



Iditarod

FEBRUARY, 1980

Runner

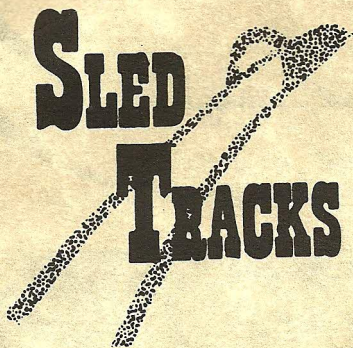


Race vet checks Herbert Nayokpuk's dog during the vet check prior to the 1979 race start.

Bill Devine photo

Veterinarians on the Iditarod

Story by Frank Gerjevic on page 4



Dear Friends,

I would like to dedicate this issue of the Iditarod Runner to a group of people who perhaps have one of the greatest

THE IDITAROD RUNNER

Vol. 3, No. 5, February 1980

Official Newsletter of the Iditarod Trail Committee, Inc.

Raine Hall, Editor
Rob Stapleton, Photographer
The Iditarod Trail Committee
Pouch X, Wasilla, Alaska 99687

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impacts on the race, and are the least visible, the race veterinarians. Coordinated by Dr. Jack Morris and Dr. Harold Spalding, this band of professionals come from all over the state. They take time off from their practices, free of charge, to offer the Iditarod Trail Committee their advice and services.

In the formative stages of the race, their efforts to strengthen the humane aspects of the event have allowed the Iditarod to grow into the classic it is today. Their willingness to sleep in snowbanks, to risk frostbitten hands, to work day and night, have made the difference.

Last year, thanks to a grant from Alaska Airlines, the

Iditarod Trail Committee was able to cover the expense of medication, transportation, and equipment necessary to move the race veterinarians along 1,049 miles of trail and to care for 55 teams.

In 1980 their job is even greater. With a record number of entries, 66, the number of dogs competing could increase to as many as 1,056 or more!

On behalf of the Iditarod Trail Committee, Alaska Airlines and the Iditarod drivers, I wish to thank Dr. Morris, Dr. Spalding and their team of race veterinarians for a job well done in 1979 and for accepting the challenge of 1980.

Thanks,
RAINE HALL
Editor

Settlers Bay 120 - Results

Held: January 5-6, 1980 Trail Conditions: Soft and punchy
Temperature: 20 - 30 above

| | | 1st day | 2nd day | Total Time |
|------|------------------------------|---------|---------|------------|
| 1st | Joe May, Trappers Creek | 6:46:54 | 5:54:32 | 12:41:26 |
| 2nd | Joe Redington, Sr., Knik | 6:34:58 | 6:11:28 | 12:46:26 |
| 3rd | Ed Salter, Eureka | 6:54:58 | 5:59:18 | 12:54:16 |
| 4th | Ron Tucker, Eureka | 7:13:58 | 5:49:15 | 13:03:13 |
| 5th | Roger Nordlum, Kotzebue | 7:04:59 | 6:02:23 | 13:07:22 |
| 6th | Kathy Swenson, Eureka | 6:57:59 | 6:20:53 | 13:18:52 |
| 7th | Susan Butcher, Knik | 7:10:17 | 6:22:35 | 13:32:52 |
| 8th | Sonny Lindner, Johnson River | 7:10:31 | 6:47:11 | 13:57:42 |
| 9th | Dave Olson, Knik | 7:06:58 | 6:55:47 | 14:02:45 |
| 10th | Bob Martin, Wasilla | 7:36:30 | 7:36:46 | 15:33:16 |

Scratches:

Jerry Riley, Nenana. Don Ekles, Anchorage. Don VanAsdal, Knik.
Bruce Woods, Wasilla. Duke Burtke, Anchorage. Lavon Barve, Wasilla.

Junior Iditarod

The Junior Iditarod will be held February 23 and 24, 1980. Kids ages 14 - 17 are eligible to enter with a maximum of 10 dogs. The race will begin at Knik Lake at 11:00 a.m. on February 23 and run 60 miles to McKenzie Point. There will

be a twelve hour layover at McKenzie Point and then return to Knik for a total of 120 miles.

For further information call the Iditarod office at 376-3561 or write to Rich Pralle, SR Box 5433, Wasilla, Alaska 99687.

