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I was born with the "Mushing Bug"

Line in



Danielle Palacios

My name is Danielle Palacios. I am 17 years old (due to be 18 in July 07). I think I was born with the "Mushing Bug". As long as I can remember, I have dreamed of running dogs. When I was 7 years old, I finally got my big break. We moved to Washington from Florida. Finally, some cold weather! I could run dogs. My parents were very supportive.

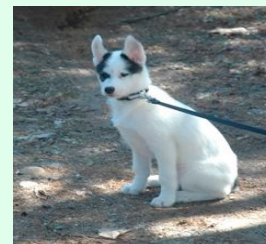
They bought my first harnesses and sled. My first lead dogs were our house pets. A Chow/Aussie cross and a Rhodesian Ridgeback. They were less than enthusiastic, but old and patient, they put up with me, and pulled. And we went, with me running more than half the way. The streets were our wild tundra, and a simple trot around the block was a 1000 mile trek to historic Nome, where we were always victorious. My first carts were bikes and scooters (even wagons which were

***As long
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battery powered ATVs). When the snow came, there were skis and kid's snow sleds. Those were my beginnings ten years ago. About half way to the present, I acquired what I viewed as a real sled dog, a Husky/Akita cross. A pup I brought from the ground up. I named him Gizmo, and our first season we skijored and biked everywhere. But Gizmo and I didn't last long due to complications beyond my control.

After that, Suzuki came into my life. Suzuki is the lead dog that we all dream about. He is a captain of the trails, reliable, steadfast, and a thinker. Yet completely at ease in the house, and my very best friend. Thanks to this dog I have earned points to place 3rd and 2nd in the NWSDA Championships in the scooter class.

*Hey! I'm Opal Scofield and I was
born with the "Mushing Bug" too!
All my life I have dreamed of
running with dogs.*



Danielle's story, continued

This is what happened to me.

In the year of 2006 I decided that I had learned all that I could learn in my present circumstances. It was time to take my sport, now no longer just a hobby, but a passion, to the next level. I had raced. I had studied and been involved in mushing for ten years. I was ready for a position as a handler. At first, like all of us, I had dreams of Alaska. But I wasn't exactly 'in the know'. I answered ads on Sled Dog Central, which led me to Wilderness Trail Outfitters.. This is an Alaskan Husky touring business in the wild Hiawatha Forest (literally) in the UP of Michigan. *I was barely 17 years old when I set out on my journey.*

I learned a lot from dogs. Really there was no way, anyone, or I couldn't learn a lot from dogs. It was like dog world. They were everywhere. 86 Alaskan Huskies surrounding the house. Two kennels; the racing kennel, and the trail-dog kennel. The trail-dogs were the moneymakers. It was because of them that we were able to live the way we did, in a small cabin, quite literally in the middle of nowhere. Only four miles from a general store, but over 19 miles from the nearest civilization, and 30+ miles from the nearest town where supplies could be bought. But we didn't really leave that often. In six months, I probably went to town a dozen times. There were months I didn't go at all.

My first experience there was of death and the devastation of parvovirus. We watched them dying, sick ourselves, because we couldn't help them. Four potentially excellent racing puppies: Spirit, Loner, Echo, Chester. Three working pet pups, which had no names. Puppies that I had played with and adored. There I was pulling their lifeless bodies out of the barrels they lived in, for Fred to bury.



September was an emotional month. Shortly after that, the yearlings, Blue and Red died from parvo. The pups had not received their vaccinations yet, but Red and Blue had. Their loss was another bitter one. More racing dogs down. To make matters worse it was obvious now we had an infestation of something in the kennel, as some of the adult dogs were going off. Was it parvo? We still don't know. The poor lifestyle did not allow us to have an autopsy. The other possibility was a parasite called Coccidia, which was floating around the local kennels at the time. But whether that would wipe out our young dogs like it did we don't know. Probably won't ever know. But I dedicate this section to our lost.

