

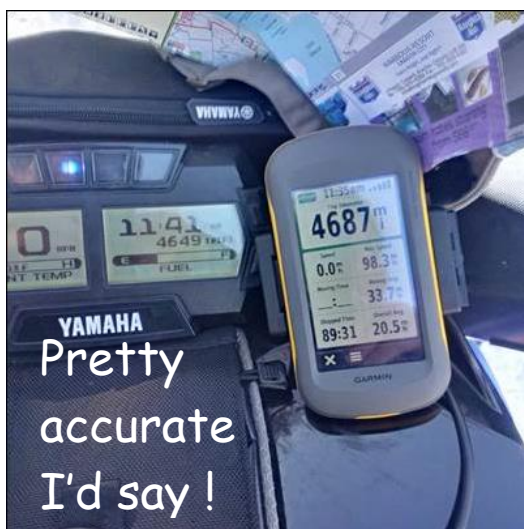


19 Mar 15. Hi all. Here is my final report, a few days late.

Click on this link for my route: <https://spotwalla.com/tripViewer.php?id=c2ed54caeede628e>

Follow me on our FACEBOOK page. <https://www.facebook.com/tekridertekvest>

Took a few days off to de-compress from the trip and get back into the groove. It's taking longer than I thought to recover. Is 60 really the new 40? Feels so weird to drive a car again, after almost 4 weeks on a sled. I think I have Viper lag - akin to 6+ hour jet lag (no turbo 4 me yet) Lol. Kinda reminiscent of getting home after an army deployment when I had to step away from a high-speed, intense overseas' pace (and my band of brothers), and re-learn how to be patient with the civy snail race. It's so great to have sleds today that can handle just about everything we throw at them! But, as I sit here in the hot tub, I'm reminded that snowmobiling is still a contact sport and that you need to dress for the crash and not just the ride (a shameless plug here for my recently-tested TekVest and Arai helmet!). As the frost recedes from my frame I can now feel a pair of strained wrists, jammed thumbs, and see a big purple shiner developing on my left leg, as the one on my right hip turns back to stock. No pain - no gain! The firm tug of a fully-loaded ruck on a long hump, the C130 prop blast after a green light rush, the confident feel of a C8/M4 carbine (all things I miss from my army days) are just fond memories now, but a set of handlebars and a challenging sled ride with keen buds still enables me to cruise on those old memories and create new ones! The freedom, versatility, acceleration and exhilaration of a snowmobile are still un-matched! To rack up 4600 miles on a sled, over 26 days of riding, without mechanical failure, is a pretty spectacular testament to all the new iron - IMHO! It's great to have been able to re-connect with my favorite outdoor sport, to have met so many old friends, and to have made so many new ones along the trail. ☺ **Next year? A tour the eastern side of CANUSA? ON,PQ,NB,PEI,NS,ME,NH,VT,NY,PA?**

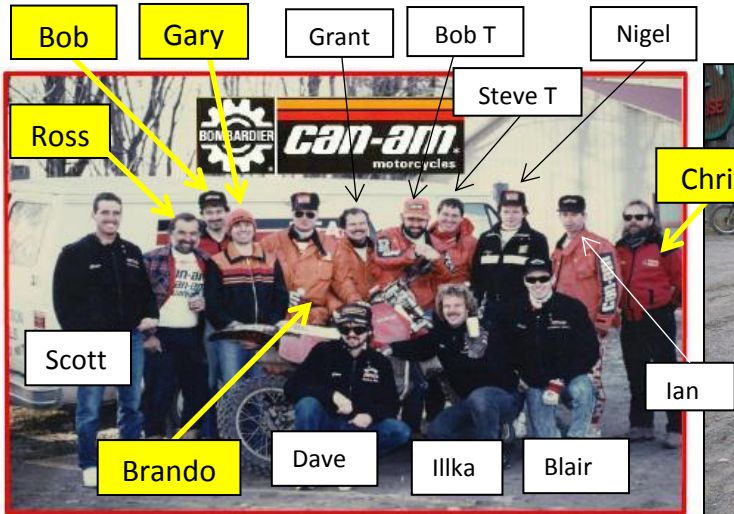


Rode my '81 Everest LC around for a bit over the weekend and am reminded of just how far sleds have come along in the last 50 years. After my early years riding borrowed or rented sleds, including a: 68 Oly, 70 Sno Hawk, 71 Rupp Sport, and a 72 Ski Whiz, my first "real" trail sled was a 1972 Ski Doo 340 TNT fan cooled that I had bought used in the fall of 1973. I managed to break the 1000-mile mark that season on Oxtongue Lake in late March. Went through numerous spark plugs, belts, 2 windshields, a pair of skis, and a track - not an unusual tally for the times - and a set of pistons after I had learned from Race & Rally how a Tillotson high-speed screw could be adjusted for more MPH - while riding the sled! Back in the late 70's/early 80's a high-mile year for me was maybe 2000 miles. I rode a John Deere and several Scorpions, when I worked there 77/79. I then switched to Moto Ski, when I started working for them in 1979.

As the sleds, snow conditions and trails continued to improve in the mid to late 80's it was a race to see who would be the first of my friends to rack up the magical 10,000 clicks (6200 miles). It was pretty tough to do that in Ontario, where trail connectivity was in its infancy, so we often went to the UP or Quebec where 300-mile days were much easier to achieve. Mark Lester generally was the first, Ross Lennox was next, and I was generally the last to get there, but I was always way ahead of Chris Ellis who was always changing out tunes, or parts, or running to Daytona. Chris is the first sledder I ever knew who rode with tunes (now I can't ride without). I recall him wiping out in front of me one year in PQ. Although he still denies it, I'm certain he was trying to install a new cassette on the fly (guess that's why they called it a Walkman). My many sled buds over the years, including; Wes Lytle, Steve Laakso, Bob Kendell, Gary Klassen, Tim Chambers, Brian Davis, Brian Hadley, Doug Post, Eric Doetsch, and the infamous "Haliburton Wrecking Crew", were always up there in the mileage contest as well. Our local dealers, Paul Prentice and Larry Everitt, were always scratching their heads over our Monday morning parts lists before putting in a call to Mr. "Good Will" (Maurice Marcotte) at Bombo to plead for more warranty. I recall needing 5 tracks on my 88 Plus, just to roll 11,000 clicks that season. Who still remembers the era when Camoplast was NOT the preferred choice? Tx again to Brian, Ian, John, Stretch and Ted for being such good wrenches and keeping my "demos" rolling (yes, I had/needed a big team back in the day).

Many tx to my Moto Ski dealers, including those who really went out of their way to support the sport; George & Vera, the Vincent family and the Hadley clan - all dealers who are still in business. Special thanks to Paul Prentice for race support over the years. Can't forget Dave and Marilyn who have still not used the Formula MX tombstones they had specially engraved 30 years ago. For many years I was a no-compete in the annual distance contest while running the Doo race program, overseas with the army, or helping sons Jeff and Kevin turn laps at the CSRA SX races. There was no internet, email, text or cell phones/coverage back then so it was just a good old telephone call, often just a VM, to post the mileage report. "How many miles u got???" Oh yah man, BTW, how are you doing otherwise ?" LOL. It seems that I still have a chance to join the 10K club this season. My only regret on this trip was that Ross was not able to ride with

me. Still the best rider I have ever turned tracks with. For some reason he now prefers his motorhome, Harley and southern climes (whimp). While we're on memory lane, I would be remiss in not mentioning all the Can Am experiences back when they had 2 wheels. Many of the guys in this pic are still riding bikes and several are hard-core sledders like me. In fact Bob and Gary are just riding their long tracks through Labrador this week. That's sons Jeff & Kevin w/me.



**The Last Ride**  
Team Can Am - Ontario Terra Nova 1987



As this was really just a business trip I can now mention that I had several different products under test and look forward to re-launching our Power Touring Gear next fall. Stayed tuned for deets!



# Brando's (RE-WORKED) Mega Sonic Memory Tour

**WINNIPEG**

3500 miles by trails – 20 days on the trail

- Depart Minden 07FEB15
- Arrive TRF 15Feb15 (8 trail days)
- Winnipeg Loop (2 day trip)
- Arrive Minden 22 Feb 15 (8 trail days)



It has been 30 years since the suits cancelled Moto Ski ☹️.  
Gone but not forgotten!



**MINDEN**



➡️ **PHASE 1 = 10 DAYS**  
(the approach)  
1500 miles

**PHASE 2 = 4 DAYS**  
(the RACE)  
600 miles

➡️ **PHASE 3 = 8 DAYS**  
(the return)  
1400 miles

31Jan15; 18 kms. Minden, ON.

Hi all. Helm loaded up my SPOT and GARMIN software and Fast Eddy programmed the SPOTWALLA coverage on Friday night. The next day I zipped up my new jacket and left the plant. I only made it 18 kms up the Rail Trail when I decided to pull into the hospital. An epidermal cyst had popped up on back of neck late Friday and almost doubled in size in 24 hrs. It was a small bump for a month or so. Thought it was just a big zit. No issues riding so far this year. It was pretty tender when I put on the helmet Saturday. Thought I should go to emerg to be sure. Spent 3 hours there until the doc lanced it. He suggested it was better to have happened here than across the border due to a risk of infection, especially with helmet pressure. Imagine a big zit the size of quarter. The crater now has a wick in it. I'm a Tekcandle. My ride is off for at least 7 days while it heals. On antibiotics now. Better to have happened at home than part way through my trip. The cyst still in there. 3 month wait to see if it dissolves, or they need to dig it out. I'll have to write this one up as a TKO. Rats. Trip delayed one week. Good thing they cancelled the I-500. No pressure to get to MN now. Back to work now. TTYL



**Day 1: Rode 175 miles to Crane Lake, ON - 07 Feb 15.** Neck good. Finally got underway after a week's delay. Sled great. Rode 5 hrs. Ran Minden/Gravenhurst/Bala/Mactier to Crane Lake to meet Chris Reid. Lots of people out. Groomers active but lots of rock still showing. Sticky snow. Warm day. Clubs doing the best they can with so little snow. Amazing snow pocket around Crane Lake/Mactier where I was well-hosted by Chris Reid (Yamaha Sr Project whiz) and wife Karin. Got to do some après-ride visitation via the Crane Lake Taxi.



