

Fur Rondy :

Historical Perspective

Fur Rendezvous time is upon us again. The Rondy, held in Anchorage now for it's 46th Annual time is scheduled for February 13-22.

Alaskans from through out the state are expected to come to Anchorage to join in the festivities here, which include a range from looking at photo collections to sled dog racing.

The Anchorage Fur Rendezvous is approaching a healthy middle-age. Now officially a older in spirit. Originally, the



Tundra Times File Photo



Parade at North American Dog Sled Race led by Olive Anderson (Mrs. Johnny Anderson)

Fur Rendezvous was unplanned but a mutually agreed upon

session of drinking, carousing and messing around by the trappers and miners from all over Southcentral Alaska.

In the mid-1930's, Rondy was civilized and called a winter carnival. From those days to the present, with a few minor modifications on the original theme, the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous became Alaska's winter sport on a grand scale.

The Fur Rendezvous is under the supervision of a non-profit civic organization known as Greater Anchorage, Inc. The celebration is run by a Board of Directors and is unique that the board is not simply a figurehead body, but actually a team of working professionals skilled in a variety of fields. These people organize certain events which are then actually staffed by the Rendezvous board. They give

guidance and set policies for all events under the Rondy umbrella.

Rondy's Board of Directors is made up of people from all walks of life. Your neighbors and friends working together as volunteers make Fur Rendezvous a success for you. The board employs an executive director and staff of employees who conduct the day to day operation of the celebration.

It takes a full year to put together the average Rondy, and estimates of volunteer labor ran to 4500 at last count. This figure, however, is probably well below the actual number of persons who give time to one or more of the Rondy activities. From CB'ers who control traffic at the parade to the local organizations who sell Rondy buttons, Fur Rendezvous is produced by

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the people of Anchorage.

As to the actual make-up of the Rendezvous calendar of events, it varies from year to year, however, there are certain cornerstone events in each Rendezvous. The World Championship Sled Dog Race is "the" event. The celebration has been built around this activity since 1947. The World Championship is staged by the Alaskan Sled Dog and Racing Association and attracts dog mushers from all over Alaska as well as the "Lower forty-eight". Greenland, Germany and Japan have also entered teams in the past.

The race is a 75 mile run with three 25 mile per day heats staged from the heart of downtown Anchorage. Despite encroaching development which threatens to close the trail in some areas, the Rondy race still covers a large part of the Anchorage community and people line the trail almost the whole length of the run. Prize money for the race has been increasing each year and now totals \$22,000.

Rondy, one of the ten largest festivals in the nation, boasts three World Championships, 8 State Championships and features over 105 separate events with everything from Hot Dog Skiing, the state's only Fur Auction, to the Miners & Trappers Ball. The Rondy Carnival is the largest in the state, Sporting events such as the Grand Prix, Snowshoe Softball, Basketball, Rugby, - Tennis and Cross Country Skiing along with a multitude of various exhibits highlight the ten days of Fur Rendezvous.