In Memory of Jake

by Natalie Head



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Jake, a 13-month old border collie/husky mix came into my life on April 9, 2005 and left it on June 11, 2006. He had a rough start on life, ending up in the Oregon Humane Society, where I ultimately found him. We had many adventures during his short time with me: chasing horses, being kicked by those same horses TWICE, camping, running on the beach, being lost for 2 hours in the dark woods, running Dogs Across America in the snow, stealing French fries from the roommate, and scootering. Scootering was his great love. We started a month after I got him and he jumped into that harness like he'd been waiting all his life for it. We ran almost every weekend. He wasn't a fast dog, but he pulled like an ox. Several times I found him in the corner by the coat rack, trying to put his harness on by himself so he could go scooter.

A lot of time, love and training went into Jake. He was a diamond in the rough and his edges were beginning to smooth out when tragedy struck, ending his time here on earth with me. He loved most people, once he got to know them and was learning to get along with the dogs next door. He progressed to the point that he was actually able to have 5 doggie friends over for a birthday party on his 2nd birthday. But all the love and training in the world probably would not have prevented the accident that took him from me. I have blamed myself, and I have blamed him. But I really don't think anyone is to blame, just being in the wrong place at the wrong time. His time here was done and I know he's waiting for me at the Rainbow Bridge. He became a better dog because of his time with me and I am better because of him. Much love to my Jake-man...you are missed greatly.

But there were also survivors.

But there were also survivors. Otter, a brother to the four racing pups we lost. Otter was the first to show us something was wrong by not eating. At mealtime the pups are like piranhas. It's quite a comical sight. But Otter didn't eat that day. And wasn't he looking skinny? Fred was leaving on a trip downstate, so I got to take care of Otter myself. I sat in a chair in the house with him on my lap and gave him Gatorade with a big cattle syringe, and tried to get him to eat. I didn't succeed. Later I had to go to the mailbox, a mile hike up the driveway. Otter came, following slowly, unsure of himself, but faithfully. Otter got sick with the rest of them, but he made it, as did his sister, Snow, and two of the working pet puppies that we later named Rocky and Boulder.

During, and after that period, it was all training. I wasn't very good at managing my time, and by the time I had a routine down, conditions were no longer favorable and we had a large break in training sessions for the trail-dogs. Actually this happened a lot. There were weeklong periods where I didn't run my dogs because of mechanical failures. I drove dogs on a Yamaha golf cart. They were more comfortable than an ATV, and had a handy space for carrying two buckets of water on the back (or in my case a bucket containing several feet of rope and a come-along). This thing broke down on my left and right. Once we blew at least five fuses in five minutes. The thing was ridiculous. But when it worked it worked, and the dogs were strong, but lacking in miles. The whole year they lacked miles. But we made it.

The golf cart and I had many misadventures. To access the trails you had to cross a series of puddles. Clay-loam soil creates a slick, tire-sucking, kind of mud. To get across the puddles became like NASCAR mud racing every time I ran a team, which towards the peak of training was at least three teams a day. More often, because of time it was two teams a day. My runs were always slow. I would get stuck, and stuck again. And stuck, trying to get unstuck, and stuck trying not to get stuck in the first place. What I would have to do is try to ride a bank almost around the puddles. Most of the time I would end up sliding onto a stump and high centering myself. Nothing is more depressing than hearing your tires spin and your dogs barking impatiently. Once, coming home, I was so frustrated that I actually (with the dogs help) managed to lift/push the 500 lb golf cart off the stump. I was never able to do it again. The worst time was when I had been stupid. Eager to get the three teams a run before dark, I took out the last team at dusk, not realizing how quickly it got dark. I had no lights. I had done a short four miler. Coming back I tried to compensate for the mud, and slid neatly onto that stump. I had to keep running back to the cabin for lights, and finally I needed help. At first Fred was calm, but at the end, he became frustrated too, and he got angry. Whoops! I never went out without a light, at any time, after that. You learn.

