

# Intrepid snowmobiler: early memories of an enthusiast

by Craig Nicholson

I heard my first in the mid-sixties. I was trudging and sweating my thigh-deep way into our snow bound cabin. Several minutes later I actually saw it. Scooting along in a noisy spray of powder where I had feared to tread. I never did find out what make that snowmobile was, because neither the driver or myself could be heard over the racket. Also, he didn't stop. But I was intrigued by the way that machine nipped so easily across the snow. It opened a whole new world of winter possibilities.

## Early sleds broke down

Unfortunately, many of them were only that. Those early sleds had a nasty habit of breaking down in the middle of nowhere, defined as anywhere that one did not want to be stranded. That included my drive, which was frequently as far as I got when the sled would start at all. At least it was a short walk home. The family wouldn't even bother to suit up unless I made it to the road and back without incident. My right shoulder bulged with new rope — pulling muscle. Half a Rambo. And the neighbours would always comment on how far I'd got that time.

So jerry-rigged repairs, wire, tape, tinkering, and prolific cursing were the order of those days. Along with frozen tools, nicked pinkies, arm pit — crammed hands, foot stamping, and much scrabbling around in the snow for that nut dropped just before the stamping.

## Memorable ride

It was even worse once I managed to get out of our drive. I began to believe that "preventative maintenance" meant that which kept me from

returning home. My wife said she hoped it wasn't her.

One memorable ride featured four separate mechanical failures, two trips back home for parts and tools, one angry wife and two dogs who began to answer to swear words. The thrill of snowmobiling was arriving anywhere with a still functioning sled. Without a long walk. Or a family feud. Or another pocketful of dirty parts that wouldn't go back together.

## Never ride alone

Those were the days when the "never ride alone" slogan originated. As in take at least two machines, not pile the whole gang on just the one. And except for that once when we rode double after a break down and my wife hit an unexpected (are there any other kind?) mogul which flipped me off onto my butt in snow, we never did. I was unhurt but alone as she rode off home without so much as a backward glance. She swears she didn't feel a thing and I believe her.

Snowmobiling acquired a reputation as a dangerous activity. I know that's how I felt after riding double behind my wife.

**“The helmet visors fogged up at every breath, the kidneys scrambled, the knees ached and the world was introduced to helmet head.”**

## No rules

There are no rules and no groomed trails, and everyone just took off wherever there was snow, regardless of farmers with shot guns, ice you could see fish through, parked

and my own worst nightmare, the ubiquitous fence with decapitating wire strands. I always expected to see the head of some unfortunate snowmobiler mounted in trophy-like warning on the nearest fence post. My wife promised to put mine over the mantle. With an apple in the mouth, no doubt.

I can't say that my first snowmobile rides were comfortable. Suspension was primitive and I can still feel the places where my jaws crashed together or my spine accor-dioned or my joints sprung on countless moguls and dips. And although my front would sizzle from the rampant engine heat, my spine would shiver with icy goose bumps from whipping winter winds. I can still taste the fumes, but it was fun.

## Painful extremities

Extremities were painful, with frozen digits, thumb cramps, iceburg feet and wet bottoms the norm. The helmet visors fogged up at every breath, the kidneys scrambled, the knees ached and the world was introduced to "helmet head". My wife says I shouldn't wear my hair that way year round. But I did have fun.

Despite the suffering, or maybe because of it, I was hooked. And with reliable new sleds and order in the sport, the free-for-all soon began to tame. No small part of this transition is owed to an association founded in 1966 by a handful of snowmobile clubs who had the vision to realize that the sport could only thrive in a safe, organized environment.

As for me, I've developed a meaningful new relationship with my banker to finance my snowmobiling. Electric start terminated Rambo. And I'm still having fun.

## 1991 YEAR IN REVIEW 1991

continued from page 2

### April con't

celebrate Earth Day.

•Two Schreiber girls, aged 12 and 14, were located after going missing on Schreiber Beach. O.P.P. Constable Kajmowicz and his dog Kanuk were brought in from Thunder Bay to assist searchers, and plans were made to bring in a helicopter before the girls were finally found.

### May

•Terrace Bay Police Chief Don Kidder announced he was leaving Terrace Bay to become Chief of Pembroke Police Services. Kidder, who served as Red Rock Police Chief before coming to Terrace Bay, had been in the community since 1987.

