

PAW PRINTS & SKI TRACKS

Annual ASPA membership dues are due. If you want to continue your membership, please complete the form included, and send it in with your dues. Thanks!

January Races

Despite the lack of snow combined with dark and cold, January 2008 began the year with a race on January 6th at North Star Golf Course. Unfortunately, but not surprising, the race scheduled for January 26th had to be cancelled due to the cold. Below are some photos from the first race of the new year. February is shaping up to be another month of FUN with a race on February 2nd, show 'n' go on February 3rd, followed by the annual Race Across the Valley. All photos by Lisa Stuby, except where noted.

February 4
Ski Waxing Clinic
Raven Cross Country
6:00 PM, ASPA members only. Pre-register at 456-5070.

February 10
Training Clinic #2
Creamer's Field
10:30 AM, Contact Lisa Stuby at 458-7657

February 15-17
Race Across the Valley
Fun Class est. 3-5 miles (3 dog pool)
Distance Class est. 6+ miles (5 dog pool)
Location TBA

March 1
8th Annual Birch Hill Races, Birch Hill Nordic Ski Area, Jim Hergrives, 455-8007



Steven Sheehy is off and running with Ahi and Sputnik. photo by Pat DeRuyter.



Pat and Crisco, ready to groom the trails to perfection.



Show 'n' Go #3

ASPA Show'n Go #3 will take place on February 3rd, instead of the 2nd. The location is still to be announced. Contact Peggy Raybeck for location and details, 457-4775 or pay-check39@hotmail.com.

Fun Race #4, January 6, 2008, North Star Golf Course as reported by Andy Warwick

North Star Golf Club hosted the fourth Alaska Skijor & Pulk Association Fun Race of the 2007-2008 season. The temperature was +5; relatively balmy. The trails were excellent from recent snow and Pat DeRuyter's grooming. Eighteen teams took to the trails with the following results.

Thanks to the following volunteers for making this race possible: Race director: Andy Warwick; registrar and timer: Wallace Bandeff; trail groomer and starter: Pat DeRuyter, and again, Roger and Melinda Evans for the use of the North Star Golf Course.

As this newsletter goes to press, the next fun race will be at Creamer's Field, February 2nd, with sign up at 11:30 AM, and the race commencing at noon. Contact Pat DeRuyter at 479-7853 or patd@gci.net for more information.

ASPA Fun Race #4, January 6, 2008, North Star Golf Course				
Bib #	Skijorer	Dogs	Time	Place
Six-mile three dogs				
1	Don Kiely	Chance, Daikon, Casper	24:03:00	1
Four-mile three dogs				
3	Brian Charlton	Wiggy, Reuben, Sally	13:57	1
4	Carol Kleckner	Jazz, Misty, Blackberry	14:06	2
2	Sara Elzey	Millie, Robin, Chert	15.07	3
Four-mile two dogs				
5	Peggy Raybeck	Carmen, Masie	16:05	1
9	Peggy Raybeck	Charlie, Trakker	17:16	2
7	Steven Sheehy	Ahi, Sputnic	18:42	3
6	Karsten Hueffer	Addie, Callie	19:31	4
8	Nina Ruckhaus	Tracker, Sam	19:52	5
Four-mile one dog				
18	Mike Kramer	Decoy	15:55	1
14	Kimberlee Beckmen	Iris	22:18	2
13	Laurie Hueffer	Grizzly	23:46	3
11	Gail Davidson	Tobi	25:08:00	4
12	Jim Altherr	Sophie	33:14:00	5
10	Lisa Stuby	Killae	39:08:00	6
Two-mile two dogs				
15	Sara Elzey	Borax, Loon	8:43	1
16	Kimberlee Beckmen	Terri, Lily	10:26	2
Two-mile one dog				
17	Ted Wu	Ty	10:02	1

**The Alaska Skijoring & Pulk Association's annual
Race Across the Valley is Feb 15, 16 & 17!**

VOLUNTEERS! Please consider volunteering for any of the 3 days if you are not racing, and volunteer your family & friends to help out too! At a minimum we will need a starter and 2 timers for each day or the race WILL NOT happen!! Handlers, photographers, and trail sweepers are a plus. If you can volunteer please email Don Kiely at donkiely@computer.org. Thank you!

