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The Knox Trail booth at the Sled Expo was so big it required panoramic mode to get it all in! Photo by JIM RICHARD



The next generation of Buckland trail volunteers relax after a hard day's work. PHOTO BY STEVEN HOWLAND

# Club Photos

See Club News on page 3



Members of the Florida Mountaineers have fun handing out pumpkins to students at the Florida School.



The Hilltown Club gets festive while working the trails.



The Conway Snowmobile Club received a \$67,688 Recreational Trails Program grant to purchase a new Favero Snow Rabbit for grooming. Photo COURTESY OF FAVERO

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The Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts is committed to enhancing safe snowmobiling in Massachusetts.

Snowmobiling on the European-Asian Border By Dan Gould



## ON THE

A celebration at the peak of Mount Oslyanka in the Ural Mountains of Russia. PHOTO BY ROMAN SHTEFAN



### ONTHETRAIL

The Official Publication of the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts

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#### President's Message

BY DAN GOULD



Olga and Evgeniy Borodin knew exactly where to take Dan for a photo opportunity as they showed him around the City of Perm, Russia, near their home.

## **Moving Forward**

AM's leadership has been busy this year. The board of directors recently approved a new database management system that will give every club a powerful suite of software to organize the business end and communicate with members. It allows them to sell products and includes a robust mobile app. It can even be used as a standalone website for clubs that need one.

Better yet, club members will be able to login and manage their own account, order trail passes, update their mailing address for magazine delivery, sign up for e-news and directly contact the club.

Every club will have the tools to effectively and efficiently run their organization, it will be a major timesaver for our volunteers. The system will be in place this winter, although it will be a soft launch as we explore the power and features of our new toy. Stay tuned!

If you attended SAM's 2012 ISC in Sturbridge you probably remember Olga and Evgeniy Borodin, our special guests from Russia. Last winter I actually got to fly over and visit with them. Somehow we managed to squeeze a little snowmobiling in, too! It was an amazing trip, one that can hardly be explained in words, but I tried my best, starting on page 10.

#### ADAMS SNO DRIFTERS

#### by Chrissy Satko and Joe Rogge



We would like to share with you some information about our annual Christmas Party (December 10th). As we discussed our annual party we had several goals in mind: 1) keep it local, 2) keep it inexpen-

sive, and 3) have the focus be on food, friends, and charity. What we have done the past few years is to move away from a general "toys for kids" type charity to a process where we identify local individuals or families in need of support. A large portion of our September, October, and November Club meetings was devoted to discussion surrounding charities and the need for our support. A short time ago we developed a short "Charity Form" that we use in our selection of the charity we will support. We would like to remind other clubs of the importance of being an active club in terms of community involvement and providing support for various charities. On many occasions we spend more time discussing our involvement with charities than trails. We would also invite anyone reading this to join us at one of our club meetings be a part of our discussions. http://adamssnodrifters.webstarts.com

#### **BERKSHIRE SNOW SEEKERS**

#### by Randy Toth



Come experience the excitement of snowmobiling in the Berkshires. Our first class groomer fleet consists of 3 Tucker Sno-Cats, a Thiokol, a tracked ATV and 4 snowmobile-based groomers. Dues are only \$70

for each snowmobile (\$55 if you join before December 15) 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), 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 October Mountain State Forest, Pittsfield State Forest and the Windsor Area. Grooming reports are promptly posted in the SAM Forums by our trail coordinators within hours of grooming. See you on the trails!

#### **BERNARDSTON-GILL-LEYDEN**

#### by Brad Stafford, president



'Twas the months before winter and all thru the state... All the clubs are getting trails ready, make no mistake! The calendar pages are flipping faster than the leaves fell after that freak little teaser of a

snowstorm in October. Hopefully it got you all excited and you have great expectations about a snow-filled winter with plenty of riding. But those dreams need more than snow... they need

work. Your local and statewide clubs have been eagerly getting their part done and there is always more to do. Every year it gets harder to get everything done with the resources each club has. This year our club had some trail changes and lots of tedious light bridge repairs. We finished up making our second mini-truck "trail ready"... Thanks, Jeff! But even with the lack of riding last year, we have an overwhelming amount of trail clearing work to do. To help make your and others' dreams come true, keep an eye out on our Facebook page for work bee postings. I invite you all to our regular club meetings to see what happens behind the scenes at the Bernardston Vets Club at 7pm on the last Monday of the month, unless a holiday gets in the way. Until then, "Keep the Rubber Side Down."

#### **BUCKLAND RIDERS**

#### by Steven Howland, secretary



Winter is finally settling in and fall trail work is mostly behind us. As always thanks to all those dedicated to making sure trails are in top condition before the riding begins. That doesn't mean

the work ends though. Please join us at our monthly meetings, second Mondays of the month, 7pm at the Buckland Fire Station,



to help us plan future events, club rides, and more. Looking for something new to do in the winter? Why not get checked out on a groomer. Contact one of our club officers to find out how to do this. More information is on our webpage at bucklandriders.com

#### **BURGY BULLETS**

#### by Kevin Kukucka



Hello fellow snow lovers! The Bullets have been hard at work with finalizing trail work for the season. We had a very successful annual holiday dinner on Dec. 3 and collected a lot of Toys for Tots that evening.

