

THE

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WINNING EDGE

YOUR TOTAL MOTORSPORTS MAGAZINE

TOP OF THE LAKE SNOWMOBILE MUSEUM KICKS OFF MICHIGAN SWAP SEASON



Ted Postula was on hand to serve as auctioneer.



© 2020 Photo by Steve Landon

Sandy Ketcher, volunteer, and Ed Klimek from Elmira, Michigan encourage shoppers to buy.

Inside:

**WHAT'S HOT INDUSTRY NEWS
& PRODUCT RELEASES**

**REMEMBER THE
RACING MANTA**

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AND MORE!

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WHAT'S HOT

Industry News

MARION SNOWMOBILE SWAP AND SNOWFEST TO RETURN



The Marion VFW Post 6015 Color Guard that has been opening the Snowfest since the second event was presented a special print by the Marion Vintage Snowmobile Club in appreciation for their support. The print designed by Sherry Landon with photo by Steve Landon was taken in 2019. Pictured Back row L-R: Brian Niver, Bob Ryan, Ryan VanPolen, Scott Schepers, Dick Eisenga, and Terry Huttenga. Front row L-R VFW members Dick Depew, Mike Bell, Snowmobile Club member - Dave Swiler, Dick Reed and Bob Friend - VFW members

Text & Photos by Steve Landon

Marion, Michigan, July 2020; -- Snowmobile enthusiasts concerned about the future of the Marion Vintage Snowmobile Swap Meet and the ever-popular Snowfest were greeted with some good news when the Marion Vintage Snowmobile Club reported both events would be back.

Going into a special public meeting July 15th at the Marion Fairgrounds the future of the club and their events were in question. Vacancies on the board needed filled plus new volunteers had to step up to the plate to help at both events. Many volunteers and board members were simply burned out from years of service. While they wanted to continue as volunteers they felt it was time for a change.

Over 40 people braved scorching temperatures near 90 degrees to help figure a way to keep two of the biggest vintage snowmobile events in Michigan going for years to come.



Old and new board members gathered for a group shot following the meeting. Back row L-R Brian Niver, Terry Huttenga, Dick Eisenga, Bob Ryan and Dave Swiler. Front row L-R Eric Williams, Ryan VanPolen, Mike Gretka, Scott Schepers, Brenda Blain, Josh VanBuskirk.

Prior to getting down to business the Marion VFW Post 6015 Color Guard that has been opening Snowfest since the second annual event was presented a special print by the board in appreciation for their support. The print designed by Sherry Landon with photo by Steve Landon of The Winning Edge Magazine was taken in 2019 during opening ceremonies.

During the meeting everyone agreed the board needed some help as well as new people to step up to the plate to keep everything running. Thankfully not one person on hand wanted to see the club dissolve. Thanks to that attitude it didn't take long for board vacancies to be quickly filled. Veteran race flagman and board member Dave Swiler took over as President, Ryan VanPolen will serve as Vice President and Brenda Blain will be Secretary. With Board positions filled, discussions turned to the 2030 fall swap meet and the 2021 Snowfest.

What started out with a lot of uncertainty tuned into an evening of hope and celebration according to President Dave Swiler.

"The possibility of our club losing some members and not being able to continue on was a big concern



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prior to the cancellation of the 2020 Snowfest. The fact that some people were getting burned out and wanted to step back posed a serious threat to the future of the club and our events. We're a small all volunteer club, it can be tough to get others to join and be a part of the effort to put on our events.

I don't think cancelling Snowfest had much effect on the members stepping down. I know a couple of them had been telling us they wanted to step down prior to that, but all had agreed to stay until after Snowfest 2020. We all really work hard as a club to keep the races, swap and show going and avoid cancellation. Last year there was still a lot of work effort and time invested by our entire club to pull it off but Mother Nature shut us down" – Swiler said

Snowmobile enthusiasts from around the state and as far away as Ontario, Ohio and Indian had been concerned since reports emerged the Marion Snowmobile Club could possibly be dissolved. The meeting was not only important to the Marion business community, it was also important to the entire vintage snowmobiling community, especially vintage racing. Thankfully it turned out good for everyone involved.

"I feel the meeting went pretty well. I would have liked to see some more faces but I also realize July is a hard time to get everyone together, especially when its about snowmobiling, racing or anything to do with a winter sport at that time of the year. Thankfully it all worked out and we'll be back.

I have a good feeling this new board and our club can be just as successful as in past years, I think we'll be able to please the majority of our fans, racers and the local business community. I am so proud to be a part of this club and all it does.

I am open to talk with anyone about joining and becoming a part of this or even listen to suggestions from racers, members, community or businesses. I am going to do everything in my power and to



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the best of my ability to keep the Marion Vintage Snowmobile Club going with continued success! I'm looking forward to working with the new board members.

I love the support we get from everyone, I know we have to take the bad or the not so good and try and learn from that as well and improve. I welcome all comments and feedback, even if it is not the best of news. I would like to think and hope that we have good communication and feedback from everyone. I will listen as long as people are not screaming at me. We can handle anything in a good way if we just work together.

I would like to Thank everyone who attended our meeting, The Village of Marion, all of our sponsors, helpers, volunteers, the Eagle's club, a our entire Marion Snowmobile Club, past and present members, and all of our fans and racers. We could not have accomplished all we have done so far without any of them! A huge Thank You to all" - Swiler said

With a new board in place plans will get underway on the October Snowmobile Swap Meet set for October 10, 2020. The Marion Snowfest which features vintage snowmobile racing, a show and a swap meet will be held February 20, 2021. Watch The Winning Edge Magazine on face book for updates.

THE WINNING EDGE

STAFF

PUBLISHER/EDITOR/WRITER:

STEVE LANDON

COMPOSITION/PRODUCTION/DESIGN:

SHERRY LANDON

CIRCULATION: SHERRY LANDON

ADVERTISING REP.: STEVE LANDON

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS:

STEVE & SHERRY LANDON

THE WINNING EDGE MAGAZINE:

YOUR TOTAL MOTORSPORTS MAGAZINE

652 E. SURREY RD., FARWELL, MI 48622

PHONE/FAX: 989-588-9213

E-MAIL: winningedge@chartermi.net

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ABOVE: A biker checks out some of the sleds on display.



TOP RIGHT: A couple of visitors check out the display of Chuck Ulchs' antique skidoos.

STREET FAIR PROMOTES VINTAGE SNOWMOBILE HOBBY

Top veteran ski-doo collector Chuck Ulch of Harrison, Michigan didn't let the COVID-19 virus keep him for pulling together another great vintage snowmobile display during the annual Harrison Street Fair Saturday August 22nd

Mr. Ulch along with three other collectors braved near '90 plus degree temperatures to bring out some unique old sleds for visitors to check out. The exposure helped promote the hobby and the history of the sport to folks that might otherwise have not know about it.

The annual street fair is part of the annual Historic Michigan Old U.S. 27 Motor Tour features everything from craft and street sales to community entertainment. Following strict safety guidelines this years event went off without a hitch.

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Flashback

Bob
Bracey



REMEMBER THE RACING MANTA

Editors Note:

In 2001 I had the opportunity do a series of interviews with Bob Bracey, father of the Roamer, Raider, Manta and Trail Roamer twin track Snowmobiles. At the request of many of our readers we are pleased to rerun “Remember the Racing Manta” with some additional content. Please enjoy.

Interview with Steve Landon

W.E. — Winning Edge
B.B. — Bob Bracey

W.E. — You were the main person behind the RAIDER project until you left Leisure Vehicles Inc. to form ARBE Products, tell us a little bit about the company and the products you produced? What did ARBE stand for and how long did the company exist before you became Three R Industries?

