

PAW PRINTS & SKI TRACKS

This is the last newsletter of the 2009/2010 season. Hard to believe spring is already here! Wishing you a good summer off new fun and adventures with your canine family. Be sure to check out summer training tips and activities on the ASPA website at <http://www.sleddog.org/skijor/training/sumtrain.html>

Lee's Cabin Race, Show 'n' Go, er, Really FUN Event!! By Lisa Stuby and Sara Tabbert

As I finally stop procrastinating and get to work on the April 2009 newsletter on a rather balmy 18 °F day, my thoughts are returning to that day a couple of weekends ago on a rather cold March 21st, the day of the Lee's Cabin race. I showed up to help time the racers from the parking area at mile 28 of the Elliott Highway, but with only one racer, Mike Ruckhaus, there was no need. Mike was given the stop watch and timed himself. Peggy Raybeck and Edel Agersborg went in the night before and had Lee's cabin nice and warm for us, which was a good thing, because the weather was COLD!! When I left Fairbanks, my thermometer was reading -5°F and windy. At the trailhead it was quite windy, somewhere between 15 and 20 mph. I was very glad to not have to stand and time folks and gasp, operate a pencil or stopwatch since my hands were so cold, I could barely move them. Our fearless leader and organizer, Sara Tabbert, kept offering me her big, super-insulated leather mitts, but I know once I started moving, I'd get too warm. So, off we went. The weekend beforehand my dog Killae got a bad case of bacterial gastroenteritis, but thanks to antibiotics and me waiting on him hand and foot, he was well again. However, as we started moving, he trotted next to me looking up. I thought, oh poor dog, he's not feeling well, but what was happening was he was thinking similarly, oh my poor human, she's suffering. After a few miles, the wind began to die down and thoughts of homemade chili began to dance through my head and a WARM cabin. On the way in, I heard giggling in the woods as Thea Ruckhaus and her friend Nicole Farnham, who brought out a snow machine to help carry gear, were chopping down HUGE dead trees to be used by future visitors for firewood.. Lee's was definitely a welcomed site!! Adding to the joy I felt was a gentle body slam by Cocoa, Gail Davidson's rescued chocolate lab, who licked my face as I was getting my skis off and thumped her otter-like tail on the back of my knees. I was surprised that this very friendly, people-loving dog had spent the first two years of her life tied up and neglected. Inside I warmed up to good food and conversation. According to Janna Miller there were perhaps a dozen dogs in the cabin at one point, and only about half that many people. Sara brought prizes and all participants received one, whether they raced or not. With the cold weather, doubtful anyone was dilly dallying on the way in anyway.

From Janna Miller's, mine, and Sara's memory, they went as such:

Don Atwood with Coho, Suka, and Harley: Largest dog with Suka.

Gail Davidson: Fastest labs with Tobi and Cocoa. Maggie surpassed Cocoa for best face licker.

Bruce and Jana Miller with aussies Roy and Lilly: Fastest dogs with no tails.

Brandon McGrath-Bernhard with Pete and Pablo: Fastest bikejorer.

Lisa Stuby and Killae: Red Lantern (actually it should have been the whiniest participant due to the cold award!).

Mike Ruckhouse with Tracker, : First Place Racer (as well as Last and Only) who reported a time of "Oh, I don't know, about 45 minutes?"

Thea Ruckhaus and Nicole Farnham: Best wood gatherers and snow machine drivers.

Edel Agesborg with Iver and Camille: First skijorer to the cabin (Friday!).

Sara Tabbert: BEST organizer with cheerleaders Rothko and Irene.

Best Cabin Warmer: Peggy Raybeck who came out Friday night with Edel and got the cabin toasty warm for us.



Inside Lee's cabin (left, photo by Janna Miller). Burrrrr, yep that is Sara under all the layers trying to stay warm along with Bruce Miller and Mike Ruckhaus. Photo by Lisa Stuby



Returning back to the parking area after spending the afternoon at Lee's Cabin is Brandon McGrath Bernhard with Pete and Pablo and Sara Tabbert with Rothko and Irene. Photo by Lisa Stuby

9th Annual Birch Hill Skijoring Race by Jim Herriges

While many Fairbanks residents spent Saturday morning digging out from the recent snow and windstorms, thirty skijorers and twice as many dogs were racing around the Birch Hill Recreation Area trails under sunny skies and cool conditions in the 9th Annual Alaska Skijoring and Pulk Association's Annual Birch Hill race. Despite the recent dump of snow, Birch Hill groomers had the trails in good condition. The wind-sifted snow that fell after grooming Friday night, and the inevitable softness from so much snow, gave dogs and skiers alike a good workout.

