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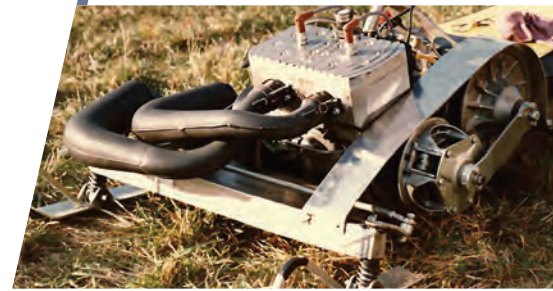
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*Bill Sweet in the Berkshire Snow Seekers' Tucker 1000 on Whitney Place Road in October Mountain State Forest.*

PHOTO BY RANDY TOTH

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## MANAGING EDITOR

Dan Gould  
(508) 867-6430  
info@sledmass.com

## STAFF WRITERS

Robert Dodge, robert.dodge@sledmass.com  
Andy Holland, vintagesleds@sledmass.com  
Terry Holland, terry.holland@sledmass.com  
Brad Stafford, brad.stafford@sledmass.com  
Rena Sumner, rena.sumner@sledmass.com  
Randy Toth, randy.toth@sledmass.com  
Jim Tucker, jim.tucker@sledmass.com  
Larry Tucker, larry.tucker@sledmass.com

## COPY EDITORS

Patty Gould, Paul Trova, Rena Sumner

## GRAPHIC DESIGN

Stewart Moon

## ADVERTISING SALES

Carl Mischka  
(888) 666-1491  
carl@mischka.us

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**SUBMISSIONS:** P.O. Box 526  
Brookfield, MA 01506-0526  
info@sledmass.com.

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## President's Message

BY DAN GOULD

# Tooling Around

The stock tool kit hidden away in the average snowmobile is little more than an empty promise. "I'm here for you, but when you need to tighten that loose suspension bolt I'm going to make your knuckles bleed."

Actually, the cute little tool set may have a calming effect. Though screaming in agony, you'll feel 100% better after throwing them into the woods once you realize how useless they are. Guaranteed.

I've been carrying real tools since day one. That could have something to do with my first snowmobile, a cheap junker, which blew the engine twice during its first trip under my fanny. The liquified piston was replaced with a fresh Wiseco in our hotel room that night and promptly melted again the following day at lunchtime.

I bought a brand new sled as soon as I got home, which promptly exploded the first trip out. That's a story for another day but at least it was under warranty.

You see, I have scars, and for some odd reason I get a lot of ribbing about the rollaway toolbox stashed in the trunk of my sled. Reality is, I've since bailed more friends out of trouble with the tools than myself. Yes, I know, I'm now officially jinxed.

Now, don't confuse tweaking with repairs, as so many of my riding buddies do. I enjoy adjusting the suspension settings to match

conditions. I even play with the carbs at times. There's no better time to check the track tension or a chain case than after a good rip.

Not long ago a friend had a rather odd electrical problem on a fairly new sled. Nothing major, it kept shutting off for no reason. Those in the group were mechanically savvy and we quickly diagnosed a defective connector in the main wire loom. Not something you would expect in a new sled but poop happens.

The chief mechanic of the day kept asking if I had this tool or that tool, he was clearly trying to stump me. I responded each time by handing the appropriate Craftsman over like a surgical assistant. He tried not to look surprised. The repair required among other things, a tiny Phillips screwdriver, a socket set, small open-end wrenches, a pair of wire cutters, needle nose pliers and a piece of wire, all of which I just happened to have.

This was definitely an instance that would have been difficult, if not impossible, with the stock Playskool tools that came with the sled. It also made the difference between a tow home and another 50 miles of fun on the odometer.

As the trailside garage was just about ready to close for the day, someone shouted "Do you have any tie-wraps to hold the wires in place?" They were clearly testing me. I went back to my trunk and responded, "Sure, what color would you like... blue?" 🛷

## Online at sledmass.com

- Poll: If your sled broke could you fix it?
- Join a Club: Interactive trail pass locator map
- Annual Awards: Deadline, March 1
- Snowmobile trails damaged by illegal use
- Something to do: Check sledmass events
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Our 1973 Arctic Cat Formula II ready for the 1972-73 season. Only 50 of these special sleds were built. PHOTO BY DIANE MILLER

# American Ingenuity



My brother Bob rebuilds a carburetor on our parent's dinner table during the 1970-71 season.

PHOTO BY DIANE MILLER

By Jeff Miller

American ingenuity, two words that have lost some meaning in the last decade or so. For years Americans came up with ideas for things, you could sit back and marvel at what they thought up in their heads. But with the computer age, that is all but a lost art. Everywhere you go, people are on their computers doing work. It is no different in the mechanical world. Car manufacturers and such can do a complete redesign of a model so quick now with computers. But do you notice in today's computer world, those designs don't have the elegant flow-

ing lines of a hand-drawn design of years past? Racing follows the same path. Walk through the pits of a big race and you see laptops everywhere and pit crewmembers tapping away on keyboards. In the pits you can hear heated discussions between engineers and drivers, "according to all our data the car should fly," and the driver snaps back "I don't care what your data says, it is a pig on the track." The days of a stopwatch and seat of the pants feel are gone. All the same rules apply for the snowmobile world. This is a story of racing in a different era. An era in which it was fun to race, everyone could do it, and with a little American ingenuity, could be very successful.