B.B. — ARBE Products was formed in conjunction

with a sister company called Texas Products that wanted an outlet for its lightweight aluminum forming capacity. ARBE-Texas Products built many racing snowmobiles for the manufacturers of that era, ThunderJet for SnoJet, Brute for Allouette, the Ski Doo factory sleds, and many others. ARBE engineered and marketed a complete racer kit, everything was all aluminum, the suspension, chassis, steering, spindles, skis, springs, engine plate,

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track cleats and anything else that was normally steel. The complete sled was around 275 pounds.

We added to the products sold by engineering new concepts. We made a racing protective Pro Vest jacket for drivers, special light weight cleats called Arboly, and we invented the now predominate push through stud with a product called the ‘Hot Tip’. We then began to market complete racing single track sleds called Mantas. About 50 were sold including one to Dan Kirts. We also built 100 of the Manta twin track racers.

The name of the company was pronounced Ar-bee

TOP RIGHT: AN EARLY PROTOTYPE OF THE MANTA ENJOYED SUCCESS ON THE MICHIGAN RACING CIRCUIT. THE BODY WAS EVENTUALLY CHANGED TO LOOK MORE LIKE A FORMULA 1 CAR.



PROTOTYPE MANTA GOING THROUGH TESTING.



Arbe Products, Inc. announces 1975 Manta Twin Track Racing Sled. The rear engine Manta has been under development for a full season and is now ready for limited production. A prototype 440cc sled has been raced successfully on the Michigan circuit. Unique features are cockpit seating with roll bar, foot operated throttle and brake, dual titanium tracks, rear engine placement, twin tunnel chassis and rear suspensions of aircraft aluminum fabricated by Texas Products Manufacturing. Power is supplied by Sachs 340 RX and 440 RX racing engines. Overall dimensions on the 350 pound sled are 45” wide by 108” long by 26” high. For further information, contact Arbe Products, Inc., 225 South Street, Rochester, Michigan, 48063.

MANTA FACTORY RACING



BUD BENNETT



DAN KIRTS



DAN KIRTS PUTS HIS MANTA THROUGH THE PACES.



BUD BENNETT ROARS DOWN THE FRONT STRETCH.

and those are my initials. We ran the company until the spring of 1976.

W.E. — Since the snowmobile market had gone through a down turn why did ARBE become involved with the sport, especially racing?

B.B. — I had always liked the challenge of competition and felt I could beat the existing manufacturers. The market turned down because of the Arab oil embargo that left the U.S. without enough fuel to even supply autos and trucks on the road. No fuel was allotted to any R.V., boat, or off-road vehicles.

I felt the embargo would end and the recreational industry would be back. It did return, but not soon enough to save the snowmobile industry from a drastic series of bankruptcies. This included Arctic Cat, Leisure Vehicles (Raider), Sno-Jet, Allouette, Sno Prince, and many others.

Many diverse companies like Mercury, John Deere, AMF, Harley Davidson stopped production, there were only a few snowmobile manufacturers left.

W.E. — Since you had been behind the Raider why didn't you return it to production after LVI went bankrupt in 1976?

B.B. — The Leisure Vehicles company that I had started and decided to sell in 1973 went bankrupt



MANTA DRIVERS GET READY FOR THEIR NEXT RACE.



THE FACTORY (ARBE) PRODUCTS 1974-75 SNO-PRO RACING MANTA. TWO WERE MADE, ONE WITH A HYDRAULIC TORQUE CONVERTER AND GEAR BOX (NO CHAIN). ONE MACHINE IS KNOWN TO EXIST TODAY AND IS OWNED BY BRIAN GNAGEY OF MICHIGAN.

due to a lack of sales (overproduction). I did not have the money to buy the assets to revive the company.

W.E. — Did you have plans to develop a trail sled following the demise of the Raider to complement the Sno-Pro Manta?

B.B. — Yes, I have always felt the twin track concept was the ultimate trail sled and it was in the overall plan.

W.E. — What is the story behind the Manta concept? Who or what inspired the name Manta?

B.B. — The name Manta was established with the shape of our single track. It had wing-like shapes

and a double nose (the exhaust came out the front). When we went to the twin track racers, the name was carried over.

W.E. — In 1973/74 you unveiled a prototype Manta that looked nothing like the ones Dan Kirts, Bud Bennett and others would fly on to victory in sno-pro competition around the snow belt. How was this sled different from the ones later raced? Why did you go to the other design?

B.B. — The prototype was used to get some track time on the chassis in 1974. It was the exact same sled under the rather bulbous body. I had made the body to the drawings of one of our styling people's renderings and did not like the proportions. We did the later styling to be more like a Formula One race car, I felt this was much more pleasing. Oh! It did not have the Cobra front end initially either. It was successful on the Michigan race circuit late in the season.

W.E. — Tell us a little bit about the machine, the drive system, Cobra Adjustable Drive System, Power Plant etc.....was this a true I.F.S. machine?

B.B. — The Manta twin track had an aluminum monocoque chassis with twin tunnels housing two 9" x 103" tracks with Arboly cleats. Two aluminum rear suspensions had 4" of travel and the front independent suspensions were 'Cobra', a coil spring mounted horizontally on top of the ski. They had about 5" of travel, other than the Raider in 1971, the Manta's were one of the first controlled travel independent front ends in the industry. The 'Cobra' front suspension was developed by H & H, a manufacturer of hydraulic brakes and other snowmobile products. Seating was in a automotive race car bucket with a five-point seat belt. Early sleds had a roll bar and later units a full cage. The engine was rear mounted with a conventional drive unit in front of the engine turning a solid shaft drive axle. All Raider, Manta, and Trail Roamers run solid axles (no differentials) and they steer with skis only. Exhausts were racing chambers exiting out the rear. Steering was with a butterfly wheel and there were brake and throttle pedals for speed and stopping.

W.E. — You hooked up with Bud Bennett to drive. Tell us a little bit about Mr. Bennett and how you



1975 KAWARTHA CUP

came to have him run with Dan Kirts. How would you describe their respective driving styles and personalities? Do you have any particular moments that really stand out about each driver?

B.B. — Bud Bennett was an ARCA stock car racer who also raced in the Michigan snowmobile circuit on Mercury Sno Twisters. He had won championships in stock cars and 340-440cc stock snowmobiles. When Bud saw the twin track Manta, he felt it was the way to go for racing. The automobile-like characteristics were very natural to his driving style and he became our test and development driver. Dan Kirts was an all-time world championship hydroplane racer who also raced Allouette Brute mod sleds. As I indicated previously we had built these sleds in conjunction with Texas Products. Dan first bought a lot of the ARBE racing components and then we provided him a complete Manta single track to promote our ARBE line. He became a factory driver but worked on his own sled at his Indiana machine shop business.

Each driver had a unique style and setup for the Manta twin track. Bud liked to dirt track the rear end around and Dan liked the sled set up to carve the corners without breaking the rear end loose. Bud was always testing the limits of the rules with new innovations. Dan worked on perfecting the

fine fits and precision aspect of the twin track components. Both drivers gave me 100% and always elated me when they rose to the challenges I put to them. Dan was more calculating in his approach while Bud pulled his way to victory in any way necessary.

Each driver had moments of glory and Bud's came up at Alaska in our first race along with cross-country victories in the World Trophy Race at Ironwood, MI against all the majors. Dan came on later to shine at the next World Trophy race in cross country and sprint runs.

W.E. — Hall of Famer and 1984 Soo I-500 winner Dan Kirts ran both the Manta Sno-Pro and later 1980's version. How did you meet up with Dan? How would you compare his driving style to others in that time period?

