

## **Iron Dogs of the Mid-West Ride**

### **Hayward's trails and lakes.**

**by Tom Anderson**

They started showing up Sunday afternoon. Trucks pulling trailers loaded with snowmobiles and with great expectations for three days of cruising the snow trails and frozen lakes of Hayward, Wisconsin. This was not the first time they had experienced the area's vast winter scenery.

They were members of the Iron Dog Brigade, "an honorary society dedicated to the fun of snowmobiling", who were there to honor their motto. And honor it they certainly did. Making the 2017 Ride were: Bob Linn, Larry Shepherd, Bruno Andreini, Ed Skomoroh, Dennis Nauman, Bob King, Judy King, Les Ollila, Tom Anderson, Dale Vagts and Ken Stewart.

Led by the "local Dog", Dale Vats, who has a second home on the other side of the lake, the Dogs gathered for the welcoming dinner at the Chief Lake Lodge. They were all staying next door at the nearby Pat's Landing Condos and had rented an extra room there to be able to gather and tell tall tales in a private setting away from the bar.

Away from the bar??? Seemed like that was amply solved by a variety of snacks and liquids brought by the members to enjoy without a bar tab. While the Super Bowl was on the big TV, renewing friendships and catching up with each other was taking precedence.

Monday, following breakfast and introduction of our guides for the day, we donned our cold weather gear and fired up the sleds for a full day of adventure and touring Sawyer County trails. Under sunny skies and perfect temps in the 20s, our band of ten Dogs and 11 guests in fell in behind the local guides and headed across the lake and into the woods.

This area of Wisconsin is loaded with big lakes scattered throughout the area. Many lakes are separated with short portages from one to the other. So our mounts did not have a problem with carbon build up! While enjoying the twisty, wooded trails, it is exhilarating to be able to take advantage of the power today's sleds have as you zip across the lakes.

Lunch at Lost Lake Lodge got us refueled for the afternoon's adventures. Many times we crossed the 30-50 feet wide, cross-country ski trails used for the annual Birkiebiner cross country ski race that draws thousands to the Hayward area each year. Unfortunately, the race was cancelled this year due to lack of snow. A warm spell came in just after our ride and

took away both ski and snowmobile trails. The phrase "lucky dogs" certainly applied to us for this ride.

The afternoon's ride continued to provide great scenery and wonderful trails. The system is numbered for easy directions going to many resorts, lodges, restaurants and through towns. It is fairly flat terrain with elevation varying from 1,500 -1,600 feet.

We parked the sleds for the day with 80+ miles of adventure behind us as the Dogs headed for their condos to prepare for dinner back at the Chief Lake Lodge. We finished off the day gathered in the extra condo room for a night of more tales and recounting the day's activities.

Tuesday a fresh inch of snow greeted us, then a light mist just before lunch at the Sawmill where we had our own private room. The afternoon saw two more inches of snow so the trails were very pristine as we headed back on a different route across more lakes and through the deep woods of the area. Sawyer County has a rich history of major logging camps of that past era. Many of our trails were on those old logging roads that have been preserved for multi-use trails. Again, trails were in wonderful condition. Well, there was this one section that was nasty. "Good to shake loose my constipation," remarked one unnamed Dog.....

Our final day, Wednesday, had the guides taking us to Hayward for lunch at the Trails End Resort. But not before we passed under the open mouth of the huge musky fish that marks the International Fishing Hall of Fame building. It is so big that tours are given inside of it.

These could be "old Dogs", but at an intersection on one of the big lakes, several of the sleds somehow wound up in a line similar to a starting line on a race track. Someone then dropped a glove and.....well you know. For Ken Stewart, our oldest rider at 82, Wednesday's highlight was him hitting 102 miles per hour with his big Cat ZR1 Turbo as we all zoomed across one of the lakes. No trophy, but we sure heard about his bragging rights!!

Our final gathering was dinner at the Lodge and then heading back to the condo for a brief review of the ride. A tradition on these rides is the awarding of the "Crapper" award to the Dog who had the misfortune to miss a turn, run out of gas, kiss a tree or another sled, etc.

We had a problem this year as nothing like that, or any other boo-boo happened. The only thing that we could find any sort of fault with was that twice our guides made a wrong

turn. Since Dale Vagts had hired the guides, it was decided that he should be honored with the Crapper award. It was also somewhat fitting as he had designed a very attractive (?) toilet seat and cover for this year's ride.

Sadly, on Thursday, the Dogs loaded up and headed back home. Sleds had turned about 240 miles, scenery had been wonderful, trails exceptional, after dinner visits with fellow Dogs very entertaining and the "honorary society dedicated to the fun of snowmobiling" had lived up to its motto.

Guests of the Dogs were Brian Carmichael, Sally Carmichael, Scott Nauman, Carol Nauman, Brent Nauman, Marilyn Andreini, Ron Patton, Joyce Vagts, Marie Linn, Jean Skomoroh, Scott Anderson, Sarah Anderson, and Earl Klersy.

Next year the Dogs will journey to Babbitt, Minnesota on February 25-28 for the annual Mid-West Iron Dog Brigade 2018 ride. More details will follow but mark your calendars for these dates.

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