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Dog Mushing, Anchorage Fur Rendezvous Race 1972

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Notes: Original in 7-inch tape, master copy on CD. Produced by Roger McPherson. THESE TAPES WERE PRODUCED AS A PART OF AN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM NOW DEFUNCT AND WERE BROADCAST OVER THE RADIO FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.

Tape begins with Carl [Huntington] telling about the dog race and his problems, but the recording ends abruptly.

At 1:12 the recording begins again from the beginning where the interviewer asks Carl to talk about the previous day's race. He thinks it was a good race for him. There were some time-keeping problems: Dr. Lombard was recorded 2 minutes faster than he actually was. Dr. Lombard had some problems and also Carl himself had quite a bit of problems. He changed leaders and got out of trail, but, all and all, he was satisfied with his day. He dropped 4 dogs, but doesn't think that that will affect his performance too much and that 12 dogs can do as good as 16. He hopes the 12 can go for the remaining 2 days.

The 12 dogs are not all Carl's. He tells he got lots of them from the villages, from Galena and Huslia, Nulato, Koyukuk and those places. Lots of people lend him dogs and he really appreciates that. He also got dogs from Pete Shepard last week and he's got 3 of them running in his team.

At 2:30 the interviewer asks if Carl had any real problems with dogs running off the trail. He says he did on Gamble Crossing. That is an 8 lane highway where he got completely off the trail. If it wasn't for the policeman, he thinks he would still be going down the highway. It's hard to stop 16 dogs and they were "dragging on the pavement." He managed to get the dogs turned back to the trail and Carl really appreciated the help from the policeman.

He has been training his dogs for the race for since September. The interviewer wants to know if the temperature difference between Galena and Anchorage has been hurting the dogs. Carl says his dogs aren't affected since he has been in Anchorage for about a month now and the dogs have had time to adjust to weather and city life.

Talking about his lead dogs: Yesterday he went out with Rex and Tiger and those are the leaders, but young Rex took him off the trail because of some stray dogs and so Carl put one of his old leaders in front. Today he will run Tiger and put there an older dog from Leo Crisca [sp? Kreska?]. The dog's name is Queenie. He thinks he'll have a good run if Queenie keeps out of the way and if the dogs will stay on the trail.

4:16 the interviewer asks how long Carl has been racing dogs. He tells that it's his fourth year now. He grew up with dogs, but had to go to school like all the young people should and he had some "lean years" while he was growing up. When he got out of school, he got back into dogs.

He races his own dogs and had just started raising pups. He listened to lots of old-timers like Hugh Biafold [sp? Possibly Bifelt?] and Tony Salmon who taught him a lot and also his father has helped him tremendously.

He feeds his dogs Casco meal with lots of vitamins to augment what Casco lacks. Carl uses lots of Wesson oil and rice and whatever the dog needs.

In today's race, Dr. Lombard is going to be in front of him in the starting position. Gary [unclear, Gareth Wright?], a famous musher, is behind Carl so he's between two top-notch mushers. [Break in the recording.]

At 5:58 the interviewer asks Gareth about his placing in the second leg of the Rendezvous. Gareth says he's going out as a number 3 and he has Dr. Lombard and Carl Huntington before him. There's 15 seconds between Carl and him. The interviewer says Carl will be running 12 dogs and asks how many Gareth has. He says he had to cut down too and is running with 11 or 12 dogs. His lead dogs are from Bill Taylor and their names are Alice and Ruby.

The interviewer wants to know how his dogs are doing in Anchorage weather and Gareth says it's affecting them somewhat. He had a couple of really good dogs out

of which one “went down” because of the heat. He had a few problems with passing during the previous day’s race and the trail was pretty soft and it broke a lot. All the teams towards the back had that problem.

7:11 Gareth passed 9 or 10 teams the previous day and Lombard passed 11. He didn’t have trouble with passes except for the last two or three when he got a few tangles. He probably lost a couple of minutes, but thinks that everybody else had similar problems.

The interviewer asks what he feeds his dogs during the race and he tells he feeds them Purina and a little bit of fish and whale blubber for extra oil. Gareth’s strategy today is to go as fast as the dogs can run and he is hoping to catch Carl and Lombard. He only “paddles” [kicks on the side of the sled] when the dogs need help. Otherwise he won’t waste his energy. Most of the time, he has to do lots of work when he comes back from Cordova and he doesn’t have much energy to start [the race] with. His dogs are running good in this race. They could run faster, but the trail isn’t conducive for their fastest speeds.

His runners are made of Petex. It works well, but he has to change the runners every day since gravel and sand tears it up. The sled holds up well, but the runners need replacing.

Gareth has several handlers to help him: Ralf Purdue [possibly Perdue?], Mike and Roxie Brooks, and Al Chase. His wife is handling him. The interviewer thanks for the interview. [Break in the recording.]