B.B. — I met Dan as the friend of one of my Raider factory workers. He, like Dan, was a Enduro driver as well as Sprint Ovals. When I started to build racing products, Dan was racing a lightweight Allouette that we had built through Texas Products. We first sold him lighter tracks and other components that helped him win several class championships in Michigan. After seeing him drive, I knew

he could help us with our twin track project. Dan had an enormous desire to win at anything he drove and although very aggressive, he was the cleanest competitor I ever met.

At times, I thought he literally dragged sleds to the winners circle on willpower alone. He did most of the work on his machines and was also a super tuner on engines.

W.E. — Please give us some details about those racing Manta's - Twin Track & Single Track versions of the Sno-pro era; power plant, clutching, suspension, track, weight, length, etc..

B.B. — The single track Manta was almost identical to the Ski Doo Blizzard factory sleds with all aluminum and titanium parts, except we used stock 440cc Sachs free air engines, Comet clutches and drivens with hydraulic brake. Track suspension was our own with 15" wide, 103" long cleated Arboly tracks. Front suspension was our own aluminum spring & ski with carbides (just beginning to be found on racers). The sled weighed 250 pounds.

The twin track Manta factory and Sno Pro sleds ran the same Sachs 340 & 440cc engines until the advent of the liquid cooled Yamaha's. We traded



DRAG RACING MANTA

two Manta twin tracks for two 440 Yamaha sleds to get the liquid cooled engines. Since the engine didn't heat up and slow down in late laps, it made the Manta almost unbeatable. Twin tracks ran narrower versions of our aluminum rear suspension with 9" wide, 103" long Arboly cleated tracks, running in two tunnels that flanked the driver seat. The engine was in the rear, and we eventually used Arctic clutches with Comet drivens. Front suspensions were independent with a unit we helped developed called a Cobra. The body came

IN 1982 VETERAN ENDURO RACER DENNY ATHERTON OF GAINES, MICH., WORKED WITH BOB BRACEY TO MODIFY A MID 1970'S MANTA RACING CHASSIS, ADDING A '79 SKI-DOO IFS FRONT-END AND A 440 SNO-PRO TO RUN THE ENDURO CIRCUIT WITH SOME SUCCESS.





TWO DEDICATED MANTA COLLECTORS, TOM MASK AND MARK HARDING MADE THE LONG HAUL FROM WISCONSIN AND NEW YORK STATE TO SHOW THEIR SLEDS AT THE 2012 MICHIGAN A-1 SWAP AND SHOW.

off for service with 4 hood pins and weight was 290 pounds. Length was 108", overall width 45" (the max allowed in racing.)

W.E. — The late Gilles Villeneuve ran a Twin Track enclosed cockpit Allouette back in the early days of sno-pro. Did your racing Manta come out before Villeneuve's machine? Were there any similarities? Did the machines ever compete against each other - if they did what were the results?

B.B. — We ran a parallel course as far as time with the Villeneuve brothers, but they showed their unit in a very crude untested form early in 1973-74 race season. I chose to race the local Michigan circuit to do more development and successfully raced the factories later that year and the next.

The Allouette was a much larger (10' long), heavier (600 pounds) sled that ran the same free air Sachs engine as we did. They both had two tracks, a cockpit seat with a five-point seat belt, a roll cage and foot controls for the brake and throttle. The front suspension on the Allouette was an independent unequal length A arm like the Arctic Cat and the Trail Roamer today. (Chaparral and Skiroule

had also tried this type of suspension in their factory racers.) The Allouette rear suspension used one slide rail like the Raider and their track drive had a differential with a brake to steer the tracks with. This system was also used on the Ski Doo Formula One twin track racers. The Raider, the Manta and the Trail Roamer steer even better without this system being necessary.

The only time we raced the Allouette twin track was at Peterborough, Ontario for the Kawartha Cup in 1975. It was a two day event and we beat the twin tracks on Saturday and their single tracks on Sunday. I even got the Sunday race on film. Dan Kirts narrowly lost out to the Yamaha liquid cooled factory sleds for the Cup only a couple of points behind, due to not racing in the 340 class.

W.E. — The final version of the racing Manta made it's debut November 7, 1974, in Alaska at a Motor Musers race, in that event you placed 1 & 2 with Bud Bennett leading the way to victory over teammate Dan Kirts, what do you remember most about that first race; Fan reaction, sled performance, conditions, mechanical problems etc...Did

the machine meet or exceed all your expectations? What ever became of the sleds in Alaska?

B.B. — The Alaska race was a costly effort on our part as we had to fly the machines up and we were certainly not as well equipped as the factories to work on our sleds. The sleds ran in 440X and there was not much to run against, but we overcame the adversities and had good finishes. 440X was the class that USSA set up to allow new concept sleds to run in and we wanted to run with the regular factory mod sleds. The race was tough on my budget and us but the press we got was worth it.

For a first outing on totally untested sleds, we were lucky to get a working setup with the four hours of daylight available each day.

We felt we had a lot of potential but sure needed test time to try setups. That was to show up at the Ironwood races later that year. Fans always gave us great response everywhere we went and Alaska was even more so as no one had seen the twin track concept. I guess that finishing 1-2 was about as well as we could hope for. But, we still wanted to run against the factory mod sleds. One of the Polaris dealers we had beaten in the first race purchased the two Mantas and campaigned them the whole year in Alaska. I do not know how he fared with them, but he later became a Trail Manta dealer years later.

W.E. — You returned to the Lower "48" ready to tackle the Ironwood Olympus? Not only did you turn a few heads you also set course records. Tell us a little bit about that race since it was the one where you got to really face the Factory "Top Guns".

B.B. — The Michigan race sanctioning body, M.I.S.A., allowed the twin tracks to run in regular mod classes and the Ironwood race was a combined sanctioning race with Wisconsin, U.S.S.A. and Michigan rules all used. This let us run in mod against the factories. The cross-country race was used to qualify for the World Trophy race (the top 50 times only were allowed to run). There were 1200 entries and Bud Bennett finished third in the seven mile run. As I indicated earlier, the test time was not available to us and we had sold production twin track Manta race sleds to about 10 customers. The Ironwood race came very early and

no one had snow or ice to test on. In the regular mod classes on the oval our customers runs and we were a disaster. Sleds spun out and were ill handling due to improper carbide and suspension settings. All of the sleds including Bennett's were unable to go in a straight line. Several were even black-flagged. With Bennett qualified for the World Trophy (they ran elimination's and a final on Sunday), we only had one night to make the sleds work. About 10:00 in the evening, we hit the set up we needed. In each of the three qualifiers we won each race, even beating the eventual Trophy winner, Jim Adema.

As fate would have it, the final was not to be ours. While leading on the final lap, two hood pins that held the front of the body on let loose and Bud had to hold the body down with his arms while trying to steer. We finished fourth, not bad, since no other factory sled had even qualified for the final.

Most of our racing was done in Michigan since we could compete one-on-one with regular mod sleds. We faced the factories and won our share of races during the 1974-75 season. In 1975-76 U.S.S.A.

A REAR VIEW OF MARK HARDING'S UNIQUE MANTA.



opened mod racing to twin tracks. The Wisconsin race association invited us as a factory team to come to one of their race weekends and we won five of six classes we entered. The next week, the association banned twin tracks.

W.E. — Dan Kirts who is perhaps best noted for his success on the enduro circuit raced in sprint competition with you, however, did he ever enter the ‘70’s era Manta’s in endurance competition - if so how did they perform?

