

# KCC Newsletter

## Spring 2005

### Kasilof Community

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One of the most enigmatic passages in Scripture for me, yet also one of the most poignant, is when Jesus cried out just prior to his death on the cross. We read in Matthew 27:45-47 *Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.* <sup>46</sup>*And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* The word forsaken is defined as, “to give up (something formerly held dear); renounce, to leave altogether; abandon. The story continues in verses 51-53, <sup>51</sup>*Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,* <sup>52</sup>*and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;* <sup>53</sup>*and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.* I have seriously pondered what did Jesus must have went through on that cross to have caused Him to cry

out like that. In my limited understanding of this life-altering event, which is one of the three most significant truths in history (incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection), I read that Jesus was abandoned by His Father as He took the “weight” of all of mankind’s sin (past, present and future) and bore it on the cross. Some of you might find issue with my choice of words here when I say that God abandoned Jesus on the cross. Ok, I might even agree. But, we know this: God cannot be in the presence of sin, and when Jesus bore our sins on that cross, something changed for a period of time between He and His Son. Jesus experienced in some way what those who deny Him will forever experience, that is, to be alone, without the Father. I have intently contemplated what it must have felt like for Jesus to do this. I cannot fathom it. I would have never been able to pay this debt. Praise God I don’t have to. He only asks me to believe that it happened. To accept His gift. To have faith. I do. I have. Yes Lord.

# **Man Made**

*by Brent Johnson*

Is the Panama Canal evil? What an odd question! And a more penetrating question is: can man ever change nature with a good result? The answer is—yes, often. Humans have manipulated nature in ways that were environmentally friendly, economically prudent, and socially helpful. Bradley Lake hydroelectric project, the Suez Canal, hybrid corn or wheat, fish hatcheries, aspirin, and greenhouses are examples of tweaking nature with success.

A long list of failures is also easily found. Hydroelectric dams decimated salmon stocks in the Columbia River System. Logging and mining have had negative impacts on environments, especially for salmon. The introduction of West Nile Perch to Lake Victoria in the 1950s was a disaster and whoever put pike in Mackey Lakes made a big mistake. Nor have bad ideas waited for man. Earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts, floods, small pox and mosquitoes are all ugly. Help or harm is had in abundance from human modifications or from the straight beam of sunshine, which causes melanoma. Verdicts seem determinable by effects on people or ecosystems.

Certainly, I have the utmost respect for nature. NASA is searching our solar system for earth-like conditions elsewhere. And finding nada. So grows my appreciation for our own unique planet. No other orb in our solar system is even remotely life-friendly. Even on earth science has many limitations. People donate blood because scientists can't mix the blue-red fluid in a test tube. Breast milk is healthier than formula. No alternative has been found to exercise and dietary nutrition. Fruits and vegetables full of natural fiber remain a priority in any diet designed by sane experts.

In spite of these wonders of nature, man has an essential role in health. Strangely, churches mostly ignore this need while pursuing eternal life. Since the latter is of utmost importance, it is difficult to emphasize the temporal in our earthly setting, and impossible in any other setting.

We need to heed health while on earth. No other opportunity exists. When Jesus said, "I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly," where did He intend that life to take place? Unless I miss my guess, Jesus sought to include earth

in such fullness of life. Our God encourages "family" and for families health is a must. Jesus healed many people and sent His apostles to do the same. I Corinthians tells us death is an enemy of God. Doesn't it stand to reason God would then also dislike infirmity?

Granted, some diseases and physical problems are beyond our control. Others are within our ability to improve. At times health is a matter of finding the right remedy. Few it is that can't benefit from better self discipline. Accepting man-made cures when they are available should be second nature. I knew someone who had epilepsy. They had medication which kept their problem in control. Once, they attempted to trust God for healing. And quit taking medication. Bravo! But when the seizures returned, they went back to the medication. Bravo again! They were willing to try and when that failed, they were willing to stick with something that works. No other sensible choice was available.

I'm sick of "treat" traditions. Children's Church should teach good habits spiritually and physically. Instead we bribe attendance with treats. Oh, just give them a healthy snack you say! Hmmm. Have you tried carrots and celery sticks on kids expecting a sugar-rich dessert? Recently I picked up my daughter from ski practice at Tustumena school. The well-meaning coach was having an after practice snack! Which, come to find out, is offered after each practice. No possibility exists that more calories were burned during skiing than were available in the snack.

America wrings her hands about the bloating portion of our public that is over-weight. And teaches sugar dependency from first grade. Yes, I know teachers show children nice food pyramids with lots of great literature. And at the same time throw open the flood gates of temptation. Luckily, some children have metabolism and pancreases capable of the onslaught. Most do not.

Corn syrup is a man-made disaster swallowing and wallowing our children. Medicines and health technology are man-made solutions. The church is way tardy about weighing in on critical health strategies. Where we may fail to zap someone into well-being by prayer, we should not then ignore the need to preach health by other means. By nature, by hybrids, and by God!

## HOUSEHOLD 2005

On New Year's eve, KCC once again played the lead role in hosting the third annual Household event at Skyview High School. The calendar played havoc with planning Household, leaving New Year's eve as the only night available for us to use the school. It turned out to be another great event though. Operating under a slightly different



schedule than the previous two Households, this time we had a family oriented group from Homer called, "The Virge" lead off the night in music and devotion. After the Virge finished and everyone had their go at the food table, the normal plethora of activities started up. The rock wall has become a very popular attraction and the gymnasium was full of participants showing off their basketball and volleyball skills.

Other activities included table tennis, cribbage, crafts, chess, board games, live bands/music, younger children's activities, scrapbook/stamping, indoor soccer and a jumping cage.

The new year was ushered in with a fireworks show out in the parking lot.

Yes, Household 2005 truly was a *A Knight For The Family*.





**From Top Left (Clockwise)**

Miss Jane mastering the rock wall

Two young ladies attacking the food table

Kelsey Shields and Melissa Smith singing a duet

Two young ladies getting ready to play basketball



## **SOMETIMES PEOPLE REALLY DO GET WHAT THEY DESERVE.**

A Charlotte, NC lawyer purchased a box of very rare and expensive cigars, then insured them against fire, among other things. Within a month, having smoked his entire stockpile of these great cigars and without yet having made even his first premium payment on the policy, the lawyer filed claim against the insurance company. In his claim, the lawyer stated the cigars were lost in a series of small fires. The insurance company refused to pay, citing the obvious reason that the man had consumed the cigars in the normal fashion. The lawyer sued... and WON! (Please stay tuned.) In delivering the ruling, the judge agreed with the insurance company that the claim was frivolous. The judge stated nevertheless, that the lawyer "held a policy from the company in which it had warranted that the cigars were insurable and also guaranteed that it would insure them against fire, without defining what is considered to be unacceptable fire" and was obligated to pay the claim. Rather than endure lengthy and costly appeal process, the insurance company accepted the ruling and paid \$15,000 to the lawyer for his loss of the rare cigars lost in the "fires".



**NOW FOR THE BEST PART...**

After the lawyer cashed the check, the insurance company had him arrested on 24 counts of ARSON!!! With his own insurance claim and testimony from the previous case being used against him, the lawyer was convicted of intentionally burning his insured property and was sentenced to 24 months in jail and a \$24,000 fine. This is a true story and was the First Place winner in the recent Criminal Lawyers Award Contest.

### **Psalm 101:7**

No one who practices deceit  
will dwell in my house;  
no one who speaks falsely  
will stand in my presence.

## 4A Alaska State Wrestling Championships

In bowling it's known as a "turkey," in baseball, it's a "strike-out," while in basketball many refer to it as a "trey." In wrestling, however, they call it excellent, and that is just one of the accolades that Eli Hutchison earned this past February at the 4A state wrestling championships held at Chugiak High School. Eli, a junior, won his third straight state championship.

Another Hutchison drew high praise at the state championships. Eli's little (but extremely tough) sister, Michaela wrestled her way into the record books by finishing 2nd in the 103 lb division. This was the highest finish ever by a female in the 4A classification. Michaela is just a freshman, which is bad news for wrestlers throughout the state.