You learn

November was just a training month. And at the end of it we got snow. Not enough for sleds, which also put a hole in my training. The golf-cart was dangerous to drive in snow, no traction. Plus the brakes were going out on it. They had to be adjusted, really after every run, but we adjusted it only when the situation got desperate (for example, going down hill, step on the brakes, nothing). I think it also started eating fuses again (which results in a lot of my running home with the dogs). At one point it caught on fire, but that must have been back in September or early October, because Jennifer hadn't arrived yet.

December came. We had our first tour that first weekend. Two people, a two-hour. We took the two strongest, fastest teams, and had a ball. We met, and thankfully passed, a porcupine. And after that the snow left until January. Then it stayed, but it certainly wasn't enough. We sledged half the season on no more than eight inches of snow. Mostly the same snow, with little dustings of maybe half an inch here and there. I didn't actually do much sledding. At first, the conditions weren't favorable, then I wasn't sure if I should or not, and then I lost my dog team. After that, I wasn't allowed to run until the conditions were better. Truth be told, that spooked me. I wasn't comfortable by myself after that. On that particular day we had just had a dusting of snow so there was no braking powers. The dogs ruled (more so than usual). I decided I could handle the conditions; I would take my guide team. I figured there would be no problems. I certainly didn't expect to fall off. My dogs were out of control at hook-up. My dogs did not know to "take a break". And it only takes one dog to bark or hit that line to get them ALL started. I had to get out of there fast. I went to pull my quick release and it was frozen! So now I had to thaw it. Breathing on it and beating it I finally got it to unsnap. My sled was halfway tipped over. We shot out of the chute like a slingshot. The legs on my lead dog Hunter were moving so fast he looked mostly like a black blur. At the end of the chute is a sharp right turn, which I did not make. I toppled over, and was swung straight towards the trunk of a very sturdy tree, with my back. I tried to flip over, my gloves were wet and the drive bow had no grip. They pulled it right out of my hands. Then the sled bounced back up, and they were gone. There's something very depressing about watching your dog team leave you. Especially dogs you didn't think would leave you. Two of them tried to come back. Bonnie, my swing dog and my faithful Suzuki, who was in wheel. I was only running five, for control. The other three were running like demons. So I followed them. Probably about a mile and a half to two miles. I met Fred at the bottom of a draw. He gave me a ride with his team. That was intense! Twelve dogs, full bore, down a STEEP hill. We called it The Vertical, with reason. My dogs were tangled around a stick in the trail. The males had been fighting. But they were alive! The relief I felt cannot be described in words. I got them sorted out and we went again. When we got back, the snow was so slick I jerked my sled and it shot forward three feet. All in all it had been a pretty average day. Crisis excitement wise anyway. I never lost a team again, but by the end of the year, when I started running dogs again, I had rediscovered how to **NEVER LET GO OF THE DRIVEBOW.**

The scenery was beautiful most of the time. When you're being dragged on your face it loses some of its appeal. Once, we were on a four-hour tour. I was following. We were going through the plains. The team in front of me wasn't doing so hot, having leader issues. My team, hauling one person, was tailgating. I was frustrated with having to ride my brake. Finally I spotted a tree I could snub off to, had them stop, and switched some of the dogs around. They sped up and I was happy knowing I could open up now. I pulled the quick release and promptly dumped the sled on take off. I was dragged several feet scattering the unsecured contents of my basket, and finally, after what seemed like hours, got my sled back upright with my brake on. I looked back at the items, and the dogs started dragging me again. Through the brake bar, (it hardly slowed them down), I could see no suitable trees to snub off to. That was my repair bag back there, along with a spare harness. I couldn't see anywhere to snub off to without dragging the sled several feet off the trail, through drifts. Tim, my hulking wheel dog would NOT allow that. This dog was all brawn and heart, no brain. He pulled. Lived to pull. If you stopped, Tim barked, which got the rest barking. It was easily the most out of control team in the kennel. Later, I went out to find the bag. At dusk, I drove to the entrances of snow mobile grades and hiked up them, looking for something familiar. Finally it got too dark and I went back feeling discouraged. Fred was miffed, but I had done stupider things. We got it back the next morning, thanks to the other handler, Brandon, who picked it up with his snowmobile. Thus I learned the importance of always having things secured, which I usually did. This hookup had been chaotic, and I hadn't been the one to put the bag in my sled, otherwise it was just second nature to clip it in. I knew it hadn't been clipped in, but I didn't want to be left behind. It would have taken probably only a minute as I think I had a spare line to tie it on to my sled. **Lessons learned.**

