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Fall 2002



Iten Kennels

BY RUTH ITEN

Iditarod 2003

Dear Friends,

Yes, we have signed up to run the Iditarod this year. Ed is happy with the core team he'll be running. Their performance in last spring's Kobuk 440 proved they have what it takes to be tough. And, they have the speed.

Quite a few of our old Iditarod finishers are now retired into recreational teams—some excellent young athletes have stepped up to take their places. This year you'll meet Silo, Cloudy, Megan, Frost and Blaze. Some of the old pros will be back too. Pee Wee has stepped up as Ed's main leader. Blackie continues to be a steady team member (if you can get him out from under the wheel of

the truck). Rex, Boy, Sally, and Dylan continue to grow into top performers.

I'm not sure what Ed missed the most last March. The children and I missed seeing everyone in Anchorage and Nome. We're looking forward to spending race time with you this year.



Ed completing the 440. Cloudy and Bruce in lead, PeeWee and Frost in swing.

PUPPIES AND COLT

The children and I spent the summer caring for the puppies. Ed continues to devote much time and attention to his breeding schedule. After some negotiation with me, Ed planned four litters.

The best part of the summer was living by the ocean and fishing for salmon. The weather cooperated and our drying racks filled with fish.

Sneka had a colt on July 4. We knew she was pregnant but we weren't sure when the foal was due. We rode her and Sodie down to the beach on the 3rd then took the boat to town for the celebrations. When I came back on the fifth a little red colt was nuzzling next to her in the bushes by the beach. We named him Indy.

Welcome Tollef

I first met Tollef at the drawing for the 2001 Kobuk 440. Young, he seemed to me, quiet, a little shy. He came to Kotzebue to run Dean Osmar's dogs in the race.

A self motivated dog driver, Tollef drove to AK from Minnesota the summer of 2000. He eventually landed a job handling

dogs for Dean and Tim Osmar and a summer job set netting for salmon out of Kodiak.

After the 2001 Kobuk 440 we got a call from Tollef. He had fallen in love with the country in the NW Arctic and with the roadless training opportunities. He wanted a job as handler.

Tollef has proven himself an excellent dog driver. From my first runs with him running the chase team I could tell he has a natural eye for spotting the dogs abilities.

We're happy to have him back for a second season.

We Couldn't Do It Without You

We really couldn't! When I thought of all the people I needed to contact to make this Iditarod happen it made my head spin. Each of you adds so much. I thought this newsletter would be a good way to catch us up.

A special thank you to Lynden Air Cargo—they've already started to ship this season's dog food.

Without you all it would almost seem an empty effort—a big part of the race is the support we receive.

Thank you and God Bless

2002 Kobuk 440 Results

1. Ed Iten, Kotzebue	71:10:45
2. Rick Swenson, Manley	72:46:18
3. Ken Anderson, Fairbanks	74:15:37
4. DeeDee Jonrowe, Willow	74:30:17
5. Jessie Royer, Big Lake	77:16:13
6. Louis Nelson, Sr., Kotzebue	79:24:28
7. Garth Elsdon, Kotzebue	96:00:30
8. Rick Mackey, Healy	100:25:24
9. Dave Milne, Aniak	



Mass Start 2002 Kobuk 440

Thanks to James Mason, *The Arctic Sounder*, for the 440 photographs



Tollef and friend



2005 Iditarod Team

“We hit snow going up on the way to Ambler, and then we got smacked coming out of Shungnak. It was a blizzard from Ambler on up. It was really ugly, just howling wind and blowing snow. I spent 7½ hours breaking trail, from Shungnak to shelter cabin.” Ed, quoted in the April 18 Arctic Sounder

2001-2002 Race Season

Even without the Iditarod our race season was busy last year. Tollef kicked off the season with a fourth place finish in the Baker 120. “He ran a real conservative race,” Ed said. That was good, there were no injuries on dogs early in the season.

Everything about last year’s Kusko 300 was a surprise. From missing the flight out of Kotzebue (the dogs were so quiet in the hanger they went unnoticed while the plane was loaded) to finishing with two dogs in lead who had never lead before, the race held nothing but challenges for Ed.

We were experimenting with different brands of commercial dog feed last year. Our old standby changed their formula and the new feed was causing stress diarrhea. The Kusko showed major problems with one of the brands we were trying. It was a good place to test the feed. As a result we tried another brand on Ed’s 440 team. His 440 dogs con-

sisted of strong good eaters with no diarrhea or dehydration. Ed has been experimenting with his race feed for several years now. It is good to have found a formula that will work on a distance race.

Kate advanced from the three dog class to Juniors eight dog races. The Kotzebue Dog Musher’s Association (KDMA) holds three juniors races each winter. The course is out on the sea ice. Kate’s biggest challenge was holding on to the sled. I was surprised. Kate has been driving dogs since she was three and she can turn around trees and lean into steep mountainsides. With a light sprint sled and eight fast dogs skimming across the hard, bumpy ice and she found her match. With help from her fellow mushers and the race officials she did manage to finish every race.

This experience is invaluable for our junior mushers. The advice Kate got from the officials and other elders who had working teams all their lives touched

my heart. The atmosphere at our Juniors races is caring and supportive of the young mushers. We look forward to running the Juniors races with both Kate and Quinn when he turns twelve.

Our team continues to excel in the Kobuk 440. This year’s racers drove through a blizzard while forging a new trail out of Shungnak. Ed’s new main leader Pee Wee led the pack across this infrequently traveled route. Both team and driver loved the race—its an annual visit back home, to the upper Kobuk, where life passes at a slightly slower, perhaps better pace.

Tollef completed the season with the last race, a new race along the coast to Kivalina and back. There is nothing like the coast in the spring—late spring, end of April to be exact. The sea ice up here is the last to go in the state. Our team took a first place finish in the race.