Other KCC wrestlers from Skyview high school included Luke Morse and Elliott Gauthier.



Top: Skyview High School's **Eli Hutchison**, 2005 State Champion at 135 lbs, wrestles West High School's Max Rosefigura in the championship match.



Left: **Michaela Hutchison** from Skyview High School wrestles Wasilla's Alan Bartelli in the 2005 State Championship in the 103 lb division..

## On the Scattering of Theological Ducks (Ode to Ezekiel)

I am reading through Ezekiel—a book in the Old Testament that is probably most famous for being avoided. If the first chapter alone doesn't leave your mind reeling, continuing into the next surely will.

So why am I reading through Ezekiel? Well... No big reason, I guess—just that I like to read through each of the books and scribble them up with underlines and penned notes in the margins and sometimes even pictures. Ezekiel has been looking particularly ignored, and so one day I thought it high time to revisit him.

Not a very appropriate way to treat a sacred book? I disagree. The book itself beckons us to study it, to drink it, to feast upon it. I can't very well do that if I'm reading it through a glass case in a museum, now can I?

So here I am in Ezekiel, pen in hand, having my theological ducks chased out of their neat row—yet again. It's annoying how easily they get flustered. I go through all the trouble to sort them and label them and FINALLY have them walking in an orderly line, and then I go meet with the Theos in my theology and the first thing He does is mess them all up! It's always that way.

You know, I've come to decide that it's a lot easier to have perfect theological neatness if you just stay away from the One it's all about. He's a lot easier to categorize that way. First, you can decide what His characteristics are (and why) and type them all out in black-and-white, complete with Scripture references (of course!). That makes one feel quite nice (I can say that because I've done this myself). You can then solve all the difficult problems and answer all the complicated questions, if that sort of thing is your cup of tea, and feel confidently assured that you have a handle on "what goes where" in the study of God.

Just don't do anything foolish like reading Ezekiel. The first chapter alone will get you every time.

Am I one of those people who think that we cannot comprehend Yahweh? Well...yes and no, if you don't mind a wishy-washy sounding answer (and I obviously don't). I certainly *do* think He's given us *much* by which we can comprehend Him. Nature alone will do the trick—no Bible is even necessary (He said so Himself, as a matter of fact). And then we *do* have the Scriptures, where much of His heart is put into words



that we little humans can understand. We get a glimpse, anyway--a taste.

But let's face it. If I was standing there, literally viewing Ezekiel's chapter one vision, I'd be flat on my face. And if I wasn't struck dumb by the sight and had the power of speech, I'd probably just join the angels (like in Isaiah's vision) crying, "Holy, holy, holy..." I mean, what *else* is there to say?

And that's exactly my problem. He's not a neat orderly God, not something that can be stuffed into a box or measured on a chart. He's BIG, messy, wholly OTHER than I. He short-circuits my brain with His splendor, His vastness surpasses the bounds of my understanding.

He's not easy, this Yahweh. He doesn't do what I want, nor in the way I want it. "His thoughts are not my thoughts, His ways are not my ways"--He is entirely impossible to manage, and defiantly refuses to bow. He overwhelms me with His terribleness, but equally overpowers me with His tenderness. "Who is like unto Him?"

"Draw me after you and let us run together," says the bride in Song of Solomon. So I read the words He's breathed, I scribble through the pages with my little blue pen, feasting on the crumbs, seeking to see His face, running after Him, panting to keep up, glimpsing His form here--and now there--in that spot I saw Him clearly for a moment, at least I think I did...but over in that place as if "through a glass darkly."

It's enough to whet my appetite, anyway, but never enough to fully satisfy. And...I think that's exactly His intention.

By Molly Aley

(via excerpt from my web-log, aka "blog" at: <http://threepennies.blogdrive.com> )

### ***Editor's Note from Molly-by-Golly***

Well, I've been having fun with my new website, and now I've joined the world of bloggers. It is better for me than being a part of a forum...with forums, I just get addicted and want to go check it all day long! :o) With a blog--there's one entry, perhaps a tiny bit of conversation if anyone comments, and that's that. :o) It gives me that chance to write and express thoughts, but takes *out* the element of dragging me away from my primary calling in life! \*grin\*

**2005 Tustumena-200**  
**Musher #5 And His Wife**  
by Karla Hudson

Most people know that I'm the "Beloved Wife" that grudgingly sponsors her husband's (Josh) mushing hobby. After all, it's only displayed on the back of my Josh's dog truck. Honestly there is a little truth to that, but it's mostly a joke. At least that's what I let Josh think. I just get annoyed with how expensive dog food is (that's the grudgingly part). Josh loves his dogs and he loves to take them out on runs.

Josh ran the Tustumena 200 this year. He had been planning this race for 3-4 years. This was quite an experience and not just for Josh. To start things off, I had a busy week at work and I was getting sick with a cold.

**January 28<sup>th</sup>** Josh and I went to the pre-race banquet where the boy that he was giving a ride to during the opening ceremonies drew the #5 for Josh's bib. The bib that displays the musher's number is sponsored by a local business. Dick Blakeslee had sponsored bibs before using the name Dick's sleds. That bib was #20 last year. The committee for the race wanted to honor Dick by reusing that bib. They also had a moment of silence to remember him by. After the banquet we went home to get some sleep. But I didn't sleep because I was up all night with serious sinus congestion and coughing. I had to be sure not to disturb Josh's sleep so I left the room.

**January 29<sup>th</sup>** opening ceremony. The mushers gave rides to kids over in Kenai. Then the race started at 2:00pm at the T-Lodge. The dogs were excited to say the least. It took several people to help hold Josh's dogs until it was time for him to go to the starting shoot. Josh was getting ready to take off and he got some last minute advice from Jon and Bree, which was very much appreciated. So it's time to go to the starting shoot and we guide the dogs up and I start to feel like I didn't get a to chance wish him well. His dogs were getting ready to run him off into the wilderness and I didn't get to say be careful even though I prayed for him the night before that God would keep them safe. Then, God sent someone. Bree comes running up and says good luck to Josh and I and gives me a hug. At this point the official is counting down and I asked Bree if she could hold Dainty (the lead dog) while I go tell Josh bye. She agreed, so I ran back real quick gave him a kiss and ran back to Dainty so I could send them off. 5,4,3,2,1 their off. Departure 2:08 p.m.

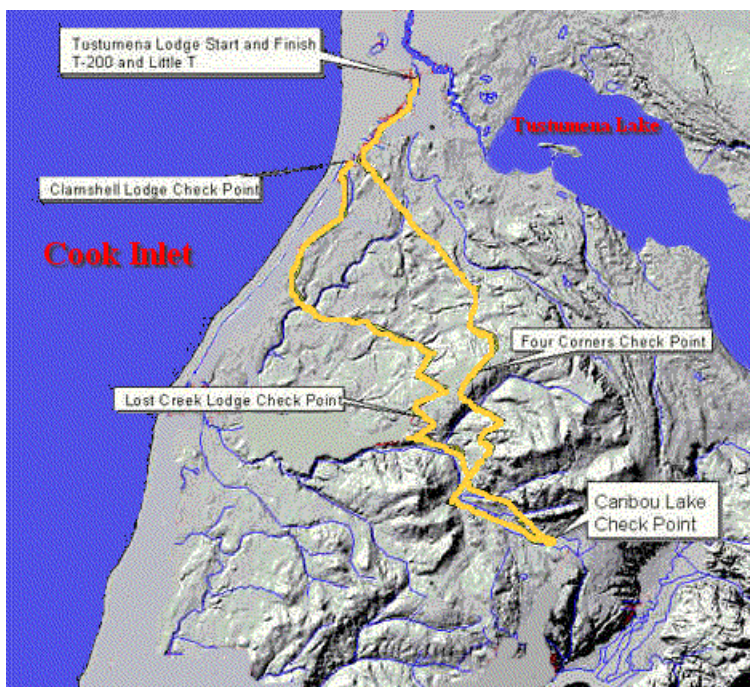
So Josh is off. There I stand feeling anxious, yet confident that Josh would be fine, but having to wait and see how things would unfold. There were a lot of professional mushers. For once Josh was the little guy among some big names. How would he do? Would the dogs hold up? Could he win? Well I already knew he wouldn't win, but it still crossed my mind. As for myself, I started feeling worse with my cold after standing outside all morning and afternoon. I'm going home and try to get some rest for tonight or early a.m. hours.