We also had a very entertaining adult hayride in November. This was a ton of fun for all of us so-called "adults." Club meetings are still every 2nd and 4th Wed. of the month at 7pm. We have memberships and SAM passes available at the clubhouse and at Valley Motorsports. Events scheduled are as follows: club ride/family fun day on Jan. 14 and a Poker run on Jan. 28, both leaving the clubhouse at 9am. Don't forget our annual "Big Game" party and the Daytona 500 party with pot-luck dinner. Check our Facebook page for details and updates of upcoming events, or call Kevin 413-559-7920. Clubhouse winter hours start (depending on snow conditions) Dec. 30 and are: Fri. 6-10, Sat. 10-10 & Sun. 10-6ish. Thanks to all our supporting members that help make all of these functions both enjoyable and successful. If it wasn't for our core group, there wouldn't be a snowmobile club in our area. Get out and help your local club!

#### CHESTERFIELD FOUR SEASONS

#### by Bill Golaski, SAM delegate and treasurer



As I write this on October 28 we had just had a minor snow event. It's coming people! Things have been very busy this year at the club. We have had many people renting our hall this year, so please

keep in mind that we do have it for rent with a full bar. Reminder: get your membership and pass before December 15 to beat the price increase! Trail crews have been very busy this year as always getting the trails ready for riders. I did see a few new faces this year, but we always need more. Please lend a hand. We are excited to get our new Bearcat out grooming the trails. The new machine should really make a big difference. It never hit the snow last year due to the poor winter. We hope to have a club website soon. Once the riding season does hit, we hope to have the club open every Friday PM, Saturday noon to PM, and Sunday noon to 5ish. It's always best to call before you come as it is run by volunteers. 413-296-4048. Club events-2017: Game supper Jan. 28 will sell out, please get your ticket in advance. Groomer Benefit Dinner-Feb. 25 dinner with entertainment. Also, we are planning a Fish Fry sometime in March. Check the SAM website calendar for updates. Think Snow!

#### **CONWAY**

#### by Ed Skorupski



While 'tis the holiday season, Christmas came early for Conway Snowmobile Club. We were the lucky recipients of a \$67,688 Recreational Trails Program grant. With this grant and money we've been able

to save over the years, we will be purchasing a Favero Snow Rabbit. This groomer will allow us to cover more trail in less time with better results. We are all eagerly awaiting its arrival. Trail work has been ongoing this season with a significant amount of cleanup occurring after the October snow. Thanks to our volunteers, we have cleared most of the trails already and consider ourselves to be in good shape for the season. This doesn't mean the work is over, trail parties still meet frequently. Please contact the club and let them know what your availability is and we will link you with a crew. Trail passes are available: online at sledconway.com, at club meetings, or at one of our retail partners- Ray's Cycle Center, Bakers Country Store, The Sunderland Corner Store, Deerfield Sunoco, Neighbors Convenience, or the Hatfield Center Store. A trail pass is the perfect gift for your favorite snowmobiling enthusiast. For the latest information, like us on Facebook and follow.

#### **EASY RIDERS**

#### by Larry McCullough, treasurer



Happy Holidays! Let's all hope the Farmer's Almanac is right on their forecast of cold and snow, especially after last year. This season's snowmobile shows were great. Hope all of you were able to pick

up all of the items you needed for the upcoming season and your sleds are ready as well. The Easy Riders have been busy working on club activities and trips for this season. Our Christmas party is set for December 13 at the Moose Lodge. Tom is working on a long weekend to New Brunswick during their free weekend (1/20 - 1/22) and Bob is working on a trip up to Ft. Kent the following weekend. Check out our website ersc.net for additional information on these activities and more. If you have not ridden up north, the provincial free weekend or the Tri-State reciprocity weekend are the times to try out another state or province. Quebec's free weekend is 1/21 - 1/22, New Brunswick is 1/20 - 1/22 and the reciprocity weekend between Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine is 1/27 - 1/29. We invite all of you to come by and check out our club. Hope to see you at one of our meetings or on the trails.

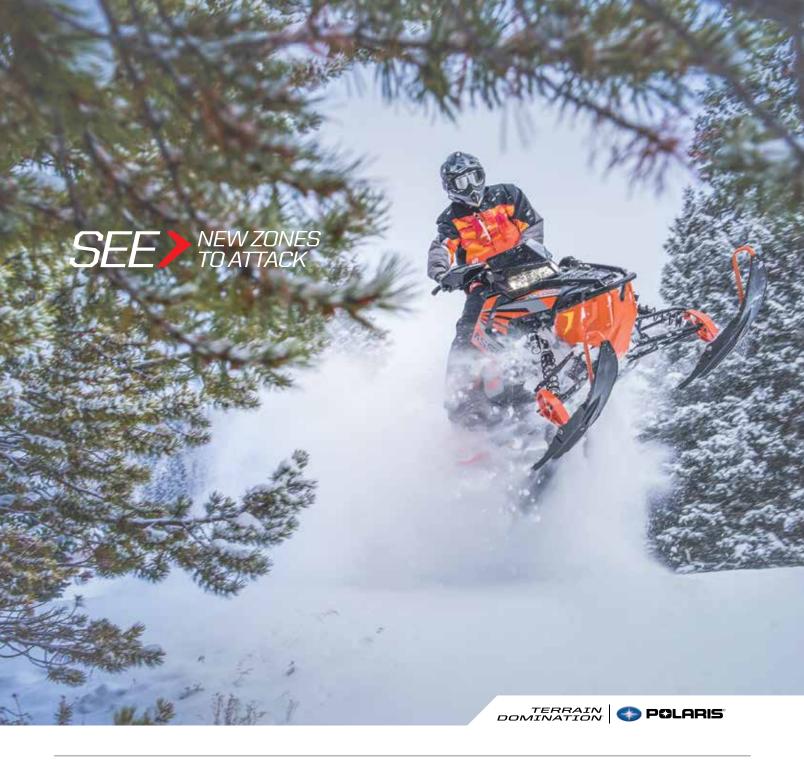
#### FLORIDA MOUNTAINEERS

#### by Tim Keating, secretary



Hello from the Mountain! On October 28, our club purchased, and handed out pumpkins to all 110 students at the Florida School, along with some extras for the school staff. While it was a rather raw

day, it was all well worth it to see the smiles on the kids' faces. This year we also gave donations to the Florida, and Monroe Fire Departments, and the Florida Senior Center. This is our club's way to give back to the local community for letting us do the thing we all love: snowmobiling. Trail work has started, we meet every Sunday at 9am. Please call our Trailmaster Nick Keating (413-662-2705) if you would like to join us and help out. We have had snow on the ground twice this year before Halloween, so things are looking promising! On behalf of the Florida Mountaineers, I would like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season! Think Snow!