The events began with the 3-dog 6K race. In a dog race, it isn't always an advantage to start first, as Don Kiely discovered. Sara Elzey with Ayla, Millie, and Zorba started third, but finished 19 seconds faster than Don (with Casper, Jenny, and Chance) in a winning time of 17:36. In the 2-dog 6K race Peggy Raybeck with Carmen and Chico finished first in 19:46 followed by Gail Davidson with Tobi and Cocoa. In the one-dog 4K race Jesse Warwick and Joba finished first in 14:41, and Jim Altherr and Sophie finished second in 25:53.

As dogs and skiers were finishing up the shorter distances, the distance races began with mass starts. Bruce Miller with Roy, Rebecca Knight with Gypsy, and Mike Kramer with Decoy were leading the 1-dog distance class (7.5K) race at the halfway point, but errantly took the 6K turn, creating a new class—the one-dog 6K. Mike Kramer finished in the lead of this closely matched group in 19:30 followed by Rebecca Knight of Wasilla in 19:45 and Bruce Miller in 19:52. Changes made to the course the previous day to accommodate the weather undoubtedly contributed to the confusion.

Sara Tabbert won the one-dog 7.5K class with Rothko in 29:24. Ted Wu with Ty was second in 30:15 and Mike Ruckhaus with Tracker third in 32:52.

The 2-dog mass start followed the 1-dog class close enough that teams were passing on the trail. It tested the dogs of the 2-dog class to continue on straight while 1-dog teams in front of them were turning left. Brian Charlton with Bonnie and Calvin, Chad Carroll with Elvis and Penny, and Martin Truffer with Saphira and Casper formed the lead group early in the race. Jim Herriges had some line tangles at the start with Yeller and Mabel and spent the early part of the race shortening the gap between his team and the leaders. After Herriges joined the lead group, it travelled together for some time until Herriges opened a slight lead while inbound on the White Bear loop. Charlton managed to catch back up on the last hill of the White Bear and the two teams entered the stadium together. The Herriges team managed to hold them off, winning by one second in a time of 25:08. Chad Carroll came in third at 25:50. Emily Bernhardt overtook Truffer for fourth place in 27:45.

In the relay event (in which most dogs were running the second race of the day), Chad Carroll with Elvis put Team 2 ahead on the first leg and Paula Hicks with Willow maintained that lead in the second leg, but Team 3 teammates Sara Tabbert (Rothko) and Gail Davidson (Tobi) ended the second leg in second place and their third leg member, Matt Bray with Rainy, pulled Team 3 to a win. Two of three fresh dogs helped Team 4 (Nina Ruckhaus, Liz Kane, and Jim Herriges) to finish 16 seconds later in second place.

Thanks go to many: Brian Charlton for marking and cleanup of the White Bear Loop; Sara Elzey, Lisa Stuby, Chad Carroll, and Gail Davidson for trail setup and cleanup; Pat DeRuyter for registration, timing, and starting; Clarice Dukeminier for registration and timing; Liz Kane for registration and post-race treats; Peggy Raybeck for timing; and Penny Parker for dog handling. Jim Herriges organized the event, trail setup, and cleanup. Nordic Ski Club groomer Tim Buckley groomed trails pre- and post-event.

Thanks to the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks North Star Borough for the always-wonderful trails and facilities. Thanks also to generous sponsors who provided prizes for the event including Raven Cross Country, Canine Caviar Pet Food, Beaver Sports, Apocalypse Design, and Denali Chiropractic.



Getting ready for the 6 K 2-dog, Paula Hicks with Taxi and Dennis proceed to the starting line. Photo by Lisa Stuby



Finishing up the relay, Matt Bray with a still eager for more Rainey Photo by Jim Altherr



At the start of the second round of participants in the relay. Many of these dogs already raced before and their calmness shows. Photo by Jim Altherr



Okay, listen up!! Jim Herriges gives out awards to the winners, which all participants were. To his left are Clarice Dukminier and Pat DeRuyter who helped sign folks up, timed, and coordinated the Relay. Photo by Lisa Stuby

Alaska Skijor and Pulk Association, 9 th Annual Birch Hill Race				
Saturday, March 07, 2009, 3oF				
Temperature: 3° degrees F, trail soft with fresh snow				
Bib #	Skijorer	Dogs	Time	Place
6K, 3-dog				
3	Sara Elzey	Ayla, Millie, Zorba	17:36:00	1
1	Don Kiely	Casper, Jenny, Chance	17:55:00	2
2	John Schaeur	Willow, Tsaina, Riley	19:12:00	3
6K, 2-dog				
5	Peggy Raybeck	Carmen, Chico	19:46:00	1
7	Gail Davidson	Tobi, Cocoa	27:07:00	2
4	Rebecca Gilbert	Pepper, Sharlee	27:55:00	3
6	Paula Hicks	Taxi, Dennis	37:09:00	4
4K, 1-dog				
9	Jesse Warwick	Joba	14:41:00	1
10	Jim Altherr	Sophie	25:53:00	2
8	Lisa Stuby	Killae	28:02:00	3
6K, 1-dog				
17	Mike Kramer	Decoy	19:30:00	1
13	Rebecca Knight	Gypsy	19:45:00	2
18	Bruce Miller	Roy	19:52:00	3
7.5K, 1dog				
12	Sara Tabbert	Rothko	29:24:00	1
11	Ted Wu	Ty	30:15:00	2
16	Mike Ruckhaus	Tracker	32:52:00	3
14	Janna Miller	Lily	33:45:00	4
9K, 2-dog				
23	Jim Herriges	Yeller, Mabel	25:08:00	1
18	Brian Charlton	Bonnie, Calvin	25:09:00	2
22	Chad Carroll	Elvis, Penny	25:50:00	3
19	Emily Bernhardt	Dusty, Coral	27:45:00	4
21	Martin Truffer	Saphira, Cooper	27:59:00	5
20	Matt Bray	Gilbert, Rainy	29:37:00	6
24	Ellen Clark	Tiko, Tenar	37:42:00	7