A few hours later, after getting some rest, but no sleep, and really giving up on the idea of sleep, I started checking the T-200 web page for updates on mushers. It was probably 9:00 p.m. and almost everyone had passed Josh up prior to checking in at the first checkpoint, which is called four corners. Josh had arrived there at 4:50 p.m. and then moved on. He was due to check in at Caribou Lake at anytime. As the night went on, he still hadn't checked in. At 12:30 a.m. I called Race Central to find out what was going on. I was told that they would update their web page. A few minutes later my sister (Shannon) and I had fresh information to look at. He had made it to the second checkpoint. Five minutes after that I get a call. Josh has dropped a dog and I needed to go get it from Clam Shell Lodge. At 12:45a.m. Shannon and I loaded up to get the dog. The good news was even though the web page was just updated, the information was still about four hours old. Josh had made it to the 3<sup>rd</sup> checkpoint, Lost Creek Lodge. He wasn't allowed to drop dogs until he got to Lost Creek. He had gotten there about 12:30a.m. Yay, we're doing better than I thought.

**January 30<sup>th</sup>** Clam Shell was busy, many of the mushers had made it there already. First to check in was Jessica Hendericks. She was musher #6. She made it to the Clam Shell in something like 8 hours. At any rate, I went to find the dog, but it hadn't make it there yet. The dropped dogs were put in kennels, which then were being place in a huge sled to be hauled out by snow machine. The dog (Bigfoot) didn't get in until 2:30a.m. It was no surprise Josh had to drop Bigfoot. He didn't think this particular dog could make it past Lost Creek and we had planned on having to drop him. Shannon and I took Bigfoot home. I was driving pretty slowly and so by the time I had gotten back to my house, I needed to get ready to leave again because we were expecting Josh to pull into Clam Shell. Josh had to take a layover at Lost Creek. He had to have a combined total of 4 hours that could be taken in increments. His plan was to do 2 hours on the way to the half way checkpoint (Clam Shell) and 2 hours on the way back to the finish line (T-Lodge). I was to expect him into Clam Shell five hours after he got to Lost Creek.

We had seen many mushers come in. I had never really cared about this sport before. But seeing those dogs pull in after running 100 miles was touching. Tire, cold, hungry, but they had a job to do. Those dogs knew it. You can see it on their faces; they endure it to please their master. To get their master's praise. All the teams were taken around behind the lodge to a resting place and were fed and watered.

When four o'clock rolled around I started to anticipate Josh coming in. The hour went by and I anticipated more. All the while feeling worse then ever and tired from a lack of sleep. I was really relating to those dogs. I was in and out of the Clam Shell Lodge, time just dragging along. I would go out and look for him to come across the field that was on the other side of the highway. There were flaggers that would radio into the officials inside when a musher was coming. Everyone could get outside before the musher pulled in. I was so eager for



Josh and the team to get in. It was more than time for him to be there. I was sitting inside on a footstool, not saying a word to anyone. All these mushers looking at me knowing I'm waiting for my husband to come in. He was the only one left out there to get to the halfway checkpoint. The officials had already started sending teams back out that had taken their six-hour layover. At 6:27 a.m. a flagger radios in to a official "dogs are in the parking lot." We all go running out. Josh had made it in. The officials check to is if he had all his required supplies, which he did. Shannon, some volunteers, and I helped guide the team around back to find a spot to rest. Josh tended to his dogs and then left Shannon and I to watch over them while he found some food and a place to sleep. The dogs had pile of straw to sleep on. Being as tired as I was I got my sleeping bag from the

vehicle, made a pile of straw for myself and went to sleep by the dogs. Shannon ended up doing the same. Just so you know the straw is very warm. I couldn't even feel the cold from the ground. About an hour and a half later when the breeze came in off the ocean, that was another story.

Josh had woken up about 10:30 a.m., not that he slept well (many thanks to a very loud snoring musher). At that time he was able to tell us his story. Of course we wanted him to get to Clam Shell sooner than he did, but it turned out the reason he dropped Bigfoot was not entirely for the reason we were expecting. It turned out Josh had to bag the dog 40 miles before he ever even reached Lost Creek. That was an extra 40 to 50 pounds the team had to pull. It slowed him down a lot. He had decided after he got to Lost Creek and taken his layover that the team could use an extra hour. So he didn't depart from Lost Creek until 3:30 a.m. Once they had gotten back on the trail he had taken a wrong turn. He didn't realize it until he lost 30 minutes of time and then had to turn around go back to get on the right trail. Another hour that was lost. Even so, the musher that had gotten in before him was only 40 minutes ahead of Josh.

Josh's departing time from Clam Shell was schedule for 12:17 p.m. That was Six hours and fifty minutes after his arrival. When all the mushers left the T- Lodge, they did it 2 minute increments. So the time had to be adjusted at the halfway checkpoint to make up the time difference to the mushers that left after Josh. In other words, Josh left the starting line 50 minutes before the last musher left. So he had to sit that out at the halfway point. Anyway, it was very annoying to me sitting around there waiting to leave. I understood why we needed to wait. If I had been feeling better, it might not have been such a big deal. The team that came in 40 minutes in front of Josh departed at 11:42 a.m. She was musher # 10. That last 40 minutes was just miserable. My cold at that point was severe. I was weak physically and mentally. My muscles were so sore. I could hardly walk. It must have been the combination of my cold and having to restrain the dogs at the starting line and ceremonial start. But I was praying to God for help. When it did come time for Josh to go, it seemed bittersweet. I was relieved that I would soon be getting home myself. But when Josh crossed that highway to go back across the field he had come off of six hours and fifty minutes earlier, in my moment of weakness I couldn't help but cry. I didn't think that he was feeling as bad as I was at that moment, but it was impossible to know what obstacles he would have to overcome during the next twenty hours, especially with only two hours of poor rest. Shannon and I went and cleaned up after the dogs, picking up all the straw that was laid out for them, then got in the vehicle and went home.

When we got home, I knew that I would have to feed the dogs that didn't make the team. Shannon offered to feed them for me, and I was grateful. I just didn't have it in me. I called Josh's mom to fill her in and then quickly went to bed. Part of me felt guilty about sleeping because Josh wasn't able to sleep. But the other part of me said, "This is what he has wanted, he has fun doing this, sleep and don't worry about it." There was no contest or even an option for that matter. I went to sleep. I started getting a lot of phone calls about 3:00 p.m. Folks wondering when Josh would be in, wanting to see him cross the finish line. They would have to listen to me tell them that he wouldn't be in until early morning the next day. I continued to sleep.

5:00 p.m. I felt that I couldn't sleep anymore. I tried to rest, but that was hard. 6:00 p.m. Josh's mom called to let me know he made it to Lost Creek again at 5:15 p.m. He was moving slow again. I had later checked the web page to get an update on all the mushers and discovered that Jessica Hendericks won the T- 200 at 3:28 p.m. That was no surprise. She did a great job. But Josh was only running with 9 dogs. He had started out with 13. That concerned me. He still had a long ways to go. I started look at the rules for the race to see how few dogs a musher could finish with. They had to have 5 dogs in harness.

I spent the rest of the night trying to rest. I thought for a little while that I was feeling better. Then I broke out in a fever and started having sweats. Getting nervous about midnight approaching, I had to start getting ready to go again. Shannon and I had agreed to meet at the T-Lodge at midnight.