My family has always been what you would call a bunch of gearheads. If it had a motor, we had it and usually raced it. In the late 50's, early 60's, my father drag-raced all over the country. In the 80's and 90's, I raced nitro cars all over the U.S., but in between those two periods were some of the fondest memories one could ever have.



**My family has always been what you would call a bunch of gearheads. If it had a motor, we had it and usually raced it.**



My brother, Bob, was the ultimate gearhead. If it had a motor, it was torn apart and modified in all kinds of ways. In 1969 we got our first snowmobiles, an Arctic Cat Panther and a Ski-Doo Olympique. Bob said, "If I put a megaphone exhaust on that 10-horse Hirth motor, it will really scream." That was the beginning of our snowmobile experience. The next two years our family raced Ski-Doo's for Bob Lively, our local dealer in Colrain. Racing was big back then, especially oval racing. Local organizations had racing every winter. It was not uncommon to have 8 or 10 oval races within 20 miles of our house. Towns like Greenfield, Bernardston, Northampton, Buckland and Worthington all had winter racing. It was the best time for gearheads like us. 1972 we switched to Arctic Cat and raced for Francis Stetson and the Stetson Cat House out of Charlemont. After much success with a 290cc EXT, the wheels started turning in my brother's head.

In the fall of the '73 season we took possession of Arctic Cat's latest project, a 1973 290cc Formula II. Little did we know at the time that we were picked to have one of only 50 Formula II's that were built. It was unlike any other sled, and that is what really made Bob think about things. For the next several years we raced ovals and even this new fangled thing called grass dragging. How awesome was this, we could play with snowmobiles year round! By mid to late 70's racing was changing. Liquid cooling and independent suspension were introduced. Sleds were getting very fast and many places could no longer hold oval races. But also at this time grass dragging was at an all time high. Organizations could hold a race in nice weather and use a very small amount of land. In 1979 we were just



**Bob Miller, left, and Jeff Miller, right, help their father, George, load the Formula II for another weekend of racing during the 1972-73 season.** PHOTO BY DIANE MILLER



**Bob's hand-built racing sled at Terryville, CT. during the 1981-82 grass drag season.** PHOTO BY GARY TOTMAN

grass dragging; winter racing was just too expensive and you had to travel a long way to get to the tracks. That fall we started racing for Dave Wickles Trucking in Hatfield. Dave wanted to be the team to beat. He drove out to Wisconsin to Decker Racing and bought the fastest 1978 Ski-Doo Blizzard they would sell him. That year they won everything in sight, including the New York State Championship and runner-up in the Pennsylvania State Championship. After racing it for a couple years Bob knew that this sled was made for ice racing, not grass dragging. So he began the ultimate gearhead project, building his own sled and motor!

So the design began, not with computers, but with a pencil and paper and all

the knowledge he had gained throughout the years. First off the sled had to be light. Grass dragging does not require all that suspension and creature comforts. It had to be lean and mean. We went to the local metal dealer and got a 4 x 8 sheet of 1/4" aluminum and commenced to burn up my father's Skilsaw. That tool was never the same after we were through. Cut after cut he made, measuring everything twice and marking where it would go. Everything was handmade. The handlebars, skis, he even made his own aluminum brake caliper. He designed innovations that would not be seen on sleds for another 20 years.

Chassis flex was a concern and keeping the clutches aligned was very important. So he designed a support to tie the engine and drive clutch together so they would stay perfectly aligned. Today you see them on all performance sleds. It was a thing of beauty, like no other sled ever built. But for all good race sleds, you need a good motor. Once again thinking ahead of his time, Bob realized that all large engines at the time were 3-cylinders and very heavy. They were fast, but in drag racing high horsepower and a light chassis is the way to go. The biggest 2-cylinder engines at the time were 440's. So back to the drawing board he went



again to build a 650cc twin. Big bore twins were not heard of yet, but today they are commonplace. There were no cylinders available at the time that would accept a large piston and sleeve. So Bob ordered a piece of molding plastic and made his own one-piece jug and cylinder head, then went off to the local foundry that poured the new jug and head. After hundreds of man-hours, sleeves were fitted to the jug, then the 440 Rotax-based engine was modified to accept the new assembly. When the entire machine was assembled including the engine it weighed in at less than 250 pounds! Several weekends of testing went on to iron out the new design and tune the motor. Things went well and the sled was raced several times with mixed results. Time and technology were not quite there, which made it difficult to extract the full potential from the complete unit.

