

## **A Brief History of the Colorado Mountain Mushers**

Based on information from Debra Su Stephens, Don Herr, Larry Natzke, and Leslie Fields. Summarized by TC Wait 7/1/2010

Don Johnson, Ron Kruczek, Ron Oldfield, Ed Samberson, Janice Church, and Carol Deeks started the Rocky Mountain Sled Dog Club (RMSDC) in 1960. In little time, sled dog racing became quite popular in Colorado with races drawing well over 100 teams. RMSDC had become a large club with very diverse interests among its members. As the RMSDC sprint races attracted more serious competitive racers, there was interest in providing quality events for novices, families, and mid-distance racing, camping, and other fun events that did not fit into the competitive sprint racing circuit.

In February 1989, a small group of mushers decided to branch out and form the Colorado Mountain Mushers (CMM) to meet some of these diverse interests. CMM offered a variety of low-key sprint races and mid-distance races geared towards a family atmosphere and focused on having fun with dog powered sports.

Don and Bette Johnson were instrumental in the founding of the Colorado Mountain Mushers. Along with the other founding members, Don Herr, Terri Newberg, Mike Williamson, Amy Gray, and Nancy Yust, the fledgling CMM put on a wide variety of events, including races in Leadville, Redstone, Central City, Waunita Hot Springs, and on Dillon Reservoir.

In the late 1990s, a group of mushers including Larry and Valerie Natzke, Mark Hatch, Linda Feith, Mark and Debra Su Stephens, and Amos Auringer introduced mid-distance races to the CMM venues.

Now, more than 20 years after it began, CMM is a thriving club with a wide variety of quality events including campouts, dryland races, mushing clinics, sprint races, and mid-distance races. RMSDC has continued its tradition of offering competitive ISDRA events for the serious sprint racers. Many mushers still belong to both clubs, enjoying the best of both worlds.