

# PAW PRINTS & SKI TRACKS

*Hard to believe the winter is almost over. I am a little late at getting this last newsletter of the 2010/2011 season out due to lingering trails and a few other "die hard" skijorers and groomers who have been grooming what they can. I took my last skijoring excursion today, on April 20th. An abundant snow season coupled with some of the most dedicated trail groomers in the state has allowed us to skijor later than I can remember in the 22 years I have lived in Fairbanks. However, a forecast of 50°F and above is forecasted for next week. That's fine, I am ready for warmth, hiking, running, and fishing. Plus my dog and constant companion, Killae, is definitely ready for a change.*

*So, here is wishing all of you a good, fun, and safe summer. See you in the fall.*

## **ASP A Orienteering Race, Creamer's Field, March 20, 2011, Creamer's Field by Pat DeRuyter**

Thirteen people and 14 dogs enjoyed the beautiful sunny weather at Creamer's Field on Sunday afternoon to participate in the 9th Annual ASPA Orienteering Event. In the walk/run 60 minute class, Maria Bray and Natasha successfully defended their championship from 2010 by collecting all 1000 points in 51:30. Bud Marschner (Kazan) and Jamie Marschner (Bree) tied for second place with a total of 540 points each. Linda Bode (Cleo) finished third with a total of 390 points.

The skijor class had a more difficult time because the trails were still blocked from the Open North American Sleddog Race that was completed earlier in the day. There were a number of crashes reported as skijorers tried to negotiate the deep snow to get around the fences. In the 60 minute class, Lisa St Clair (Lark and Senna) came in first with a total of 630 points. Jim Altherr and Sophie were a close second with 580 points. Peggy Raybeck and Chico rounded out the top three with a total of 490 points. In the 30 minute skijor class, Gail Davidson and Cocoa won with a total of 560 points. Jesse Warwick and Joba were second with 410 points and Andy Warwick (Zip) came in a close third with 390 points. In the Youth 30 minute skijor class, Joe Bue and Fido won with a total of 420 points.

Many thanks to Pat DeRuyter for organizing this race and Clarice Dukeminier for valuable assistance. Without dedicated volunteers like these ladies, NONE of our races would have happened.

### **60 minute run/walk with your dog**

1. Maria Bray (Natasha) 1000 points in 51.30
2. Tie Bud Marschner (Kazan) 540 point  
Jamie Marschner (Bree) 540 points
3. Linda Bode (Cleo) 390 points

### **60 minute Skijor**

1. Lisa St Clair (Lark, Senna) 630 points
2. Jim Altherr (Sophie) 580 points
3. Peggy Raybeck (Chico) 490 points
4. Barb O'Donnell (Buddy) 340 points

### **30 minute Skijor**

1. Gail Davidson (Cocoa) 560 points
2. Jesse Warwick (Joba) 410 points
3. Andy Warwick (Zip) 390 points
4. Sara Elzey (Faero) 340 points

### **30 minute Youth Skijor**

1. Joe Bue (Fido) 420 points

### Fun Race #3, Creamer's Field, March 16, 2011 by Andy Warwick

Our annual ASPA March mid-week race took place this year one day before St. Patty's Day. Andy Warwick was the race director and timer, Pat DeRuyter was the starter, Carol Kleckner registered participants, and Don Kiely was the timer. Temperatures were +20F and the trails were perfectly groomed by Peggy Raybeck. Thanks to all of the volunteers and those who participated.