**January 31<sup>st</sup>** I was driving down my road feeling like I had no idea where I was. I had taken some cold medicine earlier in the evening that had a really bad effect on me. That medicine made me feel like I was having a nightmare and I couldn't wake up from it. I was hoping that I could get Josh's dog truck to the T-Lodge without running it off the road. That or hoping nothing ran out in front of me. At any rate, I made it there. I went inside and the place was nearly empty. There were only three people there. Kim the president of the T-200 association was looking tired. She was sitting over in the corner resting. She saw me come in but didn't say anything. One guy was lying on the floor. The second man had his head resting on the table. I went and sat down, waited a few minutes and decided to wait in the truck for Shannon to get there. The cold air seemed to regulate my body temperature some, at least for a little while. Shannon showed up about fifteen minutes after me. Our mother had packed up some fried chicken and Lip-ton tea that she had sent along with Shannon knowing that it was going to be another

long night. Shannon had brought several blankets along as well. We were sitting in the dog truck trying to figure out what we were going to do all night. Shannon just wanted to load the blanket into the dog truck and go to sleep, which didn't sound like a real bad idea. But I just wasn't real comfortable with that. I started wondering if we should just drive back to my house and go to sleep. We thought about it for a while. I already knew Josh wasn't going to be making it in until at 5:00 a.m. if we were lucky. I was actually figuring that it would take him longer to get to the T-Lodge than it did the Clam Shell. After all, his dogs were tired from the day before and he was only running with 9 dogs. I just decided to go home. We would be back at 5:00 a.m. and be able to think clearer after getting some more sleep. Shannon drove us this time in her truck. We just left his dog truck at the T-Lodge.

5:00 a.m. We were on the road back to the T-Lodge. I was driving my van because Shannon's truck tried braking down on the way back to my house. We couldn't be taking that risk expecting Josh in at any time. The road was looking much better after that bad spell with the cold medicine. This time when we walked into the T-Lodge it looked much of the same way as it did when we left at 12:45 a.m. Kim was up moving around, as I'm sure she would be with mushers coming in at all hours of the night. Rachael Scdoris, the legally blind woman from Oregon, crossed the finish line at about 3:30 a.m., along with Tyrel Seavey, who guided her on the trail. But, I was surprised to find out that the only musher that was still out besides Josh was Ed Pearson, who Josh had gone on several training runs with preparing for the race. Kim had told me that she heard they were taking a break together, and had been at four-corners together as well. I felt somewhat pleased that Josh and Ed were on the trail together, although that meant Ed had fallen behind a great deal from when he left the Clam Shell at 10:30 a.m. the day before. It was just good to know something about how Josh was doing. He was going to be in soon. He had left at 4:20 a.m.

So, feeling better physically and mentally, we sat down to eat some of the fried chicken that mom and sent. We sat and talked with Kim about how long she had been involved with the T-200 association. This was her first year as the president. When we weren't talking, we were watching a really bad movie on TV. Kim had forgotten to tell me when she saw me last night that Josh had dropped some dogs. I had actually forgotten about it too. We inquired about which ones. Kim looked in her paper work and read Rex, Bauser and Badger. I wasn't surprised by Rex or Bauser, but Badger was one of Josh's top dogs. Rex and Bauser are yearlings. Badger was like a pro. We went out to get the dogs and put them in the truck. Upon getting the last dog in the truck, a flagger radioed to

Kim that a musher was coming in. Kim checked to make sure that it wasn't two mushers. It was confirmed that it was only one. It was either Josh or Ed. I had a feeling that it was Ed, but I wasn't sure. Plus, if Ed and Josh had been trailing together, knowing Josh's character he would have waited for Ed to come across the finish line with him. Some would wonder why, but at that point why not? It's not like he would have anything to loose. Kim asked that if it were Ed if we would help him with his dogs. Of course we would. Well, it turned out Ed crossed the finish line at 7:10 a.m. He had all his gear checked and was then asked about Josh. Ed said that he was about 30 minutes behind him. Good! So Shannon helped Ed with the dogs. Ed just went straight home. We then went inside and grabbed some coffee to finish out our wait. That last 30 minutes of the race was the best I'd felt since it started. One of the flaggers had called in to tell Kim that he was back from filling up his gas tank. About 10 minutes after that the call came in the last musher was coming in. We quickly put our coats and gloves on and went out to wait for him. We looked off in the distance across the highway. The same way he went when he was leaving the starting line. About a 100 yards away there was about 4 huge light set up down by the old hatchery. Just past those lights we were looking for a little light to come over a hill. Kim had made a comment about if they were sure they saw a musher coming. It seemed to take forever to see that light when it did finally show it's self. You couldn't see the dogs or Josh but you could see that tiny light off of Josh's headlamp that was coming up the trail. I called my mom and told her that Josh was getting ready to pull in. She was really happy to hear it and was able to tell Amanda, Jeremiah, and Jonathan that their dad made it home before they went off to school that morning. Josh was coming on to the highway and the flaggers had to stop him so that a school bus could go by. Then we could see the flagger grab the gang line and lead the team across the road. All we could see was the silhouette of the dogs with the sled and Josh standing on the back. As crazy as it sounds, it was a beautiful sight. After crossing the highway the team briefly disappeared in the dark again. A moment later the lead dog, Dainty, appeared in the dim lights of the parking lot and finished guiding the team in at 7:42 a.m. Kim welcomed Josh in and checked to see if he had his required gear and congratulated him on finishing the race. I welcomed Josh as well. He was happy to be in and was very pleased to have finish what is known as the hardest 200 miles of mushing trail.

Josh was extremely cold when he came in so we sent him inside to get warm while Shannon and I put the team of dogs in the truck and rapped up the gang-line around the sled. We went back inside to start getting the details of what the last 100 miles were like. He started out from the Clam shell doing good, but by the time he got to the Lost



Creek Lodge 3 of his dogs had over heated. Interestingly enough, all 3 dogs were related. Rex and Bauser were from the same litter of pups, and Badger was there dad. The trip from Lost Creek to Caribou Lake went great. Josh said it was one of his fastest times. From Caribou Lake to four-corners was a bit harder. They were up in high country and the wind was bitter cold. Dainty was having a lot of trouble leading the team through the wind and would try to hide from it. Josh said he literally had to tell Dainty that if she didn't get them out of there they were going to die. Josh said she must have known what he was saying because she listened. He had to take a break for a couple hours after getting to four-corners, which was where he caught up with Ed. Josh said he asked Ed if he had gone home and then come back for him. They had a good laugh. He said the volunteers at four-corners were great. They asked him if he wanted to stay longer that they would be having eggs and bacon and toast for breakfast. Although breakfast sounded good, getting back on the trail was the priority. Josh and Ed left four-corners together and about half way to T-Lodge Ed's team got their second wind and passed Josh's team. That was OK. Josh wanted the red lantern award anyway.

After a cup of coffee, Shannon, Josh and I loaded up and went home. It was daylight when we left the lodge. We unloaded Josh's dogs and praised them again and again for the good job they all did. We fed the dogs and left them to rest. Josh got to bed at 10:30 a.m. and then had to get up at 1:00 p.m. to go take a college test. He's not sure he did so well because of a lack of sleep and physical exhaustion. He got home at 4:00 p.m. and we got ready to go to the awards banquet. That was fun. I know we weren't the only people there feeling fatigued from the weekend event. But everyone seemed to have a great time. They had a sportsmanship award that went to Tyrell Seavey. The humanitarian award went to Allie Zirkle, the 3<sup>rd</sup> place finisher of the T-200. They both received drawings that were picked in the poster contest that children from around the peninsula did. Jeff King came in 2<sup>nd</sup>. Then, the top award went to the first woman to ever win the T-200, even setting a new record for finishing the race the fastest, Jessica Hendericks. She won \$ 7,500 dollars and the winning poster from the children's contest. All the posters that were given out as awards were nicely framed. Jon Little won the little T-100. Jon's handler won 2<sup>nd</sup> and Jason Mackey won 3<sup>rd</sup>. In the middle of presenting the awards the association presented Jane Blakeslee with bib # 20 that Dick had sponsored last year. Jane was very touched. We all were that knew Dick. It was great. Josh was proud to accept his red lantern and proud to run his first race with a great team and with the sled that Dick taught him how to build. This was the 21<sup>st</sup> annual Tustumena 200.

## LAWN MOWER SALE

A preacher was making his rounds to his parishioners on a bicycle, when he came upon a little boy trying to sell a lawn mower. "How much do you want for the mower?" asked the preacher.

"I just want enough money to go out and buy me a bicycle", said the little boy. After a moment of consideration, the preacher asked, "Will you take my bike in trade for it?"

