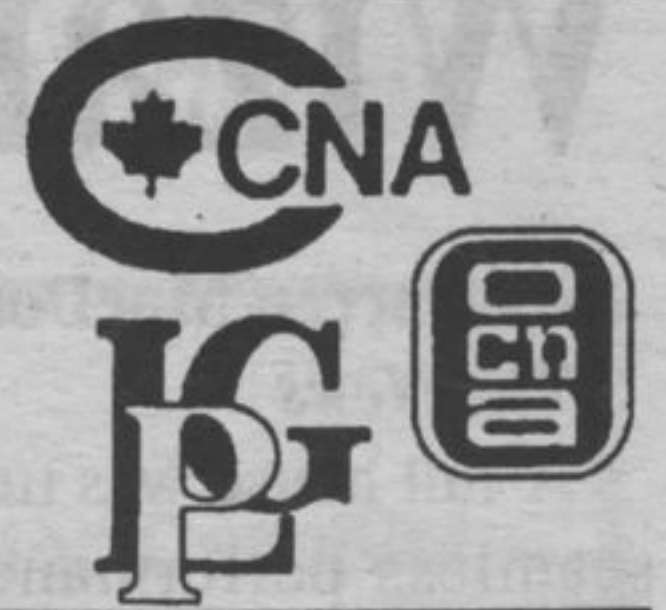


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Good and bad alike, the media lumps snowmobilers into one group

As illustrated by this week's cartoon, the image of a snowmobiler—and snowmobiling in general—is divided: a sport for responsible outdoor-loving and family oriented people on the one hand, and an sport for the inconsiderate and selfish on the other.

As with most things in life, it only takes a few of the latter to make all of the former look bad. It sort of reminds me of airplane travel. The headline never reads "99.9 per cent of airplane flights take off and arrive without incident", or "Driving more dangerous than flying." Instead it's "200 die in mid-flight inferno", or "Terrorists blow up jetliner."

Similarly, you don't usually read stories about responsible people sticking to their groomed snowmobile trails, respecting the rights of others and staying away from dangerous areas.

And just as there really are gruesome airplane crashes, there really are a few snowmobilers who apparently don't think about anyone but themselves. This winter—and especially in the last few weeks—it seems these few have been particularly active.

In the last two weeks alone I've received three letters dealing in some way shape or form with a complaint about inconsiderate snowmobilers.

And that's unfortunate for a sport trying very hard to improve its image. With ambitious long-term plans that include integrated snowmobile trails running from the Manitoba border to Parry Sound, and along with them huge potential for the winter tourism industry, the last thing snowmobiling needs is a flurry of bad press to re-enforce a negative stereotype.

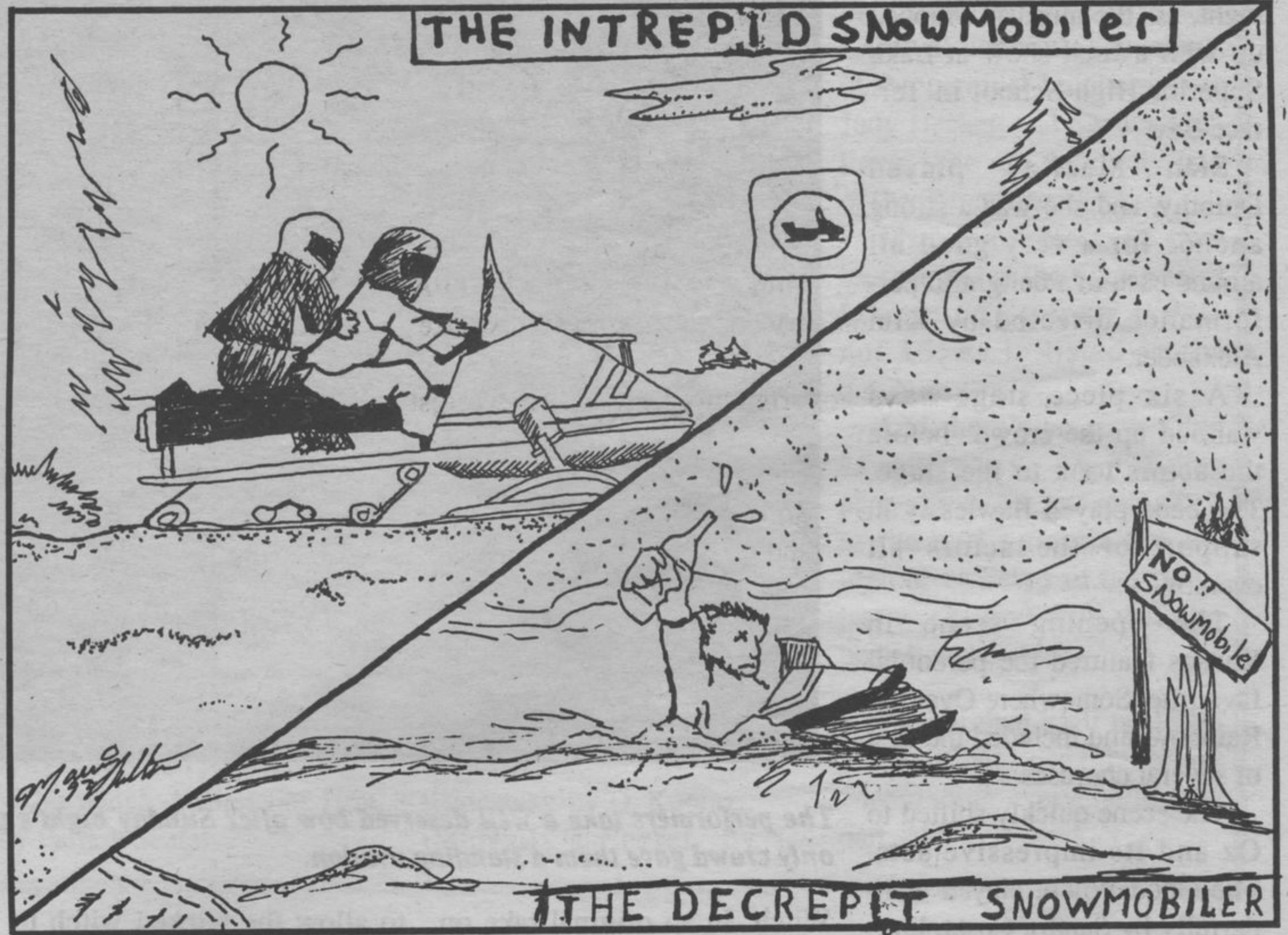
When Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs Vice-President Don Lumely was here last year, he talked about starting a safety-first media campaign to counter stereotypes. That's a good idea, but a prerequisite to snowmobile safety will have to be increased surveillance of snowmobile trails.