<b>ASPA Fun Race, Creamer's Field, Wednesday, March 16, 2011</b>				
<b>Bib #</b>	<b>Skijorer</b>	<b>Dogs</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Place</b>
<b>3.7 mile, one dog</b>				
5	Jesse Warwick	Joba	13:32	1
4	Bruce Miller	Roy	13:53	2
6	Ted Wu	Ty	14:52	3
3	Patrick Joyce	Apollo	14:57	4
2	Gail Davidson	Cocoa	17:42	5
1	Don Attwood	Harely	19:56	6
<b>3.7 mile, two dog</b>				
10	Erin Tochin	Clyde, Tarsis	13:08	1
7	Carol Kleckner	Jenny, Blackberry	13:09	2
9	Nina Ruckhaus	Sasha, Sam	14:18	3
12	Dana Truffer - Moudra	Cooper, Saphira	14:23	4
11	Matt Sprau	Itty, Wiggy	14:53	5
8	Kimberlee, Beckmen	Iris, Terry	17:00	6
<b>3.7 mile, three dog</b>				
0	Sara Elzey	Katrina, Daria, Kate	11:59	1
16	Sara Elzey	Faero, Tas, Avril	12:47	2
<b>2.7 mile, one dog</b>				
17	Sunnifa Deehr	Chipper	12:29	1
15	Kristen DeGroot	Finnley	17:15	2
<b>2.7 mile, two dog</b>				
13	Sara Elzey	Ayla, Dylan	10:43	1
14	Jim Herriges	Lily, Lena	10:55	2
<b>1.5 mile, one dog</b>				
19	Jim Herriges	Ole	5:32	1
18	Kimberlee Beckmen	Lily	5:42	2
20	Liz Kane	Black Bart	6:25	3
21	Paula Ruckhaus	Sasha	8:13	4
<b>1 K, old dog (11 or older)</b>				
22	Gail Davidson	Tobi	3:30	1

### Fun Race #4, Musher's Hall, 3/27/2011 by Andy Warwick

This was the final race of the year for ASPA. The race took place on the ADMA trails. The weather was perfect. During the BBQ and member meeting, Jamie Marschner was reelected President for the 2011-2012 season. Two new Board members: Sunnifa Deehr and Matt Sprau joined us. Pat DeRuyter was given a special award for keeping and coordinating trail grooming during a very prolific and taxing snow year. Pat was also the volunteer of year (unanimously). Don Kiely and Carol Kleckner's dog Caster won the Alder award. Race volunteers were Pat DeRuyter - registration and race starter, Carol Altherr - registration, Sara Tabbert - timing, Alice Stickney - timing, and Petra Uotila - BBQ griller. Andy Warwick was race director. Bud Marschner took numerous photos of the event and posted them on his photo site (<http://budsalaskaphotos.smugmug.com/Skijoring>).

#### Fun Race #4, Final ASPA Race, ADMA trails

Bib #	Skijorer	Dogs	Time	Place
<b>1 mile, one dog</b>				
2	Kimbelee Beckmen	Lily	4:01	1
19	Paula Ruckhaus	Sasha	4:54	2
<b>1.7 mile, two dog</b>				
18	Mollie Murray	Maggie, Lindsey	7:52	1
<b>3.7 mile, three dog</b>				
14	Andy Warwick	Zip, Licorice, Boots	14:02	1
1	Sara Elzey	Ayla, Faero, Dylan	14:22	2
<b>3.7 mile, two dogs</b>				
15	Nina Ruckhaus	Sasha, Sam	16:40	1
12	Erin Atwood	Coho, Suka	28:52	2
<b>3.7 mile, one dog</b>				
16	Mike Ruckhaus	Tracker	20:25	1
17	Jim Altherr	Sophie	41:24	2
<b>4.5 mile, three dogs</b>				
20	Sara Elzey	Katrina, Daria, Kate	15:55	1
<b>4.5 mile, two dogs</b>				
6	Carol Kleckner	Jenny, Blackberry	17:26	1
<b>4.5 mile, one dog</b>				
9	Jesse Warwick	Joba	19:26	1
8	Sunnifa Deehr	Chipper	20:56	2
7	Patrick Joyce	Apollo	22:22	3
11	Gail Davidson	Cocoa	23:50	4
10	Don Atwood	Harley	24:22	5
<b>5.9 mile, three dog</b>				
5	Don Kiely	Casper, Chance, Millie	27:18	1
<b>5.9 mile, one dog</b>				
13	Kimberlee Beckmen	Iris	31:03	1
0	Lisa Stuby	Killae	51:00	2
0	Jamie Marschner	Bree	51:00	2
<b>7.7 mile, one dog</b>				
4	Peggy Raybeck	Chico	41:45	1
<b>7.7 mile, two dog</b>				
3	Janna Miller	Lilly, Roy	37:04	1

