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# RESPECT

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## RESPECT

To admire someone or something deeply because of their abilities, qualities, actions or achievements.

The 6<sup>th</sup> trait of Iditarod is “R” for Respect. Jeff King is a musher respected by his peers and Iditarod Race Fans alike. Some respect King because he has won numerous middle distance races, the Yukon Quest and four Iditarods. He is known as the “winningest” musher in sled dog racing. Others respect him because he is a founder and charter board member of Mush with P.R.I.D.E. (Providing Responsible Information on a Dog’s Environment), an organization that advocates responsible care and humane treatment of sled dogs. C.J. Kolbe’s family respects Jeff because of the experience their terminally ill son had through Make-a-Wish Foundation as Jeff’s Idita-riders. Lew Freedman in More Iditarod Classics shares a story that Jeff tells of C.J. As Jeff’s Idita-rider, C.J. gave him his lucky penny at the Ceremonial Start of the ‘96 race. King tells Freedman, “The penny was indeed lucky for me and the dogs. We won the race with a very fast time, coming in three hours ahead of Doug Swingley. Eventually, C.J.’s cancer returned and he lost the battle but I’m still in touch with his family. Each year we send the

penny back and forth and I carry it in the Iditarod.”

Within the theme of Iditarod, there are a multitude of opportunities to feel respect for not only the mushers and canine athletes but the Iditarod Trail Committee, the organizers, the veterinarians, the pilots, the checkpoint workers, the communication specialists, the trail sweeps, the village volunteers and a multitude of others working behind the scenes.

Respect is not reserved for people. Every musher will tell you that above all, they respect the athletes – THE DOGS. I respect Jeff because while he is proud of his wins, what he finds most satisfying is the performance of his dog teams. King says, “The dogs are the real athletes, they are the real champions.”

Respect can also be felt for things or experiences such as physical skills, ability, stamina, the Dalzell Gorge, the Farewell Burn, the Northern Lights and the forces of Mother Nature. Respect for things is a part of what helps us make wise choices.

Don’t forget the pioneers of the Last Great Race, Joe Redington, Sr., and Dorothy Page along with many others who have made the race what it is today, Mary Shields - 1st woman to finish the Iditarod, Libby Riddles - the first woman to win the Iditarod and Susan Butcher - 4 time winner of the Iditarod. All are worthy of our deepest respect.

