April 8, 2015 Meeting

The April 8, 2015 Waterloo Technical Society (WTS) meeting was called to order by President Gary Dorhout at 7:15 pm.

A total of 33 were in attendance. Treasurer Ken Friend reported a previous balance of $1,014.08. Receipts included $0.00 interest and $30 in membership dues. Expenses were $15 for the March guest speaker's meal. The ending balance was $1,029.08. Ken reported 11 honorary and 46 paid members for a total of 57 members.

No old business was discussed.

New Business. President Dorhout asked Mr. Tim Schoenfelder to research and advise WTS on the purchase of a public address microphone and speaker system for under $500.

Next month, May, WTS Officers for 2015-16 will be elected. All interested members are asked to make their candidacy known. Volunteers are welcome.

Speakers for 2015-16 are being solicited. October's meeting will feature a tour of the UNI Power Plant.



Figure 1. 2015 Iditarod team: musher, sled and dogs.

Our guest speaker was Dr. James Kenyon, retired Cedar Falls veterinarian and one of four **Iditarod** veterinarians.

History. Jim toured the China River area of Alaska on a vacation and became interested in the Iditarod event. The slogan in the area was: "Men are men and women win the Iditarod." The dog sled race went from Fairbanks to White Horse in the Yukon, a distance of approximately 1,000 miles. At a Duluth, MN, veterinary meeting Jim learned of a dog sled race from Duluth to Ealy to Duluth. His attendance at this event sparked his interest in the sport. The 1993 Iditarod season was his first participation at the Alaskan event. It's cold during the race, -10 degrees Fahrenheit for daily highs. This year, 2015, snow was trucked to the starting line because the temperatures had been in the low 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

Alaska was a territory purchased from Russia by the United States in 1867. In the 1890's gold was discovered and Alaska saw rapid population growth as prospectors moved to the region. The prospectors traveled from the Alaskan coast to the gold fields in Iditarod using the Iditarod Trail. In 1925 a relay race of dog sleds raced life-saving diphtheria serum to prevent an epidemic in Nome. In the 1940's, the Alaskan Highway was constructed by the Army in order to defend the Alaskan Territory during World War II. Soon airplanes would replace mail and freight transported by dog sled and new arrivals to Alaska would never know the role dog sleds played in Alaska's history. In the 1950's snow machines, today's snow mobiles, replaced dog sleds for personal transportation. To preserve the spirit of dog sleds in Alaska's history, Joe Redington and Dorothy Page

promoted a dog sled race to commemorate the Alaskan purchase centennial. In 1967 and 1969 there were sprint races to Iditarod on the old trail. In 1972 the first race proposed by Redington would cover 1,049 miles from Seward to Nome. This is the current race. There are now two courses, a Northern and Southern route. In the odd years the Southern route is run; even years the Northern.

Logistics. The Iditarod requires 2,000 volunteers. There are 28 pilots and groups of trail breakers who mark the path with flags among other chores. Cooks prepare meals for participants and visitors, ham radio operators provide communication and relay information to stations for satellite broadcast. Equipment for **mushers** is brought in by helicopters. Straw bedding is provided for the dog teams and tents for the mushers.

Trail Hazards. A musher and his sled team are apt to encounter moose, sleep deprivation, frost bite, and medical emergencies when no physicians are present. The moose is a reality. There were 240 accidents involving moose in Alaska this past year.

Each team keeps a diary on the condition of the dog team. It is common for dogs to dehydrate due to diarrhea. Veterinarians as well as the mushers watch for fatigue and unusual dog behavior to ensure healthy animals.

Vets examine dogs with EKGs, blood tests and require proof of vaccinations 14 days prior to the race. Dog injuries are comprised of gastric ulcers, cardiac arrhythmias, fatigue, dog fights, carpus injuries, paw injuries, frost bite and tendon or ligament injuries.

Participants. In 2015 there were 75 entrants in the race. One-half of these are full time dog sled racers. The mushers fall into three categories: top tier are the CEOs, full time professional racers; second are the spare timers; and the lowest tier are the campers. The dog is not a pure bred Husky. The dogs are approximately 1/8 English setter for endurance, part short haired German shepherd for speed. Dogs that weigh around 40 to 45 pounds are the ideal size. The most intelligent and fastest dogs are picked to be **lead dogs** and run in the front of the pack. Behind them run **swing dogs**, whose job is to direct the team around turns and curves. At the back of the dog team are the **wheel dogs** or wheelers, who are right in front of the sled and are usually the largest and strongest of the team. The rest of the dogs are known simply as **team dogs**. There are 6 dogs in the team at the beginning of the race and 9 to 10 at the end.

Dogs eat 12,000 calories each and drink 6 liters of water per day during the race. The mushers will eat 27,000 calories and drink 14 liters. The higher the protein in the dog's diet the lower the number of injuries. Dogs wear leggings, booties and coats to protect them from the elements. Typically the dogs run at 8 mph during the 8 day plus 19 hour race of 18 hours per day. Teams are required to have two rests of 8 hours and one of 24 hours. A dog generally races no more than 8 years before retiring.

Mushers wear three layers of clothing, heavy boots and carry heat packs and sleeping bags warm to minus 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Vets carry survival kits in case they get stranded or separated from others.

It costs approximately $40,000 to prepare and participate in the Iditarod.

Sleds. The official race rules require that "some type of sled or toboggan must be drawn" but specifications are up to each racer. Typically, the sleds used weigh around 100 pounds (easily twice that once loaded with gear) and cost around $1,500. They have a basket where gear is carried and a tired dog can rest, and are outfitted with a braking device. Mushers stand on the sled's runners, which are usually made of wood and covered in plastic or Teflon, and extend out from the sled's basket.

The dogs are attached to the sled with a series of lines called **rigging**. This includes the tow line (or gang line), tug lines and neck lines. The dogs each wear a collar and a harness. The tow line connects the dogs to the sled. The tug line connects the dogs' harnesses to the tow line. The neck line connects the dogs' collars to the tow line. There are no reins, and dogs respond to the musher's vocal commands; gee for left, haw for right.

Race. The prize for this year's winner was $79,000 plus a new Dodge truck ($40,000 value). The race begins the last Saturday in February or the first Saturday in March. The daylight is returning at this time so there is more daylight for racing. There are check points every 50 to 75 miles. Vets begin at an initial station then leap frog to the next assignment as the race progresses.

A team can get lost during a blizzard so the mushers carry GPS tracking devices on the sled. There has never been a musher or team lost during the long race. If a musher and sled team get lost the team forfeits. The track is single file and few places are available to pass another team. The first musher's nose to cross the finish line is the winner. For these reasons the races are close. The 2015 winner had a 22 minute lead at the finish.

The 2011 race was the fastest ever. John Baker won in 08d 18h 46m 39s. Either Dallas or Mitch Seavey have won the Iditarod for the past four years.

Next Meeting. The May 13, 2015 meeting will hear Glenn Davison. Glenn will give a brief history of the “Wood Components & Technologies” manufacturing facility located in the Cedar Falls Industrial Park.

Meeting Adjourned. President Dorhout accepted a motion for adjournment at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

James R. Stevenson