Tours were incredibly stressful. On a tour morning I got up at 5:30 AM. I was outside by 6:00 AM, and I was done by the time the tour was over, if it was a morning two hour. If it was anything else I was done by 5:30 or 6:00 PM. Because I would get back, check the sleds, gather harnesses, seat-cushions, put ganglines away, tip sleds over, snack dogs, feed dogs. Then I would rake. On two hour trips, when we got back I just had to do the maintenance, snack and water, and I was done until their dinner time, which was 4:00 PM.

Tours were stressful because we had to hook up between five and seven jacked up, ready to go dogs, in minutes. The trail dogs were allowed to go out of control all through tours because it was just too much effort to keep so many teams in line at once. We had a few that were good. The rest were just psycho. They came out in full glory when the customers came around, knowing that we weren't going to call them on anything. Luckily I managed to maintain enough control to keep things going smoothly. It's kind of a power trip to get 42 barking dogs quiet just by standing at the kennel and shouting "TEAM", followed by instant quiet. It never failed to impress. My presence could also make them be quiet, if I had already shouted "TEAM," and we were standing by the fence showing off puppies, a few could start barking and I could move back into sight, look at my instigators, and they would fall quiet again. Control was a very good thing in that kennel. If you gave those dogs an inch they would take a mile.

Very pushy dogs, but good dogs. Dogs with so much heart.

One of my lead dogs, Alley, taught me how much they love to run. My dogs Nina, Moony, Musket, and Bigfoot taught me how much respect and love they have for me, by doing what they did.

Brandon and I were doing tours that day. It had been a weekend. We were on our second group for the day, and then it would be over, almost over. We had four more to take out the next morning, but that would be a cakewalk; three teams, two hours, no problems. This was five teams, including mine. I was taking up the back, and it was a good thing I did. We weren't far out of the kennel when Alley bit the powder. She gets a sugar drop occasionally. I had thought all the dogs in the yard looked strong enough to go out again. They were, except for Alley. They were slow, but they had done it and had come back looking good. Happy dogs, feeling they had done something right. They were still peppy and upbeat. I took Alley, replaced her with my leader, and let the team in front of me take off again. Now I had no lead dog, no reliable lead dog. I didn't know what Nina was going to do. I didn't know if she would run up front by herself. Now I had four dogs, and a dog in my basket. The rest of the teams had six dogs. They were all pulling about the same weight. I figured I would be left in the dust. And Nina drove those back three. They were the fastest team out there. They pulled so hard. And Alley, her desire to run, even when she just couldn't, was so strong that she could twist out my bag, and over the side of my sled to desperately paddle in the snow, wanting to run just so bad! She would calm down for a few minutes if I squatted down and petted her, and talked to her, and let her know that she was a good girl and it wasn't her fault she just couldn't do it again. But then she would freak out again and twist, and turn, and try to run.

Brave, brave, Alley.

Nina didn't let me down until the end of the run, when she discovered she was just like a dog on a leash and could do whatever she wanted. She started wandering, but she did get us to the chute. She wouldn't go in it. Bigfoot led us the last couple feet into the kennel.