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#### **GREATER WHATELY**

#### by Robert Sabola



We would like to wish you and your family a very happy and healthy holiday season. Take time this holiday season to hang out with friends and family. The memories you make will last you a lifetime.

You will be glad you did. GWSC Meetings: Second Monday of the month September through April, Whately Town Hall, 7pm. Email us at: greaterwhatelysnowmobileclub@aol.com or visit us at sledmass.com/club/greater-whately-snowmobile-club

#### **KNOX TRAIL SNO-RIDERS**

#### by Jim Richard, media director



Hello Sno-Riders! Winter is approaching and so is the snow! The club officers wish you a fabulous holiday season. Think snow! Records were shattered at the Sled Expo. SAM provided us with a huge booth.

Sales of trail passes, raffle tickets, and merchandise were just as large! The attention getter was Paul Richard's Subaru groomer and drag. Also, member Bruce Cooper displayed his unusual Chevy Astro power unit. Thank you to all who set up, knocked down, manned, and visited the booth! Directly across the isle was the Mass Vintage Sled display and judging. President Jeff Gamelli took the "Best Original Sled" award with his 1973 Scorpion Stinger. Members Mel Scuderi and John Ruffo worked constantly to make the vintage show the centerpiece of the entire Expo. Thanks





Mill Valley: Mill Valley members install a gate at the edge of an owner's property to keep out ATV's and other unauthorized trespassers.

guys! The club finally has a secretary. Paul Richard was elected at the Oct. 23 meeting. Thanks Paul! As I write this the 7th raffle is almost sold out. To all who entered, thanks! As always, volunteers are needed for trail work, groomer maintenance and operation, club events, etc. Would you like to help? Call the SnoPhone, go to knoxtrail.com, write to KTSR Box 363, E.Otis, MA 01029, or attend a meeting! See you on the trails!

#### **LEICESTER**

#### by Frank Bond, vice president



Hopefully by the time you read this we should have had our 1st meaningful snowstorm. As far as the club goes, crews are going out on Sundays to clear and repair parts of our trail system. People are always need-

ed to volunteer for this. Don't feel like an hour or two isn't helpful. Any little bit helps us keep our trail system going. This season especially it is vitally important to stay on the marked trail system. We have quite a few places that are very sensitive and our trail system could be lost forever if people don't follow the posted signage. Please tell friends and family to stay on the marked trail system. We are putting together our club events as I write this. Please check our webpage in the future for the latest events. Remember our meetings are the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7pm from October thru March at the Leicester Rod and Gun Club, 1015 Whittemore Street. This is a good way to meet everyone, we are a lighthearted bunch that all enjoy the same thing: snowmobiling. We also always need groomer operators. We only have a small amount of people that groom and extra help is always appreciated. Training will be provided. And as always think snow!

#### **MILL VALLEY**

#### by Nathan Sansoucy



As the weather gets colder, we look forward to welcoming winter. Even though we were teased with this minuscule amount of snow, we all realized it went away too quick. I know that everybody is

starting to get the itch to ride, but there is still work to be done before that point. Our trail crews have been working vigorously on cleaning debris and cutting back the past year's growth. We

and other safety apparel. Never drink and ride. C2016 Polaris Industries Inc.

are still encouraging others to help whenever, and however they can. With the help of our crews and the club, we have put up gates to keep quads out of landowner's private property. Thank you to those who are working with us to keep the trails safe and friendly. Furthermore, we are working on re-signing trails that they have gone missing, and replacing the old ones. As winter weather is approaching we all wish for lots of snow and hope everyone can get out there and enjoy the beautiful scenery that winter and the snow grants us. Ride safe and be courteous to the others that share the trails and enjoyment of riding and other snow activities.

#### SAVOY KANARY KATS

#### by Doug Decoigne



Well, we did get a little snow already, hopefully a good sign. The usual volunteers (most of them) are plugging away on trail work and preparing the grooming equipment. We could really use some

more help. The annual routine is every Sunday at 9am at the Savoy Store. We have much work to do! Every volunteer is appreciated if only for one Sunday. No huge projects on trails this fall, just routine trail clearing/de-brushing/water bars, stumps, etc. We are waiting for snow and our Christmas party, which is Saturday, December 3 at the Hilltop in Plainfield. Trail passes are available at Dalton Store, Ronnie's and Pittsfield Lawn and Tractor in Pittsfield, Ronnie's in Adams, Southside Sales in North Adams and the Savoy Store. \$55 per sled before 12/15/16, \$70 per sled after 12/15/16. We are raffling off a 2017 Ski Doo MXZ Sport, tickets

are \$20 each and are available at Savoy General Store, Ronnie's in Adams, Bennington and Pittsfield, LP Adams in Dalton, South Side Sales in North Adams and at club meetings. No more than 750 Tickets will be sold! Contact: info@savoykanarykats.org for tickets. Drawing is 1/28/2017. Think Snow!

