

Serum Run Expedition arrives in Nome

By James Mason

A group of mushers and snowmachiners who left Nenana on February 22 and followed the 674-mile serum run trail arrived in Nome on Thursday.

Five mushers and eight snowmachiners braved -45°F temperatures on the Yukon River and plenty of snow in their commemoration of the 1925 run which brought serum to cure diphtheria to Nome.

"It was cold," said Stephanie Johnson of Nome, one of the mushers. "I think yesterday was the first day that we had above zero in the 20 days we were on the trail."

They spent two nights in tents on the Yukon. Her dogs looked peppy and upbeat at the finish. "I think they held their weight pretty well," Johnson said of the dogs. "They ate well, they look good. They've all lost a little weight but I have too because we worked our butts off the last 20 days. They worked harder than me. I think these dogs really fared well in these conditions. They've never seen trees so they're learning to navigate through the trees on the very tight trails. I have several dings on my sled from hitting trees. It's not something I'm used to doing in Nome. Overall they did very well. I couldn't be more proud of them. They never stopped."

Maria BB is from western Massachusetts and owns a touring and racing kennel there. "The trail was

spectacular," she said at the finish. "We got here [to Alaska] in December to train. We've been in Two Rivers and 750 miles is the most my dogs have ever done. We were on the Yukon River at minus 45. We've been mushing in minus 45 but they had dog houses. This morning we woke up and they were all buried under the snow. It's innate, they know what to do. All 12 dogs from beginning to end."

BB described the trip as "traveling with my best friends. My 15-year-old daughter is back home and she says 'Mom I can't believe you're doing this, I want to do it too.' She's proud of me too."

Juliah DeLoach of Trapper Creek had done 200 miles before this trip. "It wasn't a problem," she said. "We trained for it. I knew my dogs were capable so it wasn't too much to ask. They saw some new things. They'd never been on sea ice, they'd never been in wind. The first couple days with the sea ice they were OK and then we got to a real wind-swept area and it was making a lot of noises underneath us so one of my leaders just really didn't want to do it," she said. It was cold on the Yukon River. "It was exciting being out there on the trail," she said. "There are a lot of trail challenges. I think that was the exciting part." What about the Aurora? Was it out? "It was like a sea glass blue-green," said DeLoach. "It was really pretty. I hadn't seen that

color from home."

Nome musher Kirsten Bey was part of the expedition as well but her run was cut short when she was injured when a snow machine hit her on the trail outside Galena. She was medivaced from Galena to Fairbanks and is recovering. Troopers have identified the snowmachiner who hit her and he is cooperating with the investigation.

Photos by James Mason

END OF THE TRAIL—Maria BB of Massachusetts arrived in Nome as part of the Serum Run Expedition, on March 12.



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