Those dogs were special to me because I had trained them. They had come as adults from another kennel early on in October. They were out of control dogs, wild dogs. Dogs that hadn't been run in three years. I taught them discipline. One team was entirely girls, six of them, all the out of control dogs. They were my dogs. They were easily my favorites, because I had trained them. I had made them good. They pulled for me like they pulled for no one else. They were my girls.

This was February. The temperatures were getting ridiculously cold. Zero digits and minuses for averages. Those were the high temperatures. I can't even remember the lows. It was cold. One weekend Brandon and I went out in -20, the next day, -30, and then -40. After that it warmed up. I didn't get cold, except for my hands. I was colder than I would have wanted to be. It was so cold that ice formed on your eyelashes in clumps. Your eyes water so much! It's cold, cold, and cold at -40. Brass burns your skin. You stick to metal. It's cold. The dogs are in their element.

At the end of February I found out there 125 kibbles in a cup of dog food. That's how many I hand fed to one of my dogs, desperately trying to keep her alive. Navigator. One of my girls. One of my core dogs. A faithful wheel dog that had an easygoing trot that never let up. She made it look easy. The rest of them could burn themselves out, but Nav had been in races like the UP 200. She knew all about conserving her energy. Saving it for the long haul. Her team had come in tenth the year she ran. Nav had been going skinny. I was feeding her more. She was gaining weight. I had her almost to perfect when she went Down.

Down is a terrible word. It means the dog is in their house. It means the dog is sick. It means the dog is going to die. You know when they go Down. While I was there two dogs survived from going Down. Molly, sister to Blue who died; and Rem. Molly's uncle. Navigator had gone skinny again. Too skinny. She had nothing on her. She was so cold. It was -20. My heart broke. I went inside for help. Jennifer had me bring her inside. I was in shock. Nav had been normal the day before. She had been weird before that day, but I had given her Gatorade, and some antibiotics. She'd been great, running around barking. And now this. She was Down.

I buried Nav that day. I knew she wasn't going to make it. I had seen too many with that look in their eyes. It's a sad look. An 'I'm sorry' look. They don't want to die. They don't want to die like this and make us sad. They only want to make us happy.

Sweet Nav.

She did die. As we desperately fought to save her. With warmth, love, Gatorade, Alpo, and IV's. In the end she started having fits, which we tried to help her through. She fought too. So hard. But in the end she died. In the warm house, safe, and miserable. She wanted to be outside. She fought to be outside. In the cold, in her barrel. It's what these dogs live for: The Cold, The Run.

Rest in peace Nav.

That was the end of February.

Then I came home. Leaving my dogs, and my car, as a promise that I will return. This is the most of my story. The highlights of it really. I learned so much about dog care and trade secrets that haven't been mentioned here. Some of it can't. But that was my life for six months. Living with dogs. And I can't wait to get back!

Caedmon's Corner

On the 31st of March, Caedmon will be 1 year old. It's hard to believe how far he has come with his scooter/bikejor training. We have had many ups and downs with his training, mainly his reluctance to line out and run in front of the wheeled object. I don't think he has a fear of the bike or scooter, he's just unsure about being out in front of mom (although he'll willingly pull like a maniac while he's supposed to be heeling on a leash!) I was getting very frustrated with this balk, to the point of just falling apart during the run. I'd get upset and yell and Caedmon's ears would flatten against his head. He'd slink back to me "I'm sorry Mommy...I was badI'm sorry!!" Then he'd run smack next to me for the remainder of the run, afraid to get out front. I began to realize that I was in danger of ruining my pup and needed to get a handle on myself before doing any other pull training. I didn't want Caedmon to associate the bike and harness with Mommy getting mad, so we started doing some bike rides in areas where he could run off-leash. I didn't have any expectations except that he keepup with me and stay near the bike. He did great. Never straying more than 50 feet ahead and always in my sight, waiting at the curves for me to catch up and tell him which way to go. He loved being able to run and not have his mom yell at him. After several weeks of no harness pulling at all, we went back to bikejoring and having him pull in harness. I started using a new term "out front" instead of "line out" to get him out front and he seemed to respond to it much more readily. We made sure we had another team to play rabbit if needed. The off-leash running made a huge difference and having another team for company fed his competitive side.



