

# *Tank Dodging*

The Fort Richardson Army Base allows people to use some of the remote parts of the base for 'recreational purposes'. It's a good place to run dogs, because there is whole network of winter roads on base that connect back to the Chugiak trail system.

We were laying down a 40 mile run, and our path took us on a long loop through Fort Richardson and back onto the Chugiak trail system. I planned to travel the road system on the base, and link up several different areas via single track trails through the woods. My 12 dog team was clipping along down the middle of the icy roads. I wasn't too concerned about running in the road because Fort Rich was deserted as usual, and you can always hear the occasional car or truck coming.

I was day dreaming a bit, thinking about where we should go after we rejoined the mushing trails, until we rounded a corner and came head on with a speeding Stryker armored combat vehicle. A Stryker is basically a tank on wheels (many wheels). It can travel very fast over all kinds of terrain, and is almost silent as it moves. This gigantic machine came busting around the corner without any warning, and there we were tooling along in the left hand lane.



The Stryker locked its wheels and started sliding. The dogs did a double take and hooked over to the right shoulder. I struggled to stay upright as the sled rocked into a ditch and then over the berm. We never slowed down as we passed them. I looked over my shoulder to see the enormous machine straightening its wheels back onto the road, and accelerating away. I wondered what the guys inside were thinking.

It was an exciting moment, but I figured that the crew would radio back to any other tanks or battle ships hauling-ass my way. It seemed logical that they would give them a heads up that they were sharing the road with a team of sled dogs. I relaxed until we rounded the next corner, and had to dive out of the way of the next Stryker racing towards us.

Dogs will get used to anything. After the third pass, the dogs hardly took notice when a Stryker suddenly appeared. They just nonchalantly loped on by, barely scooting over to give the massive vehicles a lane to drive in.

It took me little longer to loosen my death grip on the handle bar and stop shouting "gee-over" at the team. About the seventh or eighth tank that went by, I had finally relaxed enough to notice the yellow placard mounted on the front of each machine; "Caution - Student Driver". Any relaxation I had achieved rapidly vanished, and I couldn't hustle the team off the base fast enough.

Are the trails any good on Fort Rich? Yes, but you have to watch out for the tanks.