B.B. — I don’t remember if we ran the race Manta in any enduro races, perhaps the Soo 500 once or an enduro at Kinchloe, but I can’t find any documentation. There were ‘road course’ type sprint races in those days and the Manta was unbeatable in these right-left turn type races.

W.E. — Note Dan Kirts raced a Trail Manta at the Soo I-500 in 1985.

W.E. — Beyond your success with Dan Kirts and Bud Bennett - how did other Manta drivers perform in competition. Are there any particular names that stand out?

B.B. — There were drivers successful in several other areas and the most memorable was Jean Guy Poulin who won five of six out of nine 440X weekend meets. Randy Robbins ran the Canadian circuit with good finishes in the Kawartha Cup. The Yamaha factory did all its liquid cooled development work on the Canadian circuit in 1975 with U.S. entry in 1976. In Wisconsin, David Longue ran 440X to wins regularly.

W.E. — For the 1974/75 Season you produced two special Manta Twin Trac’s,one with a Hydraulic Torque Converter and Gear Box. You also added a air scoop behind the cockpit. Tell us about this machine compared to the others you produced. Did any of these machines see action on the oval? If so what kind of success did they enjoy.

B.B. — Those two sleds were the factory ‘Sno Pro’ sleds to run against the other factory race teams. The large air scoop was to help the free air-cooled Sachs engines from overheating. The hydraulic torque converter was to eliminate the belt (They were still a high attrition item in the early 1970’s.)



run with manta '76

SPECIFICATIONS	
Engines	Sachs 440 RX — 64 HP Sachs 440 RX — 74 HP Mitsubishi 440 RX Type Tuned Exhaust Channeled
Drive	Control 105 C Clutch 400 Drive
Belt	ARBE Fiber 9 — Racing Belt
Body	Model: Thermoplastic removable with 1 head plate and 1 rubber foot plate
Chassis	Twin Tunnel Aluminum Manta design with internal chassis construction steel roll bar
Rear Suspension	Two — double slide bar aluminum construction with adjustable front and rear torsion springs
Front Suspension	Two extra adjustable coil spring shock units mounted on 34" aluminum skis
Steering	Center mount direct link rod and connections with parallel pit bar rod. Butterfly wheel
Track	Two — 101" long — 8.1" wide external drive chain, closed
Skis	Front: aluminum, flat-bottomed
Throttle	Front: aluminum, flat-bottomed
Fuel Capacity	2 U.S. Gallons
Dimensions	Overall length: 120" Overall height: 44.5" Skis width outside: 42" Overall height at roll bar: 34"
Weight	(Approx. Full)
Standard Equipment	Seat Belt Carburetor heat bars Rear Fins Rocker seat Tether kit switch

The truly Unique MANTA Twin Trac is the product of 4 years of research and development by the originator of the rear engine — twin track snowmobile concept. Each MANTA is hand assembled for precision in the manner of the fine European racing sleds from which it derives its styling and handling characteristics.

Many new features grace the Manta Twin Trac for '76 such as new side scoops for engine cooling, lower center of gravity, improved steering control and new decorative trim. Standard equipment includes: aluminum monocoque chassis with roll bar, hydraulic brakes, Cobra adjustable front suspension, carbide wear bars. Engine choices are Sachs 440 RX or Sachs 440 RX with Mitsub. 440mm carburetors.



Manufactured by:
ARBE Products
225 South Street
Rochester, Michigan 48063
Telephone 1-(313) 652-4320



win with manta '76

The 1975 racing season is over and the new MANTA Twin Trac told its tale by showing its tail. In its first full racing season the new MANTA Twin Trac told its competition that it's out to do business. Witness what Manta drivers did with this super unique hi-performance racing sled.

UNITED STATES SNOWMOBILE ASSOC. (27 RACES)
8-1st Place
4-2nd Place
1-3rd Place


MICHIGAN INTERNATIONAL SNOWMOBILE ASSOC.
8-1st Place
5-2nd Place
3-3rd Place

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN SNOWMOBILE RACING ASSOC.
(Only two events entered)
1st — 440 RX
2nd — 440 RX
3rd — 440 RX


ONTARIO SNOWMOBILE RACING FEDERATION
KAWARTHA WORLD SERIES
1st place 440 RX
2nd place Unlimited Mod

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January, 1976

Ours performed equally with the belt drive and worked through a gear drive (no chain). Some of this technology is just now appearing as ‘innovations’ on special high performance snowmobiles here in the 2000’s. We first raced these sleds in the World Trophy at Ironwood. They set new records and led the cross-country qualifications. Our 440 ran and set a 650 new record with Dan Kirts driving. In the oval qualifiers, we won all our heats with Dan and Bud qualifying one-two for the final.

As the day progressed, delays caused the final race to be pushed into early evening. That condition of dusk (I could see cigarettes glowing in the grand stand) along with a snowstorm limited the visibility so much that I withdrew our sleds from competing in the final as I felt it was an unsafe condition. As you can imagine, Dan and Bud were disappointed as they rightfully felt the final was going to be a Manta battle for the trophy. This race proved to be a sad affair as Yamaha factory driver Jim Adema was killed when he crashed and came off his sled. Another driver was unable to see him and ran into him. I think Dan and Bud understood my concern then, and we drove home in revered silence.

W.E. — There were ads promoting the Manta Twin trac Modified Racing Sled. Did you have a large dealer network? How were those consumer versions different from the Factory versions run by Bennett and Kirts?

B.B. — Most of the racing Mantas were sold ‘factory direct’, but previously mentioned Dave Longue

did sell four or five in Wisconsin. We usually tried to send any upgrades we developed to our customers since we were changing setups and testing all the time. Some worked for them but since each driver used his own style, most of the individuals had their own tricks.

W.E. — In an ad promoting the 1976 Manta you offer the sled with or without engine - Why?

B.B. — We had worked the old Sachs 440 free air engines to their limit and new technology (including liquid cooling) was coming on the scene.

Some customers were pulling engines out of the sleds they had been racing.

W.E. — There is a story that you made a little trade for a Yamaha Water Cooled Engine after Dan Kirts narrowly lost out to the Yamaha factory sled for the Kawartha Cup in 1975. What were your en-

BOB BRACEY DESIGNED A VEST FOR DRIVER SAFETY, HE ALSO DESIGNED ONE OF THE FIRST TEATHER KILL SWITCHES.



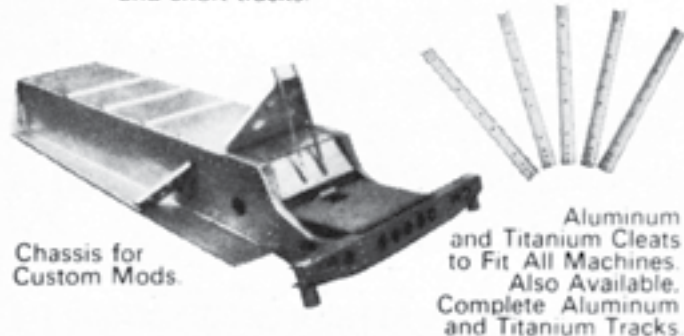
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gines lacking when it came to running against the Liquids. Did you ever run water burners in future Manta's

B.B. — We ran the 1975 Kawartha Cup race in Peterborough, Ontario against the Villeneuve brothers with their Allouette single and twin track sleds and the factory Yamaha liquid cooled prototype sleds.

The event was a two-day race with duplicate races each day. On Saturday we couldn't do anything right as Bud's sled won in the heats and broke a chain at the start of the final. Dan won his heat and in the final got a cleat from another sled up in the suspension to tear up one of our tracks. We had beaten the twin tracks of Gilles and Jacque Villeneuve during the heats to eliminate them from Saturday's final.