IDITAROD RUNNER

1. FRED JACKSON, Kotzebue
2. JOE REDINGTON, SR., Knik
3. JERRY AUSTIN, St. Michael
4. DAVE OLSON, Knik
5. SONNY LINDNER, Johnson River
6. LIBBY RIDDLES, Nelchina
7. SUSAN BUTCHER, Knik
8. DOUGLAS SHERRER, Takotna
9. VARONA THOMPSON, Nome
10. LARRY SMITH, Dawson City, Yukon
11. EMMITT PETERS, Ruby
12. BRUCE JOHNSON, Atlin, British Columbia
13. BRUCE DENTON, Juneau
14. BRUCE WOODS, Wasilla
15. BOB NEIDIG, Eagle River
16. DONNA GENTRY, Skwentna
17. MARTIN BUSER, Switzerland
18. MARJORIE MOORE, Montana Creek
19. STEVE CONASTER, Eagle Island
20. MARC BOILY, Fairbanks
21. RON CORTTE, Unalakleet
22. DON HONEA, SR., Ruby
23. RUSSELL IVEY, McGrath
24. JOHN BARRON, Big Lake
25. DeeDee JONROWE, Bethel
26. BILL BARTLETT, Newport, NH
27. JOHN COOPER, Ambler
28. WALTER KASO, Talkeetna
29. TERRY ATKINS, DVM, Cheyenne, WY
30. ERIC POOLE, Trapper Creek
31. DICK PETERSEN, Wasilla
32. HERBERT NAYOKPUK, Shishmaref
33. RICK SWENSON, Eureka
34. LEE GARDINO, Chugiak
35. LONDON CARTER, San Rafael, CA
36. JOHN ECKELS, Unalakleet
37. HAROLD AHMASUK, JR., Nome
38. RUDY DEMOSKI, Anvik
39. DICK MACKEY, Wasilla
40. KEN CHASE, Anvik
41. GLEN CRAIG, Nenana
42. JAN MASEK, Anchorage
43. ROGER NORDLUM, Kotzebue
44. BARBARA MOORE, Nome
45. CLARENCE SHOCKLEY, Trapper Creek
46. NORMAN VAUGHAN, Anchorage
47. BILL BOYKO, Atlin, British Columbia
48. ERNIE BAUMGARTNER, McGrath
49. GERALD RILEY, Nenana
50. JOHN GARTEIZ, Anchorage
51. DUKE BERTKE, Anchorage
52. JOE GARNIE, Teller
53. JOE MAY, Trapper Creek
54. FRANK SAMPSON, Noorvik
55. LARRY COGDILL, Big Lake
56. DON ECKLES, Anchorage
57. SARGE McCLINTOCK, Anchorage
58. ED CRAVER, Talkeetna
59. JACKY GOODWIN, Talkeetna
60. HENRY JOHNSON, Unalakleet
61. WARNER VENT, Huslia
62. BABE ANDERSON, McGrath
63. TUNNY WALLUK, Nome
64. NEIL EKLUND, Kotzebue
65. MICHAEL HARRINGTON, McGrath
66. AL MOORE, Trapper Creek

Iditarod Sweepstakes

'Twas soon after Christmas
 when all through Alaska
 wherever you went
 Alaskans all asked you
 "Have you entered Iditarod Trail Sweepstakes yet?
 Right away
 do it today
 don't delay.
 You are sure to regret
 if you forget."
 It's soon after Christmas
 but March will come
 and the time
 when Iditarod will be run
 honorably and bravely
 will be won.
 FEBRUARY, 1980

An Iditarod Sweepstakes ticket
 may or might not win a prize
 but your contribution
 will gladden
 a winner's heart and eyes.
 A generous purse for the brave
 dog sledding men
 will cheer all along to compete again.
 For 1980
 here is my fee—
 For all of the rest
 I wish the best
 and some of the luck
 may be with me.

— Frances May —
 Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

IDITAROD

BY FRANK

His boot-steps echoed the cold on the packed snow of Farewell's short street. Shoulders hunched, Phil Meyer grinned in the glow of his cigarette. The trail vet was bound for coffee, a break from the tour of the teams that were Farewell's first '79 Iditarod flurry.

