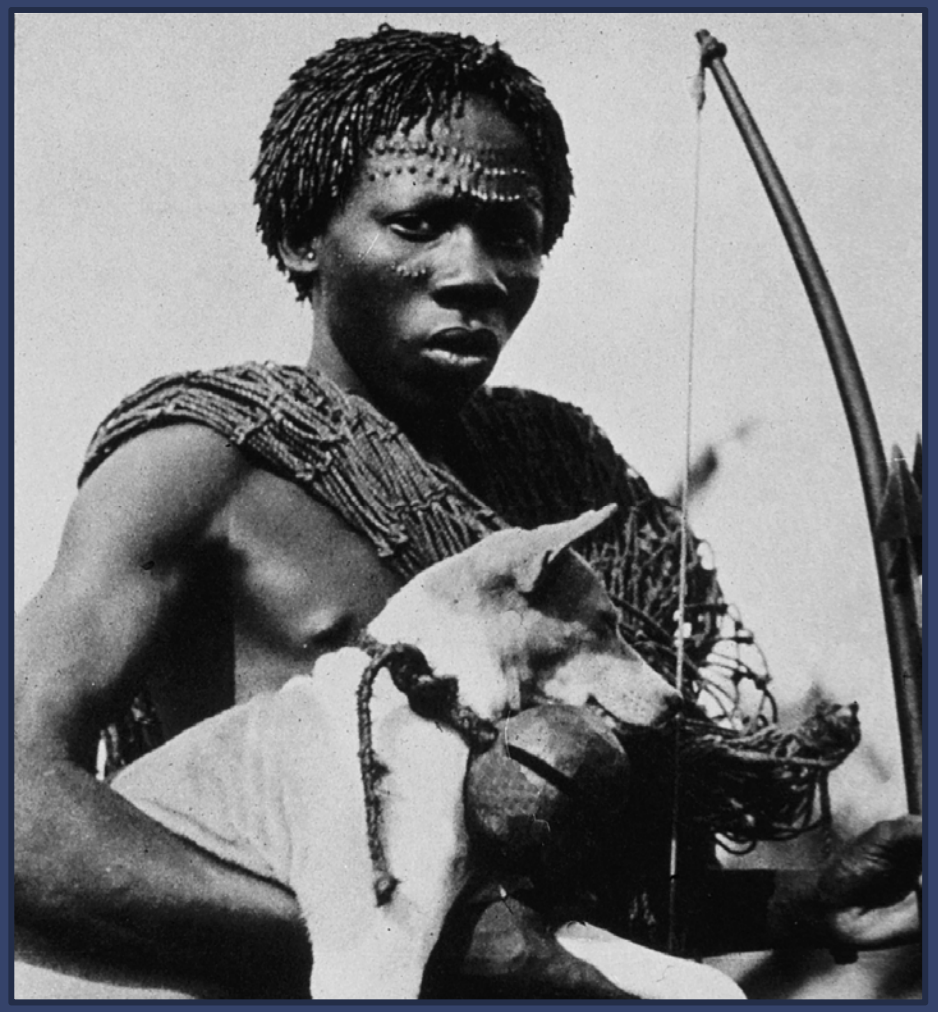
1983 © AKC

Basenjis were used as hunting dogs, often driving game into the hunter's net.

1983 © AKC

Since they did not bark, bells were tied to their necks or around their waists to frighten game.

1983 © AKC



Good hunting dogs were apparently greatly valued, but were not pampered as pets. Only the most successful and resourceful survived to produce offspring.

1983 © AKC

Eventually, Basenjis were discovered in three widely separated regions of Africa: in the southern Sudan, the Congo and in Liberia.

1983 © AKC

What is the Basenji's personality like?

For uncounted thousands of years the Basenji survived as a hunting dog. Great importance must have been given to intelligence and adaptability for the dog often worked out of sight of the hunters. At times the Basenjis can still be quite independent and aloof.

1983 © AKC

It is alert and careful with strangers...

1983 © AKC

…open and calm with friends, loving and solicitous with children. When meeting strangers. Basenjis prefer to make the first overtures and should not be approached from behind.

1983 © AKC

Although not high strung, the Basenji is an alert, active, curious dog.

1983 © AKC

Judges should not expect it to stand motionless for long periods.

What other traits are unique to Basenjis?
Many of the things that make Basenjis unique are not visible to the judge.

1983 © AKC

These include the charming yodel of a happy Basenji and the almost total lack of a bark. Research has shown that Basenjis have vocal apparatus that is quite different form other dogs and that they also lack the disposition to bark readily.

1983 © AKC

Basenjis are such an ancient breed that their line may have split off from the mainstream of canine domestication before barking behavior became genetically fixed.