Sunday proved to be our day as one of our customers won the 340 class and in 440 a customer won a heat, Dan won a heat and Bud finished second to qualify three Mantas for the 9 sled final. Racing in the final against the liquid factory Yamaha's and the single track Allouettes of the Villeneuves, Dan Kirts finished first with Randy Robbins' Manta third and Bud dropping out from second place with a burned piston. Dan's performances in 440 and a second place with our 440 sled in 650 gave him a second overall in the Cup. The Manta won using its cornering ability, but it was very evident that the liquid Yamaha's did not slow down like our free airs did in later laps. We contacted Yamaha, but they were unwilling to sell us any engines. To get two engines for our fac-

tory sleds, I traded a dealer two Mantas for two liquid Yamaha sleds and pulled the engines for our use. Once converted to liquids, the Manta Sno Pros never lost a race that they finished.

W.E. — How many Manta Sno-Pro's were produced? Are there very many still in existence today?

B.B. — Only two were built with the large scoop although a local Manta owner did put the scoop on his racer. I lost track of the two Sno Pro sleds, but a collector brought me pictures of the hydro clutch unit when I was at the Novi, Michigan snowmobile show. I asked if he wanted to sell it, but he knew he had a one of a kind and declined. (He sent me a picture later.)

W.E. — Do you recall your last race as a manufacturer?

B.B. — We produced our last race Manta in the spring of 1976. Our last race was at Weedsport, NY where we won the 250 class and qualified first

Saturday night for the factory 50 lap Sno Pro special event against the best Arctic, Ski Doo, Polaris and several other factories had to offer.

This was a 440 liquid Yamaha powered Manta twin track. We broke a suspension on a fence board that another sled knocked onto the track while leading at lap 15 or so. We were unable to make repairs in time to continue.

W.E. — While it's not a race sled — how is the current Trail Roamer project going?

B.B. — The Trail Roamer production is over for the year and we are sold out except for three or four sleds to open the Canadian market.

W.E. — Any Final Comments?

B.B. — We have produced 100 total Roamers. Three are being kept for testing and prototype work along with giving test rides to magazines and potential customers. We are still trying to gather some investment money to help us increase production numbers to gain profitability.



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Press Release
MANTA SNO PRO SLEDs
Release Any Time

September 1, 1975

Why Arbe Products Races

Racing to develop a trail sled is the plan of Bob Bracey, president of Arbe Products. As designer and originator of the twin track, rear engine snowmobile, from his first Raider in 1968 to the sleek, new Manta, the battle was one of acceptance. The statements of the "experts" were made over and over. "It won't go in snow" or "It won't turn" were heard each time the sled was taken off the trailer. Every time something deviates from the norm, the same type of skepticism appears. With his racing background, Bracey got this same type of reaction at Indianapolis when he helped perfect rear engine cars which now dominate almost all types of automotive racing.

With the sales of some 20,000 Raider snowmobiles, the rear engine, twin track type of sled gained the approval of a portion of the snowmobiling public. A new cry emerged from the "experts" -- "It may be OK for little old ladies, but it'll never work on the race track." After trying unsuccessfully to convince the Raider organization to get into racing, Bob left and formed Arbe Products. At the same time, Alouette got on the bandwagon with the controversial Sno Pro twin track that caused a sensation wherever it ran. The cost of Sno Pro was prohibitive as a test bed for the first Manta, so it was developed on the Michigan snowmobile circuit where the existing rules allowed it to compete in the Super Mod classes.

After the original Sno Pro became the Professional Drivers Circuit for the 1975 season, manufacturing capacity and U.S.S.A. ruling limited the Manta to competition in 440X class. The expense of traveling the circuit to race in only one class was again prohibitive. The Manta factory team toured many of the other racing associations, leaving behind the reputation of being highly competitive, even when they crossed paths with other factory efforts.

With the return of the Sno Pro Challenge Circuit and new U.S.S.A. rulings that allow the Manta to run in Super Mod classes, Arbe Products will field a team of four sleds in competition. These sleds will represent the final test bed for the Trail Manta, a performance sport version of the racing sled to be offered for the 1976-77 season. The trail version will utilize the same twin track, rear engine concept in a single passenger, ultra quiet machine. It will be the first time that a four year development project will have been used to work out the bugs and will give one of the most dependable sleds available to the general consumer.

The Drivers

Dan Kirts

Little known on the U.S.S.A. circuit due to factory commitments in Michigan and Ontario, Dan is referred to as one of the super drivers by people he has raced against. He has campaigned snowmobiles for seven years, taking the 340 and 440 Mod championships in Michigan in 1974, and has over 100 wins to his credit. Dan's mild-mannered ways off the track are misleading to his hard charging race techniques in all forms of competition. He not only races snowmobiles, but he has run outboard hydroplane boats for twenty-one of his thirty-four years. Six national championships and three world championships, plus a closed course speed record are in the books with Dan's name in front of them. When he isn't racing boats in the summer, Dan dabbles with stock cars. He dabbled his way to lap records and track championships at three race tracks in Indiana during the 1974 season.

Competition for Dan and the Manta started early at Brandt's Lodge, Alaska at the first U.S.S.A. race. He finished 2nd and 3rd to teammate Bud Bennett. Back in the lower 48, the name Kirts became synonymous with Manta. On the M.I.S.A. circuit he had 10 firsts in Super Mod, including the season's "Invitational Championship" race at Mackinaw City. The Ontario Snowmobile Racing Federation only saw Dan once, but that was enough as he captured 1st place in 440 Mod at the Canadian World Series at Peterborough, against competitors like Gilles Villeneuve, Larry Omans, and Gary Iulig.

Dan is a specialist on engine and drive trains and treats his equipment like he carved it out of a block of steel with a pen knife. Every piece has a meaning and seems to take on a form of life in Dan's hands. His approach is simple -- first make the machine finish, then finish first. Dan is looking forward to his first full season against the factory drivers and hopefully a lot of first place finishes.

Bud Bennett

Jokingly referred to as "bust'em Bennett" by the mechanics, Bud has the uncanny knack of finding all the weak points in the design of a sled. Chains that are not tensioned properly, break; suspensions that need a slight bit more structure, bend; or the fuel line that was not safety clipped on, falls off. These are the circumstances that surround racing and testing with Bennett.

No stranger to race tracks of all types, Bud started his racing career with go karts in the early sixties, winning a national championship in 1967. Then, in 1971, he switched to stock cars and was voted "Rookie of the Year." During the summer months, Bud can be seen piloting his number 10 Camaro on many of the midwestern race tracks.

His snowmobile racing endeavors began with stock sleds in 1969. Over 100 wins later, he took a 400cc sled to Michigan State Championships in 400 and 440 class, and finished third in 650 points for 1973-74.

In 1974, Bud started the season out right by driving his Manta to a win in the first U.S.S.A. 440X race at Brandt's Lodge, Alaska. On return to the midwestern United States, he opened at the Ironwood Olympus with wins and new course records in 650cc and 800cc Cross Country, using his 440cc Manta to conquer some of the best big bore sleds in the country. Handling problems besieged the Mantas on the oval until the World Trophy eliminations. Still running his 440cc Manta, he worked up to the finals to finish fourth overall, holding the body on with his elbows. The four Cross Country runs has fractured the hood hold down pins, and they let go in the second lap of the ten lap final.