#### WORTHINGTON

#### by Michael Sarafin, vice president



Well as I sit here writing this in the midst of an October teaser snowstorm, I wonder how many miles got put on in Worthington on the 5 or so

inches of snow we got. I'm sure there are some tracks in a field or backyard somewhere. I want to take this opportunity to remind everyone of the new SAM early bird trail pass discount in which you can get your trail pass prior to December 15 for \$55. Now is a great time to get those passes at the discounted rate before the price goes up to \$70 after the deadline. Passes are available at the usual locations, Knightville Package, Skyline Services and Listons. Also keep your eye out for our snowmobile raffle tickets. It's a great way to support the club and you could win a brand new Polaris Indy 600. We would like to thank Southside for their generous support of this fundraiser and we would also like to thank Callaway Golf for graciously supporting our golf tournament earlier this year, please give these companies a thought for your future needs. Reminder that meetings are the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month at the Worthington fire house at 7pm, we always welcome anyone whom would like to participate. Think snow!







# **Cruise Control** for a Drag:

#### By Jim Richard

A previous article featured a computerized drag control system for my groomer project. This part is about restoring a Subaru truck and adding tracks.

■ his 1996 Subaru Sambar minitruck started its life in Japan and found its way to Massachusetts where it worked on a tobacco farm. Mini-Trucks, also known as a Kei trucks, are versatile vehicles found in Europe and Asia and are made by many manufacturers. These micro machines are more reliable, maneuverable, and comfortable than the common UTV. The frame consists of two fully boxed rails that run front to rear. This platform is ideal for installing accessories such as receiver hitches, bumpers, and plows. The driveline components are robust. This model has a rear mounted 660cc engine and 6-speed manual trans-axle which feeds power to all the wheels through independent CV shafts. This configuration is compact, and provides optimal ground clearance. A right



hand driver position is ideal for trail edge visibility.

A rollover accident resulted in a dented driver door and crushed B pillar. The first step was to strip the interior and exterior of the vehicle down to access all body panels. Then it was time to pull the crushed B pillar. This long and tedious project required a panel puller, hammer/dolly set, and a lot of patience. Then it was time to trim the doors and body panels for additional track clearance. Several layers of body filler and

primer, and hours of wet sanding proved to be an excellent learning experience! The interior of this truck consisted primarily of beat up cloth seats and the pungent odor of a tobacco farm. All interior panels were repaired and painted. The floor pan and bed were coated with roll-on bed liner to provide a tough and maintenance-free surface. The seats were reupholstered with black vinyl and blue accent stripes to tie together the interior and exterior color scheme. What color best represents a Subaru? O2C Metallic Pearl! Also known as Rally Blue, this iconic color symbolizes Subaru's great racing heritage. Everything from paint preparation to gun settings gave me trouble. After investing many hours into a paint job that may last only a couple, I learned that a clear coat finish is only as good as your ability to operate a paint gun and the amount of time you put into sanding and polishing.

Electrical components such as illuminated switches, audio equipment, drag controls, and rear view camera display were installed. On the outside are LED headlights, light bar, strobe, and work lights. A two-inch hitch receiver on the front and rear secures a movable 5k winch. A special frame with a two-inch ball straddles the

engine compartment to pull the fifth wheel style drag.

A set of new Polaris UTV tracks were found on eBay for an incredible price. Instead of buying custom wheel adapters, I designed a set using Solid-Works, machined a fixture jig, milled the adapters, and press fit wheel studs for a grand total of \$100. Suspension lift spacers were fabricated from steel tubing and 3/16" sheet stock. The track anti-roll brackets were modified but the rear brackets required additional engineering. I was able to devise a bracket that could bolt on without

drilling or welding.

Having hammered and welded, milled and drilled, sanded and sprayed, and wrenched and wired for many hours, this old farm truck now sits high and mighty on set of all-season tracks with an updated interior and a racing inspired paint job. Why did I do it? Because life's too short not to invest a fistful of money and hundreds of hours of labor into a project that will provide thousands of miles of groomed trails for fellow Knox Trail Snow Riders. 📣

# A snowmobile getaway



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# The Ural Mountains of Russia

# Snowmobiling on the European-Asian Border

#### Story and photos by Dan Gould

id it! I snowmobiled in Russia, without a doubt the greatest adventure of my life. The invitation was on the table for years, problem is, I hate flying. So what changed my mind? Lack of snow at home and two friends named Borodin and Roman. You may wonder how one became friends with snow-loving Russians: simply by chance.

Snowmobiling is emerging in Russia, big time. Evgeniy Borodin and his wife Olga recognized the importance of organized snowmobiling, and wanting to better understand the inner workings of snowmobile clubs in the United States and Canada decided to attend the 2012 International Snowmobile Congress in Sturbridge. In 2011 they sent an email my way, asking if I could find an interpreter while they were at ISC. That's how I met Roman Shtefan of Westfield, who grew up in Russia and moved to Massachusetts years ago. Roman, who is now a U.S. Citizen, assisted the Borodins during their visit.

Evgeniy, I call him by his last name, Borodin, since it's easier to pronounce, got the snowmobile bug early and has been a professional tour guide in the Ural Region for eons.

Since snowmobiling is a universal language, we quickly became friends at ISC. He insisted I fly over and ride with him. I said, "some day" not really convinced I could ever make such a grand trip. Four



The iconic domes of Saint Basil's Cathedral come into view upon entering Red Square in Moscow.

years later, on March 20, 2016, Roman and I landed in Moscow aboard an Airbus jetliner. The non-stop flight was relatively short, about 9 hours, and only cost \$404, round trip. No kidding.

