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Father Of The Iditarod - The Joe Reddington Story



Synopsis

Meet rugged, independent, determined, and hard-working Joe Redington, Father of the Iditarod, a man who found his destiny in Alaska. In an inspirational biography, Lew Freedman chronicles Redington's birth on the Chisholm Trail and his boyhood in the Depression -- homeless, motherless, roaming the country looking for work. Alaska was his rebirth in 1948. On his own piece of dirt, a man could raise a family, hunt, fish, run dogs, and stand up for what he believed. Redington helped rescue Alaska dog mushing from extinction, creating a legacy in a thrilling thousand-mile race across Alaska, the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

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Customer Reviews

There's no one like Joe. He taught me . . . about what being an Alaskan is and how a true pioneer lives. --Susan Butcher, Iditarod Champion 1986, 1987, 1988, 1990
If you're looking for a delightful book to read, FATHER OF THE IDITAROD is one! There are many humorous stories about Joe that had me laughing out loud. --Alaska Women Speak magazine

Fifty Years on a Dogsled. "No one embodies the spirit of the Iditarod like Joe Redington. His biography has all the energy and drive of a lead dog leaving the starting chute and is as crisp as a winter's night along the Iditarod Trail." --Tony Knowles, former Governor of Alaska. In a place where respect is not easily earned, the name of this homesteader, pilot, and visionary dog musher generates awe. His is the classic image of an Alaska pioneer --rugged, independent, determined, hard-working. Meet Joe Redington, Father of the Iditarod, a man who found his destiny in Alaska. In

an inspirational biography, Lew Freedman chronicles Redington's birth on the Chisholm Trail and his boyhood in the Depression-homeless, motherless, roaming the country looking for work as a field hand. Alaska was his rebirth in 1948. Redington found the home he never had. On his own piece of dirt, a man could raise a family, hunt, fish, run dogs, and stand up for what he believed. Almost single-handedly, Redington rescued Alaska dog mushing from extinction. With ambition, an abiding love for sled dogs, and refusal to accept "it can't be done," Redington created a legacy in a thousand-mile race across Alaska that has thrilled the world for more than twenty-five years, the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

Lew Freedman does it again, but with a larger than life figure such as Joe Reddington, it isn't hard to tell a great story. The legacy of Mr Reddington lives on not only in the Iditarod which he almost single-handedly brought to being but in the growing culture of dog racing and preservation of the wonderful northern canines who truly love to run. Joe was certainly one of a kind and I only wish I could have met him. Reading this book is the next best thing.

This book was in excellent condition and very reasonable.

My husband loves books on Alaska and the Iditarod. This is one of his favorite. When in Wasilla he met his son. Great experience. Loves talking about the book and dogs to him.

So interesting to see where Joe came from and how he did so much with so little. I'm not a reader but can hardly put this down.

Joe Redington, Sr., may not have been an Alaskan by birth, but any resident of the state would agree that he was, and remains, a symbol of the Alaskan spirit. Born and raised in Oklahoma, Redington always had a fascination with the rugged far-north, and read every book on Alaska he could get his hands on. In 1948, at the age of 31, he finally made the decision to pack up his family and move there. They homesteaded in Knik, off the Parks Highway, on the northwestern side of Knik Arm, and that's how Redington got involved with sled dogs. Mushing was an effective way to get from place to place, and Knik Kennels was born. By chance, the property opened directly onto the historic Iditarod trail, which by that time was in poor shape owing to disuse. Redington cleared a section of the trail for his own use, and soon became caught up in the route's historical significance. The famed 1925 "Serum Run" had followed that trail when there was no other means of rushing