The little boy asked if he could try it out first, and after riding the bike around a little while said, "Mister, you've got yourself a deal."

The preacher took the mower and began to try to crank it. He pulled on the string a few times with no response from the mower. The preacher called the little boy over and said, "I can't get this mower to start."

The little boy said, "That's because you have to cuss at it to get it started." The preacher said, "I am a minister, and I cannot cuss. It has been so long since I have been saved that I do not even remember how to cuss."

The little boy looked at him happily and said, "Just keep pulling on that string. It'll come back to ya!"

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## KIDS ON DATING AND MARRIAGE

### **WHEN IS IT OKAY TO KISS SOMEONE?**

(1) When they're rich. -- Pam, age 7

( 2 ) The law says you have to be eighteen, so I wouldn't want to mess with that. -- Curt, age 7

( 3 ) The rule goes like this: If you kiss someone, then you should marry them and have kids with them. It's the right thing to do. -- Howard, age 8 (this one has very good morals)

[continued]

## **KIDS ON DATING AND MARRIAGE (continued)**

### **HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHO TO MARRY?**

(1) You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming. -- Alan, age 10

(2) No person really decides before they grow up who they're going to marry. God decides it all way before, and you get to find out later who you're stuck with. -- Kirsten, age 10

### **WHAT IS THE RIGHT AGE TO GET MARRIED?**

(1) Twenty-three is the best age because you know the person FOREVER by then. -- Camille, age 10

(2) No age is good to get married at. You got to be a fool to get married. -- Freddie, age 6

### **HOW CAN A STRANGER TELL IF TWO PEOPLE ARE MARRIED?**

(1) You might have to guess, based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids. - Derrick, age 8

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR MOM AND DAD HAVE IN COMMON?**

(1) Both don't want any more kids. -- Lori, age 8

### **WHAT DO MOST PEOPLE DO ON A DATE**

(1) Dates are for having fun, and people should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say if you listen long enough. -- Lynnette, age 8 (isn't she a treasure)

(2) On the first date, they just tell each other lies and that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date. -- Martin, age 10 (wise beyond his years)

### **WHAT WOULD YOU DO ON A FIRST DATE THAT WAS TURNING SOUR?**

(1) I'd run home and play dead. The next day I would call all the newspapers and make sure they wrote about me in all the dead columns. -- Craig, age 9

# The Children of Lamno

by Lisa Jackinsky

I returned recently from a trip to Indonesia to develop an Economic Recovery Plan for tsunami-affected families and communities. Many have asked me "How was your trip?", and while that question is never easy to answer neatly for any trip, this one in particular has left me with a barrage of pictures and impressions and experiences that make a quick answer seem somehow offensive. So, here is my best effort at a more complete response.

The trip was exhilarating, distressing, exhausting, stimulating, overwhelming, inspiring, heart-wrenching... Indonesia is a country of 17,000 islands spanning the equator in the Indian Ocean. It includes places such as Sumatra, Java, Bali, Komodo (the Komodo dragon), Timor and Borneo.

Eighty-two percent of the total casualties in the 11 tsunami-affected countries were in Indonesia. The province of Aceh in northern Sumatra was the area most affected. Banda Aceh, the provincial capital, was a city of 300,000 people before the tsunami hit and killed 40% of the population. In some places the wave reached inland 5 kilometers erasing buildings, carrying off people, snapping palm trees, depositing boats far inland.

Bodies are still being recovered. Returning to the office from an IDP (Internally Displaced Person) camp, we drove behind a large truck filled with corpses wrapped in blankets, headed for a mass burial site.

Kyhl Amosson and I arrived in Banda



Aceh by Singaporean C-130 cargo plane from Jakarta. Once in Aceh province, we traveled between towns by helicopter since the roads were impassible. The colors are brilliant, the tropical and mountainous scenery, breathtakingly beautiful. But in towns along the coast it looked like a hand has swept them barren, leaving only the mosque to stand alone on a lifeless brown landscape.

I was awakened each morning by the Muslim call to prayer. Rather than one lone male voice calling into the night like I have heard in other Muslim settings, it sounded like the whole city was calling, calling out to God. The haunting sound filled the air, continuing on and on and on. And then the cats began to howl and the roosters began to crow and it felt as if all of creation was wailing.

An estimated 70% of the fishing industry was destroyed in the Aceh area. But for now, people don't want to eat fish. They believe, perhaps rightly, that the fish are feeding on the bodies of their loved ones.

I talked with fishermen and rice farmers and market traders in IDP camps. They are eager to go back to work. They have food. They have water. They have shelter. All the things needed for physical survival. But they have nowhere to go and nothing to do. They have lost their sense of dignity and they sit in the camps and wait.

I talked with a man with huge brown eyes. He had the look of despair. We knelt beside him in the IDP camp and asked if we could talk with him for a few minutes.

“Do you want to ask questions about the tsunami?” he asked.

“No, we don't want to talk about the tsunami. We want to talk about going back to work.”

His expression changed and there was a glimmer of hope.

“What is Your occupation?” I asked through my translator.

“I am a fisherman.”

“My father is a fisherman.” I said.

Suddenly his whole face transformed into a huge smile and for a moment we were part of the same world, a Muslim man sitting in an IDP camp in Banda Aceh, Indonesia and a Christian woman from Alaska, the daughter of a salmon fisherman.

The WV Indonesia Tsunami Response Team rented several houses in Banda Aceh. I stayed in the White House with about 12 other people, sharing 2 bathrooms, sleeping on

mattresses on the floor with bednets to protect us from the mosquitoes that carry malaria and dengue fever.

There was a 6.0 aftershock one evening while I was working at my computer in the White House and people rushed out into the streets and ran for the hills, fearing another tsunami. A man was killed, we heard, when he panicked, ran into the street and was hit by a car.

We flew by helicopter to the picturesque town of Lamno. As we landed on the football field, children came running out to greet us. At the end of the day, after talking with IDPs in 2 different camps, I walked back to the helicopter, the children reappearing to gather around me and take my hands.

At IDP camps when people realized I wanted to talk about going back to work, they came from every direction to tell me what they did for a living and what they needed to return to work. A group of women showed me cigarettes they rolled and sold for a living (contents unknown) and offered me one. People showed me the scars on their bodies from the tsunami, and told how family members had been swept away. An old man proudly showed us the cane he was able to hold onto as the waters swirled around him and destroyed his house.

I have returned now to California, but I am not easily returning to “life as normal.” Breaking news: Michael Jackson has been rushed to the hospital with a viral flu. I can get a preferred credit card at a special low rate if I apply quickly, the man on my home phone recorder tells me. I am handed a coupon for a bathroom makeover.

When the question is raised in Sunday School as to who are the children of God, a picture flashes into my mind of the men and women of Banda Aceh, kneeling in neat rows, men in blue, women in white behind them, praying. And I hear the calls to prayer rising throughout the city, and I see the grief and the despair in people's eyes. And I see the children of Lamno, their happy faces, their cheerful chatter, their hands eager to grasp mine and walk with me to the helicopter that will take me away.

And I know that God loves them. And I don't want to leave.

## A Crack in My Memory

by Brent Johnson

The older I get the more I reflect. And the more of me there is to reflect on. Lets not go there.... In these mental mirrors we call "reflections" are some disjointed pictures. One such photo-sequence involves the Children's Home. It was roughly across the road from the blue fish processor on K-Beach Road. Not the big log house by Skjold's drive; that was built much later. The Home has a green roof and is the next place past the log house. It's close to Jackinsky' road. I'll bet George and Jeanne could add a few details on the old orphanage.

Anyway, the Home was run by a Christian guy and operated when I was in the 5th grade. I only remember that because baseball came into my life then, arriving with Mike Humuckey from Bakersfield. Mike's Dad had played semi-pro ball. He encouraged Ed Mallette's grandpa (Frank Char) to start a Little League team. Our field was just behind what is now the Treasure Cache. The diamond has since filled with treasures (cars saved for salvage). Teams played in Kenai and Soldotna before this but wouldn't have wandered south for a while without the new kid.