A year later the sled was sold to another racer and Bob moved to Florida to work for NASA. The sad truth of all this is, with all of the testing and racing we did, we never took any photos of the



*That's Bob on the right, in the red helmet, racing his custom-built sled in Terryville CT. during the 1981-82 season.* PHOTO BY GARY TOTMAN

sled. It was a part of our history that we never recorded. In September, I was over at Gary Totman's in Conway talking about old racing days and that little sled, when he said, "Hey! I've got some pictures of that sled." He ran up into the house and came down with a scrapbook of racing photos. Lo and behold he pulled out three pictures of the sled. Over 30 years since

the sled was built we finally had pictures. I went home like a kid in a candy store to show off pictures of our rare sled. Those pictures will always bring back memories of when people built things with their minds and not computers, a time when American ingenuity was at its best. Now for a new quest. Is the sled still around and can it be found? 🐾

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## ADAMS SNO DRIFTERS

by Joe Rogge

Usually we use this month's message to talk about trail trims, various landowner issues, special projects, and our annual Christmas party. However, this time we are going to focus on two topics: the first topic does involve our Christmas party but with a different slant. Usually we include "donate a toy for a needy child" as the charity part of our event. This year we asked for donations to help with two different needs. One was for an individual who is battling leukemia. The second was "Eva and Emma's Lemonade Stand." Eva and Emma are 4-year-old twins from Cheshire who have been raising money to donate to those in the community battling cancer, [iberkshires.com/story/44686/Cheshire-Twins-Lemonade-Stand-Inspires-Cancer-Charity.html](http://iberkshires.com/story/44686/Cheshire-Twins-Lemonade-Stand-Inspires-Cancer-Charity.html). Somehow donating a toy does not seem as important. (Hint: clubs are asked to submit charity reports-what will your report show?)

The second topic involves the 2014 Thunderbolt Ski Race. Our club supports this event and invites readers of this article to check out the event at [thunderboltskirunners.org/2014\\_race](http://thunderboltskirunners.org/2014_race). Finally, we hope all of our fellow riders are having a good season and a Happy New Year. Check conditions at: [adamssnodrifters.webstarts.com](http://adamssnodrifters.webstarts.com)



## BERKSHIRE SNOW SEEKERS

by Randy Toth

Join with us and experience the excitement of snowmobiling in the Berkshires. Our first class groomer fleet consists of 3 Tucker Sno-Cats, a Thiokol and 2 snowmobile-based groomers. Dues are only \$60 for each snowmobile and they include a club membership, a SAM membership and a trail permit. Join via snail-mail (PO Box 1102, Pittsfield, MA 01202), via our website ([berkshiresnowseekers.com](http://berkshiresnowseekers.com)), via a club meeting (7pm on the 1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month from

September thru mid-April at the Skyline Country Club on Route 7 in Lanesboro) or via one of our conveniently located trail permit outlets at a participating local business: Pittsfield Lawn & Tractor (Pittsfield), Ronnie's (Pittsfield), Friendly Fred's (Windsor), Sangar's General Store (Windsor), Hinsdale Trading Company (Hinsdale) and Lanesboro BP Gas Station (Lanesboro).

Please visit the SAM website to see our club's scheduled events and our grooming reports covering the October Mountain State Forest area, the Pittsfield State Forest area and the Windsor area. Grooming reports are promptly posted in the SAM forums by our trail coordinators within hours of grooming. We hope to see you out on the trails.



## BERNARDSTON-GILL-LEYDEN

by Brad Stafford, president

Hello fellow snow lovers, here we are mid-season already. Are your sleds are running and your favorite trails open and groomed? Our club was blind-sided early by Mother Nature with an early season storm that got us behind on our trail maintenance. But, if you were fortunate enough to answer YES to the above questions, don't forget who you need to THANK!: your local clubs and their volunteers. Each year clubs face the challenge of keeping trails open. Every year there are those that go out during minimal snow conditions, ignoring club signs and postings. All those signs and postings are there for a reason. Most of them are made as commitments to landowners to ensure the trails on their property can stay open. Remember, we all want to be out riding as soon and as long as possible, so respect local clubs rules and our landowners' requests.

Our club has been busy with a Vintage Ride on January 26th and hopefully a club ride will be scheduled in February. Stay tuned to our Facebook page and website [bglsnow.com](http://bglsnow.com). Until then, "Keep the Rubber Side Down."



## CHESTERFIELD FOUR SEASONS

by Bill Golaski, president

Hello all. As I write this in mid-December we have just had our first major snowfall and more is predicted in a day or two. Looks like we could get off to a good start with the sledding season. Club members have been working hard to keep things in good shape on the trails and at the clubhouse.

Our next event will be our Groomer Benefit Dinner on February 1st starting at 6pm, \$20 per ticket. This will be a prime rib dinner with a live band. On this night we will also do the drawing for our snowmobile trailer raffle, \$20 per ticket, maximum of 400 tickets sold. This is our major club fundraiser, so please help us and buy a chance. Then the club will be having our Annual Game Supper on February 22, \$20 per ticket, both game and non-game items will be served. No one has ever walked away hungry from this event. For more info or to help out at the club, come to a meeting on the 2nd and last Tuesday of the month at 7pm, call the clubhouse at 413-296-4048, or Bill Golaski 413-585-9403. Hope to see you all ride through our area soon. Stop at the clubhouse and check us out. Check out our events on the SAM website, too. Let It Snow!



