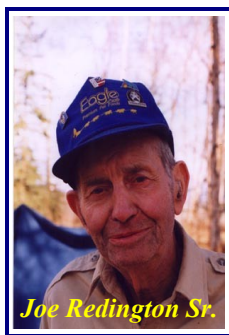




Dorothy Page



Joe Redington Sr.

The Legend of the Iditarod

By Dorothy G. Page
 Iditarod Trail Annual 1979
 cabelasiditarod.com

The Iditarod Trail began in Seward during the gold rush days.

It is over 1,000 miles from Anchorage to Nome via the presently used Iditarod Trail Race Route. It crosses two mountain ranges and passes through ice-locked wilderness areas. The mushers leave civilization at Knik and there are only small towns and villages to break the monotony of traveling in bone-chilling temperatures until they reach the historic gold rush town of Nome, perched on the shores of the Bering Sea.

Dorothy Page, a history buff who lived in Wasilla, Alaska in 1964, initiated running a sled dog race over the trail.

Page, visited with many people about re-opening the Iditarod Trail beginning at Knik and running a sled dog race to call attention to Alaska's past.

Dorothy had just reached the point where she wouldn't be able to stand it any longer if one more person gave her a strange look and asked, "are you crazy?" when she met Joe Redington Sr. Joe was a veteran musher who had traveled over sections of the historic Iditarod Trail. Joe like her race ideas. Dorothy knew, with him on her side most of her problems would be solved.

Ed Carney of Wasilla, then president of the Aurora Dog Musher's Club, appointed an "Iditarod Trail Committee". Members included Joe Redington, Al Hibbard, Dorothy Page, Vi Redington, and Ed Carney.

The first major problem the Iditarod Committee faced was clearing the old trail overgrown with brush and trees.

They picked the dates February 11th and 12th for the race. They decided to offer \$25,000 in prize money. They, also, decided to call the race the "Iditarod Trail International Championship Race", because they believed that someday it would attract mushers from all sections of Alaska, the smaller states and even foreign countries.

The small group of Iditarod promoters signed up 58 mushers for the 1967 race; and the Iditarod Race Critics began to change their tune. The race covered 25 miles from Knik to Big Lake on Saturday and from Big Lake to Knik on Sunday, for a total of 50 miles. Issac Okleasik won the race. It took the committee the entire next year to get out of debt.

Due to lack of snow in 1968 the race was postponed. The committee could only raise \$1,000 for the 1969 race and George Attla won that year.

Alaskans were more interested in snow machines than dog sledding in 1970, but work on the Iditarod Trail continued.

Joe Redington made a brash statement during the 1972 Iditarod committee Meeting. He said, "Let's go all the way to Nome in 1973!"

March 3, 1973 hundreds of people watched as 34 mushers left Anchorage and headed to Nome. Dick Wilmarth of Red Devil, Alaska was the first musher to reach Nome over the old winter trail. Mushers had not traveled that trail for over 45 years; and in Nome the celebration was like the 4th of July and Christmas combined!

Now, years after that first 50-mile centennial race, the Iditarod has grown into Alaska's greatest sporting spectacle, known around the world as "The Last Great Race on Earth".



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