In the laundry room turned dogs' kitchen, mushers cooked. Rick Swenson sliced "ice cream" — Philadelphia cream cheese — for his team that 12 days later would be the first to Nome.

For mushers and dogs and Meyer, a brief respite. But Meyer was shortly due for another kind of break — four days later he was camped at Iditarod, a guest at the Iditarod School District's Winter Survival School.

"I really wasn't prepared for it," he says. Meyer shared a tent with an Indian named John Andrews, a seasoned hand who knew how to smile at 20 below, and an assortment of Iditarod camp followers.

On their last night at Iditarod, a week after Meyer's arrival, Andrews didn't bother firing up the stove. Meyer was impressed. And cold.

During that week Meyer did yeoman's work at Iditarod, providing vet's assistance for the long, strung-out procession of teams. He'd come with only about a day's rations; he left with a day's rations. Meyer lived on the trail rations of mushers, always happy to lighten their loads, and enjoyed the hospitality of Jim and Cathy Fleming, Iditarod's lone family.

"I really didn't have it too rough," Meyer says. But by the time he broke camp and caught

a ride northwest to Elim, the leaders were just a day-and-a-half from Nome.

Meyer isn't the only vet to have drawn hard duty. Jack Morris, Meyer's partner at the Canyon Pet Clinic in Eagle River, had his first taste of the trail in minus 50-degree cold at Rohn River in the first year of the race.

"I got out there the first night and about 20 teams came in together. I had probably over 200 dogs to look at. That was my initial exposure to it."

Morris weathered the rude introduction. A member of the race committee's board of directors, this year he'll coordinate the efforts of about six veterinarians. The volunteer list is tentative, but now includes Morris, Meyer, Bob Sept, Bill O'Connor, Harold Spalding and Carl Monetti. There may be more.

Morris takes over for Spalding, who has run the vets' effort each year. He'll be faced with the same problems that have challenged his predecessor.

One of the biggest problems for the vets, Spalding says, is to be "at the right place at the right time." Logistics have improved, thanks to better organization, a grant from Alaska Airlines, and Larry Thompson's Iditarod Air Force. But the field has grown — 55 mushers started last year's race. So there are more dogs to look after. And not all the drivers can keep pace with the likes of Swenson and Emmitt Peters. So the race is spread out, spelling longer duty for the vets.

You can't take your clinic with you. The vets carry a lean kit — antibiotics, bandages,

B-vitamin, feet ointment, steroids, local and general anaesthetics and anti-diarrhea medication.

These do for the common problems, diarrhea and sore feet. Dehydration can be a trickier ailment.

"Dehydration is generally the biggest problem they (the dogs) have," Meyer says. Stress and exertion wear the animals down, and "when you're super-cold you don't have nearly as much urge to drink water."

Rest is one solution. But for mushers, time is at a premium. Hence the controversial issue of stomach-tubing, a force-feeding method to get water into dogs that won't drink.

For 1980, "the drivers decided they did not want it," Morris says. It's a decision that pleased the vet. "If a dog can't drink it's time to get it to the vet."

If a dog is subjected to stomach-tubing for medical reasons this year, it's out of the race. Tubing only will be done under a vet's supervision.

The Iditarod dogs suffer sore feet in various degrees on the trail, depending on weather, training and trail conditions. The less icy the trail, the better off the dogs.

The dogs can swiftly recover with better trail conditions, colder weather and mushers' care (mushers' fingers stained blue by Happy Jack. . .).

"I saw dogs that I thought really had bad feet at one point and saw 'em down the trail and they were better," Meyer says.

Accompanying the expected ailments are the unexpected. Last year it was a virtual epidemic of diarrhea. Some

IDITAROD RUNNER

D VETS

ERJEVIC

dogs suffered more than others, but almost every team was weakened by the bug. The cause remains a mystery.

Morris suspects a parvo virus, a mutation of feline distemper. But he can't say for sure. "The problems we've seen on the race vary considerably from one year to the next. You're never really sure."

The vets learn. So do the mushers. Spalding, who has been involved in the making of race rules from the Iditarod's beginning, has seen vast improvement in the quality of the race.

Since then, mushers have shared "a lot of experience among themselves, education they've picked up from other mushers."