As hungry as I am to snowmobile, Roman insists we spend a few days in his hometown, the capital city of the Russian Federation, population 11.9 million. Moscow has a rich blend of historic and modern architecture, it's beyond impressive. We meet with Roman's best friends Mike and Max for a night on the town, Moskva style.

Our first day consists of a field trip on the Metro, the subway system, which didn't sound exciting at first. Once underground, that changed. Every station within the city is an art museum unto itself. Each time the train door slid opened our senses were over-





Grand chandeliers hang from an ornately decorated ceiling in the marble subway station in downtown Moscow.

whelmed by absolute beauty. No litter, no unsettling odors. Instead of ugly billboards there were galleries of paintings, mosaics, sculptures and stained glass... in a subway station! Everyone in the city is dressed sharp and is polite.



LEFT: Never walk far from the packed snow of your sled or risk being trapped. Igor Zapivalov and Evgeniy Borodin take a break in a tree dotted meadow. See additional photos and out-takes online at sledmass.com.



Igor Zapivalov, Evgeniy Borodin, Roman Shtefan and SAM President Dan Gould pose before their first day of riding in Russia.

SNOWMOBILING IN RUSSIA

**Day 1:** The first day of snowmobiling is casual, we leave directly from the driveway of Borodin's suburban home down the snow-packed road into a series of fields. Igor Zapivalov, an expert snowmobiler and jack of all trades, joins us. The ride is familiar in some ways, like at home, except the trails connecting fields are mostly footpaths. After getting somewhat acclimated to the big sleds, we stop for lunch at a rustic farm that serves an amazing assortment of home made meat dumplings, mushrooms, cabbage and other specialties.

From there we travel to the Khokhlovka Museum, which is surprisingly similar to Old Sturbridge Village. The structures date back to the late 1600's. The log buildings, which include farmers' huts. a windmill, and several churches, were dismantled from their original locations within the region and reassembled at the open-air museum. The village is anchored by a historic salt manufacturing plant, the economic driver of that period. Only gold was more precious than salt.

Back at Borodin's place we hit the sauna, then enjoy a masterfully prepared feast by Olga. Borodin winds his vintage phonograph, spinning records from the 1930's and 40's as we indulge in Russian caviar,

That night we dine in style aboard a yacht on the Moscow River, floating through the heart of the city under starlight, sipping wine on the Royal Flotilla as it cruises by the Kremlin.

The next day Roman decides to sneak me deep inside the Kremlin itself, to see what goes on behind the towers and brick walls. Actually, he bought tickets and hired an expert English-speaking guide to lead us on a tour of the historic compound, which traces back to the 12th century. We stroll past Vladimir Putin's office on our way to the Kremlin Armory, a staggering museum of antiquities, packed with royal carriages, the gowns of queens, historic armory, treasures and jewels, some dating back to the 5th century. I learn that many of the riches were hidden, mostly buried, before Napoleon's invasion

in 1812. The Russians defeated the world's largest army by setting fire to crops, stores and bridges as they fled Moscow, thus denying the French army of basic resources. The tactic worked, as Napoleon had to retreat before winter or face starvation.

Hungry ourselves, we have lunch at a Cuban restaurant, then walk Red Square, the historic downtown marketplace where the colorful onion domes of Saint Basil's Cathedral dominate the sky. We witness the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where the remains of soldiers killed by invading Nazis in the Battle of Moscow are buried.

On Wednesday we fly to Perm, a twohour jaunt east, where we are greeted by the Borodins, whom I haven't seen in four years. It was an exciting reunion, magical in so many ways.

moose squares with horseradish and puff pastry inside his impressive man-cave. We stay up late, maybe too late, listening to Moscow Nights and other Sinatra-esque recordings from back in the day.

Day 2: This is where the adventure starts, as if traveling to the other side of the world has been anything but. Igor's Dodge Ram Power Wagon is packed and hitched to the four-place trailer. He points to the truck and in a thick accent say's "Hemi." Trucks like this are non-existent in Russia. It costs more than double what we would pay at home but it's one of the few vehicles that meet this motorhead's needs. Snowmobiles are expensive too, the average price in excess of \$25,000.

On the way we stop at a roadside vendor, picking up a bouquet of fresh birch branches with leaves still attached and a gallon of bright green fruit drink which I found out later was actually windshield washer fluid. I have no idea what the bouquet of sticks is all about.

Three hours later, just before sundown, we unload at a ski facility in the town of Kizel, at the foot of the Ural Mountains.



With no gas stations or services in reach, supplies have to be hauled to camp.

It was finally time to ride, or so I thought. Within 50 feet the headlight on Roman's sled goes kaput. "Hey, this is just like snowmobiling at home," I say. Neither Borodin or Igor (pronounced eager) understand the humor. They flip the hood, grunt, replace a fuse, and away we go down a logging road.

Within few miles we see lights, which turn out to be the logging trucks, one stopped with a mechanic underneath. The road is little more than eight feet wide and the snow banks are just as tall. There is no way to squeeze by. Borodin throws his sled into low range and slowly slices a path straight up the vertical bank, making several calculated up-and-down runs until he's able to crawl up... then disappear. It was dark, I wonder if we might have lost our guide to a black hole. A few minutes later Igor's two-way radio sounds off with Slavic directives. Igor points at me, shouting my name, "Den-Yell," indicating it's my turn. The Lynx Yeti under my fanny is freighted with hundreds of pounds of gear and extra fuel, I have no clue how it handles but I'm guessing like a hippo on skates. I gas it up the wall, then quickly slam the brakes at the apex. There was indeed a giant hole on the other side, a 40-foot downward slope. Borodin's flashlight is visible to my left. I follow his path, squeezing through saplings that bow aside to the mighty Yeti. Little did I know that blazing new trails would be the norm.