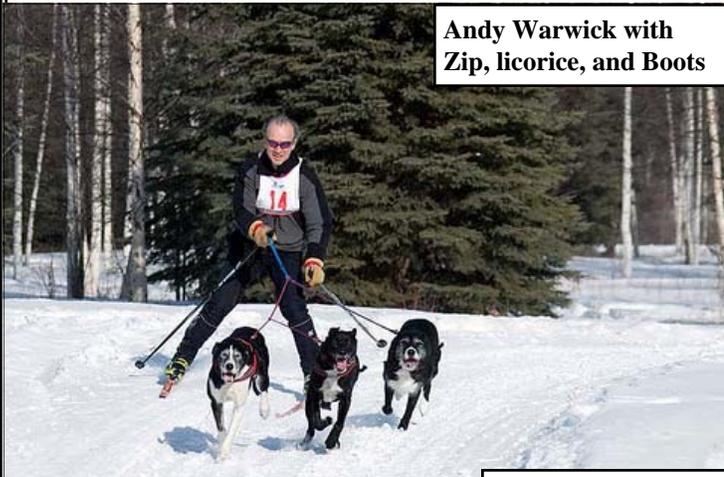
#### 1-Mile Mass Start

Nina Ruckhaus	1
Sara Elzey	2
Janna Miller	3
Mollie Murray	4
Kimberlee Beckmen	5
Patrick Joyce	6
Peggy Raybeck	7
Sunnifa Deehr	8
Andy Warwick	9
Mike Ruckhaus	10
Gail Davidson	11
Lisa Stuby	12



Peggy Raybeck and Chico who completed the 7.7 mile, one dog race.

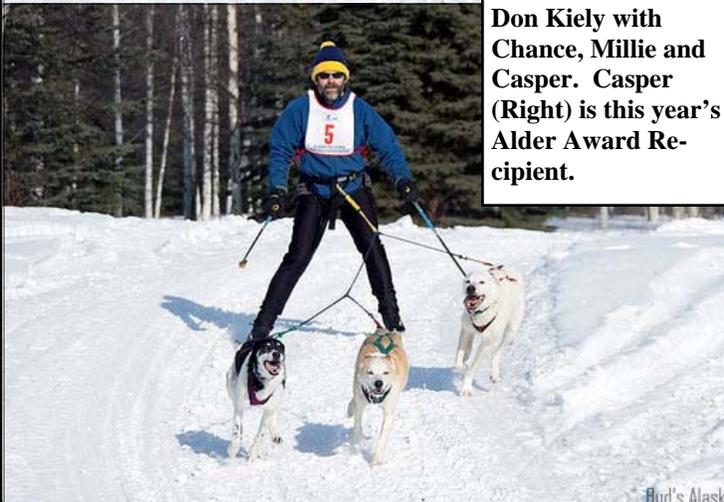
**More Photographs from Fun Race #4. All photos by Bud Marschner.**



**Andy Warwick with Zip, licorice, and Boots**



**Nina Ruckhaus with Sasha and Sam**



**Don Kiely with Chance, Millie and Casper. Casper (Right) is this year's Alder Award Recipient.**



**Off and running! Participants in the 1-mile mass start.**

**2010-11 Crash Pool Results by Sara Elzey**

For those who don't know what the Crash Pool is, let me explain, it's really quite simple. The skier logs each skijoring trip and notes if they crash on that trip. They contribute \$0.25/ trip & \$0.25 per crash to the pool. Some folks also like to track their mileage and the location of each trip. At the end of the season we divide the number of crashes by the number of trips to find the "crash percentage." The person with the lowest crash percentage wins the pool. The crash percentages are revealed only to the other members of the pool, not to the general public just in case anyone feels sensitive about it.

This season there were 4 souls brave enough to admit that they kept track of their crashes: myself, Don Kiely, Sara Tabbert, and Kimberlee Beckmen. The Saras made the most number of trips so their contributions to the pool were quite a bit more than Don & Kimberlee's. Sara Tabbert went the most miles again this year, over 660, and with only 4 dogs! Sara Elzey was close behind her, traveling about 530 miles but she was training 10 dogs, some of her own and some that belonged to a friend. Kimberlee had the most consistent schedule, going regularly and traveling a similar distance for each trip. In the end Don Kiely ended up taking home the pool with an impressive ONE crash for the entire season! That is really quite amazing, go Don! The total pool was \$85.

I hope that others will join us in this fun activity for next year. Even if you feel like you fall too often, don't be embarrassed! I find it quite interesting to see how far and how many places I get to in a season regardless of how often I fall.