**Day 2: Rode 201 miles to Sudbury, ON.** 8 hrs riding with 2 hrs in freezing rain. Tight stuff. A real workout to keep some mo on these trails. Snow is marginal but groomed as good as it can be. Check out the garage sale I came across - grey light. Could have been me. Ran Crane Lake/Parry Sound Pte Au Baril/Sudbury. Finally got to ride over those spectacular suspension bridges across the French and Magnetawan Rivers. Stayed at Rocky's on Wanipitei Lake.

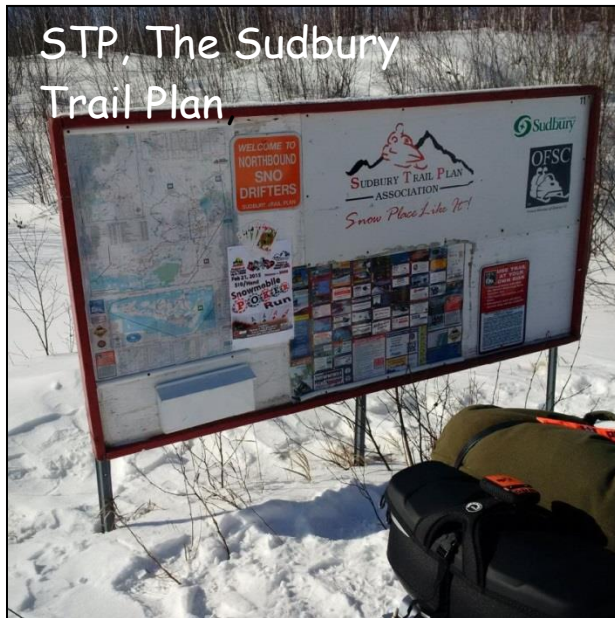


French River, ON.



Gray light "garage sale" in the soft snow.

**Day 3: Road 175 miles to Espanola, ON.** Great to ride the STP (Sudbury Trail Plan) again. They were a model system back in the late 80s and those efforts are still paying off with wide sweeping trails and good signage. Just enough snow to ride now. Groomers are out everywhere and doing the best they can with what they have. I'm pleasantly surprised at how many riders are out on the trails. Rode with Mike and Ian who are on the new Polaris Axys 800. Tried to get to Blind River but got all turned around in Massey (groomed trails but no signs) OFSC mapping on GPS not accurate here. Ended up looping back to Espanola for the night. Stayed at the Pinewood Motel. A great sled stop. Snow improving.



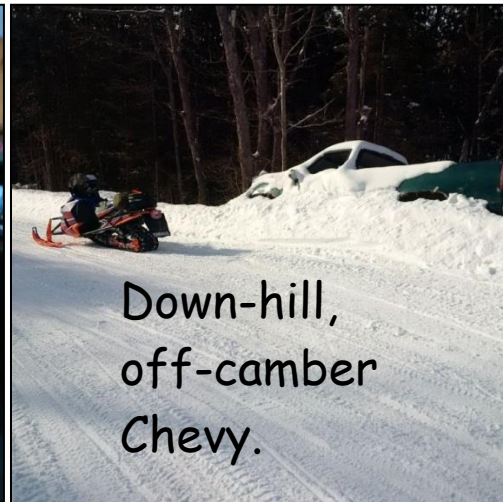
STP, The Sudbury Trail Plan



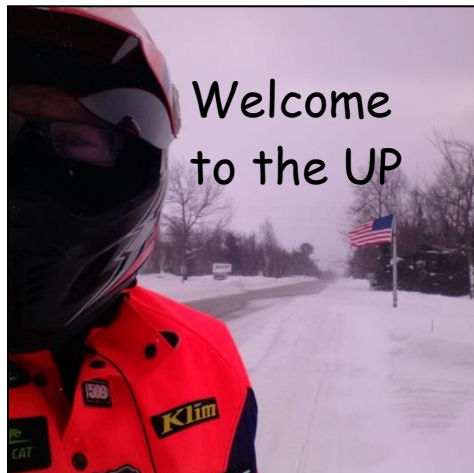
SPOT makes sense

**Day 4: Rode 175 miles to Sault Ste Marie, ON.** Road 6 hours from Espanola to the Soo. Hooked up with a pair of 1200 Doos for part of the trip. Decided to save some trail time and

boondock along the Lake Huron shoreline for 120 miles. All staked to Killarney and Manitoulin and Spanish now. West of Spanish not staked. A great change of scenery out on the big water. Lots of interesting ice formations to dodge. Hooked up with Mr. Braaap (Daniel Cedolia) along the way and he guided me to his home in Laird, just outside the Soo. Daniel gave me a custom tour of the great trail system on St Joseph's yesterday and he's riding with me towards Munising today. Many thanks to Daniel Cedolia and family for hosting me. Daniel and I have worked together for more than 20 years. Cheers Brando



**Day 5: Rode 220 miles to Christmas, MI.** Daniel trailered me across as the US snowmobile lake crossing customs office at Drummond Island is now only open on weekends. Started in Soo Michigan on the trail that runs right under the CANUSA bridge. Ran 8 hours on a wide range of high-speed trails with Mike and Ian. Lots more snow here in the UP. Lots of sleds and groomers. Last 50 miles were in snow squalls and partial whiteouts. Turns out the highway was closed for 12 hours. Stayed at the White Pine Lodge in Christmas, MI. A real sled hot spot. Full house with sleds and rigs everywhere. This is a must-stay place if you're in the Munising area. Great photo display of Ivan Hansen, a past Soo 500 winner, who owns White Pine Lodge. Met lots of folks here. My Moto Ski started a lot of conversations. Lots of MS memories out there.



**Day 6: Rode 255 miles to Eagle River, WI.** We left White Pine at noon, once everyone had dug out, and headed to Eagle River Wisconsin, home of the iconic Derby. 7 hours in the saddle. Trails in this part of Wisconsin are very tight & signed much better than Michigan or Ontario.



**Day 7: Rode 75 miles to Minocqua, WI** It was a crisp -5 F here this morning in Eagle River. Trails awesome and lots of sleds. Spotted the Divas Snow Gear rig in St Germaine. Lots of corner carving. Imagine Haliburton trails with no rocks. It was a short ride to Yamaha's R&D facility in Minocqua. I was guided in by Jim Vizanko. Jim manages the team at Minocqua and sets my kind of trail pace. Many tx to Jim, Steve, Patrick and Yoshi for a very fast pit stop and the blue carpet treatment. All they had to do was snug up the track and drive chain. Sled running great. Tomorrow it's off to Wausau and a ride with BRP's PG&A whizz, Paul Prudhomme. Just rolled 1280 miles. Snow still reported as poor in the Duluth/Minnesota area but improving.



