Fun Facts & Trivia

Last month we asked the question: "Which year did Paul and his team win the "Fastest Time From Safety To Nome" award in the Iditarod?"

If you guessed 1998, you were right!

This is a recognition awarded by the Nome Kennel Club is one of the longest-standing awards in Iditarod history. It acknowledges the Top Twenty team that makes the fastest time between the final Iditarod checkpoint at the Safety Roadhouse to the finish line on Front Street in Nome. Paul's team made the trip in 2 hours, 12 minutes and 48 seconds.

Here's the question for next month: There's a picture of Paul's famous lead dog, Red Dog, above. What year did this canine athlete win the prestigious Lily Meadley Golden Harness Award?

Gebhardt—Morning View Kennel

**Iditarod 2010 Mushing Season Update**

*By Evy Gebhardt © Morning View Kennel* Paul & Evy Gebhardt

**Sponsor Highlight:**
Ever wonder what a funeral home has to do with a sled dog team? It has been the source for a lot of good natured kidding about versions of sled designs that Paul might take down the trail, but truly—the role of Janssen Funeral Chapels to our Iditarod program is tremendous. Owners Scott and Debbie Janssen, as well as their extended network of family and friends, have become an integral part of our team. "Team Janssen" is what they should be called, because not unlike the unconditional level of care they bring to families who have lost a loved one, they give unconditionally to help our professional mushers. "Team Janssen" has transformed the shoreline, and often deposit a thick layer of uneven rocks and pebbles at the high tide mark which are not easy to pass through, as well as the necessity to be cognizant of the timing of the daily tide changes. Cook Inlet is prone to extreme variances between low and high tide, and could easily become a dangerous platform if you were caught unaware by the fast-moving tide as it squeezes out the narrow strip of shoreline between the water and the steep bluffs that rim the edge of the ocean here.

So until the weather changes, you can see Paul and Kristy with the teams stretched out in front of the ATVs, padding through mud puddles instead of sandy beach to run on when the trails were plagued with thick ice crystals after one heavy overnight freeze. But this is not typical helping out at the race starts due to the necessity of being near the kennel.

**The “Dog Days” of .... AUTUMN????**

Kasilof, Alaska

With green grass and balmy temperatures reaching over 50˚ F degrees in the long shadows of afternoon sunshine, it feels more like late summer here at the kennel than the tail end of October. While we've been kissed by promises of winter with frost on the ground a couple of mornings, and the mountain peaks are all dressed in white, the thermometer has been hovering in the temperate range for the majority of the time these past several weeks—well above normal for this time of year in our part of Alaska. Despite the temperatures more like the dogs days of summer, fall training continues on. Paul and Kristy are already beginning to map out some mid distance races for the season, but with the warm weather, it seems unreal that the start of the 2010 Iditarod is now only 4 months away.

Without the lack of cold weather and snow, the daily training runs up until this point have been delegated to the dirt and gravel trails nearby the kennel. A few times, Paul and Kristy have taken the teams down to the shoreline of nearby Cook Inlet, and used that sandy beach to run on when the trails were plagued with thick ice crystals after one heavy overnight freeze. But this is not something our team is unfamiliar with.

Paul's favored location, nor the dogs. The ever-changing tides continually transform the shoreline, and often deposit a thick layer of uneven rocks and pebbles at the high tide mark which are not easy to pass through, as well as the necessity to be cognizant of the timing of the daily tide changes. Cook Inlet is prone to extreme variances between low and high tide, and could easily become a dangerous platform if you were caught unaware by the fast-moving tide as it squeezes out the narrow strip of shoreline between the water and the steep bluffs that rim the edge of the ocean here.

So until the weather changes, you can see Paul and Kristy with the teams stretched out in front of the ATVs, padding through mud puddles instead of snowdrifts, and wearing sunscreen instead of parkas.

Sheep Mountain 150 First Race of the Season!

While some people are thinking about Christmas cards and decorating for the holidays, December has an added bonus for the mushing community, with the first race of the season scheduled just prior to the Christmas celebrations. The 150 mile Sheep Mountain race, which is run in the shadows of its namesake in the region of Alaska that skirts the area between the Copper River Basin and the scenic Matanuska River delta, marks the beginning of the “2010” race season. It is a relatively new event, that grew in popularity for a variety of reasons. It is one of the most scenic races around, with an out and back course that challenges mushers with some fairly steep terrain. And while there is not much of a purse to contend for, it does bring together a surprisingly high caliber of contenders who are eager to stretch their legs and test out their teams as they head into the full racing season.

Paul last ran this event in 2004 (placing 4th with our then-young team). This year, we will have not only Paul and Kristy leaving the starting line of the Sheep Mountain 150, but our friend, Scott Janssen of Janssen Funeral Homes will also be taking to the trail with a team from our kennel as well. Stay tuned for more details on this event!
DOES THE “BEST LOOKING MUSHER ON THE TRAIL” HAVE NEW COMPETITION???

For those of you that have followed my updates over Paul’s mushing career, you will know that he has carried the title as “the best looking musher on the trail” for some time. Before we were able to go online and follow the mushers progress during the race, we used to call in on a bank of phones manned by volunteers for that information. It would be fun to have volunteers remember me calling, and know which musher it was that I was referring to when I asked for the location of the best looking musher on the trail. Well, if the phone lines were still there, I might have some explaining to do if anyone too k a close look at our handler, Kristy. If you recall last month, I introduced you to Kristy Berington, who will be running a second team from our kennel in the Iditarod as a rookie musher in the 2010 race. I can’t say enough good about Kristy, and she has fit right into our kennel and our family. Hardworking, driven, polite, upbeat are all words that I would use to describe Kristy. She is completely hands on in every facet of the kennel, and I do believe that Paul’s aging leader, Houston, has taken a complete shine to her.

Paul tells a story of a run the two of them were on out in the hilly terrain of the southern Kenai Peninsula last season. Paul’s team was leading, and Kristy was coming up behind him with Houston in the lead position. The trail came down a steep hill and made a hard 90 degree corner at the bottom. Paul’s team went screaming around the corner, and as he was turning back to holler at Kristy to hit the brake and take the corner slow—he says he could swear that Houston knew exactly what he was doing. Instead of racing pell-mell around the corner like Paul’s team had done, Houston intentionally slowed the pace of the team and WALKED around the corner for her! What a gentleman. (And yes—if you were wondering... Kristy DID catch this monster King Salmon herself. Thanks to our good friends Rick Schmeig and Dick with RW’s Fishing on the famous Kenai River)