life-saving medication to diphtheria-stricken Nome. Redington decided it was high time the trail be restored and brought back into regular use, proposing a 1,000-mile dogsled race from Anchorage to Nome. Everyone thought he was nuts. But the first Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race was held in March of 1973, on a shoestring budget, but a resounding success nonetheless. The first few years of the race's existence were rocky at best, but this was Redington's baby, and he nursed it along with unwaivering confidence and energy. Today it is an internationally famous sporting event, with mushers arriving each spring from all over the globe to compete. Though Redington himself never won the race (he participated in it almost every year), not having time enough left to properly train his dogs after all the effort he expended in organization of the event, he did help many eventual Iditarod champions get their footing. Two such notable figures are five-time winner Rick Swenson and four-time winner Susan Butcher. In addition, Redington, along with Susan Butcher and Ray Genet, brought the first dog team to the peak of Mount McKinley in 1979. In 1993 he organized the first Iditarod Challenge, an opportunity to follow the trail for fun rather than competition, with Redington as guide. He also participated in a special dogsledding trial at the 1994 Olympics in Norway. The title "Father of the Iditarod" has been applied to Joe Redington for years, and he has engraven himself upon the hearts of all Alaskans. I grew up in Anchorage and he was always a household name. He was an amazing man. Redington had unquenchable enthusiasm for everything he did, and never let age slow him down. He ran his last Iditarod in 1997, at the age of 80. When he was diagnosed with cancer of the esophagus in 1998, he fought it with the same determination and confidence that he had exhibited when fighting for the creation of the Iditarod, and he beat it. He even got back to mushing, though he would not compete again, and eventually the cancer returned and claimed his life in 1999. This book does every possible justice to the pioneering man who revived dogsled mushing as a popular competitive sport. It is a delightful read, descriptive and engaging. Even a reader not familiar with Alaska or dog mushing will be able to capture the essence of it here. The book is also filled with great black-and-white photos of Redington, his family and fellow mushers, his dogs, and other images that bring the story to life. My one criticism would be a lack of sufficient editing. There are a few too many typos that should have been caught, and hence I don't feel quite right about giving an unconditional five-star rating. It also appears as if the very end of Chapter 18 may have been cut off, as it leaves off with what appears to be the beginning of a new sentence, but when the reader flips to the next page, it is the beginning of the next chapter. Other than this, however, the book flows very nicely and is easy to read. I would highly recommend it to just about anyone, Alaskan or not, and regardless of experience with dogs or mushing. A thoroughly delightful book!

A good telling of the life of the man who started the Iditarod Sled Dog Race, a thousand mile dog race across Alaska. Lots of good information about his life from a young man in the depression to a homesteader in Alaska. Reddington was a determined man and one who earned the title hero in the eyes of many. He had flaws like anyone but those are not represented in the book perhaps as well as they could have been to give us a more balanced look. Readers who enjoy this book may also enjoy the book Ordinary Dogs Extraordinary Friendships. *Ordinary Dogs, Extraordinary Friendships: Stories of Loyalty, Courage, and Compassion*

Even an non-dog mushing fan from Anchorage can acknowledge the huge contributions Joe Reddington made for our great state. This biography by Lew Freedman does great justice to a great Alaskan, tracing his path from the lower 48 states up to Alaska and his family life, adventures and achievements while in Alaska. Reddington have been acknowledge founder of the famous Iditarod Race to Nome, one dog mushing race every Alaskan virtually follow even if he/she isn't a fan. The book appears to be well written and the author was probably well supported by the family members of Joe Reddington in writing this book. This make the author very sympathetic toward his subject. While that itself is no great crime, like all student of history, I would like to know Joe Reddington bit more readily then his public image. Like all human beings, Joe Reddington had his moments of greatness and his flaws. I would like to have read more on his failings as well as his accomplishments. But nevertheless, the book does justice to the man and his accomplishments.

Just when you thought that the age of explorers was dying down, along came Joe Redington, the founder of the Iditarod dogsled race. This book tells about the efforts he put forth to create a sporting event that continues to this day. You'll also learn about his life growing up and the many other adventures he had. I was surprised that one person could achieve so much in one lifetime. The author interviewed Joe and many of his friends to give the reader the feeling that if you didn't know Joe, you wished you had. Never a dull moment in this man's life.

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