Last week we used the scooter for the first time in over 6 months. I wasn't sure how he'd do on it. We had another team to follow, but Caed didn't want to wait for them. He shot down the trail a good ways before I could rein him in for the other team to catch up. He is well on his way to becoming a dynamic scootering dog. He on-by's distractions very well for a 12-month old pup. His mom has learned to control her temper and let him run alongside the bike if he needs to. Usually after a 5 minute break, he's ready to get back out front. We all get into this sport for the sake of our dogs, but sometimes it becomes more for the human instead of the canine part of the team. I love to go fast and get outside and have fun. Sometimes I wonder if I'm pushing Caed into doing something he doesn't really want to do, because I want to...but then while we are running he'll give the same skippy-hop move that he does when he's playing with his favorite toy at home and that seems to tell me that he really does enjoy getting out and running.



***Caedmon's Corner
by Natalie Head***

Events



May 5- South Sound Fun Run by Susan Scofield barnstormer@fairpoint.net

June 15-17, 2007 Reno NV ISDRA & Western Regional Dog Powered Sports Conference <http://www.isdra.org/>

June 23 Tentative hike in the Green River Gorge

June Tentative pull training clinic in Sequim. Contact Lynne Angeloro langeloro@earthlink.net She needs volunteers.

July 14 Training workshop at Sue Scofield's in Rainier. Includes Canine First Aid class given by Dr. Rhonda Snyder, Mountain View Veterinary Hospital, Lacey, WA. There will be a small fee.

August 11 Snoqualmie Tunnel Run

September 22 Stevens Pass area- Beckler River Rd hike/campout/run Deb Ireland Dhskymshr@aol.com

September 29-30 Fish Lake Campout/cart/scooter/weight pull Jeff and Carole Parsons malamute77@aol.com

October 5-7 Pinewood Poker Run Princeton, BC Alpine Outfitters alpinehsky@aol.com

October NWSDA Dryland races

November 10-11 DogsAcrossAmerica DOA-WA is looking for WA state coordinator to: 1) choose trails 2) determine who will be in charge of each trail 3) map of trails. Contact Daphne at daphne@dogscototer.com

January 2008 Cascade Quest Iditarod qualifier. Sue needs dog handlers to help the mushers get the dogs to the chute, etc. barnstormer@fairpoint.net

Send your favorite trail reports to langeloro@earthlink.net and they will be posted to the K9 website K9scootersNW.com

For Sale: Suisitna

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Suisitna is 1 year 5 months, born 11-30-05. She is Alaskan Husky with Bender (Swingley) x Zonie (Loveless) . She is about 50 pounds, and is pretty long legged, and would be a great single or double scooter dog. I am asking \$150 for her, and she is spayed. I will get her updated Rabies, and has already had her shots/boosters.

Dina Lund 206 714 0392.



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Tel/24 hour fax: 360-659-3800
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Trail Etiquette

Keep all dogs on a leash and under control at all times. Do not assume other dogs want to meet your dog. Ask first. Maintain a polite distance and do not allow dogs to bunch up. Give other dogs plenty of space when resting the team.

IMPORTANT NEWS AND INFORMATION

You can NOW join K9ScootersNW online. Dues for 2007 are due April 1. If you don't pay by June 1, then we gotta kick you out :)

Membership: includes non-members who have come to fun runs but did not pay dues and join.

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Lineout welcomes feedback, questions, tips, letters to the editor, questions for Danielle, questions about trails and equipment, and any other information you would like to share with people who scooter/ bikejor with dogs. Address your communication to Lineout at barnstormer@fairpoint.net.

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