### White Mountains Adventure to Eleazar's Cabin, March 19-20, 2011 by Erin Atwood

Shhhhwoosh, shhhhwoosh, shhhhwoosh is the distinct sound of my poles against the snow as I add human power to that of the dog pulling in front of me. It's a sound that evokes the interwoven feelings of serenity and excitement, peace and passion all bundled up with the smells of sweat and dog that I've come to associate as the "Skijor" experience.

On March 19th I was the snowmachine support for a small group of skijorers who set out from the trailhead at Wickersham Dome for a 12 mile trip to Eleazar's cabin. Each was seeking their own skijor experience. Janna with Roy and Lilly, Don Atwood with Harley, Sarah with Rothko and Pete, and Lisa with Killae. Although mine was not to be a "Skijor" experience, it would be "dog bonding" experience; snowmachining with my quirky, neurotic lab Suka running alongside me.

A thin gauze of high clouds veiled the sun and the trail was easy on the skis on the way out. The dogs eagerly took off from the trailhead as I lagged behind the group so as not to ablate their shhhhwooshs with the sounds of my engine. At the turn off to Lee's cabin Don, the organizer of this trip, said his goodbyes to the group of women who would continue on for another 7 miles to Eleazar's. Don reluctantly had to return home in preparation for a midnight flight—another business trip interfering with the precious few weekends available to enjoy Alaskan winter adventures.

Sarah and Jana arrived at Eleazar's first. Janna was grateful that the last uphill mile to the cabin was made a bit easier because Roy and Lilly were inspired to chase the snowmachine after I passed her at the bottom of the hill. About an hour later Lisa arrived with Killae ready to settle in for a peaceful evening that was turning out to be "ladies night" at the cabin. Sarah couldn't stay the night with us, so after a few hours of conversation and snacks she hooked up her dogs and headed home. Just about dusk, we opened up the wine and began preparations for a chili dinner when our dogs loudly announced that more skijorers had arrived.

Kevin and Katrina arrived just in time for dinner. They had missed the meet-up at the trail head and had to pulk in their gear. Their trip had been a first long distance skijor for Katrina. The night proceeded with good conversation, food and entertainment as our dogs cominged and settled in to sleep.

Sunday morning greeted us with bright, sunny, clear skis and an oatmeal breakfast. A very grateful Kevin added the majority of his and Katrina's gear to the sled and we headed out once again for a beautiful day of experiencing Alaska with our dogs. My quirky Suka gladly took advantage of the snowmachine and rode between my arms on the one long stretch of uphill trail. She may be neurotic but she's not stupid. Even so, our pace was slow and Jana stayed ahead of us the majority of time.

I spent a little time pestering Lisa and Jana as I filmed them skijoring with their dogs. But for the most part, Suka and I lingered far enough away from the skijorers so we wouldn't interfere with their experience and partake in our own.

Jana and I arrived at the trailhead first, and after stowing gear and the snowmachine, we snacked on imported cheese and waited for Lisa and Killae to arrive. Kevin and Katrina requested that we not wait for them. They expected a slow day on the trail. After Lisa arrived we said our goodbyes and headed home, content with this year's White Mountain adventure and looking forward to next year's.



**Erin Atwood with Suka hauling out the gear (Left).**

**Lily Miller posing for the camera as the snow machine gets packed (Right)**



## THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

The ASPA events that we all enjoyed during the 2010/2011 season would NOT have happened without all of the dedicated volunteers listed below. We thank them for a very fun winter of skijoring events.

### Groomers Extraordinaire

Pat DeRuyter  
Jim Altherr  
Brian Charlton  
Chuck Deehr  
Clarice Dukeminier  
Jim Herriges  
Carol Kleckner  
Don Morton  
Peggy Raybeck  
Wendy Shiffler  
Andy Warwick  
Jesse Warwick

### Board members and Coordinators

President – Jamie Marschner  
Vice President - Carol Kleckner  
Treasurer - Sara Elzey  
Secretary – Mara Bacsujlaky  
Trail Tour Coordinators – Don Atwood,  
Janna Miller, Sara Tabbert  
Fun Race Coordinator – Andy Warwick  
Hotline Coordinator – Carol Kleckner  
Newsletter Coordinator - Lisa Stuby  
Program Coordinator – Jamie Marschner  
Website Coordinator – Don Kiely  
Permits – Don Atwood  
Birch Hill Race Coordinator - Jim Herriges  
White Mountains Event – Don Atwood  
Beginners Clinics - Sara Elzey  
Training Clinics – Lisa Stuby  
Race Across the Valley Coordinators – Sara  
Elzey, Brian Charlton, Carol Kleckner  
Board members – Don Morton