Fun Race #6, March 10, 2009, Creamer's Field reported by Andy Warwick

On Tuesday, March 10, 2009 (6:00PM) thirty-two teams took advantage of 25 degree temperatures and late afternoon sun to participate in the Alaska Skijor and Pulk Association's sixth scheduled fun race of the 2008-2009 season at Creamers Field. In a tight race, youth beat age as six-year old Kendall Kramer behind Decoy, with a time of 2:45, narrowly beat Andy Warwick with thirteen-year old Lady by five seconds. It was Kendall's first race, and like her dad Mike, she will probably get used to winning. The very happy-ending story of the day was Carol Kleckner's dog, Shaman, slipping his harness at the start, chasing Sara Elzey's three dog team around the 3.9 mile course (beating her badly), and miraculously returning to Carol's truck. Shaman had been severely abused by his previous owner, and is extremely skittish around other dogs and humans. Needless-to-say, everyone was relieved when he was safe back in Carol's dog truck.

Race volunteers: race director Andy Warwick, registrar Lisa Stuby, and timers Lisa Stuby and Paula Ruckhaus.

2008/2009 Sponsor Thank You!!

PLEASE, this summer when doing business with these people and companies, please make a point to thank them for their support, early and often! Let them know their sponsorship is appreciated and makes a difference. We'd love to have them back next year.

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Fun Race #6, March 10, 2009 (6:00PM)

Bib #	Skijorer	Dogs	Time	Place
8.5-mile, three dogs				
1	Andy Warwick	Zip, Licorice, Boots	33:40	1
8.5-mile, two dogs				
2	Steven Sheehy	Shriek, Sputnik	48:39	1
5.6-mile, three dogs				
3	Don Kiely	Chance, Casper, Raja	24:29	1
4	Edel Agersborg	Duke, Luer, Camille	24:58	2
5.6-mile, two dogs				
7	Peggy Raybeck	Charlie brown, Trakker	26:03	1
6	Lisa Baraff	Luna, Hope	27:22	2
8	Kimberlee Beckmen	Iris, Terri	28:13	3
5	Gail Davidson	Tobi, Cocoa	28:16	4
3.8-mile, three dogs				
10	Sara Elzey	Millie, Ayla, Zorba	13:12	1
9	Doreen McNeill	Snowball, Rouen, Brown	14:00	2
3.8-mile, two dogs				
11	Carol Kleckner	Shaman, Jenny	dnf	
3.8-mile, one dog				
12	Bruce Miller	Roy	14:01	1
19	Mike Kramer	Decoy	14:15	2
13	Janna Miller	Lilly	15:12	3
17	Jesse Warwick	Joba	15:42	4
18	Lori Winton	Edward	16:30	5
14	Ted Wu	Ty	16:51	6
16	Andrew Cys	Raven	16:52	7
15	Jim Altherr	Sophie	33:33	8
2.9-mile, three dogs				
20	Sara Elzey	Robin, Blackberry, Misty	12:14	1
2.9-mile, two dog				
23	Carol Kleckner	Jazz, Chanel	11:25	1
22	Rebecca Gilbert	Sharlee, Pepper	12:33	2
21	Don Attwood	Suka, Chico	16:33	3
2.9-mile, one dog				
25	Rachael Saumweber	Nina	12:55	1
24	Brian Jackson	Josie	15:26	2
1.5-mile, three dog				
26	Don Kiely	Borax, Loon, Izzi	5:54	1
1.5-mile, two dog				
27	Nina Ruckhaus	Trakker, Sam	6:52	1
1.5-mile, one dog				
30	Sarah Garland	Hoover	7:50	1
28	Susan Lightbody	Maggie May	9:00	2
29	Mike Ruckhaus	Dusty	9:35	3
.5-mile, one dog				
32	Kendell Kramer	Decoy	2:45	1
31	Andy Warwick	Lady	2:50	2

Fun Race #4, Tuesday March 17th, Creamer’s Field, By the luck ’O the Irish, the CURSE has been lifted! by Don Kiely

A small but enthusiastic group of skijorers and dogs gathered for the Alaska Skijoring and Pulk Association’s Fun Race #4. This race had been postponed and rescheduled several times during the season because of weather and trail conditions, so everyone was pleased to be able to get it in before the end of the season.