At 9:30 Emmett Peters from Ruby introduces himself. It’s his second day and he’s glad to be in the Rendezvous Race. They had good friends, like Lana Richfield [sp?], who lent them “everything they’ve got”. Emmett had a tough day yesterday and is expecting to have a tough day today since he lost 4 dogs due to cuts. Some of them crippled. He lost the dogs on the coming home stretch on the 25-miles. The dogs got tangled with the team that was passing him. That’s a name of the game and one can’t complain about it too much.

All his dogs are his own except for one that belongs to his dog handler, Scotty Bound. He hopes they will have better luck next year. It should be a good year for him next year since they have lots of young prospects coming up. This year he

started with 13 dogs, but now he is down to 9 and tomorrow it's hopefully the same bunch.

His main lead dog is Nugget and the back-ups are Fiji and Digger. The interviewer asks if he's been training a lot for the race, but Emmett tells he wasn't too sure if he could race since he doesn't have sponsors. He was just doing his natural thing with training: few miles here and there. Richfields did everything they could [to fund the race] and Emmett is sure they will do it again the following year. It's a good prospect for the young people along the Yukon.

The interviewer asks how many dog teams there are in the Ruby –area. He says there are 4 or 5 and there should be more in the next couple of years. He doesn't think he has one of the faster teams in the area, but he's experimenting on a dog [probably means with the dogs]. He thinks he's got a fairly good team, not the fastest, but they do the job. He wishes he had more help but says that maybe in next couple of years he will.

At 12:15 they are discussing dog feeding: Emmett says that Purina is recommended “right now” and they use vitamins too. Some mushers use Casco, but Emmett sticks with Purina because it digests better and he put lots of vitamins in. If they would switch to Casco or any other brand, they'd have lots of problems with the dogs. They had lots of sickness: first the coughs, then the flu. The dogs didn't seem to get over it.

The interviewer asks about Emmett's position and he tells that today he started being 11th and he passed 5 teams, but he had lots of tangles and he went the wrong trail. When one is on a trail, there's not much help. “When you are on the trail, you are on your own”.

He had Marten and Scotty Bound [sp? Bowen?] for handlers. The interviewer asks if he uses the dogs for other purposes besides racing. He tells he used to haul wood and water with them, but thinks that he will stick with racing since if one uses dogs to work, it changes their attitude. Working dogs and racing dogs should be different.

Dogs at the race are really made for racing and they are heavy-set dogs. When one has a race-hound, it needs to be between 50 to 45 pounds. That's a good built. His

dogs are medium built, weighing between 32 to 45 pounds. Top mushers like [George] Attla have the real speed-hounds, but, of course, they have been racing for a long time and Emmett expects it to take a while when he learns. He's one of the guys who are learning the hard way since he doesn't get information from anybody. He just goes out and tries. Lots of people give him credit for trying and that gives him, a young musher, [the confidence] to try for the next couple of years. The interviewer thanks for the interview. [Break in the recording.]

At 15:40 the interview continues with Roxie [Brooks] telling about the women's world-championship race that she was just in. She tells she ran it last weekend. It was 3 12-mile runs and she won the first 2 days. Last day she came in second while Carol Shepard was first. She was running 10 dogs all three days and she didn't have to drop any dogs and they were all running well. There was one little bridge with open water and she was a little bit afraid of that. The course was hilly in places, but it was mainly flat. It was a good trail with some loose snow on it, but it was pretty hard.

The interviewer inquires how his dogs were running. She tells that when they got into the woods where it was cooler, the dogs "got rolling." She was running 9 of her dad's dogs and then she had one that was ¼ his, an "Aurora Husky" breed and 3 ½ years old. Then Roxie had a 2 ½ year old male of the same breed. The names of the lead dogs are Bull and Ace. Roxie kept the same lead dogs the whole time. Her dad ran 8 of the dogs. He started the previous day and he had Bull and Ace in there too.

The interviewer asks if she had the chance to get the dogs used to the course before she ran the race. She says they drove down from Fairbanks on Tuesday and ran the two teams there on Wednesday, let them rest on Thursday, and the race started on Friday. It wasn't too warm for them and it was -5 or 10 below Fahrenheit at night and during the day it was 10 or 15 above, but Roxie thinks it was good weather for racing in Anchorage. She likes to race and found the Anchorage race enjoyable.

At 18:29 the interviewer asks how long she has been racing. She tells she has been running dogs for most of her life, but never really started racing until she was 16 and ran a junior race. She runs dogs variedly because she doesn't have her own dogs. She has to go to her dad's place to run them. Now she has young pups at

home and she runs them 4-5 times a week and for last month or so she's been out for 2 or 3 times a week to run her dad's race dogs. Then last week she was running them around 4 times a week before they came down [to Anchorage].