Greater expertise and tighter rules have made the difference to Morris, too. "If we hadn't improved from that point (the first few years) I'm not sure I could have supported the race," he says.

Last year two dogs died on the trail, one from undiagnosed injuries suffered in an accident before the race, the other in a dogfight.

Today dogs are better-fed, bred and trained specifically for the Iditarod's long haul. The result, Spalding feels, is "basically a sled dog of its own comin' out of the Iditarod," a combination of sprint dog and old Alaskan freighter.

With regard to the mushers, Spalding says "most of 'em are very, very much of an individual person. I don't think the money involved in this race is a factor to most mushers. I've enjoyed workin' with so many of 'em."

He cites "peer pressure" as

an element in keeping the race clean. The majority of drivers take a dim view of mistreatment of dogs.

Asked about the sensitive issue of drug use, Spalding, who feels that above all "the integrity of the race" should be maintained, says "I think there's probably some of it going on. I think we just have to keep looking."

But he says that in a sampling of two dogs from each of the top ten teams two years ago, "nothing came back on any of those dogs."

Race rules forbid the use of drugs. The spirit of what Race Marshal Pat Herron called "a race without prejudice" offers its own unwritten code. "That's

the way the majority of mushers feel about it," Spaulding says.

For Spalding and his colleagues, the race offers a unique adventure through some of God's country and a chance to see the reasons for their profession do what they're trained to do.

Though Spalding has given way to Morris in running the vets' operation this year, he intends to keep a hand in the Iditarod adventure. "I think it's come a long ways," he says. "It's a thing all of its own."

(The veterinarian expenses for the 1979 Iditarod Trail Race were funded by a grant from Alaska Airlines.)



Dr. Phil Meyer at the Iditarod checkpoint. (Bill Devine photo).

Iditarod Trail Race Stress Study

VERNER STILLNER, MD, MPH MICHAEL POPKIN, MD CHESTER PIERCE, MD

The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race has been an annual winter event since 1973. We have been involved in formally studying the race since 1974.

The Iditarod race represents a long duration competition under extreme conditions, dramatizing such personal characteristics as individualism, strength, courage and endurance. Travel by dog team requires survival skills in adverse Alaskan winter conditions, traversing Alaskan communities representing half of the total population of the state. Consequently, the race, a world class event, provides an excellent laboratory for the study of the physiological and behavioral adaptations to long duration competitive stress.

My colleagues, Dr. Michael Poplin of the University of Minnesota Medical School and Dr. Chester Pierce of Harvard Medical School, and I have interviewed mushers for the past five years. It has been our goal to study, with the consent of the Iditarod Trail Committee and the voluntary participation of the mushers, those characteristics that enable a musher to perform well in a race.

In 1975 our investigation demonstrated that mushers with fewer recent life changes place higher in the race than those with higher life changes. The more life changes in the areas of health, work, home and family, personal and social, and financial in the 12 months prior to the race, the lower the finishing position of the musher.

The 1977 study examined five mushers before and after the race with questionnaires and blood and urine testing. Significant changes occurred in

hemoglobin (oxygen carrying pigment of red blood cells) concentration, thyroid values, muscle enzymes, serum proteins and cholesterol. These changes suggest that responses to prolonged physical exertion cannot be anticipated from those obtained after exercise of shorter duration.

That same year one of the mushers experienced delirium as a result of high caffeine intake. Symptoms of delirium included buzzing in the ears, trembling hands, seeing white stars, dizziness and the feeling he was not in the race.

In 1978 we observed that all five mushers studied experienced a fall in their hemoglobin and hematocrit (percentage of red blood cells in whole blood) by the fifth and sixth day of the race. All the mushers studied that year revealed a generalized slowing in thinking, disturbances in goal directed thinking and memory. A reduced psychomotor (movement effects of brain functioning) activity was observed in all. It has also been our experience that many mushers experience visual hallucinations (seeing things that are not there). Illusions or misrepresentations of reality also occur primarily in the second half of the race. One example of this is to interpret a shadow on a frozen river as open water.

In the 1979 study forty-two mushers were examined at two points (before and after the race) in terms of behaviors and hematological blood responses. Comparison between first half and second half finishers showed that greater drops in hemoglobin, hematocrit and red cell count between Nome and Anchorage values correlated

with lower finish. In other words, the smaller the change in red blood cell count, the higher the finishing place. None of six behavioral variables examined proved to be significantly correlated with performance.