Unfortunately, our new team had several lads who, like myself, had neither seen nor played organized baseball. The Eagles were the best team. We played them early in the season and it didn't go well. When we were already being humiliated, an Eagle got a walk. As he got to First their coach yelled to him, "Go on to Second! Go ahead to Second!" One of my team-mates had the ball but, dummies that we were, we thought we had done something wrong and consequently their base runner was getting a free pass to second. We watched him go. His coach laughed and our coach yelled. They scored 20 or 30 runs in the shut-out. Their coach must have felt smug about the "stolen base." Sometimes I wonder what kind of depravity would make an adult behave like that?

Strange things happen in life and one was brewing here. We went on to lose every game that season. Except one. And the win came like this: We were matched up with the Eagles late in the schedule. No doubt we had improved some, but I wouldn't make too much of it. A kid from the Home was on our team. He was a fair-sized boy, probably 12, or whatever is the upper edge of the age limit.

The game exploded into something of a pitcher's dual, but the mound has faded from my memory. I don't know if Ed, who always had velocity, also found control for an evening, or, and probably, an older kid was slinging white-lightening. Those games only go six innings and somewhere late in those bifurcates our Home boy got a hold of the baseball with some good bat speed. Crack! It was fair, it was far, and it was Game!

The Eagles closed out that season with the best record. Sweetly, our sole victory came at their expense. Once or twice Justice has smiled on Fate. I try to keep those photos dusted but seem to be getting ever further behind. I'd love to find an old newspaper article to aid my memory.

The following year the head of the orphanage drove my school bus and shared positive input with me. I think they closed shop a year or two later. Now I reflect on them occasionally and dust pictures.

*Editor's Note: for a midterm project in a college class on Existentialism, Joel Shields wrote three very brief exposes on Soren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Friedrich Nietzsche. What follows is the portion on Kierkegaard, a devout Christian who was bitterly and unrelentingly critical of the church of his day, lashing out at the "crowd" for their forgetfulness of what it means to exist. By exist, Kierkegaard meant that we stand out as responsible individuals who must make free choices, especially the passionate choice about God and man.*

## **Kierkegaard**

Kierkegaard, under general consensus, holds the honor of being labeled the first existential philosopher due to his introspective writings on the nature of man, and the human condition. While other philosophers, importantly Blaise Pascal, anticipated the oncoming of existential themes of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, none developed a comprehensive philosophy concerning the subject as did Soren Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard is perhaps most known for advocating a "leap of faith;" it was his position that the evident divide (temporality and eternity) between man and God could not be bridged by "reason" or by an intellectual pursuit, for Kierkegaard, the only way to arrive at truth is through subjective passion. Kierkegaard held, as existentialists after him also have readily adopted, that man is born into a state of indecision, not inherently bound to some life path, or essence, but is completely free to create or choose this essence for himself. This state of natural freedom is a source of anxiety and depression for some existentialist philosophers, including Kierkegaard who believed it to be the state of man independent of faith.

Naturally, since Kierkegaard chose Christianity, this was the focus of his philosophy concerning the individual. It is by the aforementioned "leap of faith" that Kierkegaard truly believes one can arrive at happiness. Without surrender to the eternal, Kierkegaard says we experience anxiety and perpetual despair; writing in "The Sickness unto Death", Kierkegaard states that the wasted life is one lived in never becoming aware that "there is a God, and that he, himself, his self, exists before this God." (The Essential Kierkegaard, pg. 360). What Kierkegaard is advocating here, and throughout "The



Sickness unto Death” is that even the smallest pleasures or joys in life are simply vehicles of despair when experienced independent of living a life of faith. Thus for Kierkegaard, living a life of faith, and having a conscious belief in the eternal is necessary for existential happiness. But as is clear, the leap is not an easy thing, for one feels incredible anxiety when faced with the monumentous prospect of “crucifying” the intellect and manifesting a decision spawned solely from passion, completely independent of reason. However, this aspect of the process is absolutely essential for Kierkegaard’s existentialism, passion being synonymous with religious belief. True faith is not reaped from some mechanistic process of crunching logical syllogisms or through pure reason, true faith is inherently irrational and is a continual choice, a life process. Kierkegaard clearly states that to walk the path of faith is to straddle a tightrope, fanaticism the pitfall on one side, and disbelief/doubt on the other. This walk of faith entails that one acknowledges their belief is a product of choice, not the outcome of some axiomatic theorem or proof. For Kierkegaard, claiming to “know” God exists is pretentious, and counter to the very notion of faith, the choice God honors above all others.

At the moment when the individual chooses the eternal, Kierkegaard states that eternity and temporality intersect and thus the individual creates, through their temporal choice, an existential self that will stand for eternal judgment. As a product solely of choice, the individual no longer leads a life of despair, but is now rooted in a self-assigned definition and has purpose in life.

In examining Kierkegaard’s leap, it becomes clear why he is labeled the father of existentialism, for the leap in and of itself is existential to the core. Man, faced with the crisis of indecision and the despair of existence arrives at the point of surrender, voluntarily giving up reason and *chooses*, out of passion, a belief in the eternal. It is important to see that Kierkegaard’s philosophy stands as nothing short of a revolution in thought, for not only did he deny the widely accepted Hegelian paradigm of his time, but he systematically renounced the rigid, mechanical philosophies of Constantine, Anselm, Aquinas, and Cartesian rationalism.

When an old lady died in the geriatric ward of a small hospital near Dundee, Scotland, it was believed that she had nothing left of any value. As the nurses were going through her meager possessions, they found this poem. Its quality and content so impressed the staff that copies were made and distributed to every nurse in the hospital. One nurse took her copy to Ireland. The old lady's sole bequest to posterity has since appeared in the Christmas edition of the News Magazine of the North Ireland Association for Mental Health. A slide presentation has also been made based on her simple, but eloquent, poem. And this little old Scottish lady, with nothing left to give to the world, is now the author of this "anonymous" poem winging across the Internet:

### *CRABBY OLD WOMAN*

What do you see, nurses?  
What do you see?  
What are you thinking  
When you're looking at me?

A crabby old woman,  
Not very wise,  
Uncertain of habit,  
With faraway eyes?

Who dribbles her food  
And makes no reply  
When you say in a loud voice,  
"I do wish you'd try!"

Who seems not to notice  
The things that you do,  
And forever is losing  
A stocking or shoe?

Who, resisting or not,  
Lets you do as you will,  
With bathing and feeding,  
The long day to fill?

Is that what you're thinking?  
Is that what you see?  
Then open your eyes, nurse,  
You're not looking at me.

I'll tell you who I am  
As I sit here so still,  
As I do at your bidding,  
As I eat at your will.

I'm a small child of ten  
With a father and mother,  
Brothers and sisters,  
Who love one another.

A young girl of sixteen  
With wings on her feet  
Dreaming that soon now  
A lover she'll meet.

A bride soon at twenty,  
My heart gives a leap,  
Remembering the vows  
That I promised to keep

At twenty-five now,  
I have young of my own,  
Who need me to guide  
And a secure happy home.

A woman of thirty,  
My young now grown fast,  
Bound to each other  
With ties that should last.

At forty, my young sons  
Have grown and are gone,  
But my man's beside me  
To see I don't mourn

At fifty once more,  
Babies play round my knee,  
Again we know children,  
My loved one and me.

Dark days are upon me,  
My husband is dead,  
I look at the future,  
I shudder with dread.

For my young are all rearing  
Young of their own,  
And I think of the years  
And the love that I've known.

I'm now an old woman  
And nature is cruel;  
'Tis jest to make old age  
Look like a fool.

The body, it crumbles,  
Grace and vigor depart,  
There is now a stone  
Where I once had a heart.

But inside this old carcass  
A young girl still dwells,  
And now and again,  
My battered heart swells.

I remember the joys,  
I remember the pain,  
And I'm loving and living  
Life over again.

I think of the years  
All too few, gone too fast,  
And accept the stark fact  
That nothing can last.

So open your eyes, people,  
Open and see,  
Not a crabby old woman;  
Look closer . . . see ME!!

Remember this poem when you next meet  
an old person who you might brush aside  
without looking at the young soul  
within.....we will all, one  
day, be there, too!

