

HARDY MUSHER DESCRIBES RACE IN HOWLING STORM

Driver Gives Credit to Lead Dog for Conquering Blizzard to Get Serum to Nome

Here follows the personal story of Gunnar Kasson, for twenty-one years a musher over Alaskan trails, of the end of the 650-mile race by dogs and men over snow and ice, through blizzards and across the broken ice on Norton Bay in temperature reaching 50 degrees below zero, carrying the twenty-pound package of diphtheria antitoxin to Nome. Kasson made the last lap of fifty-five miles from Bluff to Nome. He describes it as the "toughest" of his long career—Ed.

BY GUNNAR KASSON

(BY CABLE—EXCLUSIVE DISPATCH)

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NOME (Alaska) Feb. 3.—Well, it was a pretty tough trip all right. The fact is it was the toughest I've ever had on the trails and I've been mushing Alaska since 1904. But Balto—
he's my lead dog—brought us through.

Balto sniffed the trail through the light snow when I couldn't tell where we were, on the trail or off, and kept the direction on the bare ice. The wind had swept it slick as glass and the snow was coming in so you couldn't see the wheel dog nearest the sled. Balto is a good dog.

Balto is well known in the Alaskan country. He led Kasson's dogs in 1915 when they won the Moose race. Two years ago he led the dogs which carried Raold Amundsen north from Nome when the explorer planned an airplane flight over the North Pole. Balto has gained the name of being the best lead dog in Alaska.

I got into Bluff Sunday morning, sixteen hours before Charlie Olson did. (Bluff is a tiny village on Norton Sound in the hollow of the

shore on the other side of Cape Nome from the town of Nome.)

DOGS HALF WOLVES

I had thirteen dogs, long-eared malamutes. They're half wolves. Charlie got in at 8 o'clock at night and he was glad to see me. He had run his seven huskies twenty-five miles from Golofin. His dogs have shorter hair. Everyone was frozen in the groin. They came in stiff and sore. They couldn't have gone much farther.

Charlie told me he picked up the stuff from Seppalla at Golofin. Seppalla had mushed from Shak to Lika. That was about sixty miles. Charlie said Seppalla with his twenty dogs had a bad trip across Norton Bay. The storm was mad there, he said.

(Seppalla had been warned by of-

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DESCRIBES RACE THROUGH STORM

between the hummocks and the upper beach. It made the trail heavy and slow, but with the wind gone down I could see the trail ahead some times as it was not so dark any more.

Two of my dogs who were frozen on another trip began to stiffen up. I made a rabbit-skin covering for them, but the cold went right through it. I was good and glad to see Nome. I was good and hungry.

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officials not to cut across Norton Sound of which Norton Bay is a part, because the ice was reported to be breaking up and drifting to sea. They told him to take the much longer way around, by circling Norton Bay. Apparently Seppala, champion musher of the North, preferred speed to safety.)

ANIMALS STILL GAME

Seppala told Charlie his dogs were still game although they'd mushed eighty miles. He said he used Togo and Scotty as his leaders. (Scotty is a great favorite in Nome.) This Togo is a good dog. He's smart. He knows what you want before you do it. I think he's the best of the string and they're the fastest in Alaska, they say.

I took the serum from Charlie. He lives at Bluff, an old timer. He owns the quartz mine and stamp mill there. It was blowing so hard and was so cold we took the stuff into a cabin to get it warmed up and to see if the wind would go down.

But it kept getting colder. It went down to 28 below. The wind was fierce. I don't know how fast, but I've never felt it faster. There wasn't any use in waiting, so we went. It was then 10 o'clock Sunday night. We'd waited in the cabin two hours.

WIND PIERCES SKINS

The snow was coming down fast. I hitched the dogs. I wanted to get on to the roadhouse at Safety (a distance of thirty-four miles) before the trails got impassable. The first piece of trail was the best. I stuck to the coast, figuring it would make good going if not too stormy. The wind was blowing hard. I don't know just how hard. But I had seal mukluks on my feet. They go up to the hips. And I had seal-skin pants over them. On my head I had a reindeer parka and hood, and a drill parka over that. But the wind was so strong it went right through the skins.

(As Gunnar Kasson was starting from Bluff, Ed Rohn, waiting on the trail at Safety, twenty-one miles from Nome, to act as his relay, sent word to Nome that the wind was blowing eighty miles an hour, that the snow was coming down so heavily it was impossible for man or dog to face it or keep to the trail, and that the ice over Norton Sound was in constant motion from the ground swell.)

RUNS INTO WATER

Crossing Topkok River, I ran into trouble. I ran Balto into an overflow. I couldn't see it ahead. It was snowing so. (An overflow is where the water has run up over the ice.) I had to turn him into a soft snowdrift to dry off his feet. That keeps them from freezing and getting torn on the glare ice.

I stopped only a few minutes, then started up Topkok Hill. (Topkok Hill is about 500 feet above the sea level and stands exposed to the full sweep of the wind from the sound.) The wind was coming in from the northwest. Topkok Hill is hell when it's storming. It was storming some when I got up there. My right cheek got frozen.

Coming down Topkok Hill you come to the flat for a stretch of six miles. Along a ways is Spruce Creek. It's always the worst spot for wind in any kind of weather. The wind was coming across the lagoons and sloughs there picking up the snow like it was a comb. It was blowing so hard could hardly see my hand in front of my face.

I couldn't even see the wheel dog. That's where Balto came in. I didn't know where I was. I couldn't even guess. The sled slid through the snow and kept going straight across the frozen lagoons. I didn't even know when I passed right by Solomon, so I didn't get the message from Nome. (Solomon is the first village on the trail along the seacoast from Bluff to Nome. It lies about thirty-three miles from Nome. Gunnar Kasson had gone twenty-three miles with more than that ahead of him. At Solomon word from Nome was waiting for Kasson, telling him to wait until the storm was over and not to press on under such conditions.)

SLED SPILLS IN SNOW

It's twelve and a half miles from Solomon to safety. The wind across Bonanza Creek was the worst I ever felt. The sled spilled every other minute in the soft snow and I had to untangle the dogs' harness, lift the stuff back on the sled and get going again. It was dark, too, black. The going was better after I got across Bonanza. The trail turned so the wind was with me. That boosted me along so I made the twelve and a half miles to Safety in eighty minutes.

(Following the trail it was necessary for him to dip around the edge of Safety Sound coming up to Port Safety as the town is known on the map, from the seaside. At Safety, Ed Rohn was waiting to act as relay.)

The wind had gone down when I got to Safety. I mushed by the roadhouse, but as everything was dark and Balto and the others were going good now, I decided to continue instead of waking Ed Rohn.

It's twenty-one miles from Safety to Nome. The trail runs along the beach of the Bering Sea. The wind had drifted the snow