For 1980, we would like to explore, with the voluntary participation of the musher, the social networks (family, friends, sponsors) that support the musher. We would like to study the effect on the musher of the amount and quality of social support on his or her race performance.

With the approval of the Iditarod Trail Committee, we will mail to each musher 30-45 minutes of questionnaires. These are to be completed voluntarily by the musher and spouse (or significant other) before the race only. For the completion of both sets of questionnaires, we will mail each musher and spouse or significant other a separate check for \$25.00. The questionnaires will be mailed to the mushers on February 1, 1980.

To the editor:

We are up to our ears in dog booties. We hope the 1980 Iditarod is the greatest ever.

It is the spirit of the Iditarod that prevails and keeps it from becoming common and ordinary. We're proud to be part of it.

JOE and FRANCES MAY.

(Frances May is the mother of Iditarod musher Joe May. She also wrote the poem on page 3 of this issue, boosting the Iditarod Sweepstakes).

IDITAROD RUNNER

Kuskokwim 300

Rick Swenson won the Kuskokwim 300. Fighting bitter cold, the 1979 Iditarod Champion claimed first place in 2 days, 23 hours and 19 minutes. He was followed by

Susan Butcher with 2 days, 23 hours, 34 minutes; Joe Redington 3 days, 2 minutes; Victor Katongan 3 days, 8 minutes; and Jerry Austin 3 days, 15 minutes.

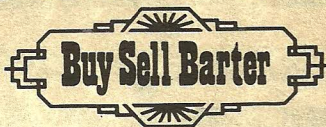
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IDITAROD ALASKAN GIFT SHOP. Gifts from the start of the trail. Call Bill Shaw 272-0944 or come by 16th just off Lake Otis, Anchorage.

RACE SUPPLIES: Double-lens fog-free goggles; lightweight aluminum Sherpa snowshoes with Alpine claw binding; all types woolen clothing, including underwear, socks, hats, etc.; down and polarguard parkas and sleeping bags; all kinds of lightweight camping gear; Special orders taken. Write Quiet Sports, Box 874, Homer, Alaska 99603 or call 235-8620.

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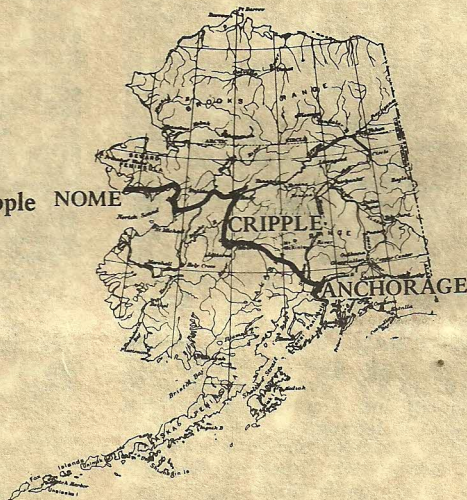
BLAZE THE IDITAROD TRAIL

AND WIN A TRIP TO NOME

If you join the Iditarod Trail Committee before the first musher arrives at the Cripple Creek Checkpoint, you may win a free ticket to Nome for the finish of the 1980 Iditarod Trail Race.

Your name will be tossed into the hat of the first musher into Cripple and he will draw. If your number comes up, we'll see you in Nome!

(Airfare to Nome from any place in Alaska, not to exceed \$500)



Iditarod Trail International Sled Dog Race

1,049 MILES FROM ANCHORAGE TO NOME
March 1, 1980

- ☐ I'd like to join the Iditarod Trail Committee. My \$25 donation is enclosed, which entitles me to the award winning monthly newsletter "IDITAROD RUNNER," a patch, membership card and the privilege of voting for the board of directors.
- ☐ I'd like to subscribe to the "IDITAROD RUNNER" only. My \$15 donation is enclosed. Subscribing to the "Runner" does not entitle me to vote. It also does not make me eligible to participate in the drawing for a trip to Nome.

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Iditarod Trail Committee, Inc. is located above Teeland's in Wasilla Phone: 376-5155