### ASPA Program and Sponsors

Jamie Marschner  
Don Atwood  
Pat DeRuyter  
Sara Elzey  
Rebecca Gilbert  
Jim Herriges  
Don Kiely  
Carol Kleckner  
Janna Miller  
Sara Tabbert  
Andy Warwick

### Dryland Race

Sara Elzey  
Andy Warwick  
Lisa Baraff  
Janna Miller  
Don Morton

### ADMA Symposium

Jamie Marschner

### Snowmachine Grant

Jim Herriges

### North Star Plowing

Aaron Hawkins

### Fall Membership Meeting

Jamie Marschner  
Carol Kleckner

### Creamer's Trail Signs/Snow Filling

Pat DeRuyter  
Jim Altherr  
Jim Herriges  
Peggy Raybeck  
Lisa Stuby

### Trash Bags/Trash Cans

Peggy Raybeck  
Beginners Clinic  
Sara Elzey  
Carol Kleckner  
Mara Bacsujlaky  
Peggy Raybeck  
Alice Stickney  
Ted Wu

### Practice Clinic

Lisa Stuby

### Fun Races

Pat DeRuyter  
Andy Warwick  
Julie Biddle  
Don Kiely  
Charlie and Jenny Mahlen  
Janna Miller  
Don Morton  
Peggy Raybeck  
Lisa Stuby

### North Star Golf Course

Melinda Evans  
Roger Evans

### Race Across the Valley

Sara Elzey  
Brian Charlton  
Carol Kleckner  
Janet Daley  
Pat DeRuyter  
Clarice Dukeminier  
Jason Garron  
Don Kiely  
Janna Miller  
Lisa Stuby  
Sara Tabbert  
Andy Warwick  
Distance Race  
Sara Tabbert

### White Mountains Event

Don Atwood  
Erin Atwood

### Birch Hill Race

Jim Herriges  
Jim Altherr  
Don Atwood  
Ricky Borland  
Pat DeRuyter  
Sara Elzey  
Dale Griffin  
Tom Helmers  
Bill Husby  
Liz Kane  
Bruce and Janna Miller  
Peggy Raybeck  
Lisa and Tom St. Clair  
Lisa Stuby  
Jeff Wells

### Orienteering Race

Pat DeRuyter  
Clarice Dukeminier

### Fun Race and Barbecue

Carol Kleckner  
Jamie Marschner  
Pat DeRuyter  
Carol Altherr  
Sara Tabbert  
Alice Stickney  
Petra Uotila  
Andy Warwick

**ANYONE WHO WAS MISSED**

### Thank you to the ASPA sponsors for the 2010/2011 season

Many thanks to all of the sponsors who supported our activities. Some give money and some give in-kind donations, the latter of which go to prizes and other kinds of support. Others gave cash to support all our activities, including all the trail grooming we do. If you do business with any of these companies (and please do!) or know them, the next time you visit them, please THANK them for supporting the club. Let them know their sponsorship makes a difference. And if you know any other companies or anyone who would be a good sponsor for ASPA, especially if you know the owners or managers, please either ask them this summer or let a board member know. We'll be starting to line up sponsors for the 2011-12 season around mid summer. This is one of the summer jobs your board members take on.

49er Feed Distributors (no longer around, but still want to acknowledge their past support)

AK/J Architecture, Inc.

Alaska Feed Company

Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.

