



He skied to Nome

MAURIZIO BELLI took the hard way to Nome.

It took him 47 days to ski from Manley Hot Springs to the gold rush town on the coast, pulling a sled that weighed about 250 lbs. at the start.

"There were many, many difficulty," said the dark-haired 35-year-old Italian adventurer, who would be a good candidate for the annual Felix Pedro look alike contest during Golden Days.

"In the first place there was cold in the night. For many days I sleep in the sled, 35 below," he said. "Carry many gear, bunny boot, new clothing, tent, stove."

I spoke with him Tuesday afternoon in Fairbanks and found him to be an animated conversationalist who enjoys traveling by himself. He started learning English five years ago because he wanted to travel in Alaska, so he is not quite sure yet of the nuances of the language.

Belli said the best part of the trip was the chance to meet people along the way. He said he saw many animals on what he called the "toondra," including caribou, fox and one wolf.

Belli, who has participated in several endurance events, plans to write a book about his adventures in Alaska. His grandfather and others from Trentino joined the stampede to the Klondike and Alaska a century ago, which is one reason he wanted to make this trip.

The weather ranged from severely cold to warm and the hazards ranged from deep snowdrifts to mud. He said he ran into overflow problems between the villages and near the end of the trip there was no snow, which required him to put his skis on the sled and walk while pulling his sled.

All told, he covered about 700 miles, following the Tanana and Yukon rivers and a portion of the Iditarod Trail.

"You must careful," he said, "and lucky."

On previous excursions in Europe, Belli has gone hang-gliding, rock-climbing, mountain-bike riding and dog mushing. In 1993, he rode a bike from Fairbanks to Prudhoe Bay in 72 hours. That trip was nothing, compared to this one, he said.

Belli plans to leave Fairbanks today for Whitehorse, where he will be working with an Italian photographer on a film about this trip and Italian immigrants of the past.