

Nome to Golovin: *It's the only race in town*

by Bob Koweluk

The 17th Annual Nome/Golovin Snowmachine Race is scheduled to be held this year on March 21, 1981.

The 200 mile race course winds it's way from Nome to Solomon, to White Mountain and turning around at Golovin for the return trip back to Nome along the course.

Roscow Wilkee, race chairman for the races in Nome, said the 1st year's race had a good showing. "Last year we had 38 entrants from Nome, Shaktoolik, Golovin, Koyuk, Elim and of course Anchorage," he said. "John Faeo from Anchorage won the race with a time of 2 hours and 42 minutes. With a snowmachine, my that's really flying! That's an unbelievable time."

Roscow Wilkee has been the race chairman for the 17 years of Nome's snowmobile race history. "The first few years of the snow

machine races were to Teller, Alaska some 65 miles to the west of Nome. There was a camp there at the Bluestone River when the Nome-Teller road was being built. We would send a gas crew up there with a weasel and sledge before the race. The gas crew and racer would have a place to go in out of the weather," Roscow said. "And now all the buildings are gone. There's no place to cache gas or for the guys to get out of the weather. You couldn't take gas there in the fall because it wouldn't be there come race day."

The snowmachine races were switched from Nome-Teller to Nome-Golovin to better provide the drivers with support with gas stops, first aid and radio communications. Radio coverage is provided by KICY radio for up to the minute coverage of race action. Aircraft coverage is provided by local residents.

Volunteer gas crews are sent down to Solomon the day before the race to get the gas drums set up. "We cache gas at Solomon with the Okitkun's in the fall before the roads are closed. On race day they take the gas to the old Pete Curran's Store there at Solomon to set up the first mandatory gas stop," he said. "And of course at White Mountain, the second mandatory gas stop, all the villagers help gas up the machines as they come in. It's amazing how much help the people there give to the gas crew and racers."

The trail for the Nome-Golovin race begins at Front Street in Nome at about 1 pm. The racers leave all together, just a few seconds or minutes apart, accelerating down the coast to the east, past check points at Fort Davis, Cape Nome, Safety Ferry and into Solomon for the first gas stop some 35 miles into the race trail. From Solomon, the drivers race past Spruce Creek and Bluff and head northeast to White Mountain, the second mandatory gas stop about 40 miles along the trail. The racers do not stop at Golovin for gas but check in with race officials quickly, and turn their machines around for the return trip to White Mountain. The White Mountain to Golovin round trip is some 26 miles.

The drivers must gas up their machines on the return trip at White Mountain and Solomon. Gas for the race at White Mountain is bought by the race committee from the Native store there.

"The race is not quite 200 miles," Roscoe said. "It's about 180 or 190

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Mary Anne Navitsky Accepted

Mary Anne Navitsky, from Sitka, Alaska, a former Alaska Native Health Career trainee and former award winner of the Don Bennett Memorial Fund for 1979, has been accepted to the University of Iowa Dental School for the fall of 1981.

Mary Anne was born and raised in Sitka, where she attended grade school and high school. Following two years at Sheldon Jackson, she be-

came the first Alaska Native woman to attend the Harvard Summer School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Ms. Navitsky served four internships with the Alaska Native Health Career Program and did her training at the PHS Dental Clinic at Mt. Edgecumbe in Sitka, Alaska, under the guidance of Dr. Tom Johnson, Director of the Mt. Edgecumbe Dental Clinic.

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miles by snowmachine."

Roscoe said, "It has been a good racing event. There is a \$160 entry fee, but we give all the money back as prize money. We give 50 percent to the winner, 25 percent to the second finisher, 15 percent to the third and 10 percent to the fourth place finisher." Roscoe said, "The Lions Club adds a thousand dollars for the driver with the best overall time. Some years the Lions Club has added \$50 more for each entry in addition to the \$1,000. One year we had a little over \$18,000 in prize money."

There have been a few women finishers, but never in the money. Three years ago the race had 81 entries, two years ago the number of entries dropped to 71 and last year had dropped down to 38. Roscoe blames rising costs of snow machines, (a racing machine costs about \$4,000 now), and to rising costs of air travel, both for the driver and machine.

"This is the only race in town," Roscoe said. "And if they won it all, the boys in town with the costs of the machines becoming so high, wouldn't get enough to pay for their machines. There was a time when the race had 12-15 entries from Anchorage who flew to Nome with a chartered DC-3 or C-46 for a week-

end filled with good fun. It's changed now. We get 4 or 5 from Anchorage now, 6 or 8 from Kotzebue and some from Elim, Shaktoolik, Koyuk, Unalakleet, Golovin, and Shishmaref. I don't know why, but we've had only one driver from Fairbanks.

"A lot of the boys here, they have what you call work machines, you know, that they use for hunting and fishing. Up until three years ago there used to be weekend races, but the boys didn't want to tear up their snowmachines on weekends," Roscoe said. "We got guys that never run a race except for the Nome-Golovin. They say I'll try it. It's a fun race. It's a tough race."

Roscoe said that the casualty rate for the snowmachines used in racing is way down now compared to years ago with the earlier machines. "There was a time when you'd lose over half of the racers, but now the machines are built better and stronger. They look a little more dignified and sophisticated. The break-down rate on snowmachines is way down, unless a guy breaks a ski. We used to have a lot of trouble with drive belts breaking, nowadays we all still carry a spare belt. The clutches and drive pulleys are better and the snowmachines have increased horsepower.

"We've had all kinds of

machines winning, but Polaris, Ski-Doo and Arctic Cat, those are the big three. And of course in the past there were machines that have won that aren't even being made anymore. Now there's Kowasaki here in town and is selling well," he said.

"Some racers have become lost between Nome and Golovin. I'd imagine that some have wondered why they decided to race in the first place as they thought of the wear and tear on their machines, or tried to keep their body warm and out of the cold wind."

John Faero, last year's winner of the Nome-Golovin race, had passed Solomon on the race the year before. Solomon is the gas stop. By the time John had figured he had missed his gas stop and decided to turn around and ease his machine back, he knew he was so far behind he couldn't win the race. So he went back to Nome ahead of everybody else, but out of competition.

"It may have been our fault for not marking the trail as good as we could have. He didn't complain. And last year he came here and won the race!" Roscoe said.

It's a down home race from start to finish. The entry deadline is about 8 pm the night before the race. "Nobody ever enters a day or two ahead of time," Roscoe said. "We just have a driver's meeting at the multipurpose room in the

school or at the army base the night before the race to show the drivers the trail, explain the rules and gas mixtures. There are a couple of women there to collect the entry money and entry forms. So we don't know how many entries we'll have in the race until

the night before."

At the end of the race there is an awards banquet, with trophies and prize monies given out. Roscoe said that the Bering Sea Lions Club usually has a hundred tickets for giving to the drivers, trail and gas crew helpers, and the press.