Imagine what our highways would be like if they were patrolled with the frequency that snowmobile trails are. When you're driving, there is a constant deterrent to modify your speed, just in case the car coming to meet you is an OPP vehicle. But on the snowmobile trail, there's much less chance of that happening.

It's no secret that police budgets, strained to the limit right now, don't allow for this kind of increased responsibility.

But in the long-term, as the sport increases in popularity (as it almost certainly will), police forces are looking at adding another burden to their list of responsibilities.

Marvin Fulton, a co-op student at *The News*, drew this week's cartoon.



Plato wasn't a speed skier

I realize that it's heresy, but I'm going to say it anyway: the Winter Olympics are over, and I'm glad.

It's not that I'm a sports curmudgeon. I'm pleased that Kerrin Lee Whatseaname won herself a gold medal. My heartstrings went as zingy as any other Canucks when Sean Burke put the leg scissors on that final shot to win the Germany-Team Canada shootout.

It's all very thrilling but it's just getting too hard to take the Olympics—winter or summer—seriously any more. As a Sports Spectacle, you bet. As a Muscle Extravaganza, to be sure.

But as an impartial gathering of the world's best amateurs competing on a level playing field under an unblemished nimbus of fair play and justice? Get serious.

The Olympics are—there is no nice way to say this—fixed. Any semi-conscious viewer watching the Figure Skating finals couldn't help but see nationalistic judges shamelessly loading their ballots for the Home Town Kids.

There's even favouritism within teams. Kurt Browning skated like a wino lashed to banana skins and still placed sixth. Elvis Strojko delivered the most technically flawless performance of the Olympics, but Elvis is still a rookie on the international scene. They dumped him in seventh place.

But Olympic officials have been hiding their eyes from improprieties for years. Look at those women's swim teams the East Germans used to send. They looked like U Boats in bathing suits.

It was a standing joke that the Russian contingent had a floating drug store anchored off Korea for the Seoul Olympics. An entire naval vessel crammed to the gunwales with doctors, pills and sundry pharmaceuticals all for the purpose of whipping up chemical booster shots to help the Soviet competitors go faster, farther, higher in ways that wouldn't show up on Olympic drug rap sheets.

Did the Olympic Overlords have any suspicions? Land sakes, Scarlett, how could you

even suggest such a thing?

Thing is, the Olympics have always been a bit of a shuck. Take the marathon. The legend goes that the big race is exactly 26 miles, 385 yards long, because that represents the precise distance from the Greek village of Marathon to the stadium in Athens—a route a heroic Athenian messenger was supposed to have run back in ancient times to bring news of an important military victory. The truth is, that nobody knows exactly how far the Athenian jogger actually ran, so for years the Olympic race was set at *about* 25 miles.



Arthur Black

Then, in 1908, the games were held in London. The Brits decided to start the race at Windsor Castle and to have the finish line at White City stadium—exactly 26 miles. The day of the race was exceptionally hot and humid, so the starting line was moved back to a shady grove of trees so that Queen Alexandra and the royal grandkiddies would be comfortable. Exact distance to the grove: 385 yards.

But it's not just the hype and the pretence surrounding The Games that's got to me. It's The Games themselves. They're getting sillier and sillier.

Look at some of the events they expect grown adults to sit down and watch. Speed skiing. Speed skiing??? For the past 20 years I've been watching what—Sloth skiing?

And what about this year's demonstration sport—curling? No doubt leaning on a broom and throwing rocks up and down a sheet of ice is as good a way as any to work up a thirst and beat the February Blahs, but as an Olympic sport?

Can you seriously envision Socrates, beard over his shoulder, sliding along on one knee, Plato and Aristotle whisking away to a Greek chorus singing "Sweep, sweep!"

Have a care, you Olympic decision makers. Today, curling. Tomorrow Naked Bungee Jumping.

Make your voice heard

The Terrace Bay Schreiber News welcomes letters to the editor on any subject.

Letters must be signed and have the phone number and address of the author for verification. We will not knowingly print false libelous or anonymous comments. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Letters to the Editor are important to community newspapers. They serve to reflect opinions of members of the community we serve. However, we must insist on these rules to ensure that this very important forum is used responsibly.

Letters can be mailed to the News, Box 579, Terrace Bay, P0T 2W0, or dropped off at the News office, 13 Simcoe Plaza in Terrace Bay.