## COLDBROOK

by Michael J. Roy, secretary

As you are reading this article, the Coldbrook Snowmobile Club hopes that you had a very enjoyable riding season thus far with many more miles to go this season. Hopefully there have been many hours logged in our groomers making our trail system smoother for us riders. The club has planned a ride and dinner to the King Phillip Restaurant in Phillipston starting at two locations: one for those who want a longer ride to dinner and then home, and the other for those of us who prefer a shorter ride to dinner and back home. This event is scheduled for Saturday, January 18, with weather and trail condi-

tions being the key factors. Please check out our website at [coldbrooksnowmobilers.com](http://coldbrooksnowmobilers.com) for updated details on this and any other club-sponsored events. Please always remember that it is our members that make us successful and able to ride our trails safely and enjoyably. Please volunteer whenever possible.



## CONWAY

by Ed Skorupski

As I write this there is a good healthy covering of snow on the ground (8-12 inches depending on location) and it feels like winter. Although there was a warm spell for a day or two in the 7-day forecast, I feel optimistic that this is going to be a great season of riding.

Our trail crews have done an outstanding job preparing the trails for the season with many hours of hard work by a dedicated few. We are always looking for volunteers and new members, so feel free to attend a club meeting (First Monday of the month at 7pm at the Conway Fire Station). We are especially looking for groomer operator trainees to help keep the trails in shape. It doesn't matter how many hours you can volunteer, the key is to increase the pool of available talent in order to keep the machines out on the trail.

Our next scheduled event will be the Annual Pancake Breakfast on February 23. We always have a good time with this event and there is plenty of seating. We look forward to serving you breakfast.

Please visit us at [sledconway.com](http://sledconway.com) and don't forget to Like our Facebook page to stay up-to-date on club events.



## EASY RIDERS

by Steven Conti,  
board member

With the season well under way, it looks like Mother Nature is well on our side, and the snow gods have answered our prayers. Enjoy it while it lasts. Be safe, sit back, and enjoy the scenery. We would like to extend a thank you to Dan Gould for attending our club meeting earlier in the year and for updating us on snowmobile-related info. Well, short and sweet this month; got some riding to "do." Always thinking snow.



## GOSHEN HIGHLANDERS

by David Bean,  
SAM delegate

Winter is here again and at this time there is two inches of snow already in the forest. The annual campout work weekend was a great success. Thanks to many newly interested volunteers as regular members. We managed to build a 25 x 8 wide bridge capable of accommodating our state groomer. In addition, we opened half-mile of an old logging road that goes from Tilton ball fields to the Oak Hill Road trail. Look for new signs. Currently we are building another bridge behind the Spruce Corner Restaurant that will hold our bigger groomer. The old bridge was unsafe. The new bridge will be located downstream. Look for signs.

We continue to work with landowners and farmers to keep the corridor trail open between Rt. 112, DAR State Forest and Ashfield. This a yearly challenge. Work continues on the grooming equipment at Turners on Tuesday night. Help is always needed. We are putting a cab on the John Deere tractor - tracked machine, and also new hydraulics. Two new 6-foot drags are being built also.

Our annual memorial ride will be held February 2 from Spruce Corner Restaurant, weather permitting. No snow-no go. Sign up from 9-11am, ride leaves at 11. Check us on Facebook and Ride Safe!



## GREATER WHATELY

by Robert Sabola

Welcome to the Greater Whately Snowmobile Club.

GWSC has scheduled four club rides, weather permitting. Dates are as follows: February 1, 8, 15, and 21. For those who want to join us, parking is available at the Whately Town Garage on Christian Lane in Whately. Please do not block the main the doors at the town garage, the transfer station drop off area or the driveway leading to the police station. Departure is 10:30am.

As I write this article I often wonder how many people actually take the time to read the articles/club news that is posted in the SAM magazine. Honestly, I had not been very faithful but this year I have made it my business to do so. It's a commitment I have made to learn more

about each of the clubs and how they deal with snowmobiling. A lot of good occurs in the clubs that support the sport we all love. Reading the articles/club news made me realize how important it is for me to be involved with my club. Hopefully, after reading the different articles you will see how important it is to be active in your club. Stay Safe!



## HARVARD

by Joe Gibbons

Our club Christmas Party on December 9 was awesome.

The new venue was the old General Store in the center of town. It was a welcome change! Great food, turkey dinner with all the fixings and a cake to celebrate our 44th year of great snowmobiling here in Harvard. Our groomer was on display, complete with an illuminated Christmas tree.

The snow has fallen early and we all got to ride on 9 inches of fresh snow in December. Superb riding! The swamp trail is open and it's awesome! The bridges are holding up great. Check out our new trail from Mill Road to Lancaster County Road. This trail will get you to Pizza Bella and over to the trail that gets you to Dunkin Donuts.

Great to see some new members! You are welcome here in Harvard. Please get your SAM pass at Toreku Tractor at the Ayer Rotary. If you're not familiar with our trails we are eager to help, call Joe Gibbons 617-460-1239. Please respect our landowners and stay on the trails. Parking is at the Depot Road ballfield next to the DPW garage.

Cookouts, night rides, NY trip to Tug Hill are in planning. We got to meet our local dog mushing team during our January meeting. Next meeting 2/11, 7:30pm at the Harvard Fire Station.



