# 1983 Iditarod Champion Rick Mackey Dies at 71 Following Battle with Lung Cancer



Rick Mackey, the 1983 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race champion, has passed away at the age of 71 due to lung cancer, as confirmed by his daughter, Brenda Mackey. Rick died on May 13, 2023.

The Mackey family has a storied history in the Iditarod, a challenging 1,000-mile sled dog race across the Alaska wilderness. Rick's father, Dick Mackey, won the race in 1978, and his brother, Lance Mackey, secured four consecutive victories from 2007 to 2010. Notably, all three family members won their first Iditarod race on their sixth attempt, wearing the bib No. 13.

Rick was born on May 1, 1953, in Concord, New Hampshire, and moved to Alaska in 1959. His interest in sled dog racing began before the inaugural Iditarod in 1973 when he requested a dog from his father. By 1975, Rick was competing in the race.

Rick's journey intertwined with his wife, Patti Mackey, whom he met in 1973. They married in 1977 and had two children, Brenda and Roland. The couple managed their own kennel and bred dogs, a testament to Rick's exceptional skills as both a musher and a trainer. He was twice awarded the Iditarod’s Humanitarian Award for his outstanding care of the sled dogs.

Throughout his career, Rick participated in 22 Iditarods, achieving 13 top-ten finishes. He was part of an elite group to have won both the Iditarod and the now-defunct Yukon Quest International Sled Race. In 1999, actress Susan Lucci rode in his sled during the ceremonial start of the Iditarod in Anchorage.

Post-racing, Rick and Patti worked for the school district in Nenana, Alaska, where he led the maintenance and custodial team for 17 years before retiring. The family is planning services for Memorial Day weekend.