

Takes a Lot of Man—

Iditarod Race

It takes a lot to be the man behind the musher. The sponsor of a dog musher not only contributes money, but a great deal of time and effort to support the musher of his choice.

On the Iditarod Race, the sponsor finds himself in some unusual situations — like getting a phone call from Galena at one a.m. requesting him to send two quarts of Koppertox foot medication, or finding out his mushers' dogs are at the airport at six a.m. and need to be picked up.

Last year, Lawrie Gay, an executive of BP-Alaska, found himself preparing beaver meat dinners in individual packets and shipping them to his musher, George Attla.

There are many different types of sponsors, from oil executives to

mothers-in-law, from bartenders to car dealers, but they have in common an enthusiasm for dog mushing.

"You never know what you gain in a business relationship," says Clyde Clary of Clary Pioneer Insurance, sponsor of Dick Mackey, "but we don't do it solely for that purpose. We enjoyed it."

Clary, who has sponsored other sports events besides dog mushing, feels his musher gave him his money's worth. "He did a good job of showing our name."

But there is more involved than the exchange on money and advertising.

Ed Fortier, correspondent for "The National Observer", sponsor of Rod Perry and Fat Albert, said, "It was exciting from top to bottom." Fortier found himself loading "grub boxes" on airplanes to ship out on the Iditarod Trail and "freezing my tail off!"

Tom Brennan of Atlantic-Richfield, sponsor of 1974 Champion Carl Huntington, said, "Everyone in the company has an interest in the musher. They all go to the weekend races and they all follow the Iditarod."

He said that he helped his musher handle the dogs at the races and "usually got run over by them."

Usually the musher goes looking for a sponsor, because, in Brennan's words, "they can't afford to race dogs without a sponsor, because, in Brennan's words, "they can't afford to race without a sponsor." But also, potential sponsors have found mushers by contacting local dog clubs, race sponsors, someone in the office or a mutual friend.

There is an old army saying that for every soldier in the front lines, there are ten more behind the lines. That can certainly be said for dog mushing.