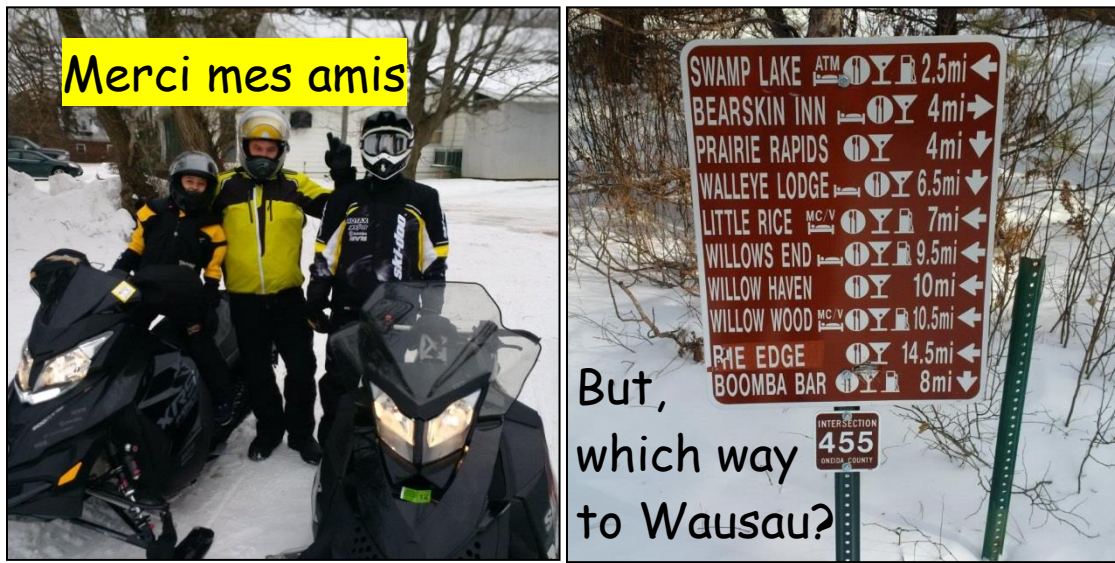


**Day 8: Rode 160 miles to Wausau, WI.** Started in Minocqua with Paul Prudhomme who was driven up in his pickup from Wausau by son Jacob who just got his driving license. Great freedom when our kids get their licenses!! Paul and I rolled on 160 miles of the fastest, tightest running possible finishing in the high-speed rolling farmland surrounding Wausau. What a great ride. We even ran into a vintage riding group out for what they said was a 100-mile ride. I think that was over 4 or 5 weeks, or maybe years, as we spotted them a little while later pulling into a local tavern. They were on a pair of 70s Scorpions, a Massey Chinook and a big Evinrude. Speaking of taverns, there are many to choose from here. Apparently Wisconsin has the highest density of taverns per resident in the USA. Although Paul and I have known each other for 30 years this was our first ride together. I first met him when he was Gary Potyok's side kick. Gary was the king of acceleration back then and took over my DSM position when I moved over to Valcourt R&D in 1990. I remember the many discussions I had to have with D'Arcy (best boss ever) to support Gary's appointment. I thought riding experience and snowmobile DNA should count for something. Gary has been there now for 25 years. Nice. Can't wait for the next ride with Paul. Might even be Nutcracker 15 now that I know I can keep up to him. Nice to see PAC products designed by people who use them. Paul's DNA is all over everything that BRP sells! I'm running a LINQ rear bag and it's the best piece of luggage I have ever seen, and I have shredded many others over 40 years of touring. The Ski Doo tunnels are 17" wide at the back and the Yamacats are 15" so an adaptor plate is needed to mount LINQ. I installed a sano setup from these folks; [http://www.upnorthtechnologies.com/pdf/ling\\_adapter\\_bracket\\_kit.pdf](http://www.upnorthtechnologies.com/pdf/ling_adapter_bracket_kit.pdf) , Paul's garages are full of interesting projects including a collection of iconic RVs, but he could use a 1975 245 RV (my 1<sup>st</sup> new sled) and a 1975 Moto Ski 340 Sonic (I want one to). Check out the centre piece in his basement den!!!



Check out the picture of Phil Mikelson's 800 triple Cam Am dragster on display at BRP's office in Wausau. RIP Phil - "The Professor" <http://www.snowgoer.com/snowmobile-news/remembering-phil-mickelson-the-snow-goer-tech-professor/1002/>

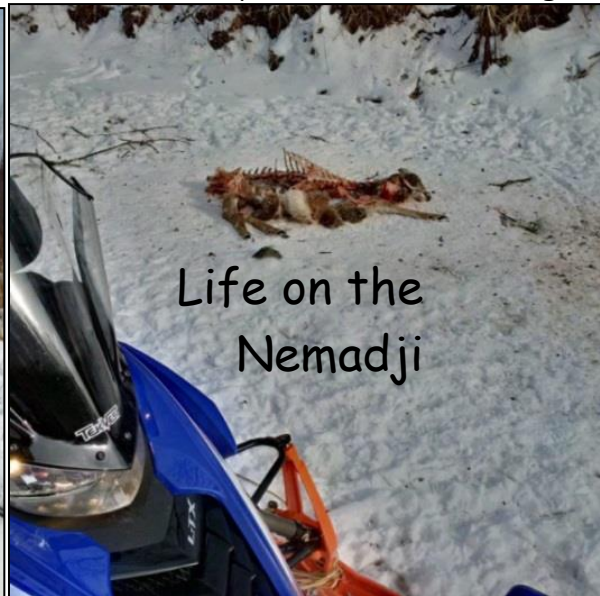
**Day 9: Rode 160 miles to Ladysmith, WI.** Paul, Jacob and Jessica guided me 30 miles outside of the well-marked Wausau club trail network where I said good bye and headed NW for a 160 mile day with Mike and Ian. Many tx to Paul, son Jacob and Dr. Jessica for hosting me and riding together. Less than 6" of snow on the sides of trail and lots of brown ribbons and icy turns in the woods and long runs of cornfields to navigate. Trail signage evaporated in NW WI and I had to do a bunch of dead reckoning with my GPS. Not much gas up here so grab it while you can. Less than 2 inches of snow. Good thing they have no rocks to groom over. They can be in business with 6" of snow, unlike my hometown trails that need 2 feet just to cover the rocks.



**Day 10: Rode 170 miles to Solon Springs, WI.** Finally spotted a Moto Ski alongside the trail and stopped for a pic. It's a 1974 Capri. It was likely one of the last units made in LaPocatière, Québec before the whole line transferred to Valcourt; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moto-Ski> . Passed through Hayward WI and decided to try and get closer to Superior but the snow lessened and I began hitting big 2" rocks and brown spots on the rail trail. The sparks were visible in the fading light so I headed back to in Solon Springs WI for the night. Am running same Stud Boy Shaper bars, drive belt and the new trick Yamaha sliders - all in excellent shape. The Montana says I've been in the saddle for 55:37 hrs, averaged 32.2 MPH over 1791 miles. Sled awesome. Love the cockpit and riding position. Perfect ergos for my size. Sweet motor that pulls hard out of the corners and is always there when you need it - although another 40 hp would enable me to hit triple digits more easily, lol. Seat a little on the soft side for aggressive riding but then it hosts a 60-year old bum. The Yamacat driveline is incredibly smooth and quiet, and even more noticeable when you swap out with other sleds. Oh yah, and no eau de' 2 stroke. Riding through Wisconsin took longer than I thought. Lots of tight trails to get through. A 100 mile ride there is like 150 in my area and 250 in Quebec but I really like to carve corners so WI is my fav so far.



**Day 11: Rode 220 miles to Eveleth, MN.** Left Solon Springs, WI with maybe 2" of old snow on the ground and sub-zero temps. This is the brown spot of the ride as predicted by my trail watchers. My goal was to cross into Minnesota south of Duluth/Superior and hook up with Chuck in Carlton, MN. GPS said 35 miles as the Crow flies. By the time we pulled into Carlton the speedo said I had covered 120 miles. Trail markers had all but disappeared, some trail sections were closed, and there were few zero destination markers. Good thing I had the GPS as I often had to do wide circles to catch trail connections while trying to get a little lube in the odd snow-filled ditch. We did a lot of sketchy ditch running, between long sections of "snirt" and "snavel", where I bent a carbide after hitting a buried rock. Often we just boon docked across farm fields in search of snow. Turns out exposed corn stalks are better running than I thought. Just after a particularly nasty "snavel" section, which was curving away from my track, I spotted an unused road allowance that was snow-covered and running in the right direction. No tracks going in and no dead-end sign posted so off we went. Seemed too good to be true - a snoasis. There must have been a foot of snow sheltered between the trees. Went for maybe half a mile at which point the trail narrowed, dropped into a steep gully, and popped out onto a frozen river bed where I spotted a solo external sprocket drive track mark (probably a trapper) that was largely dusted over and heading west, and we said " what the hay" let's see where it goes.



The river was maybe 100 feet wide and ran through a canyon with near-vertical 300 foot high banks. Ran this twisty river course for what seemed like 10 miles. Turns out it was the Nemadji River. Had to skip a few small sections of open water along the way. Super twisty. Lots of switchbacks. Had to run bank to bank to get traction as there was maybe an inch of snow at best and patches of glare ice and open spots - I was running without studs (my choice - Ice Attak next year). Came across a deer that had been run down by wolves and picked clean. Shortly afterwards I lost traction on a glare ice patch while trying to get around yet another switch back and slid into the opposite bank. Sled high-sided and threw me off. Bruised hip, jammed thumb, pulled neck muscles, hit to the back and, it turned off my tunes. Took a while for us to right the sled which lay perfectly balanced on its side on glare ice, idling away. Sorry, no pics of that one. Carried on for a few miles until we finally spotted an exit trail. Picked up the pace and finally crawled through a very brown Duluth. Once north of Hermantown the snow and trail signage improved dramatically. It was dark by this time and the temperature had dropped well below zero F. I had been working so hard all day that the condensation from within my helmet had formed an ice bridge that froze to my jacket (this was to happen several times on the trip). When we stopped for dinner at Fish Lake I had to chip the ice away to get my helmet off. We carried on north to Eveleth where we were met by King Karpik; [Gerard Karpik](#) and guided to his house where wife Brigitte and brother Dave were waiting with drinks in hand sometime after 9PM. It was a 9-hour day and 220 miles of wild riding conditions and probably as challenging as one of my tougher Harricana days; [The Harricana](#). It was quite the liquefied trip down memory lane as we went back over more than 35 years of shared experiences. Both of these guys, along with brother Randy, were giant killers in their day and still motoring. I first met "Mouse" back in 1979 when we both worked for Scorpion snowmobiles. I was the Ontario District Sales Manager and Dave was Brad Huling's master wrench when the Scorpion Squadron dominated the oval scene that year; [Scorpion Snowmobiles](#) I first met Gerard and Randy back in 1981 when GK was Ski Doo's XC factory race champ and Randy was wrenching. We all enjoyed working with Geoff Burgess who was then a key Can Am engineer guru and soon to be father of the TRA clutch. GK and I kept in touch over the years and we worked closely together again when I left the sales department at Ski Doo in 1990 to join a Valcourt marketing project focussed on getting Ski Doo back into XC racing. Gerard provided huge support to my efforts when I was the Ski Doo XC race manager 92/95. Gerard talent-spotted Todd Wolff and mechanic Bob Coffin who were instrumental in turning Ski Doo's "Mustard Tubs" into "Mustard Missiles" in 2 very short years. GK also discovered the Flying Finn, Toni Haikonen. Toni totally changed SX back in 93. Exciting times for Ski Doo!