At the 440 Kawartha Cup race at Peterborough, Ontario, Bennett eliminated many of the factory drivers, finishing second to eventual winner Herb Yancey in his semi-final, only to have a chain let go on the start of the final. The Kalamazoo Kup race at Imlay City, Michigan proved the durability of both driver and sled as the scheduled three day event was run in two. After finishing second in 340 Mod on Saturday, Bennett and the 440cc Manta ran in 19 races on Sunday, finishing first 14 times, to take second in overall points for the Kup. Bud closed out the season at the Ironwood World Games with a broken fuel line while leading 440 Mod. After fixing the line, he returned to finish fourth in 650 Mod and sixth in the shortened World Championship Race.

Always eager to try something new and different, Bennett is the never-ending source of data that a racing group could not survive without. This year Bud vows that first place is the position he will be in when the chips are down.

The Machinery

The two factory pilots for the Manta Sno Pro effort will take much improved sleds onto the track this year. With a full season of racing to work out minor problems, the Sno Pro sleds use all of the improvements incorporated into the production Twin Trac, plus some experimental systems. Sno Pro engine and automatic transmission units are not complete at this release but they will be unique to the Manta in the snowmobile industry.



ISHOF is proud to honor all Class of 2020 Inductees to the Hall in Eagle River, Wisconsin along with other awards of special recognition including International Groomer of the Year, sponsored by Arrowhead Equipment, Track Inc, Pisten Bully & SnoBoss Groomers, Edgar Hetten Memorial Award of Merit, sponsored by the Elmer Cone Family, International Snowmobile Dealer of the Year, sponsored by Snow Goer & International Snowmobile Club of the Year, sponsored by Woody's.

Congratulations to the new class of inductees & all other special award recipients.

Know someone worthy of future recognition by ISHOF?

Let us know about them by making a nomination. Nomination deadline is April 1 for September 2021 induction recognition.

TERRY HUTCHINSON **VOLUNTEER & CLUB ORGANIZER** **PRIOR LAKE, MINNESOTA**

In his nearly 50 years of organized snowmobiling, Terry Hutchinson has been involved in all levels of the sport. It all started with the creation of the Prior Lake Snowmobile Association in 1972. He served as their President for over 10 years and Trail Coordinator for the past 45 years. In 1984, Scott County's three snowmobile clubs created an alliance called Sno-Trails, Inc. Terry held the office of President and

2020

Inductees



Terry Hutchinson

served as their Trail Coordinator for 40 plus years as well. It didn't take long and Terry found himself very involved at the state level, serving the Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association (MnUSA) as a Region 8 Director. Terry eventually became Vice-President and then President of MnUSA, where he also took on the role as chair of the Trails/DNR Committee. It was then that Terry was instrumental in the implementation of a statewide corridor trail system across Minnesota's 22,000 miles of snowmobile trails. In 2008, during his presidency of MnUSA and as chairperson of the Minnesota Snowmobile Advisory Council (MSAC), he played a lead role in implementing funding changes when the club payment system went from a reimbursement program to a performance based funding program. Some other significant legislation passed under Terry's leadership included the change in statute regarding the use of studs on state asphalt trails and MN Snowmobile registration fees to include a state trail pass. Presently, Terry is leading discussions with MnUSA and the state's ATV Association regarding joint snowmobile and winter ATV trails. Terry also represents snowmobiling on the Minnesota Motorized Trail Coalition and the Coalition of the Recreational Trail Users where he served on their Board since its inception in 2007. Not surprisingly, Terry got involved on a national level as the MnUSA delegate to the Midwest Chapter, American Council of Snowmobile Associations and has attended Washington DC Fly-Ins and several International Snowmobile Congresses. With all that, Terry still remains actively involved in his local snowmobile club and is responsible for marking his own section of trail. Terry's passion for the sport of snowmobiling knows no bounds. He lives it every day of his life and it reflects in his actions and involvement, which is why Terry Hutchinson is an obvious choice for induction in the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame, Class of 2020.

JOHN PRUSAK **PUBLISHER & JOURNALIST** **NEW HOPE, MINNESOTA**

John has fond memories of riding relatives' and friends' sleds, even though his parents had gotten rid of their snowmobiles when he was young, causing him to miss out on the "golden era" of snowmobiling. John's background in snowmobiling is fairly recent compared to some of the other ISHOF inductees. Make no mistake when motorsports is in your blood and you're from the Midwest, snowmobiles will



John Prusak

become a big part of your life. Putting his journalist skills to work John plays a major role in keeping all facets of snowmobiling alive and well. In 1993, John started at what was then Ehler Publishing as an Associate Editor for Snowmobile Magazine, Snow Goer, Snow Week and Snowmobile Business. He was promoted quickly thru the ranks. By 1995 he was Managing Editor and then went on to be the lead Editor of all four publications in 1996. John's enthusiasm and journalist talents were needed and couldn't be contained to only snow related motorsports. In 2002, he was promoted outside of the Snowmobile group as Associate Publisher of other magazines such as Powersports Business, Boating Industry and more. Ultimately everybody who knows John knows snowmobiling is his passion. So in 2003 he was promoted once again to Publisher of the Snowmobile Group, and concurrently also served for periods of time as editor/publisher of ATV Magazine, ATV Sport, UTV Magazine, Trailer Life and other publications. To date, in John's 27 year career, he has participated in 27 Rode Reports/Snow Shoot testing events, 27 consecutive Hay Days events, 25 Eagle River Derby events, 24 of the last 26 Big East Powersports Shows, more than a dozen International Snowmobile Congresses and many other major snowmobile events. You name it wherever people gather at a major snowmobile venue, John will be

there covering the story. In addition, John has personally ridden snowmobiles in 23 states and provinces, and has attended events in an additional 7 states and provinces where he hasn't snowmobiled (yet). John learned early on from his predecessors, John Ehler and Dick Hendricks, that it was his responsibility to cover ALL facets of snowmobiling in Snow Goer including snowmobile clubs and organizations, which John does with every single issue. It is with this high level of dedication and professionalism to the snowmobiling community that John Prusak is appropriately inducted into the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame, Class of 2020.

LINDA ROCKWOOD
INVENTOR & DESIGNER
UTICA, NEW YORK

An innovator, a savvy business person and most importantly someone who cared deeply about snowmobiling, Linda was a pioneer in the Snowmobile Trail Webmap and Smart Phone App design business. She founded Mohawk Valley GIS (MVGIS) back in 2003, which first helped the local snowmobile clubs in New York State and then started working with other states as well. Linda knew that there was a need for the snowmobilers and snowmobile clubs to have a webmap, to be able to locate parking, trails, gas, food and lodging. Her visions for maps being contained within one's own cell phone while out riding the trails and not being tied to a paper map brought us to where we are today with the technology to safely allow snowmobile riders to utilize their smart phones to navigate snowmobile trail systems. Linda began soliciting the input of several snowmobile clubs to help improve her app and refine it so it could be used to assist with volunteer snowmobile club operations and also aid in raising funds. Later versions included functions such as automatic trail conditions which allowed for refined groomer scheduling and groomer tracking, which kept riders informed of grooming activities. She was also able to incorporate on the app a profit sharing system which gave participating clubs a simple fundraising platform. Linda understood the importance of and genuinely wanted the clubs and the sport to progress and succeed like never before. Dozens of riders wrote and shared how helpful the app was in hazardous situations, especially white-out conditions. The GIS technology helped riders confidently explore new trails. Linda Rockwood's NYS Snowmobile App was way ahead of its time. Soon her app was adopted in other states



Linda Rockwood

such as Massachusetts, Vermont and Wyoming. She set the bar high. It paved the way for other snowmobile apps and remains unchallenged to this day. Linda had to shut down her MVGIS business due to serious illness, to which she succumbed in January, 2020. We lost a true entrepreneur and pioneer who worked and succeeded in making snowmobiling better for many snowmobilers and clubs that were fortunate to employ her technology. Her loss leaves an enormous hole in snowmobile navigation development. It is with heavy heart and great honor that we present this award to her family and acknowledge Linda (posthumously) as an inductee to the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame, Class of 2020.