RACE FEES will be \$10/day for ASPA members, \$15/day for non-ASPA members. There will be a discount (\$25 for ASPA members, \$40 for non-members) for pre-registering for all 3 days by Feb 13th at 5pm. **To pre-register:** send skier name, distance/class racing each day and names of the dogs in the pool to Sara Elzey at skijorex2@hotmail.com **by 5pm Thursday, February 13th.** If you know which dogs you will race each day designate those also, if not, you can designate which dogs from the pool will race each day when you pick up your bib for that day.

The Format for the Race Across the Valley is:

CLASSES: There will be two classes each day, a Short Distance Class and a Long Distance Class. Distances will vary by location (see below). Racer's will be allowed to compete in either short or long distance class on any individual day as a "day racer" or compete in all 3 days in either distance class as a "stage racer" (see explanation of these classes below).

Long Distance class stage race participants will race all three days the longer distance on each day. Each racer is allowed a pool of 5 dogs for the event. The racer may use up to 3 dogs any one day. Once the event starts (Friday, Feb 15) dogs in the pool cannot be changed but dogs racing on any given day can be.

Short Distance class stage race participants will race all three days, the shorter distance on each day. Each racer is allowed a pool of 3 dogs for the event. The racer may use up to 2 dogs any one day.

(Note about dog pool: Once the event starts (Friday, Feb 15) the dogs in the pool cannot be changed but dogs racing on any given day can be. To ensure that the proper dog name is reported in the race results be sure to give any changes to the race director when signing in for the day.)

Day Racers may participate in either the Long or Short class on any given day, or multiple days. The racer may use up to 3 dogs in the Long class and up to 2 dogs in the Short class.

TRAILS: PLEASE TRY OUT THE TRAILS AHEAD OF TIME:

All trails being used this year already have signage up and the maps are available on the ASPA website (www.sleddog.org/skijor) Please visit each site to become familiar with the trails *before* the race.

DAY #1: Friday, February 15, 2008. Check-in/bib pick-up and registration from 11:00-11:30, race starts at 12:00pm. Location at Chena Lakes Recreation area off the Richardson Highway past North Pole. Short distance class will race the 4.5-mile loop. Long distance class will race the 9.5 mile loop. Note there is no warm building at this location.

DAY #2: Saturday, February 16, 2008. Check-in/bib pick-up and registration 11:15-11:45am, race starts at 12:00pm. Location at Two Rivers Ski Trails, 18.5 mile Chena Hot Springs Road. Short Distance class will race 7.5 kilometers, approximately 4.65 miles (once around the entire course). Long distance class will race 12.5km, approximately 7.75 miles (once around the entire course then repeat the 5km loop). We will have access to a warm up hut for registration and awards.

DAY #3: Sunday, February 17, 2008. Check-in/bib pick-up and registration 9:30-10:00am, race starts at 10:30am. Location at Creamer's Field off College Road. Short distance class will be approximately 4.3 miles, or the orange and some of the yellow loop. Long distance class will do Pink/Orange/some yellow loop (approximately 9.3 miles) (see the maps on the website). **NOTE: We are still working out the details to avoid a conflict with the rescheduled ADMA races that day, so stay tuned for details!**

Temperature cut-off for Friday and Sunday is -15F at 8:30am and Saturday -20F at 8:30am (this venue is at a higher elevation!) by calling 458-3745 x1113.

Sara Elzey, Don Kiely, Sara Tabbert
2008 Race Across the Valley Race Directors

A Beginner's Venture into Skijoring – From Fairbanks to Western Montana by Don Morton

As a part-time employee of ARSC/UAF I often find myself in Fairbanks, and over the years have come to know Jamie Marschner and Greg Newby, both great advocates of making dogs work for their pay. I call Missoula, Montana home and have two chocolate labs with huge exercise needs. Over the past year or two I started thinking that maybe I could actually harness them up for a mutually-rewarding winter activity. Now I'm hooked, and there's no turning back!

My dogs, Cocoa and Reeses, were obtained from our local animal shelter three years apart. A typical daily routine involves us hiking or running off-leash on trails – they're used to darting back and forth and I just work on keeping them responsive so they won't stray too far and chase after deer. Additionally, because we live in town, a priority with both dogs has been to train them to walk with me on-leash without pulling. So, I had a big challenge ahead of me – training them that it is OK to pull sometimes, and that when they're in harness, they're supposed to go straight ahead and not meander wherever their noses try to lead them. My wife was convinced they'd never make it.