## KNOX TRAIL SNO-RIDERS

by James Richard,  
media director

This report was difficult to write. Up until December 17, snow conditions were approaching perfection. Cold temps and a couple of dustings made a perfect "primer" before two storms dumped over a foot. The lake ice was nearly ready. A ride-able White Christmas was in view! Then



Nature cranked the thermostat to nearly 60 and yanked off the knob. By Christmas Eve, everything was gone. So it goes.

And now the good news! The sled drawing is days away and the groomers, trails, pass vendors, and volunteers are ready. The power is back on at the groomer garage thanks to an upgrade by club members from Logsdon Electric. The Youth Ride is Sunday, February 2. Riders will sign in at L&M Gulf at 9am. The course takes riders to lunch at the clubhouse. Also planned are the poker run for January 19 and the annual picnic on February 16. Go to [knoxtrail.com](http://knoxtrail.com) for more event and club information! Now Nature, put the knob back on and turn it down!



## SAVOY KANARY KATS

by Doug Decoigne

Greetings! The December issue of "On the Trails with SAM" had two articles that I want to mention. First, the newest "buzz phrase" in the snowmobiling world: conservation restriction. Attaining permanent easements on key

trail corridors is of utmost importance to all sledders. SAM is showing real leadership on this issue. If you haven't read the article, please do.

Second is the article on the beginnings of SAM, what vision that group showed back in 1969 about the issues that would face snowmobilers in the future! Amazing!

February is going to be a busy month for sledders. Events here in the northwest part of the state include: 2/2 - Florida Mountaineers Jill Keating Memorial Ride, 2/7 - regular SKK meeting at the Hilltop 7pm, 2/8 - SKK Triple D World Tour Ride, 2/15 - SKK's Annual Winter Carnival and Ride hosted by the Wandrei's, 1254 Main Rd, Savoy, 2/22 - Florida Mountaineers "Fat Bastard" Ride, 2/22 & 23 - Snowcross race in North Adams, and 3/1 - Long time SKK member Jack Cisler Memorial Ride. ENJOY!

We would like to thank all SAM member clubs for their tireless efforts as well as our own volunteers.



## WORTHINGTON

by Jeff Smith

On December 19 at 3pm at Stanly Park

in Westfield, I had the honor of meeting Secretary Richard Sullivan of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and Commissioner Jack Murray of the Department of Conservation and Recreation at which time the club was presented with a grant in the amount of \$49,000 to acquire a new Kubota Tractor equipped with Soucy all-terrain tracks. This grant will allow the club to have a versatile piece of equipment for year round maintenance of our trail system. During the winter months it will provide us with the power unit necessary to pull our six-foot MTN drag. There is lots of work that needs to be done so that we can maximize the use of this machine, but with any luck you may see it on the trails this season.

Without this type of grant, acquiring machinery like this would simply be out of our small club's reach. A special thank you to Amanda Lewis at DCR who has been so helpful with questions and guidance. Keep updated with our posts on Facebook and please feel free to send me comments on trail conditions. 🐾



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# SAM: Created by snowmobilers in the past, for the snowmobilers of the future. PART II

By Brad Stafford

In part one, I wrote how back in the late 1960's a group of snowmobilers had the foresight to see that with the growth of our sport there was going to be concerns from landowners, state agencies and a host of other issues. They needed to have a well-represented and organized voice, and a way to work through any issues. They banded together and created the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts, which we call SAM. I'm pretty sure they had no idea that over the next 40-plus years SAM, and the sport of snowmobiling in Massachusetts, would grow as it has.

There are around 16,500 registered snowmobiles in Massachusetts, and about 8,000 SAM members. With over 2,100 miles of trails, the demographics show that snowmobilers ride an average of 1,100 miles a year. We like to ride to destinations, to get together with friends for meals and club events, and to visit scenic, natural attractions, like the peak of Mt. Greylock or the Beehive in Hawley, to name a few.

All together snowmobiling in Massachusetts contributes over \$65 million dollars to the state's economy every year. That is positive economic impact! According to statistics, the average snowmobiler is 43-years old, and is married with children. Despite the occasional cheap shot in the press, this proves that snowmobiling is a mature family recreation.

As snowmobilers, we get to enjoy our sport in Massachusetts for one reason: SAM. All the years of hard work by the clubs and the dedication of countless members made this happen. It didn't happen by accident.

Today, SAM has 30 individual clubs that own and operate over 100 groomers across the state. The volunteers maintain our ITS (Interconnected Trail System) so



PHOTO BY CRAIG WARNER

**The most amazing fact is that all the work done to keep SAM operating smoothly (and our trails smooth, too) is by volunteers!**



we can ride from town-to-town and access restaurants, stores, gas stations, hotels, club houses, and if needed, repair shops.

These trails stretch from Worcester County to the NY border and allow direct access to the Vermont and New Hampshire trail systems, with connections north to Maine, Canada and beyond. Around 65% of these trails are on private land. The rest are on state-owned or managed properties.

SAM is self-funded, the primary revenues being generated by membership sales (the trail pass) and events, like the Snow Expo at the Big E. Keep in mind that SAM does not receive funding from the state. SAM is a non-profit organization, and one way or another, all the funds raised by SAM support the trail system.

