

Dog Gone Addiction - DVD

Review by Jillian Rogers

It can't be easy delving into the world of dog mushing with nothing but a pretty smile and a video camera. The tight-knit community of mushers and sled dog enthusiasts on the Yukon Quest trail can be, well, intimidating, especially for media types.

But Becky Bristow, a 30-year-old neophyte documentary filmmaker from British Columbia, Canada, dove in head first during the 2004 Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race and immersed with an illuminating, heart-

felt glimpse into the world of dog mushing with nothing but a pretty smile and a video camera. The tight-knit community of mushers and sled dog enthusiasts on the Yukon Quest trail can be, well, intimidating, especially for media types.

But the one who steals the show is the Polish-born Franczak, who realized her dream of, "living in the woods with her animals," and of becoming a dog musher, all of which happened for her later in life. In the film, Franczak talks easily about her past, her dream and the race ahead of her. Her quiet diligence on the trail was proof that hard work and determination pays dividends. It also helped that she was as tough as nails.

Franczak died of cancer in December 2006 at the age of 48 before the movie was released.

The film, which was dedicated to Franczak, was brought to big screens in Alaska and the Yukon just a few months ago and received critical acclaim from the mushing community and beyond.

Viewers of the film, which was funded in part by the Film Board of Canada, witnessed Phillips at home with her husband and young son, and gave a dog's eye view of training runs and pre-race arrangements. It also showed Griffin and Franczak speaking candidly minutes before the race, which gave the audience a real feel for the excitement and frenzy prior to the start.

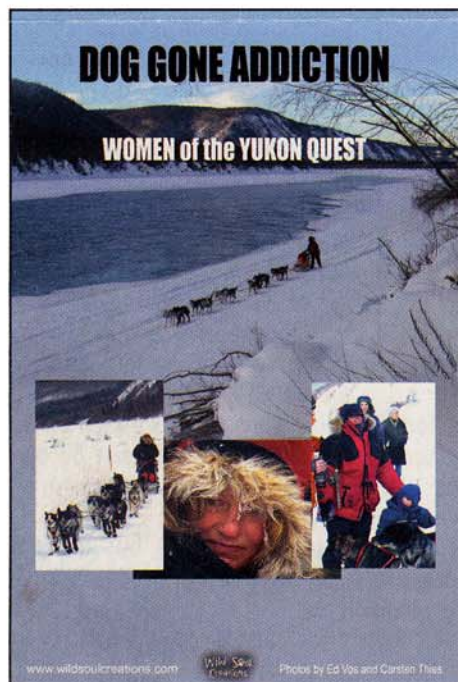
Like the Yukon Quest itself, Bristow completed the film on a shoestring budget and relied on the kindness of all involved in the race for help and guidance along the way, some of which she acknowledged at the end

of the film. There was no team of videographers, no scouts on the trail ahead, no snowmachine drivers; she did it all on her own which gave the film a feeling of overall rawness. Though the movie lacked some of the stunning scenes that have filled some other Yukon Quest documentaries, she was able to capture some very intimate moments along the way. The sense of vastness was caught on film when Bristow flew over Eagle Summit in a helicopter to capture mushers heading over the pass. There were great shots of dog drivers and their teams scrambling and scratching their way over glare ice, and more private moments of mushers struggling with fatigue and, in Griffin's case, sick dogs.

Bristow has made one other documentary, a film about whitewater kayaking in Russia; so an adventurous side, she does not lack. She has won awards for both her films and has the honor of being named in Outside Magazine as one of the 25 Coolest People in the World.

So with that being said, it is perhaps a little easier to overlook the factual errors in the film and reused footage that might only be noticed by those who follow the 25-year-old race closely. But new and old fans alike, will see that "Dog Gone Addiction" manages to seize the spirit of the race and capture the spirit of the North. She did what she had to do to make a film that would inspire as well as provoke thought and compassion, and for that she deserves recognition.

Jillian Rogers is a freelance writer and photographer living in Fairbanks. She covered sled dog races for seven years before venturing into mushing herself and now owns nine huskies.



felt glimpse into the 1,000-mile odyssey. In her film, "Dog Gone Addiction," Bristow followed three female mushers on their journeys