Animal House & Noah's Ark

Apocalypse Design

Aurora Animal Clinic

Beaver Sports

Cold Spot Feeds

Denali Chiropractic

Gambardella's Pasta Bella

Hausle Johnson Tile

Jammin' Salmons Physical & Nutritional Therapies

Mt. McKinley Animal Hospital

Mushing Magazine

North Pole Veterinary

North Star Golf Club

Play It Again Sports

Raven Cross Country

Sara Tabbert/Marmot Press

SkijorNow.com

Splash n Dash

Warwick and Schikora, CPAs

### 2011 Alder Award

**Over the next few pages are the three top entries, including the winner of this year's Alder Award. Thanks to Alice Stickney who along with Zephyr was last year's winner, for judging this year's entrants. Also, many thanks to Tone and Charles Deehr for holding this award. Here are the second and first runner's up followed by this year's winner.**

#### **Journeyman Danse Du Lis OA AXJ NF, aka "Lily" by Kimberlee Beckmen**

I got Lily as a companion dog, never intending her to be a sleddog or skijor dog. I learned Agility with her so she could have a 'job'. Belgians are extreme high energy dogs, about a half a notch below a border collie, so without work, physical and mental, they will become destructive. Agility is mainly a summer/fall sport so when the snow fell, and it was too deep for me to easily walk her at Creamers, I put on my skis and put her in harness. It took about 2 minutes for her to get the idea and we were off and never looked back. Last winter, Lily demonstrated that she is not a sleddog, she cannot self regulate her speed. She has one speed, full bore, for about a half a mile, and then she dives into the snow and tunnels like a fox hunting voles.

Fifteen seconds later, she is dashing off, only to unpredictably dive into the snow with no warning. This has made it quite difficult for me, and especially for my other dog, Iris, who gets jerked back suddenly. I found that running her single, although frustrating with the stops, was probably best. I even ran her at Birch Hill in the relay, as an after thought since she was in the car. Unbelievably, we won! Mainly it was because I was on Jim and Bruce's team. Lily ran great until just before we entered the stadium, when she dove into the snow to rest. I couldn't get her going, she just didn't know the finish line and all her cheering fans were just out of sight!

However, this year, was different and incredible. I worked hard to slowly put the miles on her, working her up slowly. She was able to stretch it out to a mile before diving into the snow. I even put her in a 3 dog team and drove them 6 miles with a sled to a cabin on New Years. We stopped to rest every mile or so but she did grand. The trip out was a breeze, only stopping 3 times and only once was it her calling the shots! I raced her in two of the RAV races, and we did respectively in partnership with Iris but it was when I hooked her up alone, that I found out what she could really do. At Birch Hill, I ran her in the relay. Unfortunately, I popped the quick release at the end of the stadium, she headed after the rest of the dogs, but I called her back. As I tried to re-attach the skijor line, she barked and grabbed the line with her mouth, trying to yank me to get going. She couldn't believe everyone else leaving with out her!

### Lily (Cont.)

It seemed like an eternity, everyone else was at the top of the hill when we took off, and Lily, all 45 pounds of fluff, powered up that hill (I seriously cannot skate up that hill on my own, I've never made it) and we caught up quickly!

However, when we hit the sharp hair pin left going up, I again stalled out, so Lily grabbed the line in her mouth and started yanking me up the hill again, barking and then yanking! Once we got going, we just couldn't quite catch up but it wasn't for her lack of trying. So, at the Wed night fun race, I entered Lily in the 1.5 mile. We took off like the proverbial bats out of Hell. I was astounded that we did the entire 1.5 mile with out a single stop (albeit she didn't stop at Birch Hill either, it was me) and came in a blazing second place, only 10 seconds behind Jim Herriges and Ole! It seems every one was astounded. Andy asked "what kind of dog is that!" and Bruce said, "man that dog is fast, when she runs FORWARD!". I was so proud. So now, we just run single, short runs and Iris and I go on the long runs with out Lily, every one is happy. I also train with Lily two days a week for Agility. It was for a trial in February in Wasilla, we missed the RAV at UAF. It was so worth it though because she got her Open Standard Agility title, which we'd been working at a long time. In addition, she had the most perfect fast, CLEAN RUN (the goal of all agility) in Excellent B Jumpers With Weaves on the first day, only the 3<sup>rd</sup> dog to run of the whole trial. I almost cried with joy.