PEGGY SPIEGER
TRAIL PROGRAM DEVELOPER & VOLUNTEER
LAPINE, OREGON

Starting to ride snowmobiles over four decades ago with her husband John and family, they all became involved with their local snowmobile club and the Oregon State Snowmobile Association (OSSA). Peggy has worked tirelessly to represent Oregon's snowmobilers as well as snowmobilers throughout the western snowbelt. During forty years of distinguished service to the sport of snowmobiling, Peggy

has made contributions as a trail and program developer and volunteer leader at the club, state, national and international levels. For the past 32 consecutive years, Peggy has provided unprecedented service for the Oregon State Snowmobile Association where she served as their Secretary, Administrative Coordinator and Executive Director. She has also been active with the American Council of Snowmobile Associations (ACSA), the International Association of Snowmobile Administrators (IASA), and the Western Chapter of Snowmobile Associations, as well as being a long-time, very active member of the Iron Dog Brigade and her local snowmobile club. As OSSA's Executive Director, Peggy has played a leading role in efforts to keep snowmobiling access open across Oregon. She has worked diligently with the U.S. Forest Service to maintain the rights of snowmobilers to access National Parks such as Crater Lake National Park, the Newberry National Volcanic Monument and development of the Kapka Butte Sno-Park. Peggy works with the Oregon Department of Transportation to administer and operate Oregon's 6,410 miles of snowmobile trails. She has played a key role in overseeing OSSA's daily association business, along with coordinating annual snowmobile trail operations. In conjunction with her oversight of the trail administrations, Peggy has served as Oregon's representative to IASA and has played a key role in



Peggy Spieger

every annual International Snowmobile Congress (ISC) since 1988. She has also regularly participated in ACSA meetings and functions since it was created in 1995. She has been a voice for snowmobiling in Washington D.C. by attending ACSA Fly-In meetings every year to work toward protecting the rights of people who use public lands respectfully. Peggy has represented OSSA with a very high level of honesty and integrity, always keeping a focus on doing what is best for the sport of snowmobiling. It is Peggy's unrelenting drive that so deservingly places her into the 2020 Class of the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame inductees.

ISHOF SNOWMOBILE
CLUB OF THE YEAR 2020
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SNO-TRAILS SNOWMOBILE CLUB
HAYWARD, WISCONSIN



The Sno-Trails Club began in 1969 and is very active in the Sawyer County Snowmobile/ATV Alliance and Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs. They maintain 175 miles of trail and have logged 850 volunteer grooming hours in a single season. They utilize over 1000 wooden stakes to mark safe passage across 8 lakes and are always researching new easements for new and improved trail relocations. Sno-Trails consistently rosters 200+ family memberships annually, 40% being local residents and the remainder of members simply choose to ride their trails and support the club. Sno-Trails holds three major fundraising events every year with proceeds going to county wide trail maintenance. They are the Vintage Ride for American Cancer Society, Poker Run and Spring Bash. Sno-Trails also publishes a monthly newsletter with safety tips, trail updates and calendar

of events. They utilize social media as well as local newspaper and radio to promote the club, their trails and snowmobile safety. Sno-Trails Snowmobile Club adopted their youth program called YETIS (Youth Excited & Interested in Snowmobiles) in 2015. Sno-Trails headline on their website is”It’s All About the Trails” and for 2020, Sno-Trails of Hayward, WI earns the coveted International Snowmobile Club of the Year. For more information on the Sno-Trails Snowmobile Club, visit www.sno-trailssnowmobile-club.com

ISHOF DEALER OF THE YEAR 2020
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For a younger dealership, just 11 years old, Day’s Powersports has built a very distinguished reputation. A family owned business that believes in treating customers the way they like to be treated – like friends. The staff is top notch, very knowledgeable and treats every customer like an old friend. Business owner Jamison Day, has been with the Bloomer Sno-Hawks Snowmobile Club for over two decades and has always been active in supporting and growing the sport of snowmobiling in Chippewa County. Since starting the dealership, they have been avid advertisers on local snowmobile maps and sponsor signage on all the snow drags in Chippewa County. They provide a snowmobile for classroom studies during DNR Snowmobile Safety Courses. They open their shop space for club members to work on trail signs. Their shop and mechanics are readily available to help with repairs to groomers when needed and they provide storage for the grooming equipment. Because of their knowledge of Wisconsin’s snowmobile program and their passion for snowmobiling, Day’s Powersports is an excellent choice for the 2020 International Snowmobile Dealer of the Year. For more information on Day’s Powersports, visit www.dayspowersports.us



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MICHIGAN *Motor Sports*

HALL OF FAME

Michigan Motor Sports Hall of Fame Cancels 2020 Ceremony

The Michigan Motor Sports Hall of Fame regretfully announced the cancellation of their 2020 induction ceremony scheduled for November. Due to the uncertainties caused by COVID 19 the Board of Directors felt it best to induct this years class and the Class of 2021 together next year.

The Class of 2020 selected by past inductees, past and present board members include; in the "Other Than Driver Category" **Scott Diehl and Rusty Daggett**. "Drag Racers" - **John Bugenski and Arlen Fadely**. "Other Motor Sports Category" - Road Racer - **Danny Kellermeyer and Snowmobile Racer Dana Wiltse**. "Oval Track, Historical Era" sees three drivers from days gone by inducted; **Dick Crup, Chet Miller, and Eldon Schrader**. "Oval Track Modern Era" inductees are **Ron Allen and Brett Mann**. The Class of 2021 will be selected in May of 2021

"There were many scenarios discussed such as making private presentations to the ten new inductees and or their families or present them their plaques at the different racing venues. At the end of discussions we realized for anyone to be inducted into the Michigan Motor Sports Hall of Fame is a tremendous honor one the inductee deserves the privilege to be recognized in front



FORMER ENDURO RACER DANA WILTSE WAS NAMED AS AN INDUCTEE INTO THE MICHIGAN MOTOR SPORTS HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2020. HE WILL BE INDUCTED IN 2021.

of their peers, with their family, friends, and those who helped propel them to the honor they have achieved. We look forward to having everyone together next year" – said Dave DeHem - Michigan Motor Sports Hall of Fame President

Dana Wiltse of Standish, Mich., perhaps best remembered for his victory in the the 1976 Traverse City T.C. 250 Pro Enduro on a Mercury joined a growing group of snowmobile racers who will enter the MMHoF. During a highly successful career Wiltse scored many oval track victories and championships in several classes both on the Michigan International Snowmobile Association – MISA and the Midwest International Racing Association – MIRA circuits. As a driver with

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Adamowski Brothers / Team Budweiser he joined Gerry Adamowski in leading the team to the 1979 Midwest International Racing Association – MIRA Championship and the famed Stroh's Triple Crown of Enduro Racing driving a Yamaha SSR. In addition to being a top driver Dana served as an MIRA race official, board member and snowmobile race team owner.

The world changing events of this past year that forced the induction cancellation is no doubt a big let down for all of this years inductees. Hopefully 2021 will back to normal. Plans call for next years to take place on Sunday November 7, 2021 at the Comfort Inn of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan In the meantime relax and check out the many biographies about the legends of Michigan Motor Sports on their webpage <https://www.mmshof.org/>

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BEYOND THE EDGE

Vintage Sledders take to the dirt at Vintage Dirt Bike Ride



Fresh off a 30-minute plus 1 lap vintage motocross race drivers celebrate. Pictured L-R.: First Place: Josh VanBuskirk - can-am, Second: Brad Huttenga - Honda and Third: Brad Davidson - Honda.