No turning back  
now



Lots of traction  
.lol

**Day 12: Rode 100 miles to Orr, MN.** Visited FAST HQ in Eveleth with Gerard and spent some time looking at their current projects, including a new Blade that Dave was building, complete with a really sano ETC 800 install. Popped off my bent runner and Gerard straightened it in a press. These are the only tools used so far this trip. It was great to see Trish again. She's been with FAST for more than 20 years now. Still lots of brain power with these guys. [The Blade Snowmobile](#) After lunch Gerard led me out of town at a very nice clip and let me ride a Doo with the super plush Air Wave rear skid - nice; [Team Fast](#) We rode for 40 miles or so before I carried on to Orr, MN - a 100 mile frosty ride and good hangover cure.

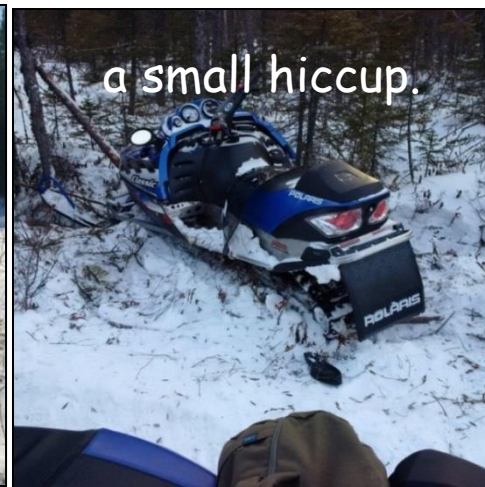


They still look  
pretty sweet!

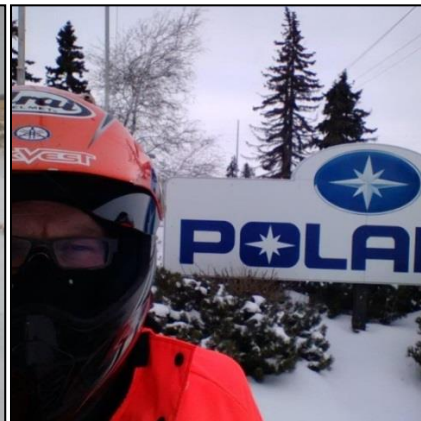


King Karpik

**Day 13. Rode 303 miles to Roseau, MN.** Sled took a few seconds more than normal to touch off today as it was probably -20F and my sled was parked in a very windy spot. Probably the most varied trail day yet as I rode the Arrowhead State Trail system into I Falls and then the Border Trail system to Roseau. Great riding. Passed a treed Polaris recently abandoned. Searched around for the driver in the bush but spotted no one. Probably hurt and had to double out to the hospital with someone else. Sure glad I don't solo ride much. Nice to have Mike & Ian along. Stopped for a rare event - a full lunch, in International Falls. Could see the Canadian Flag on the water tower across the river in Fort Frances. Popped out on Lake Of the Woods briefly in Baudette MN on the way to Warroad. They groom the trail for miles up the river and into the lake. I forgot how big this lake is. Pulled into Roseau at 7 pm. It was 7 hours and a 303 mile day.



**Day 14: Rode 60 miles to Thief River Falls, MN.** Had a great meeting with Marty S, Kavan L and Cody T, snowmobile development riders at Polaris. It was great to re-connect with them. Kavan was one of our first trail TekVest riders 18 years ago when I first worked with Brian W. They put on mega miles. It was great to walk into a business meeting with full snowmobile gear on. I like that at a lot. After the meeting it was off to TRF, a nice 3 hour blast over on largely snow filled ditch trails. I forgot how fast you can run and how quickly you can get out of shape on a driveway approach at 80 mph. Kinda relieved that the I-500 race was cancelled actually. Only rideable snow is that which is trapped in the ditches. Trails running above grade have been swept clean of snow. Why did Mother Nature waste so much snow on Boston???????????



Pulled into the Arctic Cat lobby and met son Jeff who is a snowmobile calibration engineer there. Said hello to Tim Benedict who has managed the Arctic Wear collection for many years. Missed my point of contact Keith Johnson who was out of the office. Rode my Viper over to Jeff's and Kait's house and parked it in their garage. Jeff organised a "little " reception at the Black Cat last night and I met about a dozen of his engineering buds. A great bunch of "young lads" who are very passionate about riding and working on sleds and ATVs - and that Wildcat weapon. Sounds too fast for me. All of them seem to have lots of power sports DNA. They ride dirt bikes and have enough stand-up Jet Skis and Super Jets to start a race circuit, and, none of them are stock. It was great listening to their mod plans. The drive line engineer Devin showed me a pic of his wild GSX-R project bike that he has turned into a dual sport. 2001 Suzuki GSX-R 750, Continental TKC 80 tires, Pro-taper handlebars, chopped Yoshimura exhaust, stunt crash bars and a 21 inch front wheel. **Can you imagine!!**



**Day 15. No miles today. Thief River Falls, Minnesota.** Slept in until 1 pm. No riding today. First day off in 2 weeks. GPS says 2532 miles. (Sled odo reads 2502) 77:07 hours moving time and 32.8 MPH average. 5 straight days of sub-zero riding provided a great opportunity to evaluate cold weather clothing performance with the wind chill factor taking riding temps down to -40 F. The snow cover continues to be marginal but the worst (as predicted) was within a 50 mile radius of Duluth where it looked more like an October dusting. Most of the trails I scratched through around Duluth didn't have enough snow for even one groom yet. What a winter snow low after last year's record totals. After 14 days in the saddle I have only seen a grand total of 6" of fresh snow, and that was principally in the UP with a small dusting in Minocqua and up on the border trails near International Falls. My Yamaha Viper running like a top! Body still a little sore in spots due to a minor get-off on day 11 when my sled spun out on a section of an icy river run and spit me off. Doesn't hurt the boss to do a little impact testing, I guess. Ever since they cancelled the I-500 race I haven't really had to push the daily trail time up to 10 hrs to make my original timings so I've slacked off a bit and manage 6 to 8 hrs of saddle time per day. It has been hovering around zero F here with lots of wind gusts. I've made use of all my heated products including seat, grips and TekVest.



Had a great rest with Jeff and Kait. Went riding with Jeff and fellow engineer friend Taylor for a high-speed handling test up the twisty Thief River on Sunday. Again, I am very impressed with this young batch of engineers. Our future is in good hands. I can only hope the other OEMs have equally enthusiastic peeps. Rode another one of those fun 600s and the Arctic Cat 7000 which is the equivalent of my Viper, but with Cat clutching. The Cat seems to pull harder but stayed with my Viper on a twisty river. I am still very impressed how flat this chassis rides. Love the foot holds. Really like the FOX FLOAT ride. I was sceptical after all those years on coil over shock setups but the FOX FLOAT ride is very plush and predictable over the stutters and gets me through the big junkers with less manhandling and energy required to keep her straight. No spring bounce. For sure this sled requires less effort to ride all day - and that's important for this 60-year old bum. After a fuel top up and goodbyes I decided to start my return trip. I was tempted to fly back when I saw this discount airliner on the trail. LOL. Getting my second wind for riding and looking forward to more miles. Hoping the trip home will take less time with a more direct route and some longer riding days. Since my last report I have seen maybe 2" of fresh snow tops. That brings my observed fresh fall snow total on this trip to less than 10" over 20 days. I see a dusting on the sleds this morning out my window while the TV shows 12" in North Carolina of all places. What a weird winter. I still see lots of grooming going on even though they're working with old snow.

**Day 16; Road 60 miles to Roseau, MN.** Left TRF for a quick 2-hour, 60-mile blast back to Roseau. Along the way I saw a de-winged jet along the side of the road tempting me to fly home. Trails were groomed immaculate despite the lack of snow. Actually managed to get stuck in a ditch while trying to side hill in wind gusts. I zigged when I should have zagged and was blown down the embankment into 3 feet of snow. Had to dig and cut my way out. Good weight training. Took me 30 minutes to get rolling. One guy actually slowed down in his truck, waved, and kept going. I guess he doesn't like Moto Skis?? Stayed at yet another Americinn, this one in Roseau. Great accommodation value for sledders.



