

## **EARLY SNOWMOBILES OPENED THE WORLD FOR OUTDOORSMEN**

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How often have you heard the saying, "Born 100 years too late"? Most of us can think of at least one aspect of our lives where it applies.

I believe it may be true for much of my life with one exception. I was there in my prime with an occupation and hobby that maximized it to the fullest. It was the advent and development of the first practical snowmobile.

Like the conibear trap, it took little time to access its potential to anyone with the same interests in the outdoors as myself.

Dick Barrett, to the best of my knowledge, was the first person in the area to own a practical model. George Elthorpe and I soon followed suit.

It was in the early 60s and my first machine was a single track Bombardier that sported an eight horsepower Kohler four-cycle engine. I bought it from Ed Trombley at the Lyons Falls Away for \$700.

They may have come a long way since then, but for my purposes it would have been hard to improve. A dependable workhorse, it paid for itself many times over. In short, it was a utility vehicle that made life much easier.

To begin with it was light weight and easily handled by one person. It was able to traverse all types of snow conditions without benefit of a laid track.

A little woods engineering added to its versatility door handles were added to the Bottom edge of the cowl kind a rear bumper with a trailer enabled one person to extricate it from unavoidable situations. A storage compartment added under the seat held my snowshoes. D-rings were added to the upper edge of the cowl to which packs of beaver could be tied.

No restrictions existed on State land for snowmobile use for the first years of its inception. I took full advantage of the circumstances and expanded my horizons beyond my wildest expectations.

It was an era never to be duplicated in New York State and shared by few. I am sure the experience is still possible in many remote areas of the world.

I have mentioned the word "practical" in conjunction with early snowmobiles. Many of the first models proved impractical in actual use. A dealer provided me with an early model that was very useful under ideal conditions, but was useless under adverse conditions. Its successors proved to be one of the most popular modern-day models.

Snowmobiles have brought real change to the area, both positive and indefinite. The economy reflects the positive with even the most vehement detractors agreeing.

Everyone is aware of the down sides and most of us are will to accept them, faced with the incontrovertible benefits.

Cost is the one area that troubles me and I do not refer to the monetary cost. That pales compared to the loss in human life expended. They seem to be inordinately out of proportion with other forms of recreation or sport.

Those who will ultimately have to address the problem have my sympathy and thanks. To make a long story short, they will truly be between a rock and a hard place.