

# Mush! Mush!

By Stephannie Johnson with photos by Cody Storm Cooper

With harnesses as taut as an archer's bow, the team of six magnificent and powerful blue-eyed Siberian Huskies struggle against their restraints, barking and howling impatiently at their master as if crying, "Let's go, let's go!"

With a sharp command: "Hike!," from their master, the boys and girls are off in a cloud of silvery-white, sparkling snow. The gentle whisper of the runners on fresh snow and the panting of the dogs are the only sounds breaking the still silence of the winter wonderland. For the next 15-kilometre trek through the woods, across inland lakes and Highway 141, teams make their way from Humphrey, to Rosseau in Seguin Township, delivering bags of mail the way it was done during the first half of the 20th century in northern parts of Canada.

To commemorate this primeval and severe, yet majestic form of mail delivery, for the last 21 years mushers from as far as Ohio have participated in the Seguin Dog Sled Mail Run and Mush Rush.

"I've been obsessed with Siberian Huskies since 1969," said the event's co-organizer and founder Elsie Chadwick with a laugh. "They're a wonderful breed. They do everything you ask them to. They're very wolf-like, that's probably why I love them so much. Al and I have a cottage on Little Whitefish Lake and we've always wanted to see a team out on our lake."

Friends who owned teams began bringing their dogs to the Chadwick cottage to run them through the surrounding woods and lakes. From there, with the help of current organizer Glenda Bennett, the Mail Run and Mush Rush came together. From the very beginning, Ms Chadwick said the event was "emulating the way mail used to be delivered." In 1985, Ms Chadwick recalls a winter thaw that made the trip from Humphrey to Rosseau difficult.

"It had rained heavily during the night and Humphrey Boulevard was snow-less," said Ms. Chadwick. "However, truckloads of snow were brought in to make a trail along the side of the road to meet Highway 141 so the mushers could get started on their run."

That year, it took the team of dogs two hours along the soggy and muddy trails to reach the Rosseau post office; a trip that usually takes about an hour. Since the event began, Ms Chadwick said she's only missed one Mail Run, and that was due to her husband being very ill.

Although she loves the sensation of being pulled by such powerful creatures, Ms Chadwick admits she's a better teacher than a musher.

"They do take a while to teach though," she said. "In my younger days I taught them how to lead by taking them 'gee' (right) and 'ha' (left) around cars in a parking lot. It's a slow system, but it works." The two-day event, which includes an informal meet and greet at the Mush Rush, as well as free rides from mushers, attracts between six and eight teams a year.

"It's always been a wonderful event, there's never been any problems. I love everything about the Mail Run," she said almost wistfully. "I love to see them take off. I've never gotten over that feeling."

That feeling, Ms Chadwick said, is akin to being taken for a ride by Huskies.

"It's the quietness of the forest, with just the swish of the runners, it's just mind boggling how beautiful it



22 YEARS OF MUSHING!

Dear Friend,

FEBRUARY 18

You are reading a letter which has been made to gather mail, for Rosseau, Ontario, 17 km +!

This is our 22nd - printed for the

SEGUIN MAIL RUN FROM HUMPHREY TO ROSSEAU ONTARIO

CARRIED BY DOG TEAM

Humphrey Ontario

Sideroads of Parry Sound & Area

22

WINTER 2006 EDITION

to the cheer... into the bush... because all... Smith who receives th... village of Rosseau, which... cancellation is a...

you enjoy being... san of driving you... groomed trails, wi...

Teams and s... develop... personal... ating their... now, you ka...