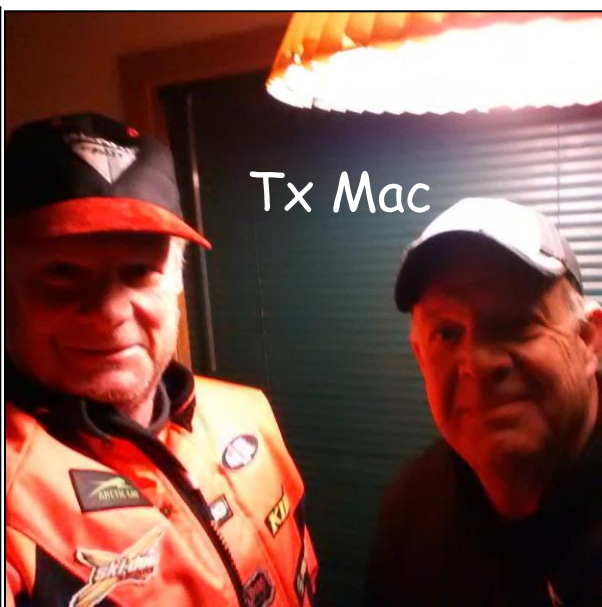


**Day 17: Rode 275 miles to Orr, MN.** Left Roseau in yet another -20F start. Rode the fully-staked trail out on Lake of The Woods from Warroad all the way to Baudette. A great change of scenery. A whole city of ice huts out there, even a bar and grill! There are a lot of custom 20 foot V-nose enclosed snowmobile trailers converted into fancy sleeping rigs with hydraulic suspensions to lower them to the ice. Very cool. Ice cats pull them from their shoreline parking lots out to their holes - a taxi service. Apparently they have 5 feet of ice. Got a 2<sup>nd</sup> run over all the fabulous border trails and down the Arrowhead State trail. Just plain awesome riding. Easy to roll the miles. Mike and Ian loved it. Reversed my route all the way back to Orr where I stayed at Oveson's Resort - a primo sled spot. A 275 mile day. Mouse had offered me a place to stay in Virginia that night but that was another 50 miles and a certain hangover - his hospitality sneaks up on you. (Tx Dave)



**Day 18: Rode 202 miles to Brule, WI.** Left Orr on yet another frosty morning and headed towards Duluth. My goal was to get back into Wisconsin and the trail conditions had not improved since my day 11 adventure. Chuck was still feeding me the intel and had his trailer on standby to haul me across the bridge into Superior. I was told the bay was frozen but it would be tricky, if not impossible, to get a cross as the coast guard ice breakers might be in use. At Virginia I decided to head east over to the North Shore Trail. The local club(s) do a great job here. Awesome arrowing and mapping. Due in part to many volunteers over the years, and one famous one in particular, Loren Filter, whom I remember from the ICCSF days; <http://snowmobilehalloffame.com/filter.htm> Visited a rest-stop where he is commemorated. Left that immaculate system and entered probably the nastiest trail section yet. 50 miles of pounding down what I will nominate for the worst trail of the trip. Way more snow than most clubs have to work with but no signs of grooming in the past week. Not sure of the reasons, but

I'm sure there are some, but the award still goes to: **The Pequaywan Lake trail # 73**. This trail is OEM R&D-grade, bump-test friendly. I sure appreciated the FOX Floaters. I finally made it to one of my special trip goals, the North Shore Trail. This famous trail system runs north of Duluth all the way up to the Canadian border, along the edge of Lake Superior. I ran the I-500 down this trail when it was the Thunder Bay to White Bear Lake XC format. Lots of memories here and more so now that it has been rededicated to an industry friend CJ Ramstad. "Mr. Snowmobiling" left us suddenly back in 2007 when he was killed in a car crash along with his son. CJ was one of the foremost snowmobile writers of his time and a real pioneer of the sport. His photo library is probably second to none. I finally got to meet him in 1986 when my good buddy Mark Lester hosted CJ in our home town of Minden, Ontario. CJ had been invited there to write about our club, The Haliburton County Snowmobile Association (HCSA) We had just re-energised our trail system and rolled out the red carpet for CJ who wrote us up favorably. It was great to meet the legend and later to work with him more closely when I was the Doo race manager. RIP CJ. <http://supertraxmag.com/article.asp?nid=822> I was privileged to be able to make it to start of the CJ's trail and get a picture. I then tried to take a local feeder trail down to Lake Superior to see if there was any chance of crossing but was confronted with a nasty uphill all iced over. Even a fully-studded sled would not have been able to make it up this puppy. I returned to CJ's parking lot and there I met Greg "Mac" McDonald who was just loading up an immaculate 9000 after a local day ride.



Talk about 6 degrees of separation. It took about 60 seconds to detect that this guy had lots of snowmobile DNA and that we had lots of mutual acquaintances in the industry and race world. Although we had never met, Greg remembers me at the 94 Duluth race talking to Terry Mattson (another stellar industry guy) when I was the Doo race guy and he was running the EMS program. Greg has been very involved with the local club scene and growing the sport. Turns out we both have sons working as engineers at Cat, both of us raced the I-500 together and are the same age. What a great chance meeting. Greg nixed any thought of a lake crossing and offered me a lift across the bridge. The Duluth Bay was quite nasty looking and I'm glad I didn't have to

tackle that one. We talked non-stop all the way to Brule. We had a long dinner and chatted at length about the industry and racing. We both agreed that the sled engineering future is in good hands (no bias here. LOL) and they would be making sleds that we old guys can still enjoy for many years. Nothing like the freedom of a sled! Many thanks Mac for the lift and chat!! Stayed in Brule that night. A 200-mile day plus the trailer lift that saved me a 100+ mile detour south by sled. Tx again to Chuck for being on standby to trailer me across.

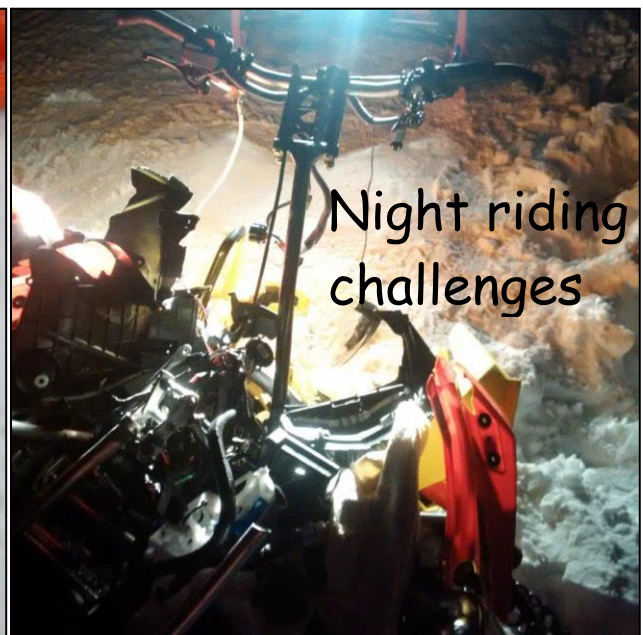
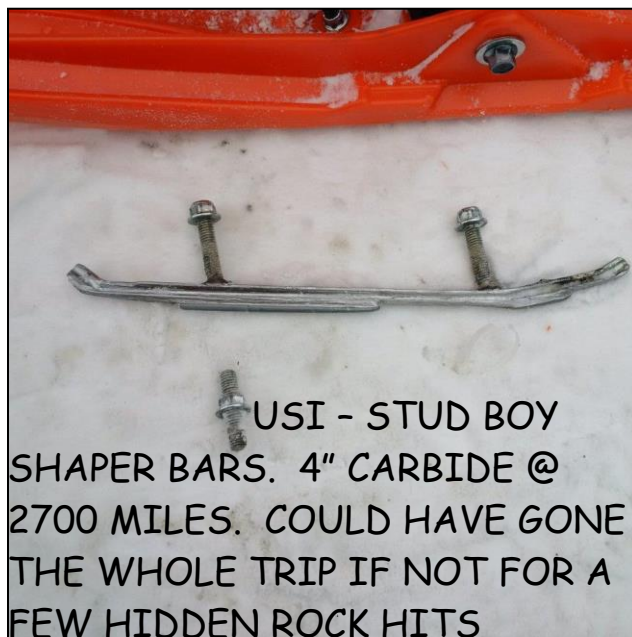
**Day 19: Rode 265 miles to Ironwood, MI.** Left Brule on yet another -20F morning and headed east on the rail bed at 80+ MPH. Very fast. Kevin's intel suggested I head south before Ashland and pick up trail # 8 and head east from there to Michigan. But trail signage is so inconsistent that it's often frustrating. I got to a point south of Ashland WI where the trail was closed with logs deliberately felled across it. That was 30 miles in off the main trail and no trail closure notice was posted until that precise spot. Not enough snow to boondock my way out of it via back roads so I had to double back to Iron River and start off again. Most clubs could use a real tune-up. They need more over-watch and inter-club coordination. Signs should be verified by non-residents. I followed 8E for much of the day and it goes by at least 3 other older numbers which are often placed individually, never all 3 at once of course. Did a lot of loop backs. Fortunately the Red Pine GPS mapping is the most accurate (tx Kevin) and I was able to always get back on track. The local maps often fold out to a very awkward bath towel size spread and cover maybe 50 miles of needless detail. Most of them are so thin (cheap) they rip the 1<sup>st</sup> time you open them and catch a gust of wind or try a fold. On a typical day one could need 5 or 6 maps to go 200 miles - and often they contradict one another with trail numbering and of course they all use different trail graphics. I still appreciate a good old-fashioned map, but keep it small, high quality and make sure it covers the 100/200 mile view. This would of course require clubs to work together and that's where pride and emotion can get in the way. The new sleds we ride today have come a long way but the trail marking system has not kept up. Volunteers have been the backbone of our sport for 50 years but their efforts rise and fall as life gets in the way and leaders come and go. It always seems to be a half-dozen club members do all the work. I get that - been there! I hate to be critical of volunteers, as I have been one for years, but we all could use some fresh blood or some full-time over-watch to improve the touring experience. In Ontario we have full-time people working for us but they seem to spend more time on media messaging and fancy TV adverts than monitoring trail signage and uniformity across club territory. Ontario trails (my home province) are still better marked and mapped than the majority, but still need more uniformity. Our permits cost just over \$200. OBTW trail permits in MN, WI and MI are all under \$40. Quebec trails still set the gold standard for marking and a permit there is just over \$300. Disclosure: I haven't been to BC, AB, NY, VT, NH, NB, MB, NS, NF, PEI or SK trails recently so I can't offer an opinion on their efforts. Opinions are like assholes - everyone has one - so I apologise if I offended anyone. Today's sleds and riders want to travel further afield each day, and we in the biz should want to encourage that. We need to see more destination markers, 3 hours out, with accurate mileages. More food, fuel and accommodation markers, with real distances. (except WI

of course where the tavern owners already do a great job) So far the best trail markings have been in the Eagle River to Wausau corridor, the Duluth/Eveleth/International Falls/Warroad corridor and most of the western UP. That's as much venting as I want to do as I am loathe to criticize hard-working volunteers. Without their past efforts I wouldn't have been able to undertake this trip! Simply amazing that we snowmobilers can enjoy such trans-state/provincial riding experiences. All we need is just a little tune-up. Maybe the OEMs could play a role here as BRP did back in the 70s with their Sno Plan. We had a great ride through some fab WI trails, carving lots of corners. Along the way I gassed up at Clam Lake and spotted a mint 68 "Oly". I immediately thought of my long-time bud Bill Fullerton and snapped a pic. More on Bill in a later update, as he deserves special mention. 265 miles later we finally made it to the famous old oval race town of Ironwood, Michigan. Stayed at yet another Americinn right on the trail.