Three teams went 5.6 miles. Don Kiely had the field to himself in the three-dog class (Raja, Casper, Chance) taking 22:52, while Jamie Johnson (Lemon, Wragel) edged out Gail Davidson (Tobi, Cocoa) in the two-dog class, 25:33 to 25:48.

Sara Elzey (Ayla, Millie, Zorba) was the only competitor to go 3.9 miles with three dogs, finishing in 12:00. Carol Kleckner (Jenny, Chanel) finished in 12:33 as the only two-dog competitor. Bruce Miller (Roy) beat Ted Wu (Ty) in the one-dog class, 13:16 to 14:48.

Sara Elzey’s second run (Robin, Loon, Misty) was in the 2.9 mile, three-dog class, finishing in 11:21. Carol Kleckner (Jazz, Blackberry) beat Rebecca Gilbert (Sharlee, Pepper) in the two-dog class, 10:17 to 12:27. And Janna Miller (Lilly) finished with a time of 12:54 in the one dog class, beating Jim Altherr (Sophie) with a time of 25:51.

Don Kiely’s second run of the day was in the 1.4 mile three-dog class, finishing in 5:29.

In the spirit of St. Paddy’s Day, there were prizes for the best costumes. Jamie Johnson took top honors with green highlights and an immense green wig. We’re pretty sure her dogs ran their best ever, trying to get away from the green-headed monster following them. Bruce Miller was second, with a green flowered lycra racing outfit. Fortunately, the cold of the day forced him to add layers during the race, so no dogs were frightened. Jim Alther was close behind with a green hat that evoked images of the Cat in the Hat, gone green. We have no idea how such a large hat stayed on during the race!

Ever vivacious Pat DeRuyter was starter, timer, and costume judge, and Jim Altherr spent hours the night before on a cold, windy evening grooming the trail to perfection. Bruce Miller helped start after his run so that Pat could be at the finish line. Don Kiely was race director. Several other people pitched in to help where it was needed.

Fun Race #4, March 17, Creamer’s Field (6:00 PM)				
Bib #	Skijorer	Dogs	Time	Place
5.6 miles, 3 dogs				
1	Don Kiely	Raja, Chance, Casper	22:52	1
5.6 miles, 2 dogs				
4	Jamie Johnson	Lemon, Wragel	25:33	1
5	Gail Davidson	Tobi, Cocoa	25:48	2
3.9 miles, 3 dogs				
2	Sara Elzey	Ayla, Millie, Zorba	12:00	1
3.9 miles, 2 dogs				
3	Carol Kleckner	Jenny, Chanel	12:33	1
3.9 miles, 1 dog				
7	Bruce Miller	Roy	13:16	1
6	Ted Wu	Ty	14:48	2
2.9 miles, 3 dogs				
26	Sara Elzey	Robin, Loon, Misty	11:21	1
2.9 miles, 2 dogs				
24	Carol Kleckner	Jazz, Blackberry	10:17	1
8	Rebecca Gilbert	Sharlee, Pepper	12:27	2
2.9 miles, 1 dog				
10	Janna Miller	Lilly	12:54	1
9	Jim Altherr	Sophie	25:51	2
1.4 miles, 3 dog				
39	Don Kiely	Izzi, Pippi, Bo-rax	5:29	1



Nearing the finish line, Jim Altherr and Sophie head for home. Photo by Janna Miller



Can be seen for miles, Jamie Johnson with Lemon And Wragel were the big winners of the costume contest. Photo by Sara Elzey



Sara Elzey with Ayla showing off their St. Patty’s Day green. Photo taken with Sara Elzey’s camera.



Orienteering Race, March 22, 2009, Creamer's Field by Pat DeRuyter

Eight teams participated in the eighth annual ASPA Orienteering Event at Creamer's Field on Sunday following the Open North American.

Maria Bray and Natasha scored a perfect 1000 points in the 60 minute running class to repeat as Champion. She ran nearly 6 miles on the various trails to collect all of the 20 "controls".

Matt Bray with Rainy and Gilbert collected 19 of the 20 skijoring "controls" for a total of 950 points and a win in the 60 minute skijoring class. The map showed an incorrect placement of "control" # 22 or Matt would have collected all 20 "controls". Matt traveled 11.4 miles but was assessed a 40 point penalty for being 4 minutes late returning to the start/finish area. Lisa Stuby with Killae came in second with 660 points and Gail Davidson with Tobi were third with 610 points.

Sara Elzey with Ayla won the 30 minute skijor class with a total of 590 points. Peggy Raybeck with Chico came in second at 520 points and Andy Warwick with Zip were third with 420 points. Andy was assessed a 90 point penalty for a late return due to what he described as a "wild goose chase".