## THE SHOES

*found and submitted by Robbie Horne*

My alarm went off - It was Sunday again.  
I was sleepy and tired, my one day to sleep in.  
But the guilt I would feel the rest of the day  
Would have been too much, So I'd go and I'd pray.



I showered and shaved, I adjusted my tie,  
I got there and sat in a pew just in time.  
Bowing my head in prayer as I closed my eyes,  
I saw the shoe of the man next to me touching my own. I sighed.

With plenty of room on either side, I thought, "Why must our soles touch?"  
It bothered me, his shoe touching mine, but it didn't bother him much.  
A prayer began: "Our Father" I thought, "This man with the shoes has no pride.  
They're dusty, worn, and scratched even worse, there are holes on the side!"

"Thank You for blessings," the prayer went on. the shoe man said a quiet "Amen."  
I tried to focus on the prayer, but my thoughts were on his shoes again.  
Aren't we supposed to look our best when walking through that door?  
"Well, this certainly isn't it," I thought, glancing toward the floor.

Then the prayer was ended and the songs of praise began.  
The shoe man was certainly loud, sounding proud as he sang.  
His voice lifted the rafters, his hands were raised high,  
The Lord could surely hear the shoe man's voice from the sky.

It was time for the offering and what I threw in was steep.  
I watched as the shoe man reached into his pockets so deep.  
I saw what was pulled out, what the shoe man put in,  
Then I heard a soft "clink" as when silver hits tin.

The sermon really bored me to tears, and that's no lie  
It was the same for the shoe man, for tears fell from his eyes.  
At the end of the service, as is the custom here,  
we must greet new visitors and show them all good cheer.

But I felt moved somehow and wanted to meet shoe man  
So after the closing prayer, I reached over and shook his hand.  
He was old and his skin was dark, and his hair was truly a mess  
But I thanked him for coming, for being our guest.

He said, "My name's Charlie, I'm glad to meet you, my friend."  
There were tears in his eyes but he had a large, wide grin.  
"Let me explain," he said wiping tears from his eyes.  
"I've been coming here for months, and you're the first to say 'Hi.'

"I know that my appearance "Is not like all the rest,  
"But I really do try "to always look my best."  
"I always clean and polish my shoes  
"before my very long walk,  
"But by the time I get here  
"they're dirty and dusty, like chalk."



My heart filled with pain and I swallowed to hide my tears  
As he continued to apologize for daring to sit so near.  
He said, "When I get here, "I know I must look a sight.  
"But I thought if I could touch you, "then maybe our souls might unite."

I was silent for a moment, knowing whatever was said  
Would pale in comparison. I spoke from my heart, not my head.  
"Oh, you've touched me," I said, "and taught me, in part,  
"That the best of any man "is what is found in his heart."

The rest, I thought, this shoe man will never know. . .  
Like just how thankful I really am that his dirty old shoe  
Touched my soul...

Author remains anonymous

## Recollections of the 2005 Yukon Quest

*By Jon Little*

Now that I know how the other half lives, I'm tempted to keep quiet. Let everyone else find out the hard way, first-hand, how the Yukon Quest stacks up to Iditarod. They wouldn't regret it, because the short, straight answer is, the Quest stacks up to the Last Great Race as neatly as cordwood outside Sebastian and Shelly's cabin near Dawson. The Quest is a beautiful, earthy sled dog race, with a character punctuated with the tang of wood smoke, moss-chinked cabins and miles and miles of untamed, untouched wilderness.

In one sense, I'm stunned that only 21 mushers started this year's race. But I understand that the Quest's self-advertised reputation as the toughest 1,000-mile race in the world, combined with a purse that falls significantly short of Iditarod's is a big enough one-two punch to drive some mushers away. If that's all that's keeping people from entering, it is a shame. To be a distance sled dog musher and to have not raced the Yukon Quest, at least once, is to have missed out on one of the greatest joys the sport has to offer.

OK, I admit I had it easy. The Quest can be cold, but we didn't have to deal with that. Warm temperatures that never dipped much below minus-30 blessed this year's race and I don't believe it climbed higher than 20 (Fahrenheit). Also, the Quest can be bumpy, tough on sleds. But we didn't have to deal with that either. Snow was plentiful, even in the thickly treed portages through the chain of lakes linking Braeburn and Carmacks. Those typically sled-damaging sections were mild and easy.

That said, the Quest throws some challenges not seen in the Iditarod, and vice versa. The single biggest physical difference (there is a different mind-set as well) between the



can't explain a schedule to dogs verbally, so you do it by physical repetition. The race rolled along at a five-hour run and rest pace for the first couple of days, and I began watching out the duo of William Kleedehn and Gerry Willomitzer. They were running together, were running faster than I was at that point, and were obviously following a meticulous schedule. Meanwhile, Lance Mackey and Hugh Neff were paired up, watching me closely, figuring I was the team to beat.

I was there with a goal to win, which is unusual for me. I normally just aim to run the dogs to their best and let the standings take care of themselves. But I had decided to run a more aggressive race in the Quest, even as a rookie, which would take me into a new role as a trail breaker for much of the race. Some of my highest highs were moving along up front. I heartily enjoyed breaking trail through an inch of fresh powder in the hills beyond Stepping Stone at 4 a.m. while the northern lights danced overhead. Being in the lead so often in a 1,000 mile race was new to me, and to my dogs. With lots of fresh snow and some sections of punchy trail, too many of those runs started taking a toll on my team.

By the time I pulled into Eagle, where the racing in the Yukon Quest starts getting serious, I had a nagging feeling my dogs weren't as bouncy as they should be. I saw Lance Mackey and Gerry Willomitzer as the best bets to win at that point. (Foolishly, I believed Kleedehn's line about his dogs having sore shoulders. I still remember his sly grin as he sipped one more glass of water at a Sebastian's cabin, as I went ahead and broke trail. Everyone believed him, it turned out.)

Mackey had been cueing off me until that point, but he took off from Eagle with a spirited team chasing Willomitzer. Everyone in the front pack, six teams, pulled into the warm hospitality of the Trout Creek cabin for about a seven hour break. One of the biggest differences between the Quest and the Iditarod is the pit stops. The Iditarod has well-defined checkpoints, each with fairly uniform **xxxxxs** – water, fuel, microwave, somewhere warm to sleep. The quest has a few checkpoints like that, but there's also dog drops – places where tired or sore dogs can be left in the care of veterinarians. And there's the little cabins along the way, some populated by the same volunteers each year, preparing warm stew, pancakes and a heated floor for a few hours snooze; others are vacant, but available for mushers who want to pull in. They often aren't marked, a slight disadvantage to rookies, but not one worth fussing over. It's just the personality of the race.

Mackey was first to launch from Trout Creek, an unenviable position in that stage of the race. The trail vanished as we hit a wind-swept and nearly snowless stretch of the Yukon River. Teams banged and skittered over frozen river ice. Willomitzer and I were traveling together then, and we followed the tracks of Mackey and Neff, who opted to turn left at an island. Unfortunately, the trail went right.

Mackey's amazing dogs cut a serpentine swath through a few inches of unbroken fresh snow atop hard pack and jumble ice. It was an insane route, no fault of the dogs or driver. He was just trying to feel his way up river. After about an hour of pretty rough going, Mackey and Neff cut right across the mile-wide river and hooked back up with the real trail. Just about every other team in the race followed their detour.

Willomitzer and I pulled up after six hours of running at a small cabin at the mouth of the Kandik River. The owner, a riverboat captain from Eagle, had a fire going and fetched buckets of cold water for our dogs. Mackey and Neff, meanwhile, marched on to Slaven's cabin, another 20 miles on. That's where the race strategies for the end of the race took shape. Mackey, Neff and Kleedehn took a traditional approach: Run to Slaven's, then another 60 miles to Circle. Willomitzer and I figured we could skip Slaven's, camp at one of the lesser known cabins beyond it, then blow through Circle checkpoint and rest our dogs at Kokrine's cabin, part way to Central. Willomitzer broke a runner and fell back, but I carried out the plan, still figuring Lance was virtually unstoppable, but maybe I could cause just enough confusion to wring out some kind of advantage. It might have worked, had the 75-mile trail from Circle to Central not been the softest and slowest of the race. My schedule had me passing Kleedehn, then Mackey and Neff, who were camped part way from Circle. Once again, I was slogging through soft snow at the front. Something wasn't clicking with my leaders; they weren't as intense as they should be, as I've seen them in past races. Should I stop and camp too, losing that time advantage, I asked myself. Just then, a moose leaped onto the trail, running up ahead of my dogs, which gave chase. A few minutes later, we startled a huge, shaggy dark gray wolf, which tried to bound up the steep riverbank, only to fall over backwards, bounce back up and run ahead of us up the trail. We gave chase. I figured the two sightings were signs that I should push on. I figured wrong.