**Day 20: Rode 230 miles to Marquette, MI.** Headed east again on fab Michigan trails. The UP snow cover is triple or more of anything else I have seen yet. The transition from brown WI trails to winter white is astounding. Super wide trails and mega speeds possible. Mike was leading for a while and missed a turn and the next thing you know we're in Houghton, an hour north of where we needed to be. That's the last time I let him lead. As soon as we headed too far north I was pinged by 3 buds who were following us on SPOT and noticed the error. I haven't had over-watch like this since Afghanistan. Tx guys. Houghton of course is the gate way to one of the best snowmobile destinations in the world - Copper Harbour; <http://www.copperharbor.org/> . Every sledder needs to get there once in their life time!! The snow is incredible. I almost headed up there but that would have put me another day behind. I took over the nav and we ended up heading south and east. Recognised the hydro line section east of Ishpeming from my 1<sup>st</sup> ride here back in 1986. Just as technical as then and I just missed the same rock that Gary K hit back then. Running in dusk conditions by now. Came across a thoroughly destroyed 2015 800 XRS towed out to the nearest road. The crash site was a mile or so later. It seemed to be just after a road crossing on a flat, straight section of trail that narrowed into a treeline. I'll speculate that the sled was accelerating hard, possibly in the snow

dust thrown up by sleds in front. The sled had center-punched a tree. Hope the rider is OK but I suspect the worst. Pulled into Marquette at 8PM local and called it a day. Stayed at the same Holiday Inn that Mark Lester suggested we use 30 years ago. Still very sled-friendly and packed with 100-plus riders. Had hoped to get to Munising today. I will have to lead the gang from here on in. Can't be too hard on volunteers. LOL. Sled odo reads 3670 miles and the GPS is 3743. Sled running great. Only had the tools out once to replace the previously bent Shaper Bar that finally gave up the ghost and ground away on a road running section north of Roseau. All that was left was a stud and nut. At 2700 miles of service it doesn't owe me a thing. If not for the initial bent condition, which weakened it permanently, I think I could have made the entire trip on these Stud Boys. See pic. Ate up a bit of the ski keel but will go the distance. We can all thank Kevin Metheny of USI ski fame. He's the man who launched the UHMW ski trend that totally changed the industry - and developed the Shaper Bar profile. Bravo Kevin. Time for me to re-connect with him.



**Day 21: Rode 202 miles to Naubinway, MI.** They say the temps will hit 20+ F today. Should be able to cross back into Canada late today. Left Marquette MI just after lunch and headed east to Drummond Island on yet another high speed mix of UP trails. Lots of snow and lots of sleds out there. Fabulous riding. Passed 3 groomers. The traffic is so heavy here that they need to groom some sections twice a day. Decided to head south off the normal trails so I could try out some new trails and get closer to Drummond Island at the same time. Once we got close to the Mackinac Bridge trail turn off I was tempted to run into southern Michigan and see about crossing at Port Huron. At that very decision point in comes a text from Fast Eddy who was watching me on Spotwalla from his Barbados lair. Ed wanted to know if I was indeed headed south to Sarnia. LOL. I knew that the Ontario trails were green all the way down to Sarnia but I decided to leave that one for another day. OBTW, the OFSC interactive trail condition map is a great resource and more user-friendly than its MI, WI, MN counterparts: <http://ofsc.mapbase.ca/viewer/> . I ran until dusk and grabbed gas in

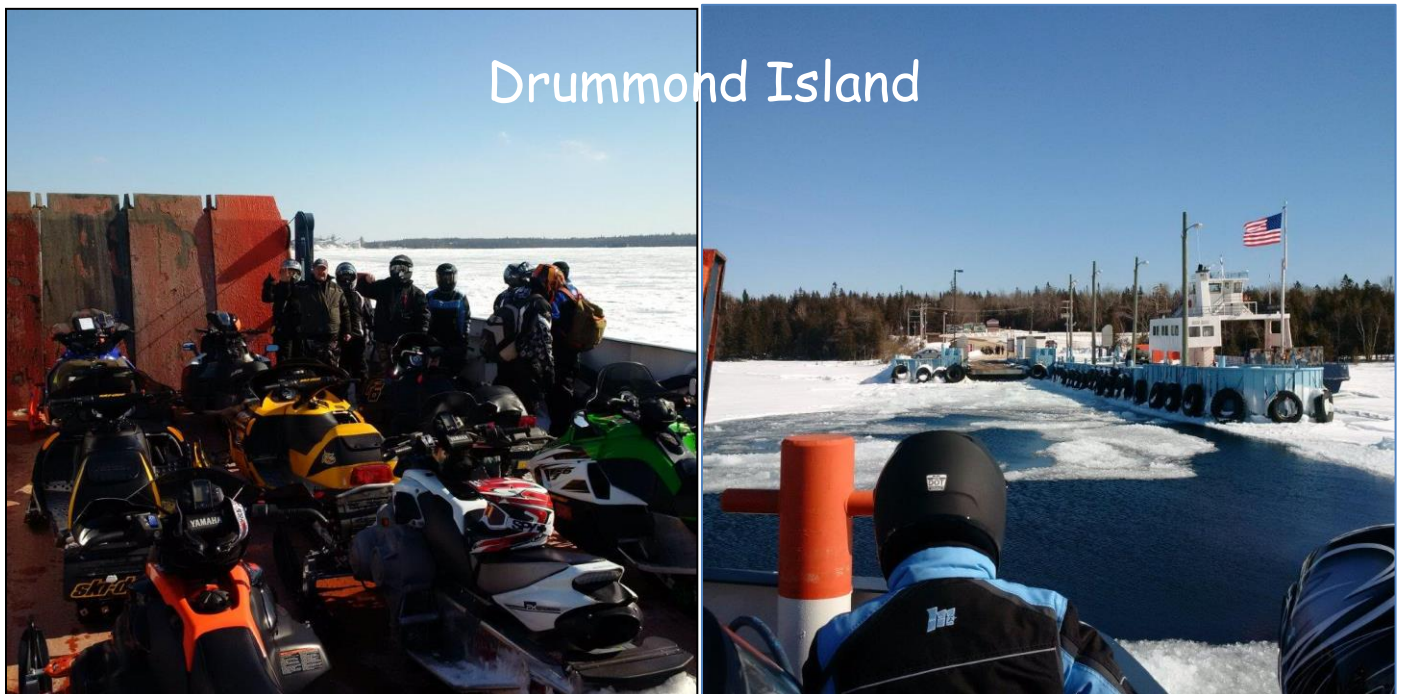
Naubinway MI, on the top of Lake Michigan. The gas station owner Michael is an avid vintage guy and did a double take on my Moto Ski. He told me about the new snowmobile museum just up the road and the light bulb went on. I remember reading about this place. After finding a room at Larry's we decided to stay there for the night and spend the morning at the museum, what a great decision that was. Another 200-mile day.



**Day 22: Rode 185 miles to Thessalon, ON.** We were met by Charlie and Marilyn Vallier who can be open 7 days a week with just a phone call. Today there was a club poker run with the museum as one of the stops. This place is incredible, a must-see for any snowmobiler; [www.snowmobilemuseum.com](http://www.snowmobilemuseum.com). Lots of cool vintage gift ideas as well. They have another storage barn with more than 100 oldies tucked away. Several famous and unusual sleds here. Even got a chance to look at a mint Liquidator, the sled I rode in the 77 Wpg2StPaul. Charlie and Marilyn, and their keen board, have created an outstanding venue. You can ride your sled right to the door.