•Lake Superior High School's production of *Oliver!* is a big success.

•Grade seven students from Terrace Bay Public School voiced their environmental concerns to Terrace Bay Council.

### June

•Terrace Bay Tourist Information Centre opens its doors to the public

•Residents in Terrace Bay see their property taxes go up by 7.9 per cent, public elementary school taxes by 4.35 per cent, separate elementary school taxes by 5.67 per cent, and secondary school taxes by 3.65 per cent.

•The Ontario Provincial Police Golden Helmets visit

Schreiber. The O.P.P. team is made up of officers from regular traffic patrol duties in Southern Ontario, and is one of the few precision motorcycle teams in the world.

•Birchwood Terrace employees are certified as members of United Paper Workers International Local 665. As such, they become the first health care group in Canada to be represented by the paper industry union.

•Schreiber native Anne Noonan is named as one of four intended appointees to the Ontario Hydro Board of Directors.

•Lillian Belliveau of Terrace Bay is presented with an Ontario Senior Achievement award by then Ontario Lieutenant Governor Lincoln Alexander. She accepted the award during a ceremony held at Queen's Park in Toronto.

continued on page 12



In loving memory of Elizabeth (Liz) Prescott who passed away January 9, 1991.

Where eternal suns are shining,  
And skies are ever blue,  
And pray your soul is resting,  
Till we may come to you.

Sadly missed by Harry, Marion, Yves and Michelle

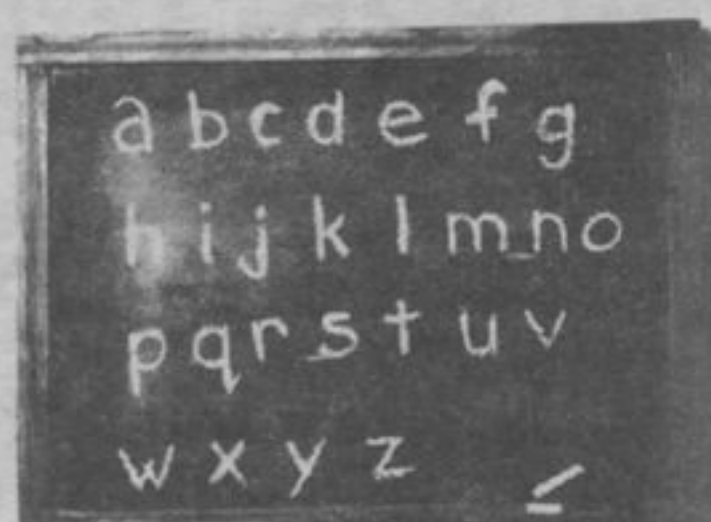


TOWNSHIP OF  
SCHREIBER

## NOTICE 1992 Tax Pre-Payments

Residents of Schreiber are reminded that they will receive a 3% premium on all 1992 Taxes paid in the month of January 1992.

Most people think there's only one way to help the developing world. We have 26.



Call us at 1-800-661-CODE for more information or to make a donation.

  
CODE  
Self-sufficiency through literacy  
in the developing world.



THE CORPORATION  
OF THE TOWNSHIP  
OF TERRACE BAY

## NOTICE

The municipality is seeking an interested resident to serve on the Planning Advisory Committee. This committee has the responsibility for advising Council on matters related to land use in the Township, particularly zoning and official plan provisions and site plan control applications.

This is a voluntary committee, but members are reimbursed for travel expenses when it is necessary to be out of town.

Interested individuals should apply in writing to the undersigned by **January 10, 1992.**

David C. Fulton  
Clerk-Treasurer Administrator  
Township of Terrace Bay  
P.O. Box 40  
Terrace Bay, Ontario  
P0T 2W0

## Visiting Thunder Bay?

Shopping? Site Seeing? Skiing?  
Find comfort at

# Paradise Motel

- \* Very clean rooms at Budget rates
- \* Close to all major attractions
- \* Variety of family restaurants within one block
- \* Picnic Area

\*Reservations - phone ahead  
**(807) 475-8628**

Bob & Leslie Swan (mgr.)  
221 W. Arthur Street  
(Highway 11 - 17B)  
Thunder Bay, Ontario  
P7E 5P7