Underway again, the full moon is our guiding light to the Urals. About halfway to camp we stop for a breather. Borodin



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The dome in Rassolny had plenty of character and was the perfect place for snowmobilers to relax.



The only sign we see all week points to the domed hunting camp in Rassolny.

opens his jumbo saddle bag and presents Roman and I with a cork-covered cup, embossed with a polar bear, the seal of Perm. He fills them with hot tea, then delivers a wonderfully warm speech, a toast, welcoming us to his homeland.

We arrive at a domed hunting camp in Rassolny, the architecture which resembles the works of Dr. Seuss. It only adds to the "pinch me, is this real" sensation. An hour later Vlad Klekner and Sergey Valeev walk in, just in time for a dinner of traditional borscht soup, fried squid, rice and liver. These guys are off-road adventurers and recently traveled 26-daysstraight by 4x4 on an Arctic expedition to the northern most point in Russia. Sergey opens a jar of his homemade pickled cabbage and makes a toast over Armenian liquor with a wedge of lemon. We hit the



After a day in the saddle, Sergey Valeev entertains us with guitar and traditional Russian folk songs.

bunks early, completely psyched for our first day in the mountains.

Day 3: In the morning I find Borodin outside draining gas cans into the sleds and contacting home via his satellite phone, our only source of communication. Wired electricity doesn't exist, a generator powers everything at the lodge. Cell phones? You must be kidding.

The trip starts along the banks of the Kosva River, we stop briefly by an enormous rock face for photos, then shoot into the woods, breaking trail in 3-4 feet of snow for an hour-plus. Suddenly Borodin slows, looks around, and points a single finger in the air. We all know this means shift into first gear, low range. We are about to travel into something big.

Passing through a line of trees we find abandoned homes, half buried in snow, many crushed to the ground. As we slow, Serg runs into a dilapidated barn, toilet paper in hand. Not a good sign. We travel further into the lost settlement of tiny log

Parking our sleds on Lenin Street, the main drag in the former town of Bolshaya, we take in the beauty of Oslyanka Mountain. I explore a few deserted cabins while Igor calls back to Serg by walkie-talkie. Igor, who speaks some English, says "not good." I dig into my bag of tricks for Imodium, something I never travel without, and hand it off to Igor, who delivers the goods. Talk about building international relationships, Sergey and I are now friends for life. You could say I did him a solid!

With that behind us we ascend Oslyanka. It goes from gentle incline, to steep, to vertical. There isn't a trail or marker in sight. Borodin advises to follow his path and never get off the throttle. I go second, barely keeping him in sight. The depth of snow varies from a few feet to bottomless. Woot!

It becomes apparent that a few in the group are stuck somewhere below. Borodin and Igor go back to help, leaving me atop a mountain ridge in Russia, all by myself. I hope they come back.

Everyone finally makes it to the ridge, just above the timberline, where we break for lunch. Dark bread with a distinct molasses flavor is complimented with slices of soft cheese, almost butter-like. I ask what kind of cheese is this? They are amused by my limited palate. It's sliced pig fat, I'm told, smoked to perfection, a high energy snack. I'm so hungry I pretend not understand and simply enjoy my cheese.

Stuffed like hogs, we ride up a never-ending slope into the heavens. Visibility decreases rapidly but Borodin leads us through a lunar surface of snow, rock and ice, piloted by his sixth sense of terrain interpretation. The line between earth and sky disappears in fog, when a couple of dark objects make their omnipresence known. At the peak are several rock formations, somewhat reminiscent of Stonehenge. We celebrate as if we discovered the prehistoric monument for all mankind.

Back at the dome dinner brings a few surprises. The table is decorated with pickled onions and cabbage, and whole

salted fish, as in uncooked with eyeballs staring back at you. Delicious, I say! Sergey supplies the entertainment, plucking an acoustic guitar, as we move on to a bowl of log-man stew. They tell me that a spoon will stand up on it's own if it's good stew, and it does.

What I thought was dinner was apparently nothing more than a snack before the banya, a traditional wood-fired sauna with an adjoining room to hang out and continue the feast. After sweating it out, my new friends run outdoors and dive into the snow. Crazy Russians. Not to be outdone, I follow suit.

That's when they ask if I've ever had a real banya? It takes little more than a blank stare to answer their question. Back we go into the 199 degree sauna, except this time they are beating the daylights out of my back with those mysterious birch branches which are dipped in boiling water the moment before impact. The ritual continues, this time drenching the tree limbs in ice water and whacking some more. It's invigorating, it improves circulation, and it dates back to A.D. 906.

In case you missed it, banya night consist of food and more food. Sergey slices cold-smoked deer meat that he hunted and prepared himself. He's proud to share with us. The conversation of the day's snowmobile adventure quickly turns to stories from past rides. Borodin listens as Vlad and Igor tell jokes. Roman is interpreting as fast as he can. Later we hang outside in our shorts, barbecuing chicken and pork, as if it's a balmy July evening, not 15 F. These guys love winter.

Day 4: Vlad and Sergey head home while the rest of us prepare for an overnight saddlebag trip. Not long after veering onto a cart road we find a group of cigar smoking sledders. This will be the last time we meet other snowmobilers. We stop, and of course they all know Borodin. We're in the middle of nowhere and yet he knows everyone! Turns out he's guided them on several snowmobile expeditions before, introduced them to this very riding area. They easily figure out I'm from the United States, then insist we have a toast of vodka. Truly a warm welcome but I still had bacon caught between my teeth from breakfast, and we don't drink on the trail, so we politely decline.



The Lynx Yeti is a known work horse. Borodin proves it has a playful side, too.