Clarice Dukeminier with Crisco won the 30 minute walking class with a total of 150 points.

Thanks to Tom McGrane for opening the Open North American fences prior to the Orienteering event and Pat DeRuyter for setting the course and starting the participants. Thanks to Lisa Stuby and Peggy Raybeck for picking up the "controls".

60 minute Run with your dog

1. Maria Brey Natasha 1000 points

60 minute Skijor

1. Matt Brey Rainy and Gilbert 950 points
2. Lisa Stuby Killae 660 points
3. Gail Davidson Tobi 610 points

30 minutes skijor

1. Sara Elzey Ayla 590 points
2. Peggy Raybeck Chico 520 points
3. Andy Warwick Zip 420 points

30 minute walk with your dog

1. Clarice Dukeminier Crisco 150 points

Volunteers of the Year for the 2008/2009 Season

Two people received the Volunteer of the Year award during the March 29 Fun Race and BBQ, Jim Herriges and Lisa Stuby.

Jim Herriges is a long-time member of ASPA and one of our best supporters. Through hard work and perseverance, he acquired the grant so we could get the new snow machine and groomer and helped groom trails this year. In addition, Jim coordinated the 9th Annual Birch Hill skijoring race which as always, was a smashing success. Jim continues to be a great asset to the ASPA Board. He always weighs in carefully on decisions and makes us think about the best way to approach any issues.

Lisa has been the publisher, editor, writer, and sometimes photographer for our monthly newsletter for three years. She is also the ASPA board secretary and is therefore responsible for drafting and distributing meeting minutes. She has also led two training clinics along with her elkie, Killae, with the goal to motivate those beginners who are having issues skijoring to not give up. Lisa has helped with the registration and timing at several fun races, baked snacks for RAV, and has helped to put out signs at the beginning of the season taking them down at the end.

Editor's note: I type these comments up with lots of blushing as so many ASPA members help keep this club not just going, but thriving!! On a recent trip to Raven Cross Country, Fred Raymond mentioned to me that unlike many clubs he has seen where it seems as though only a few members seem to do most of the work., so many members of ASPA get involved with helping out at events, etc. This among other things makes this club special.



Jim Herriges and Lena at the 9th Annual ASPA Birch Hill races. Photo by Jim Altherr



Lisa Stuby and Killae on a trip to the White Mountains. Photo by Lisa Stuby

FUN RACE #7 AND BBQ, ADMA, 3/29/2009, BY Andy Warwick

Thirty one teams participated in the Alaska Skijor and Pulk Association's final race the 2008-2009 season at the ADMA dog musher's trails on Farmer's Loop. Carol Kleckner was a double winner with wins in the 5.9 mile and 3.7 mile events. Andy Seitz won the 7.7 mile race and Sara Elzey was first in the 4.5 mile race. The 3.7 mile event was broken into three classes with Carol Kleckner winning the three dog, Sara Conn winning the two dog, and Jim Herriges winning the one dog classes.

Following the race was a barbecue and election of officers for the 2009-2010 season. Jamie Marchner was reelected President of the organization.

Race volunteers today were race director Pat DeRuyter, race officials Clarice Dukeminier, Peggy Raybeck, Tom McGrane, Penny Parker, Erin Atwood, and Lexie Henning.



Liz Kane with Ole. Photo by Bud Marschner.



Carol Kleckner with Shaman and Jenny (top) and John Schauer with Willow, Tsaina, and Riley (bottom). Photos by Bud Marschner