By Steve Landon

Rich Laughlin was clearly born with a wrench in one hand and a throttle in the other. Since birth he has had the need for speed and the desire to squeeze out every ounce of power he can from his snowmobiles, car's, truck's and motorcycles, especially his vintage dirt bikes

from the 1960's to 1982. Eight years ago he started a vintage dirt bike ride with friends and fellow bikers from his farm south of Marion, Mich., in Clare County, a ride that has become a popular tradition.

On Saturday morning June 13th eighteen riders ranging in age from '20 to '68 mounted motorcycles from days gone by and took to the trail on a 72-mile trek. Traveling to and north



Above: Portions of the many bikers on hand for this year's vintage ride fire up their engines.

Left: Vintage ski-doo snowmobile racer and Motorcycle enthusiast Larry Decker of Dewitt, Mich., launches his bike skyward at the start of the ride.

of Moddersville, Mich., the group covered scenic roads, trails and crossed historic old bridges. In addition to the trails they also did a little hill climbing in a couple of gravel pits. Overall it was a great day with only two breakdowns, one flat rear tire and one bike with a little engine trouble.

The oldest bikes in action this year were a couple of 1972 Yamaha's and a 1972 Suzuki. The year's oddball was a 1974 Can-Am. Trophies were given to those who ran from start to finish, it said, "I survived the Eight Annual Vintage Motorcycle Ride".

For those looking for a post ride challenge, a 30-minute plus one lap fun race was held on Laughlin's training track. Proving being an oddball isn't so bad the 1974 Can Am left the competition in the dust to take victory followed by a couple of riders



on Honda's. It was not a good day for the host. "I didn't race to win and it's a good thing. I lost spark and had to settle for a dnf", Laughlin said.

Great weather, awesome old bikes and beautiful countryside made for a perfect day of riding. Before long many of these same riders will tuck away their bikes for the season to begin wrenching on their vintage snowmobiles as they prepare for another season of exciting vintage ice oval track racing.

Cancelled in 2020 due to a major melt down and poor track conditions the ever-popular Marion Snowfest is set to return on February 20, 2021 at the historic Marion Fairgrounds in Marion Michigan. The areas ever-popular autumn snowmobile swap meet will take place at the fairgrounds Saturday October 10 2020.

Left: Rich Laughlin explains the day ride route prior to hitting the road.
Below: You just can't fit tall folks on little bikes as Brad Huttenga found out during the vintage ride. He was stretching his long legs from the start.



Left: Eventual Motocross winner Josh VanBuskirk works to hold off eventual runner-up Brad Huttenga as they clear the tabletop.
Above: Ride host Rich Laughlin blasts around the corner in Motocross action.
Below: Larry Decker leads the pack.



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It took pure strength of these big guys to transfer this rear engine antique from trailer to truck.

Top of The Lake Museum to Stay Warm this Winter with Successful Swap Meet

Text & Photos By Steve Landon

Naubinway, Michigan – September 19, 2020; -- Twenty-Twenty has been far from perfect, especially for the snowmobiling community whose season never really took hold. Exceptionally mild weather both day and night throughout the season mixed with occasional rain made for sparse snow and few days for racing or trail riding. The word cancellation appeared regularly in the media as events pulled the plug. What could possibly happen next? Well COVID -19, a virus that would wipe out all

the summer sled shows until September when brave souls from the Top of the Lake Snowmobile Museum came together to host their annual snowmobile swap meet.

A preseason tradition, the museum swap meet has been held on the third weekend of September since it opened way back in 2007. Money earned from the event that includes a raffle, drawings, discounted clothing and souvenir sales, as well as an auction for donated sleds and other items goes to heating the building for what snowmobilers hope will be a long, long snowy winter.

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www.ohsconline.com Pink Panther photo by Grange B



Since 1967



Sleds were not the only items sold at the swap, all recreational vehicles as well as new and used, parts, helmets, trailers, memorabilia, even boats are welcome. The added variety plus having the meet early in the fall season helps draw late season vacationers who might otherwise pass by.

"We love seeing the familiar faces come up every year, but we're always happy to see some new ones. We had quite a few visiting the swap and the museum for the first time today.

We had several items donated to the museum as fundraising items in the swap meet. It's a bonus when so many other people bring their own valuables to sell too! If we have left overs, Ted Postula our auctioneer sells them.

We had really good weather, and a nice variety of swappers with plenty to offer. When it was all said and done we were happy to report with the funds raised we'll be warm and cozy this winter" – said museum office manager Marilyn Vallier.

As with most swaps shoppers began arriving just past sunrise. With a hot cup of coffee in hand bargain hunters scurried about checking out sale items and sleds as fast as vendors could unload their vehicles. Swaps and shows being almost nonexistent this year, people were chomping at the bit to get outside and track down a long needed part to complete a project, buy a dependable rider for winter or just meet up fellow hobbyist in the flesh instead of on the phone or over the computer. Surprisingly a good number of swappers and buyers made the trek from the far reaches of the southern Lower Peninsula and the Western U.P.

For one Roamer/ Raider collector his long quest for a rare belt for his 1971 Roamer LVI twin track finally came to an end

far away from home. After searching big swaps, little ones and on-line, fellow collector Mike Allen of Farwell, Mich., was looking over a trailer full of new old stock (N.O.S) Durkee / Atwood Raw Flex Snowmobile Belt's when he noticed LVI Roamer on a list for a particular belt. Not wasting any time Allen quickly informed his friend to dig out his wallet, his quest was over the belt had been found. It's truly amazing how one can search the globe looking for that one key part only to find it in the last place one would expect – on a trailer at a little swap meet in Michigan's U.P. Big surprises really do come in small towns at little swaps with a little help from your friends.

Snowmobiling is in the blood of Goetzville, Mich., native Ted Postula, in fact Ted and his son's Gordie and Todd have chewed up the ice oval racing on countless tracks including the Soo 500 and World Championship Derby during their careers. An avid vintage snowmobile collector and active member of the Top of The Lake Snowmobile Museum Ted is also a topnotch auctioneer who can work magic with his golden tongue. At this year's swap meet he was back auctioning off some pretty nice and restorable sleds donated to benefit the museum. Working like a finely tuned race engine he was able to squeeze the most out this years bidders for a great cause.

Thanks to a fine turnout and plenty of hard work by volunteers this year's swap meet was a huge success. If you missed it this year make plans now to attend next years swap meet on Saturday September 18, 2021 at the museum.

"On Behalf of the museum board and volunteer staff we would like thank everyone who came and made this a fun, get together. We also wish to offer a special thank you to Mallory's



Their were some great deals on museum clothing that drew in shoppers.



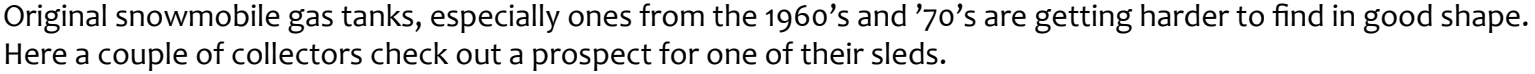
Auctioneer and former snowmobile racer Ted Postula works his magic selling a nice Kawasaki Sno-Jet to benefit the museum.



Potential bidders examine a sleds prior to the auction.

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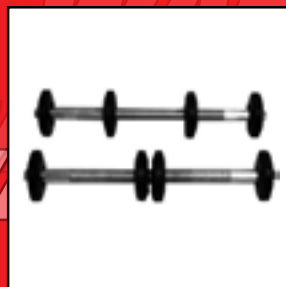




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