Continuing on the cart road we come at a halt where the trail cuts across a shallow valley. This is the geographic border separating the continents of Europe and Asia. We are riding Babinov Road, established in 1597. It was the first direct route linking Moscow to Siberia over the Ural Mountains, opening trade and allowing Russia colonization of the region. Tsar Feodor, son of Ivan the Terrible, was so impressed with the flow of commerce that he excused Artemy Babinov from paying taxes ever again.

It's safe to assume the famous explorer never imagined that snowmobilers from the other side of the planet would be indebted to his trail 419 years later, but we are.

After cruising in fresh snow for a period far longer than I'm accustomed to, Borodin slows, then cuts to the right, directly into the brush. We follow him, aiming the sleds towards a distant stand of trees, then into a field, discovering another abandoned village of log homes. This one far more deteriorated than the other, and the snow is getting deeper.

A half hour passes and Borodin slows again. He stares at his handlebar mounted GPS, looks back at us, then disappears into a narrow gap between the evergreens. If we were boondocking before, what the heck are we doing now? I understand there are no trails in this part of the world but this is extreme. There isn't a single clue of anyone ever traversing here, we are making our way through thick forest, muscling the machines between obstacles in the narrowest of space.



Get your sled stuck in the U.S. or Russia and the response is the same. Laughter and humiliation!

The trees open up a bit and we pop onto a cart road, but there is a 15 foot wide washout, about four feet deep. Shifting into low range, we ever so gracefully crawl down the ledge into the rocky stream. It takes Borodin several attempts to break the steep snowbank on the other side, which makes it easier for us. Igor, who takes up the caboose in case anyone needs help, crosses last. His Ski-Doo smells like a roadside grill and it wasn't some new 2-stroke oil. It's time for shish kabob, cooked to perfection on Igor's exhaust pipe, some of the best I've ever had.

The average elevation hovers around 1,000 meters today, about that of Mount Greylock's peak. The snow deepens to the point that we have to stand to keep the sleds from tipping. We are riding 156 inch long, wide-track sleds with fully articulating rear suspension, the epitome of stability, yet it feels as though we are performing an Olympic routine atop a balance beam.



Mother Nature leaves its mark in the strangest ways. Tree snowballs are a common sight as the elevation climbs.

Terrain varies from hilly meadows to dense stands of trees. It's snowmobile heaven. It's sensory overload. This is snowmobiling in Mother Russia!

A stop for tea traps us in waist-deep fluff. Jumping up and down drills you to armpit depth instantly. In order not to drown, one must walk on snow already packed by the Camoplast tracks, but even then gravity plays a dirty trick once in a while, pulling you to the other side of the earth, which in this case, would be somewhere near Massachusetts.

An impressive monument welcomes us to Kytlym, a rural village of log homes contrasted by a backdrop of modern apartments, about 160 miles west of Siberia. Our rustic cottage is heated by a traditional Russian oven in the center of the living quarters, complete with a warm tea kettle. We settle in for a home-cooked meal presented by the inn keeper.

It's been a long day, I inquire about the facilities. I'm told to go out the front door, take a right towards the banya... and there you go. So, I grab my favorite snowmobile magazine, take a few steps towards the door and find myself being ridiculed with laughter. Seems I misjudged the opulence of our lodging. I was given a flashlight and a roll of paper, then warned not to lose my balance once inside the outhouse. Balance? I don't recall the travel brochure mentioning this.

With that over, I settled in for the night, dozing off in a wood-heated cottage with a giant bearskin tacked to the wall.

Day 5: There is nothing like waking to six inches of fresh snow, especially if you have nothing better to do than ride all day. Snow is already halfway up the windows of our cottage and piled 6-8 feet high along the castle-like palisade fence. There isn't a snow blower in sight, only shovels. The ladies that run this place are to be respected.

My breakfast consist of three eggs, six pieces of ham, a loaf of bread, crepes with sour cream and tea. Igor and Borodin eat fried eggs in one gulp, an efficient technique I'd never seen before. I couldn't eat a fraction of it, then became concerned about the ability to lace my boots without injury.

Today we play in the big-boy sandbox. It starts on what I would describe as the world's longest set of power lines. The territory is vast, it goes on forever. We simply ride wherever we want - wherever it makes sense. The terrain is a hilarious mix of mounds and gullies, an infinite playground of fluff.

Roman, who is off to my right, vanishes. It looks as though he got sucked into the center of the universe. There must have been juniper bushes far below that gave way. Igor radio's Borodin to wait up, we had a major extraction to perform. With a manufacturer's dry weight of 700 pounds,

plus the custom gas rack and gear we schlep, this Super Wide-Track weighs at least 1,000 pounds, which sounds far worse than 450 kilos these guys are estimating. Panting like Siberian Huskies in August, we strip down to our t-shirts and swear in Russian - which sounds really bad - until we finally coax the winter mule free.

The rest of our day is spent exploring high elevation meadows with a few long breaks for socializing, which can be somewhat like a game of charades. The rules do allow drawing stick figures in the snow. Borodin has a subtle but deliberate sense of humor, which pretty much describes his snowmobile philosophy. He is prepared to the max, yet unfazed by dips in the trail. He wishes fellow snowmobilers would organize like SAM and develop a trail system but most don't understand the benefits yet. In that regard, he is a pioneer in his country.

Before heading back to camp we fool around, carving corners, laying the sleds over on the side, with several notable fails. These big rigs were never intended to be play machines and the added weight of supplies only amplify their utility roots, but it's fun. Roman and I agree, we are coming back in 2017.