The most amazing fact is that all the work done to keep SAM operating smoothly (and our trails smooth, too) is by volunteers! From the SAM Delegates and club officers, right down to the club's "Weekend Warriors." We are Volunteers! SAM and its volunteers make up the largest trail organization in the state. From keeping track of legislation in Boston to putting up a trail sign, and all the pieces of the puzzle in between, it's done by people that still have the same goals as that group





back in the 60's. We love to snowmobile and work hard to protect the privilege to ride.

So, the next time you hear someone talk about not getting a trail pass because the state will waste the money, let them know it's not true and how important it is to support SAM and the local clubs any way you can. Whether you volunteer time, make a donation to your club, or just buy a SAM trail pass, do it regardless if we have snow or not. Do it out of respect to those that have done so much over the years to get us to where we are and as an investment in the future of our sport. Ride safe and Keep the Rubber Side Down 🛷

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# To the Elk and Back

By Gerry Balchuinas  
Photos by Dan Gould

It was a great day for a ride. My best friend Harry called and wanted my wife and I to go for a ride out of Florida. We met Harry and his wife Jean in Orange and headed for the elk on the hill. We made a quick stop to meet up with another couple and then started the climb. Going up out of Greenfield we could see the destruction that the hurricane had caused. I had heard about it but to see first hand was quite a sight. There were spots of road just totally gone. We arrived in Florida at about 10am, the weather was perfect, about 25 degrees and with little wind. After suiting up we headed out.

We crossed the road and hit the trails, which also were perfect. I knew it would be a good day. We got to the first junction and headed towards Rowe. The trail down over the hill wasn't in that good of shape, actually. We got to the bottom of the mountain and decided to turn around and head the other direction. I had ridden to Savoy a few times and it was always good; the "K-Cat's" do a great job.

We rode back up the mountain and passed the intersection we had already come from. The trails from this point were in top-notch condition. We followed corridor 2 all the way to corridor 8. The trail was absolutely superb; it was groomed real well and marked great. We had a group of mixed-ability riders and all had fun along this section. When we got down into "Savoy Country" the riding was simply amazing. We stayed on 8 all the way down to 90 and headed towards the Hilltop for lunch. There were quite a few trail junctions along the way. Most of these were marked above and beyond what they needed to be. Only one sign that we came to could have been a little closer to the intersection was SV08.





We rolled into the Hilltop Restaurant to find the place mobbed with riders. Every sled make and model imaginable was represented. There were even a few vintage machines. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the inside was large and accommodating for all of us. There was even a spot for

our gear. It took some time to get served but they were packed. The food was great and we all enjoyed our meals.

On the return trip we took a few different trails, and again, all were in good shape for the amount of sleds out riding. I was impressed with the manners shown by

most of the riders we passed. Hand signals, head nods and waving were the rule for the day. We only ran into one "hot dog" out there, and if that's it for a day's ride, then that's a good day.

All in all we had a great time and will return next season. It was nice to go out and do 100 miles and then sleep in your own bed at night. There was good food on the ride and great scenes to be had. If you like hills and forests you will not be disappointed with a ride in this part of Massachusetts.

My wife and I had a great time and would like to thank all of the clubs along that area for a great ride. Dedication to the sport is still out there, and it shows. Even if the amount of volunteers has declined, you would not have noticed it when riding out here. This year I'm planning on hitting every trail on the map in this area. My wife is already looking forward to more onion rings at the Hilltop and a bacon cheeseburger is calling her best friend Jean's name. On that note I think my Hot Pocket just dinged in the microwave. Sure do wish I were at the Hilltop. 🐾

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## The Tech Corner

BY JIM TUCKER

# Close to the Vest

**W**hat's the one piece of safety gear you can't leave home without? Is it the helmet shield or goggles? Is it the snowmobile suit for its warmth and protection? Is it the helmet, the big daddy of all protective gear? It just may be the one thing that you've seen or heard about, but never used. I'm speaking about the motorsports protective vest.

I've ridden since 1969 and up until a few years ago had a spotless record for safety. The newer machines make it so easy to ride faster, further, and longer, but one solitary day or one wrong decision can be a game changer in the way we look at how we ride. For me it was one such day in Maine a few years back.

While riding along a trail, and moving at what I would consider a brisk pace, we suddenly came upon a downhill. I was leading the pack, as usual, since my riding partners feel that I should be the "decoy" that encounters danger first, although not because of my riding ability or wayfinding. With no signage visible, the trail made a hard turn to the right. To make matters worse the turn was off camber and very hard-packed. I panicked and thought I was heading into a grove of trees straight ahead. I pumped the brakes hard, turned the skis right and just at that moment the carbide of the left ski dug in and over the side I went.

I was ejected from the snowmobile and skidded down the trail on my back. Meanwhile the sled was stuck on its side with the ski sticking upright like a beached whale, flipper up high. I got up, and as most gear heads would do, worried about what kind of damage had been done to the sled, having no concern whatsoever for myself. After the initial shock, I righted the sled.



### HITS:

- Survivability is there in spades.
- Warmer than not wearing it at all.
- Looks like you have way more muscles than you really do!
- Self-confidence spikes up.
- Zero maintenance required.
- Doesn't hinder handlebar or upper body movement.

