

Book Review

dream large



Running with Champions: A Midlife Journey on the Iditarod Trail

Lisa Frederic
Alaska Northwest Books,
224 pages, \$14.95

A midlife journey; a journey through 1200 miles of Alaskan wilderness in the company of sixteen huskies; a journey to the depths of the human soul, to the outer limits of courage, determination, and endurance. How many of us dare to dream so large? Who among us has the courage to harness such passion and fully embrace the adventure? *Running with Champions* by Lisa Frederic is a moving account of one woman's quest to fulfill her dream.

Sometimes it is the smallest decisions that have the largest impact on our lives. By the mid-eighties, having settled in Alaska's Kodiak Archipelago, Lisa Frederic and her husband David ran their own fishing operation, were building a house on a remote island at the edge of the sea and had traveled to faraway places. It wasn't until 1997 that they flew to Nome to witness for the first time the finish of the Iditarod. Lisa Frederic was enthralled by the racers and their dogs: those aspects of Alaska that she most loved had coalesced into the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. Her soul had stirred.

Frederic's interest led her to volunteer on the Iditarod trail the following year – and the year after that. These experiences gave way to a dream, to further plans, and to

new hopes. “I no longer walked, I skipped. I didn't hum, I sang”.

Her accounts of training under Iditarod champion Jeff King, of living away from home, of the physical hardships she endured are powerful testaments to her level of commitment towards her newfound passion. Written in a raw, self-deprecating manner, the poetry nevertheless shines through as she describes her love of the dogs and the thrill of moving with them through an Alaskan landscape that both inspires and challenges. Euphoria and despondency battered her psyche: “When David called...I stopped telling him I was afraid...I decided if I never really voiced my fears, they would go away”. And then the next day she would have a successful run with her team: “I would feel strong and confident – nothing could stop me...I would be so jazzed I could hardly walk”.

The Iditarod is a formidable challenge that shook up Frederic's life, took her to the edge of her limits, tested her mettle, and did not find her wanting. For some, perhaps, dreams are about finding that edge, that place where there is no room for complacency. 🌲

–Marie Lamothe