

KRYSTAL KENNELS NEWS

From the paws of Joe & Robin Oberton

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 12

(SORRY NO PICTURES THIS TIME!)

DECEMBER 2007

December started out with a wonderful snowfall of **10 inches on the first weekend!** Mushing conditions were very favorable for the entire month! We enjoyed giving many rides and spending time with our niece Kailey and nephew Bryan, the Magnusen family, Denean Flower, Mike and Judy Lane, Laurie and Brandon Warren, Kris David and family, Fred, Karen and Jordan Dyck, and members of the Roldan, Helvie, Golemeske, Bloch, Bryant, Nordstrom, Bloom, and VanDerBrink families, and many others. We hope you all had as much fun as we did!! (Jordan – we will tell about the dog named Blue in our next newsletter, we promise!) =)



SHE BEAT A BATTLE FOR HER LIFE, NOW SHE'S...READY TO RACE

By Marie Nitke, Staff Writer, Grand Rapids Herald-Review

(reprinted with permission from Grand Rapids Herald-Review - originally published 12/26/07)

(NOTE FROM ROBIN: My dear friend Sue Harwood called the Herald-Review and asked them to interview me for this article. Sue had breast cancer and endured surgery and chemotherapy last year, so she truly understands! Thank you Sue! The reason this story is being told is to help others who are also going through breast cancer or other difficult situations, so they will see that they can survive it as I did, while maintaining joy and a positive attitude.

Hang in there to any and all readers who identify with this account!)

At this time last year, Robin Oberton should have been gearing up for her first-ever dog sled competition. She should have been bundling up in her mukluks, fox-skin hat and full-body purple snowsuit at least three nights a week to run her six-dog team out on the local trails. She should have been practicing her commands, and mastering her use of a snow hook. She should have been feeling anxious and excited about the upcoming race. Instead, at this time last year, Robin was in the thick of a battle with breast cancer.

Diagnosed with the disease last October, Robin underwent a lumpectomy and six weeks of radiation by the beginning of February. In March, she had a hysterectomy to reduce the risk of cancer recurrence, since her cancer had tested as estrogen receptor positive. Her condition seemed to improve for a while after that, but then in May a mammogram revealed a new lump, and she had to have a mastectomy. It was her third surgery in eight months.

In an interview last week at the Oberton home in the woods just outside of Grand Rapids, Robin recalled her experiences over the last year: “Now, it’s all a blur, it’s in the past... of course, it was kind of blurry at the time, too. Some people wonder how you can get through something like that, but I didn’t do it by myself. I had great support. I can thank my husband, my friends, my medical team, my coworkers, my congregation and my faith for helping me get through it. I believed that nothing could overcome me, but I could overcome it, with support and God.”

Overcome it, she did. Now free and clear of cancer, Robin is getting a second chance to experience the race she was robbed of before. She has grabbed life by the reins, starting with her six-dog team of purebred Siberian Huskies and Alaskan Husky mixes. On Saturday, Jan. 12, Robin will be competing in the 2008 White Oak Sled Dog Classic. Despite years of experience on a sled as a recreational musher, and years spent at the side of her husband, Joe, as he competed in races, Robin has never competed herself.

“I am more nervous for this race than I was on my wedding day,” she laughed. Although dedicated volunteers keep an eye on the trails to watch for lost teams and stray mushers, if something were to go wrong, a person could spend a long time alone out in the wilderness before being rescued.

But Robin wanted to challenge herself, and she trusts her team. Her lead dogs, Willow and Stubby, are both experienced racers. In fact, Stubby has run in the Iditarod, a famed race that winds through some of

Alaska's most raw and rugged terrain. The rest of the team -- Sapphire, Blue, Koko and Breezy -- are strong, smart and love to run. Robin said the dogs know the commands well (like "Gee," which means turn right, or "Haw," turn left) and instinctively have a great sense of direction. "A lot of times, Huskies have saved their owner's lives because they know how to get home better than the owner," she said.

In addition to Robin's team and her husband's eight-dog team, the Oberton's care for more than 10 other Huskies year-round as the owners and operators of Krystal Kennels. As a part of their business, the couple breeds Huskies, sells dog sled rides, and travels to schools, colleges and public events to give educational presentations about dog sledding and its history.

Though her life now revolves around dogs, Robin admitted that she wasn't always such a canine enthusiast. "I was a dog-*liker* before I met Joe," she said. "*He* was the dog-*lover*." But over the years, Robin has come around. She said her Husky companions have come in especially handy over the past year, helping to comfort her during the process of coping with and healing from breast cancer. "If you don't feel good, they're there... they love you," she said. "If you're having a bad hair day or are on meds that make you say weird things, they don't care. They're just sweeties."

Robin will be spending an increasing amount of time with her dogs from now until the race. Every other night, she'll be taking them for longer and longer practice runs along local trails, building up their stamina for the 20-mile trek. "I don't expect to go very fast, and I don't expect to win anything," Robin said. "I just want to have fun."

The White Oak Sled Dog Classic also offers 40-mile, 60-mile and 130-mile trail options, according to the White Oak Web site, www.whiteoak.org. Events kick off on Friday, Jan. 11 with a "Meet the Musers" spaghetti dinner. The cost is \$7.95 for adults. The public is invited to attend all the race events. For more information, visit the Web site or call the White Oak office at 218-246-9393.

Robin's racing sponsors include D.C. Drywall, Infinity Graphix, Bob's Country Market, and Mary Kay Consultant Corina Magnusen. For more information about Krystal Kennels, visit www.krystalkennels.com or call 218-326-3718. For more information about breast cancer, visit www.breastcancer.org.



WHITE OAK RACE EVENTS – JAN. 11-13!

Be sure to come and cheer us on in Deer River, as Joe and I take off in our races on Saturday morning! (Joe @ 40 miles and Robin @18 miles) We'll be watching for you at the races!!

****** THANK YOU VERY MUSH!! ******

This month our thanks goes out to **Amanda Boggs** and **Danea Rutherford**, two hardworking young ladies we have come to know through North Country Veterinary Clinic. They assisted us as we gave dogsled rides at Longyear Park in Coleraine on December 31. We were so busy that we hardly had time to talk to them at all! But we were very glad they came to help us, and we look forward to working with them again. Also, a big thank you to **Lilah Crowe** who learned very quickly that evening how to turn a dog team around to get it ready for the next sled passengers. Thanks Lilah!

SPONSORSHIP

Would you be interested in sponsoring the fabulous four legged athletes of Krystal Kennels?
If so, drop us a line at krystalkennels@gmail.com

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