### MISSES:

- Another piece of gear to bring along.
- Somewhat bulky but you get used to it.
- Can be too warm on the late March, April rides.
- Expensive but what is your hide worth?
- Taking jacket and vest off to have lunch is somewhat awkward.

She fired right up. Whew, dodged another bullet! After checking for any loose body parts, mine this time, and finding nothing missing or broken, we headed on our way.

Upon returning back at the cabin that night I had a slight pain on my left side, which turned out to be a cracked rib. Nothing major to worry about but still a painful reminder of what one moment of lost focus can do. I should have known better than to grab the brake hard with skis turned, it was a classic rookie mistake.

Man and machine paid the price. Know this: You should brake well before the turn and have the right amount of speed to negotiate through, or exercise gentle braking while turning. 'Nuff said there.

That evening I had nightmares about what might have happened if things went differently. A large tree could have been in my path, a big rock or icy cliff preparing to swallow me whole, or another sled coming the other way. Such is the nature of snowmobile nightmares.



There are many types of vests out there, some with way more protection, but I wanted core body protection with freedom to move my arms.

...

On the drive home from our otherwise fine riding trip, I reasoned that the more riding one does the closer one is to having some type of mishap. It's all about the laws of physics and playing the odds. But is there a safety device that just might help if that one-time lapse of focus should happen?

I'd been thinking about getting a vest for a while, even before the trip, and with that last episode still ringing in my mind I know this was the perfect time to explore that option. I did my research for the type of riding I do and chose the TekVest by Klim as the protective garment of choice. Tekrider manufactures the vests to Klim's specifications. There are many types of vests out there, some with way more protection, but I wanted core body protection with freedom to move my arms. A lightweight platform with maximum breathability was also a priority. I ordered the Klim TekVest and at \$270 it was a deal in the world of vests.

Now for some quick stats: The vest weighs 2.15 lbs, as measured on my calibrated scale, is very breathable and has a large YKK zipper installed. The protection factor of this particular model is not the highest out there; it's designed for trail riders, not the racing community. Needless to say, it delivers core body protection way above what the bare shoulders can endure. It also has reflective piping on the backside and really strong Tivar plastic panels top and sides for those nasty curves Mother Nature can throw at you.

As the resident Popsicle of the group I can attest to the fact that when worn under your snowmobile jacket, it keeps you warmer. Much appreciated on those minus 30-degree days. Wearing the vest late last season kept me toasty, I never reached for one more layer of clothing. Some folks say they just wear the vest and a lightweight pullover and that keeps them plenty warm. Different strokes.

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As I began to delve deeper into this realm of body protection I turned to the Internet for more info. Searching my favorite snowmobile site some intrepid rider posted a thread asking, "Anyone wear a protective vest?" This brought out a flood of responses that I wasn't prepared for. Folks chimed in about all the stories they knew or heard of people getting injured while not wearing protective gear, or saved due to wearing a vest. You have to read them to believe it, as they range from gross operator error to just one of those perfect-storm stories, but two threads stuck out like a sore thumb. One rider chimed in by saying there was never

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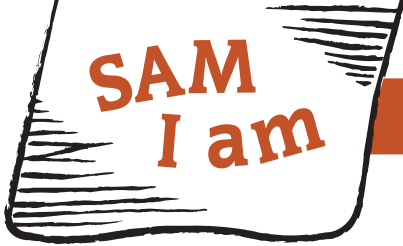
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anyone that regretted wearing one after having a mishap, or the ER doctor saying, "It would have been way worse if you were not wearing that vest."

Mountain riders have been using protective vests for years as the backcountry has way more booby traps and mines than we flatlanders see. Just think of it as insurance against unforeseen events.

So to wrap it up, I have one and won't ride without it. How about you? Rated three out of five carbides for its protection and confidence improvements and quality construction. Not quite light enough to make it feel like you have nothing on, and bulky to transport. 🐾



## Member Profile

BY TERRY HOLLAND

# Chris Marcinczyk



**Clubs:** Berkshire Snow Seekers, Savoy Canary Kats, Woodford Snow Busters

**Years snowmobiling:** 10

**Current snowmobile:** 2011 Ski-Doo XRS E-TEC 800



**VOLUNTEER WORK:** Grooming the goat paths around Pontoosuc Lake and up to Cheshire Lake. I have recently upgraded my personal sled-groomer to a 2012 Skandic E-TEC 600 WT from the 2003 I purchased in 2008.

Fall trail cleanup is my second most favorite time of year to be out in the woods, next to the middle of winter.

I also enjoy helping SAM by moderating the forums at SAM's website, sledmass.com, under the username cmarzy.

**FAVORITE RIDING AREA:** The Hill Towns of the Berkshires, Windsor, Savoy, etc. They usually get the most snow due to the high elevation. I also enjoy Pittsfield State Forest and hanging around Pontoosuc Lake.

**TELL US SOMETHING INTERESTING ABOUT YOU:** Being an adrenaline junkie, it may be hard to believe, but I enjoy yoga, too.