Roxie tells that her puppies are still too young but she trains them alongside of his dad's puppies that he has no time to train for harness. This year they won't run in any team but following year, if there are any exceptional dogs, they could do some of the big races. She has her old leader at home that she trains. It's a lot easier to train puppies if they have an older dog to show them what's going on.

Talking about dog nutrition: Roxie feeds her puppies mainly Purina, but once they start running in races, one needs to add fish and fat. They have been giving their dogs whale blubber this year.

The interviewer asks what advice she would give a young person who was interested in dog mushing. Roxie says the main thing is gaining experience and to love dog mushing. She tells that she didn't have many dogs around when she was growing up, just one of her own, so she borrowed neighbors' dogs and sled and ran them. One is going to have some bad times when one starts racing, but that's where one learns. It's good to learn what to do when getting into a tangle or a dog fight. One has to know how to handle the situation.

At 21:18 the interviewer asks if she feels pretty confident with 10 dogs and that if they get into a fight, can she handle it herself. She says that if all of the 10 dogs were fighting, they would be difficult to break up. When she hooks up 10 dogs, they are all trained and when she is training she usually doesn't run more than 6-8 dogs. When one adds a few more, they are more difficult to handle if there is trouble. [Break in the recording.]

21:58 Grace Jacobs introduces herself and tells that she is the daughter of Peter Jacobs from Bethel and that he is also a dog musher. Grace's dad has 12 dogs now and there are 4 at home so that makes 16 altogether. Grace's dad has had dogs at least ever since Grace was born.

The interviewer asks what Grace's father uses dogs for. She tells that when they were in village of Shaktoolik that is 20-30 miles down from St. Mary's, they used dogs to go hunting and fishing with. He also visited Bethel with his dogs to do

shopping and visiting around, but mostly it was for hunting and fishing. The interviewer asks how many dogs he goes hunting and fishing with. Gracie tells he usually has 8 or 10, depending on how far he is going to go. He has one leader and the rest of the dogs are in pairs. Sometimes he has 2 leaders, but that's rare.

Some dogs Gracie's father has bought from other people, others he has raised, and some others were given to him since he likes dogs so much. Most of them he has bought or raised. The run from the village where they used to live at the lower Yukon River to Bethel was 70 miles. The trip would take 2-4 days, depending on snow and ice conditions. Usually when the snow is really good, the trip can be made in no time. Gracie never did one of those trips, but she traveled from Bethel to Nunapitchuk, which is around 40 miles. That's when she was 12 years old. She stayed on the sled the whole time because it was pretty cold then.

At 24:43 the interviewer asks if her father kicks or runs besides the sled. Grace says that if the dogs are fast, he can just stand in the sled, but if they get tired he runs besides them or kicks for speed.

Her father made a sled before the race and the other sled they have is what he made the previous year. Grace says he makes lots of sleds. People are demanding sleds from him and he has sold 3-4 sleds so far. Grace doesn't know what kind of wood he uses for sleds and urges the interviewer to ask him [since he is standing somewhere close by]. The interviewer says he'll talk with him later and asks Gracie to tell him if more people have dog teams in Bethel –area. Grace says not very many have them anymore because ever since snow-machines came out dog teams have gradually disappeared. There are some but not many.

Her father feeds the dogs a combination of foods. In summertime, he fishes for the dogs and either freezes the fish underground, dries, or smokes them. Sometimes he buys dog food for them. Sometimes the dogs don't like to eat regular dog food, the kind one buys from the stores, and most of the time Grace's father fishes for the dogs.

At 27:00 the interviewer says that he has heard that Peter Jacob's won the race in Bethel and asks Grace to tell about it. Grace says that the first day he came in 4th, but then the next day he was the 1st. The race was total of 3 hours for the slowest one, but the fastest one was 2 hours. That was for both days.

His father runs the dogs practically every day even though he works from 8 am to 4 pm. Every day he comes home he feeds the dogs and runs them even in the night time. He has run the dogs ever since he started having them and has been interested in racing for a long time. [Break in the recording.]

At 28:28 Grace tells that her father usually has maybe 2 leaders in case one happens to get injured. Usually it's up to the leader to lead the other dogs. Grace's father trains leaders by taking an already trained leader and sets it by the one that is to be trained. When he makes a command, the dog who is in training automatically follows the one who is already trained.

Her father runs the dogs approximately 10 miles every day, but it depends on the weather and on how the dogs are. Sometimes he only drives them for 3-4 hours and then comes home.

Back home they have water service so he doesn't use dogs for hauling wood or water, but has them mostly for pleasure and racing. The interviewer asks Grace to tell about other teams in Bethel area. Grace tells that last year they had quite a few teams, but there were lots of mosquitos. One man who owned 13-14 dogs that were out during the summer got his dogs killed by mosquitos. He lost his whole team. The others are losing interest or buying snow-machines.

[End of the recording.]