I had a pretty tired dog team by the time I reached Central, and I hadn't accounted for the two serious hill climbs coming in the next long run to Angel Creek. I knew Eagle and Rosebud summits were there, but I had pushed too hard to that point, and there wasn't enough reserves for the mentally intimidating hill climbs. I pulled out first from Cen-



tral, but was passed by Mackey within a couple of hours. As I followed him up the first hill, much milder than the second one to come, I saw Hugh Neff coming on up the hill behind me. Then my race fell apart. My team stopped dead on the steep, treeless slope. They turned around and looked at me like they had suddenly lost the ability to understand simple commands like “hike”. Some began wandering to the side, digging little trenches to bed down. It’s an all-too-common scenario in the Quest, and happens to at least one team every year running this direction. I couldn’t believe it was happening to me, but should have seen the warning signs in my own team earlier. After about a five – minute personal meltdown, fueled by outrage and frank fear that my race could literally be over at that point, I snapped back to my senses and began the long sweat-soaked task of getting my team uphill against its wishes. For anyone who winds up stopped dead at Eagle Summit, my best advice is to stay calm, and hike up in front of you team, calling them to you as you go. It’s slow, but slow is fast when you’re not moving, as Tim Osmar once said. That technique got my team to the base of the real hill climb, a vertical climb up the face of a steep bowl. It’s just not a place a dog team ought to be. There, I had to attach my snowhook to the front of the gangline, so I could assist the dogs in hauling the heavy sled up the steep incline. I would pull and call “come” in a cheerful tone, and we’d march uphill a few feet at a time before I had to set the snow hook to anchor the sled and dogs from sliding backwards. I would pant for awhile, then we would start again. Slowly, we inched up the incline, wind and snow spitting into our faces.

Once at the top, the trail goes only a few yards across a pass before taking a slightly milder downhill grade. A few miles later, and you’re at Mile 101, a dog drop where mushers often stay for a couple of hours before making the next big push over Rosebud Summit to Angel Creek. That’s the equivalent of White Mountain, the last checkpoint where mushers take a mandatory 8-hour break before the final 88-mile push to the finish line.

I was disappointed that I hadn’t prepared my team, had over packed my sled, and had pushed too often through deep snow to tire my dogs to the point they quit on Eagle Summit. But I was glad we could fight past it. I knew my chances for a win were absolutely shot, and that Neff and Dave Dalton had passed me on the hill. I blew about two hours on that hill, and my dogs were shaken by the experience. I showed up at Mile 101 just after Mackey and Neff pulled out. As I let the dogs rest two hours, I watched Kleedehn roll up, rebootie his dogs and keep going. I figured we were at the cusp of figuring out who was going to win this race, and that I was now a couple hours short of being in the hunt.

Mackey and Neff, probably figuring I was out of the hunt, took a long break on the way to Angel Creek, not accounting for Kleedehn, until he showed up and waltzed past them near Rosebud. Mackey, with his incredible team of ever-enthusiastic shaggy huskies, took chase and recaptured the lead.

I compare a 1,000-mile dog race to a chess match, or to building a house of cards. A move made here and there early in the contest will have profound effects much later on. Sometimes the house of cards collapses. Sometimes everything falls together flawlessly. It is one of the fascinating things about racing and following races. You never know what's going to trip one team up, or catapult another into the lead.

Mackey had the team of destiny in this year's Quest, and says his faster dogs are at home waiting to run in the Iditarod. It will be fun to watch, to see if that incredible zest I witnessed in the 2005 Quest will fuel Mackey to the front of the pack in the Iditarod.

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**Columnist** *Editor's Note:*  
**Jon Little**



Perhaps there are some of you reading this article who were unaware that Jon not only ran the Yukon Quest, but he also was on the trail of the Iditarod sled dog race filing daily reports for *Cabelas* (see link below).

The Internet has really brought sled dog racing into our living rooms. You can follow your favorite musher or read articles from your favorite reporter in near real time. While John was running (and leading for much of the second half of the race) the Yukon Quest, there was a message board where his fans could post encouraging notes. It was really cool to see people from all over the U.S. intently following Jon's race. Of course, few of us really can understand what it must feel like to run a race like the Yukon Quest or the Iditarod, but following Jon in the Quest and reading his articles about the Iditarod made this reader feel like he was out there with all the teams. More than once, I offered my advice to the computer on how long a musher should rest and how long he should run. Pretty easy to do with a piece of pizza stuck in my mouth. We congratulate Jon on his Yukon Quest race and his excellent reporting on the Iditarod.

<http://www.cabelasiditarod.com>

## 2004-2005 Lady Wolverines



**Back row:** Tara Snauble, Mindy Dawson, Kendra Moerlein, Jennifer Erickson, Lauren Wolford, Heidi Skjold, Ashleigh Bartolowits, Coach Dan Leman

**Front row:** Emily Wood, Kelsey Rohr, Krista Leman, Kjersten Skjold, Jennifer Bartolowits

The Ninilchik Lady Wolverines just recently finished another very successful basketball campaign. They have won the 2A girl's state of Alaska basketball championship seven times (1996, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004), have been state runners up three times (1995, 1999, 2005), and have finished 3rd at state three times (1993, 1994, 1998). Doing the simple math, one can see that in the past 13 years these ladies have never finished worse than third at state. That is quite the accomplishment indeed.

This year's team featured two young ladies from KCC, Kjersten and Heidi Skjold. Kjersten is a sophomore and Heidi a freshman, so the Wolverine's future remains very bright. I believe a congratulations is in order the next time you see Kjersten or Heidi. Playing on the boy's squad for Ninilchik is Josh Klapack. The boys just missed a trip to state this year and Josh was a key component to the team's success.

## **A HANDY REFERENCE LIST OF EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS:**

- When in sorrow.....call John 14  
When men fail you.....call Psalm 27  
When you have sinned.....call Psalm 51  
When you worry.....call Matthew 6:19-34  
When you are in danger.....call Psalm 91  
When God seems far away.....call Psalm 139  
When your faith needs stirring.....call Hebrews 11  
When you are lonely and fearful.....call Psalm 23  
When you grow bitter and critical.....call I Corinthians 13  
When you feel down and out.....call Romans 8:31  
When you want peace and rest.....call Matthew 11:25-30  
When the world seems bigger than God.....call Psalm 90  
When you want Christian assurance.....call Romans 8:1-30  
When you leave home for labor or travel.....call Psalm 121  
When your prayers grow narrow or selfish.....call Psalm 67  
When you want courage for a task.....call Joshua 1  
When you think of investments and returns.....call Mark 10  
If you are depressed.....call Psalm 27  
If your pocketbook is empty.....call Psalm 37  
If you are losing confidence in people.....call I Corinthians 13  
If people seem unkind.....call John 15  
If discouraged about your work.....call Psalm 126  
If self pride/greatness takes hold.....call Psalm 19  
If you want to be fruitful.....call John 15  
For understanding of Christianity.....call II Corinthians 5:15-19  
For a great invention/opportunity.....call Isaiah 55  
For how to get along with fellow men.....call Romans 12  
For Paul's secret to happiness.....call Colossians 3:12-17

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### **ALTERNATE NUMBERS:**

- For dealing with fear.....call Psalm 34:7  
For security.....call Psalm 121:3  
For assurance.....call Mark 8:35  
For reassurance.....call Psalm 145:18

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### **PLEASE NOTE:**

Emergency numbers may be dialed direct. No operator assistance is necessary. All lines to Heaven are open 24 hours a day! Feed your FAITH, and DOUBT will starve to death