Training began in mid-autumn. The first step was to just put them in harness and let them get used to it. Next, I hooked a ten pound weight to them, would make them sit as I walked across a field, then I would call them to me with goodies. I'd alternate between having them do this individually and having them do this together, connected with a neckline. This was quite effective and at least got them used to wearing harnesses and pulling against some resistance.

The next step was to have them pull me as I ran behind them. This involved having my wife wait with treats at the opposite end of a field, and I'd get them to do a "READY GO," pulling me across the field. Eventually I hooked up a bike, and then when we finally got snow, did some actual skijoring across fields.

By now, it was late November and I was up in Fairbanks for a few days to attend the Beginner's Skijor Clinic and gain some practical experience from the pros. Many thanks to Andy Seitz with Mabel and Ed, and the rest of you who helped me out.

When I got back to Missoula in early December, the snow was starting to pile up in the local mountains and I discovered a huge network of snowmobile trails to try out. Over the course of six weeks (my winter break from U. Montana) I took the dogs out several times a week. At first, I was just happy if we could make it a mile without getting tangled up somewhere (typically from one of the dogs wanting to veer into the woods). They didn't pull very hard at first, and the line was often slack, but miraculously, they very gradually improved. I tried my best to never push them too hard, always trying to stop before they got bored or too tired. Now, in late January, they will often pull me hard for up to seven miles, and that was my goal for winter break – just get them to pull me for a few miles.

Some of the "wisdom" I've gained is that I should always be very sensitive to their progress, "baby-stepping" them along the way, and that dry-land training is where the real groundwork occurs. Even now, I've found that walks through town, or even quick 10-minute runs around the neighborhood, provide great training opportunities for GEE/HAW and ignoring distraction.

In terms of skijoring, I've found that my lack of skiing ability is now the limiting factor. There have been times that we were out on a trail before dawn, with a headlamp, my glasses icing up, the trail ends up being kind of rutted and icy, and I'm fighting like hell to stay up. I think that next year I will be starting with a light sled, and maybe an additional dog or two. Still, skijoring on long, relatively-smooth trails is a wonderful experience, and certainly makes you feel like a part of the pack. I'll always enjoy this aspect of it, but for long-term touring activities (which is my primary interest), I think it's time to start some real mushing.

Many thanks to all of you in ASPA who have encouraged me and answered my questions on the email list!

Notes on images – Reeses in orange harness, Cocoa (the Rocky Mountain Cocoa Monster) in blue harness. The trail we're on is near Seeley Lake, Montana, and is part of the trail for the annual "Race to the Sky" race (an Iditarod qualifier). This is Doug Swingley country.



Puppy Socialization by Lisa Stuby

Puppies and dogs need to be socialized to the big wide world so that they won't be afraid of new situations, objects, sounds, people, and other animals. Socialization is an ongoing process of changes and additions in a puppy's life. As your puppy matures, he will develop a catalog of experiences that help him to manage the world at large. This includes forming relationships with all types of people, other dogs, and different species in various environments.

A couple of years ago I was attending a conference in Anchorage and at one of the many socials, Martin Buser showed up to talk about the Iditarod, mushing in Alaska, etc. to folks who were primarily from out of state. He also brought some of his dogs, including a couple of leaders, and two litters of puppies in a pen for petting. I was truly amazed at how well-behaved his dogs were. In addition to earning a living, he also saw this event as a great opportunity to socialize his puppies to people. Any chance your dog may come into contact with people, like at skijoring races, socialization is important.

Until the puppy has been vaccinated, you shouldn't let him be around other unvaccinated animals, since he may pick up diseases (such as parvo, distemper, and hepatitis) that can be fatal to puppies. Consult your veterinarian about when and how to safely introduce your puppy to other animals.

One of the most important developmental periods of a puppy's life is the period from three to twelve weeks of age. He will be receptive to new things that later may prove to be more difficult to adjust to. Regular handling by a variety of people during this stage is essential for him to form positive attachments later. The desire to bond with humans should be capitalized on at this stage.

Puppies are usually placed into new homes at seven to nine weeks of age. He will be ready to transfer to his "human" pack at this age. If you are adopting an older puppy (over twelve weeks) that has had limited socialization, you may have to work harder at first. A puppy adopted from a shelter may not have a known history, but it is not too late to teach him what the world is about.