1983 © AKC

Another ancient characteristic shared with wild canids is the general tendency for once-a-year heat cycles of most Basenji bitches, an autumn phenomenon in the northern hemisphere.

1983 © AKC

Is the Basenji a sighthound or a scenthound?

Well, both really?

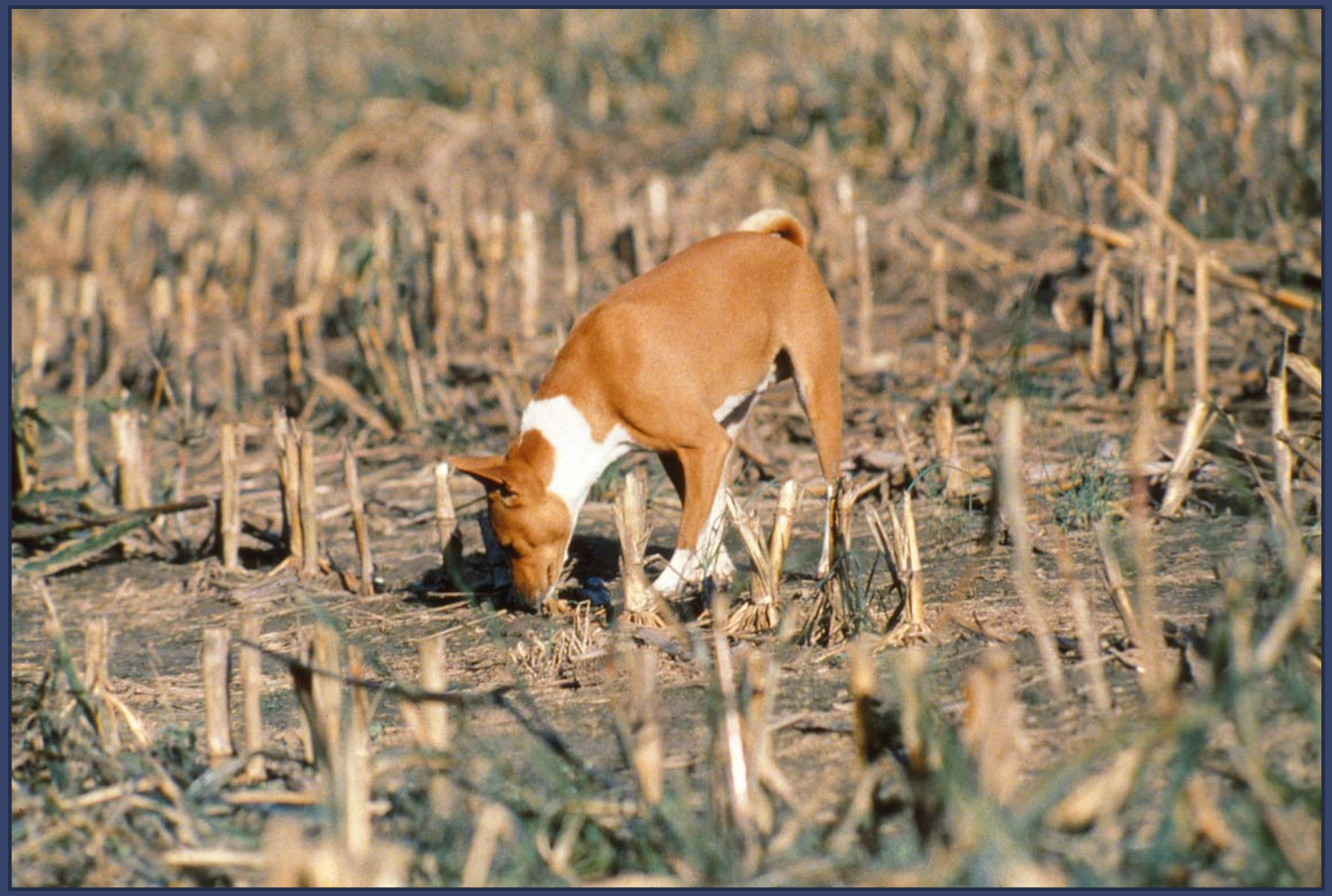
1983 © AKC

Basenjis are considered sighthounds and several have won “Best in Field” …

1983 © AKC

…in open competition with all sighthound breeds.

1983 © AKC



Basenjis are also scenthounds and several have earned tracking degrees and shown considerable aptitude in gundog field trials. They are an ancient all-purpose breed and earned their dinner any way they could. Today there are individual Basenjis…

1983 © AKC

…who have won titles in the obedience ring….

1983 © AKC

…the show ring, and….

1983 © AKC

…the lure coursing field.

1983 © AKC