Bud Marschner
Farmer's Loop 2009

Fun Race #7, March 29, ADMA Trails				
Bib #	Skijorer	Dogs	Time	Place
7.7 miles				
7	Andy Seitz	Yeller, Cheese Cake	31:40	1
8	Sara Tabbert	Irene, Rothko	34:05	2
6	Kimberlee Beckman	Iris, Terri	42:38	3
9	Nathan Dorpalen	Worry Face, Blaze	47:09	4
31	Lisa Stuby	Killae	1:13:04	5
30	Jamie Marchner	Bree	1:13:04	5
5.9 miles				
1	Carol Kleckner	Shaman, Jenny	23:57	1
4	Chad Carroll	Tico, Elvis	25:28	2
2	Jeff Conn	Saturn, Henry	25:40	3
3	Don Kiely	Chance, Casper, Raja	25:48	4
11	John Schauer	Willow, Tsaina, Riley	27:15	5
10	Gail Davidson	Tobi, Cocoa	32:28	6
12	Nina Ruckhaus	Tracker	35:24	7
4.5 miles				
5	Sara Elzey	Ayla, Millie, Zorba	17:33	1
29	Peggy Raybeck	Charlie Brown, Chico	20:10	2
14	Steve Sheehy	Sputnik, Schriek	23:57	3
3.7 mile, three dog				
28	Carol Kleckner	Chanel, Jazz, Blackberry	13:50	1
16	Andy Warwick	Zip, Boots, Joba	14:30	2
33	Don Kiely	Borax, Izzi, Pippi	17:43	3
32	Sara Elzey	Robin, Loon, Misty	17:51	4
3.7 mile two dog				
17	Sara Conn	Binna, Pluto	15:55	1
18	Rebecca Gilbert	Sharlee, Pepper	16:30	2
20	Don Atwood	Suka, Harley	21:43	3
15	Kevan Cooper	Twister, Milka	22:16	4
3.7 mile one dog				
22	Jim Herriges	Lena	15:21	1
23	Bruce Miller	Roy	16:09	2
24	Liz Kane	Ole	17:45	3
21	Janna Miller	Lilly	18:09	4
25	Mike Ruckhaus	Dusty	24:25	5
26	Franziska Kohl	Mojo	32:00	6
27	Jim Altherr	Sophie	33:29	7
One mile, Le Mans start				
	Jim Herriges	Lena	4:33	1
	Andy Seitz	Waylon	4:38	2
	Bruce Miller	Roy	4:52	3
	Janna Miller	Lilly	5:03	4
	Karl Schauer	Willow	5:06	5
	Chad Carroll	Elvis	5:20	6
	Liz Kane	Lily	6:06	7
	Sara Tabbert	Rothko	6:29	8
	Andy Warwick	Joba	7:06	9
	Nina Ruckhaus	Trakker	9:01	10
	Gail Davidson	Cocoa	9:59	11
	Franziska Kohl	Mojo	10:07	12
	Lisa Stuby	Killae	10:07	12
	Steve Sheehy	Queenie	10:20	14

ASPAs 2008/2009 Season Alder Award goes to Gail Davidson and Toby!!

Don Kiely and Sara Tabbert honored as well, by Chuck and Tone Deehr

Congratulations to Gail Davidson and Tobi, “the Wonder Dog” who are the winners of this season’s Alder Award, and the recipients of a \$75 ASPA check, plus a coffee mug displaying the duo in their right element. This winter has been the AKC chocolate lab’s tenth ASPA skijoring season. In spite of her age and also the recoveries after two major ACL surgeries, Tobi seems to improve her race performance, paired as she has been of late in team with Gail’s new novice lab, Cocoa.

Gail laments in her award winning application essay that “Toby (and I) feel slower than we used to, but looking at past results tells me that we have actually been pretty consistent over the years—everyone around us has just gotten faster!” She ascertains that “Tobi has certainly achieved her goal for this year: Run as fast as possible as often as possible! She’s never liked retrieving, or even swimming, just skijoring.” Here is the rest of their story:

Tobi, whose full name is Toblerone, was dubbed “Tobi the Wonder Dog” early in her skijoring career by Pat DeRuyter. She is a pretty well-known character among skijorers for some of her crazy traits. She knows the countdown for the race start and always tries to start at “5!”. The starters at ASPA now count down silently for her, and just say “GO!”. At the start of one race a few years ago, she started at 5 with a slack line and broke the snap link in her line. Back she came to see what happened to her person. I hooked her up to a half length line and off we went. Mike Malvick asked how I got her back, but Tobi always comes back to make sure that I’m okay when I crash. Another trait of Tobi’s is always stopping before the finish of a race. She was quite well known at ADMA races for this one, as I always beat her across the finish line. She does this at any venue she has seen before, even at places we are just touring. Apparently she knows this is the finish and she’ll have to stop running. She has a strange (to people) solution to the problem! She has now been led to believe that at Creamer’s Field, the finish is somewhere on the Training Loop.

Tobi first had a harness on at 9 months of age, skijoring on the Tanana, and I thought maybe we were going to Nome there and then! Ever since that day, it has been her very favorite thing to do. She is happiest when the temperature is 0°F or below, and she is very slow when it is above 20°F. She missed two half seasons due to ACL injuries. As everyone knows, she doesn’t stop barking until she starts running. She is then completely focused on running the trail. She is the best passer I know of, due to her extreme focus. In fact, it can occasionally be a problem, since she will go through any opening to keep going; I have been clotheslined more than once.

Now Tobi is teaching her 2-year-old little sister Cocoa how to skijor. Right now we have the brains (Tobi) and the power (Cocoa), as Tobi is getting older and gets sore from going too far or too fast. I don’t think there will ever be a lab that loves skijoring as much as Tobi does, though. Skijoring is where her heart lies, and she won’t let that harness go until she is no longer with us. Tobi was the featured lab of the month on AllLabs.com in February, 2007. She had an article and some pictures in the on-line magazine at http://alllabs.com/shopsite_sc/featured_labrador_retriever_tobi.html.