**TELL US A STORY:** One of my earliest memories of snowmobiling was in the early '70's. My aunt and uncle had two snowmobiles, an Arctic Cat Puma and a Scorpion. They kept the sleds at Goerlach's Farm in Hinsdale. The farm had a barn heated by a wood stove, where many riders kept their sleds. I remember there was so much snow that when my aunt let me drive her across Windsor Reservoir she said, "Whatever you do, do not let off on the throttle or we will get stuck." Later that day she let me and my cousin ride around the barn. It seemed like we could do it for hours. I got so tired that at one point I couldn't make a corner and drove the sled up on top of a big rock.

I have a calendar that I use all year round to countdown how many days until the snowmobile season starts. Of all of the motorsports/activities that I like ATVing, boating, camping, and so on, snowmobiling is by far my favorite. 🏍️

### SOUND OFF:

**Remember, snowmobiling on state and private land is a privilege not a right. Please respect this so our future riders can enjoy this sport as much as we do.**



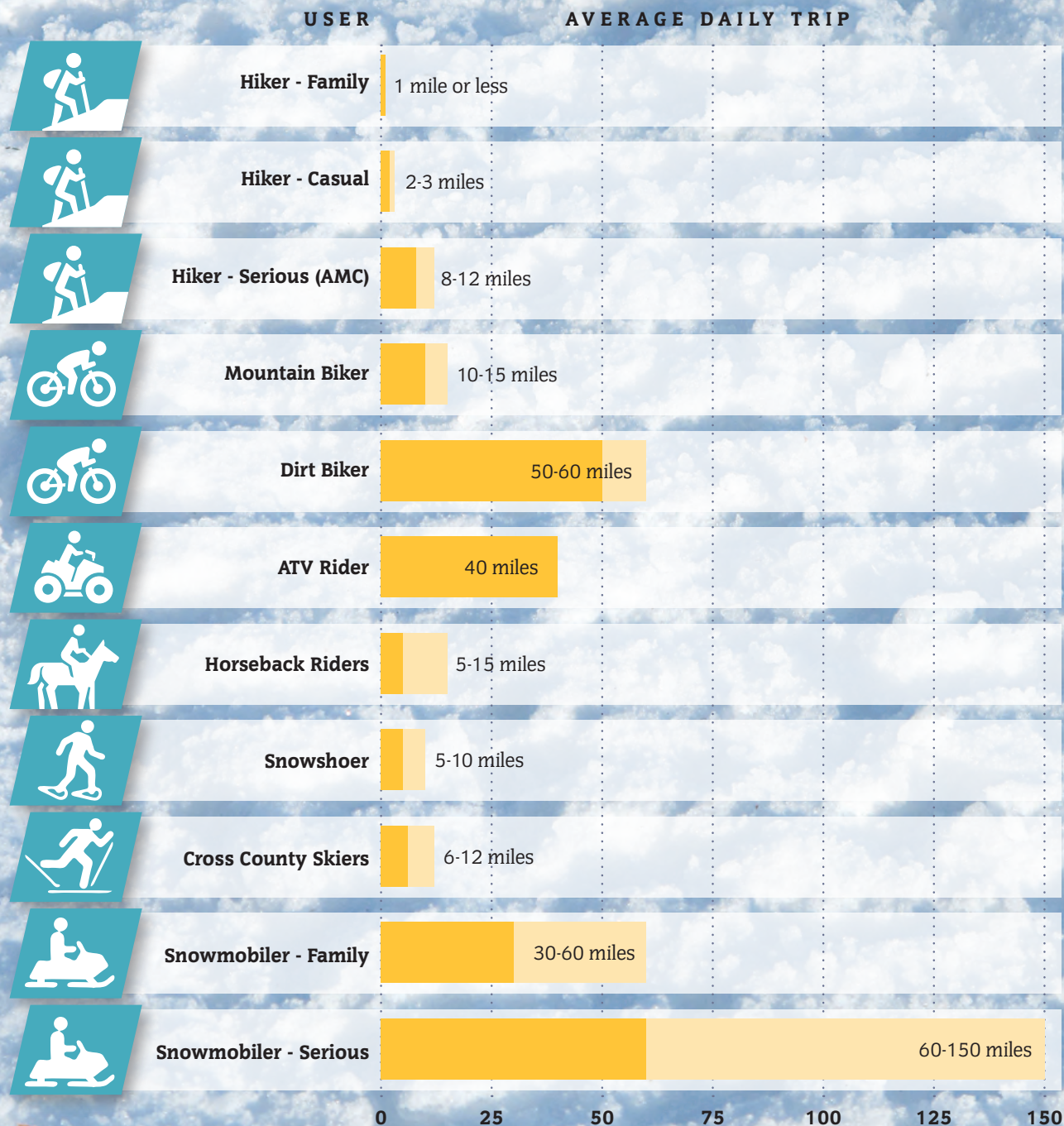


# Facts vs. Fiction:

Compiled by  
Randy Toth

Fight Misinformation

**MYTH:** SNOWMOBILERS HAVE PLENTY OF TRAILS TO RIDE.



**FACT:** SNOWMOBILERS USE TRAILS DIFFERENTLY FROM OTHER USERS AND THEREFORE REQUIRE MORE TRAIL MILEAGE.





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