



TUNDRA TIMES MUSER—Tired dogs limp into finish line after grueling three-mile pull of Tundra Times entry in the news media dog sled race Sunday afternoon in Fairbanks. Giving the

dogs an assist by pushing the sled is 250-pound Jimmy Bedford, heaviest entry in the race. The team won 15th place handily, out of 16 entries.

—Photo by BEN SANDS

Our 250 Lb. Musher, 3 Dogs Move Like Turtle Herd

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Tundra Times Treasurer Jimmy Bedford carried this newspaper's name in the annual News-Media race on Farmer's Loop Road in Fairbanks on George Washington's birthday. Here is his biased version:)

By JIMMY BEDFORD
"MUSH!" I shouted. "Go,

Brownie! Hike," I cajoled. "Git up there, you malemutes. Let's go, Prince. Come on, Gary, don't let them pass us!"

These and many other shouts and pleadings seemed to no avail. My dogs just weren't moving any faster no matter what I said. I even tried other foods besides mush.

"Oatmeal," I said. "Grits! Corn Flakes."

Still the dogs plodded on, listening to the beat of another

drummer or listening for their master's voice.

I even tried disguising my voice, trying to sound like a Russian Samovar, but all I got were backward glances over the shoulders of the dogs.

Brownie, the lead dog, was a good dog but he thought that the other dogs were loafing on the job so he stopped pulling and lagged behind the two wheel dogs. In the twinkling of a snow-

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250 Lb. Musher

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flake the dogs were tangled up worse than the Gordian knot.

I threw on the brake, dropped the snow anchor and tried to straighten them out. Precious minutes were lost and the team behind zipped out in front.

Soon I had shoved the dogs into the right order again and shouted "Hike" and they were off like a herd of turtles.

It soon became evident to me—and I guess the thought entered the minds of my three dogs that they were pulling a very heavy load, what with my eighth of a ton, plus the weight of my clothing and my sled.

This was the annual news-media race sponsored by the Alaska Dog Musher's Association to raise money for the heart fund.

Thinking about the heart fund, I appealed to the dogs' better selves: "Have a heart, fellas, pull for the heart fund. Mush! Hike! Fish! Blubber! Go, Dogs, Go!"

On we plodded around the turn as I shouted, "Gee, Brownie, Gee!" At first it looked as if he wouldn't-Gee, but finally he did, just at the last moment.

I suppose he knew just where to turn, but as that cut-off fence hove into view and I had visions of crashing into it, I was about ready to jump off the sled.

"That's the way, Brownie! Go, Go, Go. On Gary, On Prince, On Brownie. You're good dogs, yes you are," I said, thinking that if I praised them I might appeal to their pride and get more speed.

Well, to make a long story tedious, we finally dragged into the finish line in 25 minutes and 30 seconds, placing 15th out of 16 teams. The only one behind us was Stu Rothman of the Arctic Oil Journal who took nearly 27 minutes.

As we came up to the post to tie up after the finish, Brownie just lay down on the snow, utterly exhausted. I petted him and his two colleagues and praised them well.

"After all," I said, "you guys had the heaviest load to pull and you did it with distinction. Just remember that you got good practice today for the freight races."

I gave Brownie a final pat on the head and reminded him: "It isn't whether you win or lose, it's how you run the race."