Honorable mention: Don Kiely and Casper

Don Kiely describes in his essay the amazing transformation of an abused and neglected puppy named Casper, retrieved from the Dog pound, and who, seven years later, has turned into a great, hard-working dog. His Alder Award application that won him an honorable mention, explains how Casper’s slow recuperation also came to enhance Don’s love and respect for his partner. He writes:

I first met Casper shortly after Carol began fostering him from the animal shelter when he was about five months old. I was working registration for an ADMA race, and in walks Carol with this pathetic bag of bones, what appeared to be an animated skeleton with taut skin and fur. He came from an abuse situation of the worst kind, a victim of both physical neglect and mental abuse. Until that moment, I had no idea just how severely and deeply someone could abuse a dog, both physically and mentally.

When he arrived at the shelter his stomach was painfully bloated with worms. After the shelter de-wormed him, his huge splats were so full of worms that they looked like large plates of spaghetti. He was painfully shy and was freaked out by almost everything. Clearly, the first five months of his life were painful ones. Over the next couple of years Carol and I joined lives and kennels, and Casper gained some measure of health. He’s now around seven, and for the first five or so of those years he was a very thin dog. He’s a voracious eater, but just wouldn’t put on weight. It’s just been the last couple of years that he has carried a healthy weight, and now we even have to be careful that he doesn’t get too chunky!

If Casper were a human, he would be about as geeky as I am. He is long legged and a bit awkward, sometimes bumping into things in the dog yard, including human legs. He has turned into the sweetest leaner, coming over during afternoon romps in the dog yard and leaning against one of us, desperately wanting ear and butt rubs. He is a bit mouthy when playing, but takes treats very gently from our hands. He’s never shown any aggression at all to human or canine that we know of.

Alder Award Winners (Continued)

Carol and I ran Casper off and on in mushing and skijor teams as he got healthier, and I first raced with him during the 2005-6 season. He became one of my regular skijor dogs the following year, and we've gone a lot of miles together since then. He is now a regular in my faster, longer team, and does a great job as leader or wheel dog. Casper is not the fastest sprint dog, sometimes getting outrun on fast downhill, but he runs his heart out. He has turned into a wonderful gee-haw leader, even responding quickly to commands when he is in wheel.

One of his biggest strengths shows itself on occasions when we have a tangle. Instead of freaking out in the maze of lines, he'll sit patiently while I untangle the mess, even as another dog bangs on her lines to get going. If I have to, I can let him loose, knowing that he'll stay close. Given how spooked and freaky he was early in his life, this is an amazing change. I'd love to claim it was my good training, but it is really just something he figured out on his own.

Casper is all the more amazing because his former owners dumped him at the shelter because he didn't want to be a sled dog! At just five months of age. It was pretty clear that what he wanted was to get some decent food, a little medical care, and some love. With that and training, he turned into an amazing sled dog and leader, an honest, hard puller.

I also have to admit that there is another reason Casper is so special to me. Carol had been an acquaintance for some time before she walked into Mushers Hall with five month old Casper. That was really the first time that I started to understand her work with shelter and other cast off dogs, and to see her inner strength and beauty. As I learned more over the following months, Carol's love of Casper for *his* inner strength and beauty provided the foundation for my love of Carol and what she does with dogs. So in a small way, Casper led me to love. Good boy!

Honorable Mention: Sara Tabbert and Rothko

Sara Tabbert won her "honorable mention" not only for her persistent work with her husky Rothko, but also in recognition of her ambitious race records this season, counting a bit short of some hundred miles. Here is her story about Rothko's steady improvements and how he finally settled his squabbles with kennel mate, Pete:

Rothko was given to me as a two year old midway through the 2006 season by my good friend and farm boss, Mike Emers. This was a somewhat reluctant decision on Mike's part, but with one newly adopted baby and another one headed their way, there wasn't much extra attention or patience for a dog that required a fair bit of both.

The strangest thing about Rothko is how different a dog he is on the trail than at any other time. While running, this worried, insecure, needy and somewhat pathetic dog turns into a focused, confident workhorse (pathetic meaning he's been beaten up by the cat.) I've had any number of friends who have run him, comment on how "you'd never guess he was such a good sled dog!" He is up for anything – sprint race, running with a strange dog team, running single lead, long skijor runs, hauling gear on cabin trips – and he is always calm, polite to other dogs, and just doesn't quit. Oh, but the rest of the time! Brandon and I say that he "just needs more" of everything – from more food and water to more attention and security. Perhaps naming a dog after a suicidal color field painter, was not the best idea (no, I did not name him!). Luckily, we seem to be able to buck him up and calm him down.

Unlike some applicants for this award we do not have a stunning race record. Rothko is from solid distance blood lines, but just not that fast. I am not a great athlete and sometimes don't provide him with a whole lot of help. However, for a variety of race and non-race reasons, I think this year was a big jump for Rothko and me.