After the tour we hit the trail and headed north to the Drummond Island crossing point. Great trails again, snow starting to thin out but still all white. Met lots of sleds and groomers, yet again. Pulled into Drummond and the trail leads right down to a ferry. Spotted a bunch of sleds waiting and went over and struck up a conversation with them just as the "all aboard signal" went off so we just joined the pack of 15 sleds and drove on board. It was quick 10-minute crossing for \$7 return as most sleds just head over for lunch and back to the US mainland for the day. It is possible to cross over on the ice but the ferry sure is handy. On board I hooked up with Rick and Lisa from Grand Rapids MI and we rode some great Drummond Island trails to a lunch stop at the north end. They had their extended family and friends with them. What a great chat. 3 generations of sledders in this mix, and one of them wears a TekVest and races vintage ovals on as very sano looking TX 340. His lunch was on me. Rick has a TekVest but he forgot to wear it today - I bought his lunch anyway - we all agreed that trail riding is more dangerous than racing. Tx for the hospitality guys and gals. After lunch we split off as they headed back to the ferry and I went north to Canada with M&I. FYI, Drummond Island is the US point of entry for Canadians and returning US riders on snowmobiles. Note that it is a manned office but now only open Friday/Sunday in winter. If you time your crossing you can avoid a trailer trip across the bridge in the Sault and save about 5 hours. Riders can enter Canada at any time of the day as it is a phone-in report centre. Just go to the Tilt'n Hilton on St Joseph's or go direct to Manitoulin Island to their call in stations. Really nice to be able to do all this on a sled! Rode the tree line from Drummond over to St Josephs and follow the awesome trails to the Tilt'n Hilton to check in to Canada Customs. No time to do some tilting so we struck off east across the ice to Thessalon for the evening. A 185 mile day and 6 hour run time. Turned 4000 miles in the middle of Lake Huron. Stayed at the Carolyn Beach Motel. Snowmobile friendly.



**Day 23. Rode 205 miles to Little Current, ON.** Left Thessalon and rode the lake east to Blind River. Magnificent ice sculptures out on the lake and a great change of scenery from trail riding. Gassed up in Blind River and then GPS'd across Lake Huron for 25 miles to Meldrum Bay on Manitoulin Island. OFSC mapping showed all trails open and, as I have never been there in 40 years of riding, I said, what the hay, let's do it. We really had to slow down to avoid the icy shark fins that could very easily end your day. It took us more than 90 minutes to pick our way across. Brilliant sunshine! An awesome day to be on the planet! Landed at what appeared to be the snowed in ghost town of Meldrum Bay and immediately connected with the OFSC trail on the GPS. Broke trail for 10 minutes or so until I picked up the tracks of others. **Wow.** Best trail award has to go to the Manitoulin Island Snow Dusters. What a great mix of all types of trails; tight woods, fast woods, rolling farm fields, hydro cuts and miles of ditch running alongside roads with few driveway approaches. First time on this trip that I was able to get a run long enough to crack 100 MPH. We rode 120 miles from Meldrum Bay to Little Current. One could easily make a 200-mile loop. I feel like spending another day here. All groomed and well-signed. This hidden gem is off the beaten bath but well worth the effort to get there. Manitoulin Island is the largest fresh water island in the world and lies along the north edge of Lake Huron. <http://manitoulin-island.com/>. It is less than 5 hours from the US Drummond Island trails via St Joseph, Thessalon/Blind River trails, with a crossover to Meldrum Bay via the lake ice. It could be even shorter if you ran the lake. It is a phone-in customs port of entry for US or Canadian travellers entering Canada. You can take the staked ice trail to or from Spanish or Killarney or boondock from anywhere else on the lake with a GPS, given good ice of course. Hmmm, wonder if you can cross over to Tobermory? We stayed at a brand new place called the Manitoulin Hotel Conference Center. Ask for the snowmobiler rate. What a blast this trail oasis is. Bumped into 2 cops on snow patrol. 2<sup>nd</sup> time on the trip and both in Canada. Yet again they ran my numbers but didn't notice the Moto Ski. Had a great exchange. They run 550 fans.



**Day 24: Rode 225 miles to Crane Lake, ON.** We left Little Current and crossed the ice to Killarney. I look forward to another trip back here. Just getting my 3<sup>rd</sup> wind and could easily



keep riding east to the Gaspé. The lake trail is well-staked, and featured on the OFSC GPS mapping software all the way to Killarney Lodge where we rode an awesome tight, high-speed trail piece of more than 60 miles before connecting with the main Sudbury to Parry Sound corridor where I pulled over at the map board and hit the OK on the SPOT. Mike and Ian, who had been with me since Day 2, said their goodbyes and headed north back to their homes in Sudbury. It had been quite the adventure with them and we rode well together. Tough, dependable, low-maintenance guys on a pair of stellar 800 Axys'. Just seconds after their dust settled in comes a text from Chris Reid suggesting that Crane Lake would be a most welcome destination for that evening. Chris had been monitoring our location via SPOTWALLA and knew I was about to hit the split to Parry Sound or North Bay. I had originally planned to head home via North Bay/Huntsville but the temptation of a steak BBQ and more Kremlin shots was pretty hard to turn down and besides, CR said it was only an hour and a bit, so off I went. By now I'd totally forgotten about the consequences of my Day 2 reception with CR, and as it was far enough past my Day 11 tour with the Karpiks, what else could possibly happen on Day 24? Memories can be short. It's great when once and while in one's life, one can live a semi-nomadic existence, sans real deadlines and pre-set destinations to make - even if only for a few days or weeks. As I headed south into the brilliant sunshine, and rather balmy, near-zero F temps, I started to do the math and realised that I had been "duped" by CR, yet again :). Next thing I know I drifted wide on a "rookie" left hand sweeper and was sucked into 3 feet of snow and proceeded to auger into a downed poplar. Jammed my other (right) thumb in the sudden stop when the right ski tried unsuccessfully to climb over the tree. Yet again, another testament to the performance of plastic skis as I'm certain that a metal ski would have crumpled while still transferring enough force load to break a ski bolt or perhaps bend an A-arm. Luck and technology were with me yet again. Over the years I have been stuck enough times in deep snow to know that the throttle is not your best friend in this scenario, but that a sturdy hatchet and big feet were. It would be at least a 30-minute solo effort to get back on the trail, but fortunately without the benefit of mocking friends with cameras. Off came the helmet, jacket and TekVest, and out came the hatchet. Had to chop my way out of a dozen or so branches and fashion a big enough lever from the tree trunk to lift the sled up and dig out the snow.



Always carry a steel-shanked hatchet 😊



Saying goodbye to Mike & Ian

Tramped the snow down all around and created an exit path. Deep snow extraction drill 101. A big sweat on at this point. Sled popped out first try and it's back on the trail. Almost an hour later I was able to get re-dressed to ride. I turned on an XM/Sirius Octane playlist to get motivated and just then a pair of Doos approach, after all the work was done of course. LOL. I'm now an hour behind as I head south to Parry Sound on what are probably the tightest trails in Ontario, an endless thread of switch backs, with the occasional 30 MPH straight away, that took almost 5 more hours to get through. They rival the tightest that Wisconsin can throw up but with more elevation change, rocks and snow. Great signage and grooming all the way. What a difference 3 weeks meant with the evident snowfall. It reminded me of just how bad conditions still were in Minnesota. This section of trail is where I really appreciated the heated TekVest and its ability to dry up the sweat that was chilling me down. Finally met CR at Boston's Pizza just after 9PM and he guided me back to his great hideaway where we were welcomed by the "boys" and a wood stove a'pumpin. His gals were stuck back in the city. We did a whole bunch more pit racing and watched an awesome concert on the big screen; I had no idea P was so talented - IMHO very under-rated (name withheld to protect the vanity of old dudes watching, but she's married to an MX dude). Not much drama thereafter and we hit the hay rather early. It had been a 225-mile day and the longest I had run yet on the low fuel warning light - 145 miles - until I gassed up at my old Moto Ski dealer, Shure Esso in Nobel. Small world.

**Day 25: Rode 125 miles to Gravenhurst, ON.** We all got up 8'ish and were on the trail by 9 when I promptly smacked a tree along the edge of a portage trail between lakes. It threw me into the bars, and whacked my left upper leg and strained both wrists. Clearly I was starting to relax as home was now just a few hours away. CR rode with me until Bracebridge before heading back to his place. My tx CR for so many years of friendship and turning me on to Yamaha almost 20 years ago. Continued on solo until stopping for lunch in Bracebridge. What great trail layout, conditions and markings in the MSR trail system. Tip of the hat to them. Decided to ping Stalkie and Mr. List, and within minutes Dennis and I were breaking bread at Crabby Joes (I think Bob was still out trying to get his turbo to work ?). I don't know anyone who has more off-road fun than Dennis! A friend to all seasons and anything with a throttle. A TekVest customer from day

one and author of the very first trail crash testimonial that we ever received, way back in 98. He and Tom Wideman were both on Cats back then and still ride sleds that are black and way too fast. LOL. After lunch I was off to attempt to surprise a very special friend, Bill Fullerton. I knew that Bill was following me closely on SPOT, even having questioned my route selection at one point, so, in order to ensure the element of surprise that day I had chosen not to activate the SPOT that morning when I left CR's. I finally scratched my way into his plant just outside of Bracebridge and indeed managed to surprise both him and MJ. Bill did a double-take when he pulled in just after me in his pickup, complete with a mint 73 Moto Ski in the back. Bill and I first met back in 1975 when he was working for a snowmobile dealer in Port Sydney and I was flogging aftermarket parts on the road for Hickson's Sports in Peterborough. Our paths have been linked ever since through race bikes, race sleds and of course our mutual passion in all things vintage. Bill's near photographic memory of all things Bombardier is incredible and his industry connections and recollections are amazing. When I decided to re-brand my cool blue and orange Viper into a Moto Ski it was Bill who suggested a model name. Any vintage person worth their salt will of course remember the whole Ski Doo 5500/7500/9500 Blizzard and corresponding Moto Ski GPS/Super/Ultra Sonic era but most, including myself, were not aware of the mystery model that never made it to Moto Ski showrooms. For those who remember the 9700 Blizzard you will probably recall there was no corresponding Sonic model and that Moto Ski dealers (and me) were furious back in 83. The dealer meetings were quite heated. Valcourt finally relented and a prototype was created and named but it never saw the light of day and was scrapped when the suits decided to cancel the entire Moto Ski line in 1984. Many thanks to Bill for inspiring my "Mega Sonic" Moto Ski Memory tour!! And a big shout out to JB2 for creating the color scheme that just screamed Moto Ski when I saw it last April and was compelled to spring order one.