It has been an incredible year with Lily, she clearly demonstrated to me that she loves skijoring, even more than Agility (probably because she can run as fast as she wants, where she wants and she doesn't have to slow down for all those dang obstacles!). She has also learned to be a fantastic Frisbee dog. If only I could learn to throw it right. Now we need to learn Tracking, Rally and Herding next and to earn titles in all of those so she can win the right to put VT (Versatile Terv) title after her name

### First Runner Up, Dylan Elzey

I would like to nominate by pointer/husky mix, Dylan or Dillie as we call her. I got Dylan from Amanda Byrd almost 2 years ago. I had lost my first dog, Shadow, a few months earlier and was still seriously mourning him. I didn't feel an instant bond with Dylan, but she sounded like she would fit into our family, and she did. She was afraid of the cat, and very respectful to my old husky Myst and played with my younger husky, Ayla. She loved being in the house and never had an accident or got into anything. I was quickly able to loose walk her and she did well bike-joring. All seemed good. Winter came and I was very excited to try skijoring with her. We went 8 or 10 times, sometimes with Ayla, and sometimes with some of Carol Kleckner's dogs in 2 or 3 dog teams. She did great, she was strong & fast. Then one cold day running with an insecure leader she quit on me a quarter mile from the start. Worried that something was wrong with her we came right back to the car. The next time out I took her with a strong, confident leader. Same thing! This time I let her loose, worried that she was injured but she ran around just fine. I went back to the car, hooked up another strong leader, put Dylan in wheel and went back out. We made it maybe a mile and she stopped dead, refused to go no matter how hard the two leaders tried to drag her. I had never had a dog quit on me before! I was completely mystified. This continued for the rest of the season. I tried running her with different dogs but it made no difference and was stressing out the other dogs. I finally had to run her alone. Sometimes she did okay, other times she would stop dead and I would have to just hang out on the trail with her. I tried excessive encouragement, I tried yelling at her, I even tapped her rump with my ski pole. Nothing seemed to matter, some days she did okay, other days not. I was at my wits end. I even briefly contemplated finding a new home for her. But she was such a nice dog in all other ways I decided not to give up on her. I remembered how much it helped Myst & I to bond and learn to communicate to go to an obedience class so I thought I would try this with Dylan. We signed up and Dylan loved it! We got introduced to some agility obstacles and she really got into it. Summer came & I spent lots of time with Dylan. In the fall we signed up for beginning agility class. I made a promise to her that if she skijored with me in the coming season I would go to agility class with her. We had a deal. Winter came and I started out slowly, never pushing her too hard, only running her with my dogs, Ayla & Faero, often letting Ayla run loose so she had something to chase as well as a calm solid dog next to her. We didn't go very far, she always wore a jacket, and if it was below zero I left her in the car. She did well, never quit and only once or twice acted like she thought about it. She even acted like she enjoyed herself some. By the race at UAF I thought that she was ready to run with faster dogs. I raced her with the two fastest dogs from the group of Amanda's dogs that I was training for the season. They did great and we won! I was so proud of her. Next up was Birch Hill and North Pole, back to back. I had not yet run her two days in a row so I thought it might be a stretch but I raced Dylan with Katrina & Daria in both races and she did well again, we placed first and second. I decided she was up for racing in the Limited North American Championships. It has been a lot of years since I had dogs that I felt could race 3 days in a row. I was excited, yet nervous. Well, I need not have been. Dylan did great, and so did the other two. We averaged 18.38 miles an hour over the 3 days of racing and came in first place in the 3-dog class. Granted there was only 1 other competitor in the class but the dogs did really well none the less. I was so pleased. Dylan is still a bit nervous about running in lead, but she has come a long ways since last year and I couldn't be more proud of her. I think that she is very deserving of winning the Alder Award.



**2011 ASPA Alder Award Recipient, Casper by Don Kiely**

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 9—we don't know for sure—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.

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 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, and *her* inner strength. So in a small way, Casper led me to love. Good boy!



**Chasing the voles a snowy-faced Lily who was a runner up in this year's Alder Award.**

**Smile Dillie! Dylan and mom Sara Elzey showing that not only can she skijor, but she is also a "ham in front of the cam". Photo by Sara Elzey**

**The Alder Award winner, Casper, is on page 4 running very fast. .**

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**Paw Prints and Ski Tracks** is a monthly newsletter published during the winter season by the Alaska Skijoring and Pulk Association. Computer and photo shop consultancy has been provided by Bud Marschner. The coordinating editor of Paw Prints and Ski Tracks is Lisa Stuby. Your comments, articles and pictures are greatly appreciated. Please e-mail the information before the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month to lisa.stuby@alaska.gov.

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