As of this season, Rothko no longer gets car sick. This might seem like a small thing, but I could never give him any food or water for hours before we drove anywhere. Between the puking and the drooling, I would always end up with a thirsty dog and a messy car. It's hard to run well when you're dehydrated. Another improvement is that he no longer fights with my dog Pete on the trail. Although they are a strong, hard working team (plus, Pete knows commands, which Rothko has never quite mastered) they have never liked each other. This led to some ugly incidents on the trail during the first year I had Rothko. I ran these two apart for two seasons in the hope that they would outgrow their animosity. This season I held my breath and put them back together, and we made it without a single trail squabble in training or racing. They successfully completed two legs of the RAV, the Hamburger Run, and an ADMA race as a team. I am also proud to say that when they finally did get into a fight a few weeks ago, they did it in the yard, not the trail, and Rothko got Pete really good (and yes, Pete had it coming!). On the skier side, I also took two sessions of classes through the Nordic Club. What a revelation! Skate skiing is much easier and more efficient if you try and do it right.

Rothko and I will most likely never finish at the top of the field, but our performances together have shown respectable improvements. We dropped times off of both two dog and one dog races at ADMA, and although the timing on the 26 mile Hamburger Run was a bit dubious, we finished somewhere not too far off of the two hour mark. We also braved the LNAC, didn't come in last, and were not too terribly far off of the times of the two competitors ahead of us. Races, short or long, Rothko is my reliable guy for the job, and a good candidate for the Alder award.



Alder Award Winners Tobi (left) with his mom Gail Davidson and adopted sister Cocoa (right). Photo by Bud Marschner.



Alder Award runner-up Casper (left) with Don Kiely and Chance showing how much she LOVES to run. Photo by Chuck Deehr



Alder Award runner up Rothko (right) with pal Pete illustrating how "Team Couch" got its name. Photo by Sara Tabbert

2008-9 Season Crash Pool Report by Sara Elzey

This year I decided to challenge my fellow skijorers to join me in what I called the "Crash Pool." In order to participate, skijorers had to log each skijoring "adventure" and the number of times they crashed during each adventure! For each trip and each fall they put \$0.25 into the pot. At the end of the season I divided the number of crashes by the number of trips to determine each skijorers "crash percentage." The skijorer with the lowest percentage of crashes won the pot. There was confusion about whether we were counting "days" of skijoring or "trips" (as in two trips if you ran 2 different teams on the same day). We elected to count trips. I promised to keep everyone's crash percentages private (except from the other participants) so I will not include them here, but, I will tell you who the participants were and the finish order.

There were six participants including myself, Kimberlee Beckman, Lisa Baraff, Carol Kleckner, Don Kiely and Sara Tabbert. Everyone had a slightly different system for tracking their adventures and crashes. Kimberlee and Don were very organized and methodical, neatly recording the date, place, number of crashes and money owed to pot. Carol did pretty well tracking her many adventures but somehow missed an entire week early on in the season. Fortunately, she was able to piece it together from Don and my log sheets since we always skijor together. Sara T and Lisa's were the most interesting to read! Both of them did their list in a journalistic style complete with comments and expletives about the trail conditions, temperature, dog behavior, and their skiing ability. Sara even highlighted and capitalized her crashes so they stood out on the page! Lisa also tracked her mileage and went an impressive 330 miles with Hope & Luna this season. All participants said they enjoyed keeping track of their skijoring for the season. Some were horrified by their number of crashes, others were surprised that they fell less than expected.

The finish order ended up as follows: Sara E, Don, Kimberlee, Carol, Sara T, Lisa. Since it didn't seem right for me to administer the pool and win the pot I stepped aside and gave the winnings to runner-up, Don Kiely. Lisa suggested that the winner should have to wax her skis in exchange for her sizeable contribution to the pot! I thought this might not be fair to ask of Don(grin!) so I got a \$15 gift certificate for a ski wax donated from Raven Cross Country for Lisa's red lantern prize. The pot total ended up at \$144.25! Thanks to everyone for participating! Have a great summer everyone!

2008-9 Season Statistics by Sara Elzey

These statistics include Fun Races #'s 1-6, Race Across the Valley, Birch Hill and Orienteering, but do NOT include Fun Race #7 on March 29, 2009)

Total Number of racers: 61

Total Number of different classes/distances/# of dogs raced: 231

Total Miles races: 895.7

Number of 1-dog racers: 27

Number of 2-dog racers: 24

Number of 3-dog racers: 7

Most miles raced:

Sara Elzey, 50.8; Don Kiely, 43.1; Steven Sheehy, 35.8; Brian Charlton, 34.9; Carol Kleckner, 32.2; Peggy Raybeck, 32; Janna Miller, 29.1

Most classes raced:

Sara Elzey, 16, Don Kiely, 13, Carol Kleckner, 11; Peggy Raybeck, 10; Janna Miller, 10; Gail Davidson, 9; Bruce Miller, 8; Lisa Stuby, 8

Most first place finishes:

Carol Kleckner, 9; Sara Elzey, 8; Don Kiely, 6; Peggy Raybeck, 6; Brian Charlton, 4; Jim Herriges, 4; Bruce Miller, 3

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