By now the day was drawing to a close, and the snow falling heavier and blowing more wildly, so I had to push off from Bill's as I was trying to get to Orillia for the last night of the trip. I decided to take the Lake Muskoka "short cut" down to Gravenhurst and promptly drove into a complete white-out with lots of fresh drifting snow. With no visible tracks or shoreline to dead reckon with it was time to rely solely on the GPS track. A great opportunity to test one's focus and commitment, while keeping the track rolling. After 2 close approaches I finally found the gap into Gravenhurst Bay and made it to shore without getting stuck in what was easily 2 feet of fresh sticky snow out there on the lake. The snow and wind were not letting up and it was already 6PM and dark so I decided to pull into the Marriot for the night (what a great place). A short 125-mile day, but full of so many great memories and fresh winter delights!

**Day 26: Rode 35 miles to Orillia, ON.** Rolled out at 9 am towards Orillia with the intention of making the final 125-mile run back to Minden in time for an evening R&D session with my long-time designer and friend Helm. The Orillia District trails I rode where in great shape and well-marked with huge map boards posted at key intersections. Our new sublimation printer is to be delivered in a few days and Helm and I needed to go over the floor layout and production schedule. To save Helm the drive I was able to park my sled in Orillia and hitch a ride to Georgetown where Helm and I met to go over the plan. Stayed in Orillia that night after a mere 35-mile day ride.

**Day 27: Rode 85 miles to Minden, ON.** Finally got rolling around noon and headed east to Minden via the Carden Trails which were nice and choppy. They hadn't been groomed for a week and were a most fitting way to appreciate the immaculate Orillia and Haliburton County trails on either side. Along the way I had popped into Byers Equipment to say hello but they were all away at the Polaris dealer show. In 1977 they were John Deere snowmobile dealers and Rob's father Allan sold me a 340 Liquidator that I rode in the Winnipeg to St Paul I-500 race that year. Another memory lane stop as our relationship rekindled a decade or so ago when sons' Jeff and Kevin raced and chummed around with Jamie and Kyle Byers and were always well-fed by Sherry & Nancy. After a scratch through Norland, and a fast run through the Somerville Forest trails, I hit the Rail Trail and headed north to our Tekrider plant to say hello to my team and thank them for making me/us look good! My 4-week attempt at growing a beard was deemed rather pathetic by the team and has been ended, with the results removed and recycled. Headed north again and connected with the South Lake trail.



In all my years of riding this trail is still one of my favs, albeit far too short. I have ridden it year-round; AKA the South Lake Trail Massacre at the 86 Corduroy Enduro. Great memories here and the direct route to Kevlar Lake and my long-time neighbours, the Lester clan. I pulled into the Trax cave and popped up to say hello. Mark was out for a ride but it was a good time to connect with AJ and talk sleds. Our conversation reminded me again of how switched on the younger sledders are these days. Today our industry is largely funded by we boomers but led by the Gen X crowd. The Gen Y types are close behind and getting ready to take the lead and, as I have stated previously, our future is in great shape!! Minutes later in walks Mark and his first words were; "so, how many miles?". LOL. No surprise here. It was great to connect and I hope we can turn some tracks before the snow slips away. Next stop was a few cottages down the lake to visit Paul & Patti Prentice and replace the bottle of Yukon Jack I had borrowed back in 1989, after an all-day test session trying to make the Mach 1 go as fast as the advert. LOL, yet another story for another day. It was then back out on the South Lake trail and the final 10 clicks to my house, with one last pit stop to make sure Stretch was still alive and hydrating properly. All good there so I rode home to find another 2 feet of snow had fallen in my absence. As they say, there's no place like home. Tx all for reading my posts and let's hope to connect soon. For my dirt buds, Brando 23 is only 7 months away. In the meantime keep the rubber side down. **Final trip specs; same drive belt and sliders, 1 set of carbides, 1 track adjust, 1 chain adjust, no parts, a like-new tool kit, an un-used first aid kit, 1 flattened Mars Bar for next year, 4687 miles/7452 kms, 155 hours on sled, 30 MPH average speed, top speed observed: 102MPH, 1 day off & 26 days in the saddle, 2 get-offs, 2 dig-outs, 14" max of fresh snow throughout, and a partridge in a pear tree!** Many tx to Yamaha/Arctic Cat for making an awesome sled, McGregor Sportsline in Bobcaygeon (my dealer) and great products like; Stud Boy/USI, Arai, ROX, BRP LinQ, Up North for the cool LinQ bracket for YAMACATs, Paul's ratchet strap & trick gloves, Garmin Montana, SPOT, BlackBerry Classic, I Tunes, Gord at Podium Graphics, Mother Nature, **The TekVest team**, and of course those 2 wankers; Mike & Ian. This trip wouldn't have been possible without the past, present & future support and inspiration from a lot of my friends & customers. A big thanks to BRP, Arctic Cat,

Yamaha, Polaris, Blade, USI, Western Power Sports, Parts Unlimited, Automatic, Klim, Divas Snow gear, 509, Royal and Gamma for their business. Over the decades I've served 100s of dealers in Ontario but special recognition goes out to a few friends who ride what they sell and still love the sport; Larry's Small Engines, Uxbridge Small Engines, Team Vincent, Belleville Sport & Lawn, HB Cycle, Northland Rec, Factory Rec, The Machine & Cameron Cycle. OBTW, tx to all the other folks whom I failed to mention herein but contributed in some form or fashion to the mission. TTYL ps: no animals were harmed in this project, nor injection oil consumed - but one sturdy pine was slightly scratched. FYI, the most popular request on the trail, besides PTG - bring back the wine skin☺

**Next year's tour? The eastern side of CANUSA? Any volunteers to replace Mike&Ian?**



## The Original Plan

26 JAN 15

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### I-500 XC RACE OR BUST - BRANDO'S MEGA SONIC MEMORY TOUR

**"Men do not quit playing because they grow old; they grow old because they quit playing."  
Oliver Wendell Holmes**

Long-time snowmobiler and industry veteran Steve Brand has entered the 2015 I-500 XC race from Winnipeg, MB to Willmar, MN.

<http://www.snowmobile.com/blog/2015/01/winnipeg-to-willmar-i-500-race-cancelled.html>

You may not recognize his name but you may have heard of his product, the TekVest. "I just turned 60 and life is a little boring right now so I figured the I-500 would be a good distraction" said Steve. Steve is no stranger to this event and long distance riding in general. He competed in the Winnipeg to St. Paul on a John Deere Liquidator in 1977, the Thunder Bay to St Paul I-500 back in 1991 on an MXX Ski Doo and the 1992 10-day Harricana on a Mach 1 LT. Steve still rides but never gets enough time to do his favorite 500 km loops from the TekVest plant located in Minden, Ontario. **Steve's been in the snowmobile business since 1975** having

worked for an after-market parts distributor 75/77 (Hickson's Sports), Arctic Cat (Scorpion) 77/79 and Bombardier 79/95. He was a District Sales Manager for **Scorpion, Moto Ski, Ski Doo and Can Am** motorcycles during this period. In 1992/95 he was the Ski Doo XC/SX race manager for the US and Canada and played a key role in Ski Doo's return to terrain racing led by the efforts of **Todd Wolff and Toni Haikonen**. In 1995 he left Bombardier and started Tekrider, now entering its 20<sup>th</sup> season. Their flagship product, the **TekVest**, is the number one selling snowmobile upper body protector in the world.

Steve departs Minden this Saturday the 31<sup>st</sup> of January and heads off to Winnipeg - on his snowmobile. He will be riding a **2015 Yamaha Viper** the entire distance to and from Winnipeg - an estimated 3500 miles. He plans on being "on the trail" for 22 days and will be riding with different friends along the way as he traverses the **Ontario/Michigan/Wisconsin/ Minnesota/ Manitoba** trail systems - crossing the border at the Soo. Snow is pretty sketchy but the show must go on. " I'm no stranger to snirt and snavel running and expect to go through a few sets of carbides" says **Brando** (as he's known to his buds). Tekrider will be re-launching its PTG (**Power Touring Gear**) technical clothing line next year and Steve will be doing some final product testing on this trip. The PTG line will be a custom-order, limited-availability product line that will target the high-mile trail touring rider. Tekrider is also moving into sublimated design technology which will be used for more and more of its products. **Lots of new product and energy coming in 2016!!**

It was 30 years ago this year that **Bombardier cancelled Moto Ski** and Steve's trip is dedicated to the memory of this gone, but not forgotten brand. At the time of cancellation Steve was the Eastern Ontario District Sales Manager for Moto Ski and still cruises on Sonic memories.

Steve remembers watching this 1971 Moto Ski ad on TV and recalls his first Moto Ski ride on a brand new 1971 Zephyr 340 owned by friend Roger's Uncle Murray;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dHJZXGS0zM>

Contact Steve by e-mail at [steve@tekrider.com](mailto:steve@tekrider.com)

**Feel free to send Steve your Moto Ski memories and pics.**

Follow him on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter & SPOTWALLA.





**The End**

OBTW, read this interview conducted by long-time rider/racer/scribe John Sandberg;

<http://www.arcticinsider.com/Article/A-Mega-Sonic-Epic-Journey-and-Interview-with-Steve-Brand>