

Cordova's First Iceworm Festival

By Lavon Branshaw in 1987

In 1961, Cordova showed pride in its heritage and faith in the future when the winter "Iceworm Festival" was founded.

A \$15.00 cash prize was offered for the winning design of the Iceworm. Ted McIntire of KLAM was the winner. The original Iceworm head was like a worm with a body one-hundred-fifty feet long and boasted thirty-seven pairs of legs. The head was constructed of over-sized slabs of fiberboard donated by a firm in Washington. Karl's Gun Shop donated the fierce eyes. According to the Cordova Times on February 16, 1961, 'it was a beautifully put together piece of workmanship with varied and brilliant coloring.'

The highlight of the festival was the parade with the first appearance of the Iceworm. The hearts of Cordovans were forever captured! The rippling movements of this creature are now an indelible part of Cordova's history.

A variety of contests were planned. There was halibut and salmon fishing from the city and ocean docks with no boats allowed. Kids had to wear approved life vests. All males capable of growing a beard were to start the process on the same day in December. If you didn't comply, you could be arrested and dragged before the 'Iceworm Magistrate' for punishment. Example of punishment was "mud Hole" Smith, owner of Cordova Airlines, sentenced to shout loudly ten times, 'Fly Pacific Northern Airlines.'

A beauty contest was held and Lou Roberts was the first Iceworm Queen.

On Saturday morning, a ski race was to be held, (if no snow, a foot race) from Mile 5 bridge to Davis Store. All cheating and short cuts tolerated. There was a dog sled race, (if no snow, use bikes) a race consisting of skiers being pulled by one dog, (if no snow, skiers run with one ski under each arm).

There was a dog catching event. Prizes were awarded to the boy or girl who brought the most dogs to Davis Market for counting. Owners could claim their dogs after prizes were awarded.

It was suggested an 'Iceworm Cocktail' be invented, but there was some question as to who could be the judge.

A street dance was planned along with a sidewalk crab feed.

Cordova's first Iceworm went on to the Fur Rendezvous in Anchorage. Our Iceworm captured first place in the parade. Indeed, it was a feather in the cap of the entire town. We are pleased to be connected with the now famous and amazing discovery from the glaciers near here - the Cordova Iceworm!