Your puppy should become accustomed to people who are loud or quiet, young or old, tall or short, active or inactive. Introduce your puppy to people wearing hats, glasses or sun-glasses, helmets, coats or capes with hoods up, gloves and masks. You can also take the puppy on short car rides, so he'll be a good traveler from an early age and/or get him accustomed to the dog box.

Be careful to make all of your puppy's socialization experiences positive. If something or someone seems to frighten your pet, introduce that object or person more slowly, and associate the object or person with positive things. For example, if your puppy is afraid of someone wearing a big hat, have the person with the scary hat offer treats to the puppy. Soon, the puppy will associate the hat with something good instead of something scary. If your dog is destined to spend time indoors you should also gradually introduce your puppy to a variety of household items and sounds, such as the vacuum cleaner, telephone, television, etc.

Some puppies are shy, others bold and outgoing from Day One. Learning to observe the signals a puppy gives helps in the socialization process. A confident puppy will advance towards new things with his tail up or wagging, ears forward, and a relaxed facial expression. A hesitant puppy may hang back, holding his tail low or tucked and have a facial expression that might appear worried. A shy puppy needs more time to adapt but if not forced, can become more confident. When first socializing your puppy, focus on confident responses and praise him for bravery in new situations.

Puppy Kindergarten Training classes are available in many areas. A well-run class will teach basic manners, build confidence, and attempt to prevent problem behaviors from developing and for your puppy should be fun. They may also help your puppy get used to and look forward to "events", like skijoring races.

Puppy Socialization (Continued)

Like human children, attention spans are limited when your young pup is less than a year old. Like human children, pups will go through their version of the “terrible twos” at about 4 to 6 months, pre-teen around a year, and then the “teenage” years at about 1.5 years, where they often forget everything you taught them. During a puppy training class I took several years ago the instructor right away told the class what we should expect from our pups, prompting one woman to stand up and announce “BUT, my son just turned 18 and started college, you mean I have to go through all of this again with my DOG?!” Of course, our dogs will grow up much faster, most show real maturity at around 3-6 years, depending on the dog and breed.

Teaching a puppy to eliminate outdoors is a form of socialization. It requires an understanding by the puppy of where to go as well as him feeling comfortable in different settings. Puppies that are paper trained initially may “hold it” to go back indoors. For him, the concept of going to the bathroom includes the feel of papers under his feet, a roof over his head and usually no human at the end of a leash-if even in the room. He may not immediately generalize that concrete or grass beneath his feet, wind on his face and you at the end of the leash is the same thing. The use of a phrase like “HURRY UP” introduced at the time he is going on the papers can later be used as a prompt outdoors. Taking him to the papers on leash, as a transitional-phase, may also help. From the beginning, vary the surfaces you take your puppy to for elimination. Surface-specific puppies are harder to teach to generalize where to eliminate. This can cause difficulties later if you move to another area or want her to travel with you. If your puppy is to live primarily outdoors, “houstraining” may not apply. However, most people I know, even with large dog yards, will let the huskies indoors every now and then.

If your puppy makes a mistake in the house, and they will, NEVER scold or hit your puppy, especially if I am visiting! I found houstraining my current dog was a breeze. We had a couple of “oopsies”, but I got into the habit every couple of hours of taking him outdoors and asking him to “go potty” and when he did I told him, “good boy.” Any indoor accidents I would say “oh no no”, but not angrily. With two grown rescued huskies, I don’t know, they were so happy to not be tied up outside that I never had one indoor accident until they got old and sick, and they were never formally housebroken.

To prepare your pup for veterinary visits handle him all over on a daily basis. He will also need to be comfortable with strangers handling and gently restraining him. Make mock veterinary visits to build a positive association. Go once weekly and ask the staff to give him treats, especially when he gets on the scale. You may actually end up with a dog that looks forward to vet visits.

Many dogs that are re-homed during adolescence are products of an undersocialized upbringing. It takes an investment of time and effort to raise and train a puppy properly. What you put into a puppy that first year influences the rest of his life. Socialization is ongoing. As he matures, different issues may arise. A puppy that has been exposed to the world outside of the back yard has a better chance of taking things in stride. A well socialized dog makes a wonderful companion and will be welcomed many places.

Sources were from the ASPCA website and my own experiences.



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