**Day 6:** The logging road on the return trip is freshly groomed... but wait, there aren't any groomers here. We zip along for miles, carving our way along the only real trail of the entire week. Next to a stack of logs is a bulldozer. My comrade Borodin, anticipating that a week of logging operations would have turned the road into a rutted mess, arranged to bulldoze the entire trail for our final ride back. He truly is the Tsar of the Urals.

Roman and I wing back to Moscow for one last night before going home, taking in the opera Carmen at the world famous Bolshoi Theater. The words "opera" and "snowmobile" aren't often mentioned in the same story-actually this may be the first time ever-but it was nothing short of a spectacular cultural experience, another unforgettable moment. They say it ain't over until the fat lady sings and nothing could have been closer to the truth. I think she waved goodbye.

Interested in snowmobiling in Russia? You can connect with Borodin at snowmobilerussia.com or contact me at sledmass@gmail.com.

When it Snows! You Just Gotta Go

#### By: Iwana B. Riding (AKA Randy Toth)

uess what honey, it's starting to snow," I called out excitedly to my spouse. "Get up, get out of bed and get ready! I just filled the sleds with gas and oil. Let's grab the old helmets and go for a ride."

"Did you remember to put the state registration stickers on the sleds?" asked a sleepy voice.

"Not yet," I answered. "I think they're in the pile of stuff on the kitchen table. We can get them on our way out the door." Let's get going.

"What about the state registration paperwork you're supposed to carry with you?"

"They must be with the state registration stickers on the kitchen table." (I hope.) "Come on, let's get going!" I pleaded.

"Do you have the S.A.M. trail pass stickers on the sleds?"

Darn! "Not yet, but I'll put them on before we go. OK?"



"Don't forget the S.A.M. trail pass paperwork while you're at it."
"OK. OK." I shouted. "I found them. Now let's get going before the snow all melts."

"What about the club stickers for the sled? Do you know where they are?"

"I put them on the sleds last week. Stop stalling. Let's get going. I think it's starting to get dark now."

"Do you have the club membership cards?"

"No the S.A.M. card serves as the club membership card. I always carry it in my wallet right next to your picture dear," I shouted. "Everything is ready, but you! Please, let's go!"

"Have you loaded up the sleds on the trailer yet?"

The trailer! Where did I put the trailer registration decal? Oh darn, I didn't put the new one on yet. Now where did I put the trailer registration? I can't find it in the truck. "Honey, did you happen to see the state trailer registration stuff?" I asked hopefully.

"It's with your sled. I knew you'd probably lose it so I put it away for you."

"Way to go honey, I'll give you a big hug when you get downstairs. Now can we please leave?"

"Are we heading up north?"

"Yes, we'll unload in Massachusetts and probably ride up into Vermont if it doesn't get too dark by the time we get there."

"Did you remember to put the Vermont Trail Maintenance Assessment (TMA) stickers on the sleds? Do you have the Vermont TMA paperwork with you? How about the local Vermont club stickers? Do you have our Proof of Insurance Cards? Do you have our Safety Certificates?"

Some time later, my spouse was reported to have said "I'm all ready to go now. Where are you?" [Picture silence; broken only by the sound of a truck with a snowmobile trailer disappearing down the road into the late afternoon sun.] "Dear," she called, "I just remembered, I forgot to pack a lunch for us. We'll have to stop at the store and get some food before we start out. Then I can make lunch for us and we can finally get going. I can't wait to go riding with you today. I'll be down in a minute. Hey! Why is my sled sitting out in the middle of the driveway? Dear? Oh Dear?"



#### **Member Profile**

## Michael Sarafin

**VOLUNTEER WORK:** I have been volunteering with the WSC and SAM with my family for as long as I can remember, I also volunteer with the Massachusetts Truck Pullers Association and sit on the advisory board for the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School Manufacturing Technologies program.

MY FAVORITE RIDING AREA: Right in my backyard in Worthington. I enjoy seeing people I know riding on the trail system that I took part in making. It makes me proud.

**TELL US A STORY:** When I was in 4th grade my parents brought me to Mount Snow to see the X-Games snowcross races. I was so excited to see Blair Morgan, who rode a Cat at that time. I can remember seeing Blair and the 7C come out on the track for the first time practicing and not believing my eyes. We stood on the side of the mountain all day long watching every lap and in the final some no-name kid named Tucker Hibbert took the gold medal and Blair got silver. I was a little disappointed by the 2nd place finish but the kid who won rode an Arctic Cat so I was ok with that. After the race I got the back of my Arctic Cat coat signed by both Hibbert and Morgan which I proudly wore to school every day, and still own to this day. It may not fit anymore but the faded autographs are an awesome reminder of the time we went to Winter X and also that I saw the start of some of the best, if not the best, riders of all times pro careers.

#### **TELL US SOMETHING INTERESTING ABOUT YOU:**

I have a career as an aerospace machinist

and make parts for a wide variety of aircraft, everything from passenger planes and Learjets to the latest military fighters. If you've been on a plane or had one fly over your head, chances are there is something I made on that aircraft. On the opposite side of the coin I don't have a normal pet like most, no cat or dog for me, my pet is my 1,500 pound Hereford cow, May.

**SOUND OFF:** I would like to take the chance to say to all of those out there who don't take part in participating in a club, that you really should give your local club a chance and a fraction of your time. None of this is possible without those volunteers and it's actually a lot of fun, believe it or not.



Club: Worthington Snowmobile Club

Years snowmobiling: 22

Current snowmobile: 2011 Arctic Cat Sno Pro 500

Sled mods: Currently stock, added a tunnel bag for storage.

**Club position:** I was recently elected as the Treasurer of SAM. I've been Vice president of the WSC for 8 years. I also handle writing the club newsletter and club news in the SAM magazine, keeping our membership list up to date as well as distributing passes.

#### Marketplace





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