

Searching for extreme answers

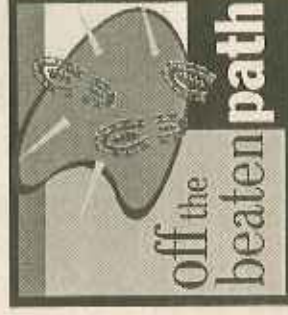
North Van athlete finds life's meaning in adventure sports

By Don Fiorvento

Before Kevin Valley was about to ski down the frozen Yukon River in Alaska in March, he was asked by a three-year-old what he was looking for. The question caught the 35-year-old by surprise and he never was able to answer.

"I still don't know what to say to him," Valley told *The Outlook* during a conversation at Lynn Canyon on Tuesday evening. "That three-year-old had more insight than most adults."

Valley, who doesn't really consider himself an extreme sport athlete, joined fellow North Van resident Dave Norona on a 1,760-kilometre cross country ski trip across Alaska called the Iditasport that took 33 days to complete. On many occasions they endured -50 C temperatures and Valley, an architect, notes they were fortunate to have experienced



there's no shelter. There's the frozen sea and then the tundra. They blur into each other. It's hard to tell where one starts and one stops."

Valley notes that crab fishing on the Bering Sea is the most dangerous profession in the world. "Somebody dies every week. The boat just tosses and if they get thrown overboard they're gone."

Valley estimates that he and Norona skied about 900 to 1,000 kilometers of their trip on frozen water. He said the Yukon River is comparable in size to Indian Arm.

"Obviously there's something I'm looking for if I'm doing it. It's all those philosophical things mixed into one."

Valley said that he guesses some people are just content to read a book and have a coffee at Starbucks. "I've always had an itch. There's nothing wrong with it, it's just different."

Valley's list of things to do includes mountain biking, road cycling, rock climbing, hiking, diving and competing in adventure races such as an upcoming Raid The North event in Terrace on June 24 that sees a team of four rapel, mountaineer, mountain bike and run over a 36-hour period.

"It's just more interesting to do a lot of sports. That's why I like the adventure sport."

Valley, who boasts a time of 29 minutes on the Grouse Grind, admits the competitions are hard on the body and in some instances may do more harm than good. He notes that Alaska really took its toll on him.

But Valley denies he has a death wish. In fact, the events he competes in actually help him to appreciate life more.

"Because you're in such a stressed state, everything is alive, it's heightened, clearer."

Rob Newell photo



REACHING OUT - Kevin Valley stretches before a long jog.

moderate conditions until the last third of the trip when they traveled along the Bering Sea.

"It was bitter, we were in full balavas. Nothing can be exposed."

Valley developed a hacking cough that hounded him 15 hours per day and eventually led to him spitting up blood for four consecutive days.

"The Bering Sea is totally exposed,

"We appreciate what we've got when we come back. Like anything, food's the best when you're starving."

Valley says that if you have to explain to people why you participate in adventure sports then they'll never understand. He says it's about learning and discovering: the challenges that lie ahead and your ability to respond.

"I'm not content unless I'm out there doing something, at least jogging Lynn Canyon Park." ©