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A trip across Michigan's Upper Peninsula

By Joel Slezak

On February 11, 2012, three local guys set out to do something that had not been done before. They were planning to take their vintage rear-engine "iron dog" snowmobiles across the entire length of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Gary and Dennis Slezak of Fruitport and Terry Church of Ravenna had spent the last six months or so getting the snowmobiles completely restored so they could take them on the trip. They spent countless hours after work and on weekends working on this project. They completely tore down the engines and had them rebuilt so that they would be able to handle the conditions on the trip. Other replacement parts included new tracks, sprockets and bearings.

Gary would be riding a 1963 K95 Polaris, with Dennis on a 1963 Arctic Cat Model 250, and Terry on a 1965 Polaris Super Pacer. The average speed of these sleds is not very fast, less than 10 miles per hour. It is like driving your riding lawnmower across the U.P. at a slow speed.

On February 11, the guys left Fruitport and headed 550 miles and 14 hours north to Ironwood, Michigan. When they got there, the snowmobile trails weren't in the best of shape, so they decided to start the trip in Wakefield, which is just a little farther east.

On the morning of the 12th they were finally on the trail. The first morning was cold, only about three degrees out. The sleds would stay mostly on the marked

snowmobile trails, and they tried to keep in contact with two chase vehicle trucks that were following them on the main roads. These trucks were driven by Joe Kuzniar, Sr. of Fruitport and Fred Cole of Irons, Michigan. The first day on the trail, the guys went 55 miles in 11 hours, and at one point, had to be pulled up a steep hill by some newer snowmobiles just outside the town of Rockland.

The guys continued their way across the U. P., going through L'Anse and then on to Ishpeming. The deeper the snow, the better the sleds seemed to perform.

As they made their way to the town of Gwinn, the snow conditions started to get pretty bad. At times they were riding through mud and gravel. They proceeded to head towards Munising, and at one point ran out of gas; but thankfully the chase team was close by and got them on their way again.

They continued on, from Shingleton to Seney, and eventually on to Newberry. The trails were getting quite bad at this point, and the guys decided to make one last push and headed to the town of Paradise in the eastern U.P., where they finally ran out of snow.

They had hoped to make the Mackinaw Bridge, but there was no snow at all to do this. The guys ended up making it 325 miles in nine days. The sleds ran practically flawlessly and they got to meet a lot of great people along the way, while seeing a lot of great country.

The guys say they hope to do it again sometime, only with better snow conditions. •



Terry Church, Gary Slezak, Dennis Slezak, Fred Cole and Joe Kuzniar in Paradise, Michigan.

Local discounts for older adults

(Courtesy, North Ottawa County Council on Aging)

Applebees - 15% off for 60+ (with Golden Apple card)

Arby's - 10% off for 55+

Burger Crest (Fruitport) - 73¢ coffee or pop with food purchase for 60+

Burger King - 10% off for 60+

Chili's - 10% off for 55+

Culver's - 10% off for 60+

Denny's - 10% off for 55+ and 20% for AARP members

Dunkin' Donuts - 10% off for 55+ or free coffee

Golden Corral - 10% off for 60+

IHOP - 10% off for 55+

KFC - free small drink with any meal for 55+

Long John Silver's - various discounts at some locations for 55+

McDonald's - discounts on coffee every day for 55+

Steak'n Shake - 10% off for 50+ on Mondays and Tuesdays

Subway - 10% off for 60+

Taco Bell - 5% off for 65+ and free beverages

Wendy's - 10% off for 55+

Great Clips - \$3 off haircuts for 65+

Super Cuts - \$2 off haircuts for 60+ •

International missionary Tom Braak receives local donations

By Pam Mettler

Although Haiti missionary Tom Braak has wrapped up his recent visit to west Michigan to speak about Faith In Action, the organization he founded in 1997, work towards his mission continues with recent news of donations and building plans for a new Faith in Action International Development Center.

Since his visit, a group of girls at White Pines Elementary School in Grand Haven collected money for water filters; and students and audience members attending a recent play at Reeths Puffer High School donated money into a special "prop" used for a school musical. The money collected will be used to purchase a water filter to be sent to Haiti.

Trent Klairter, Reeths Puffer drama instructor, said that one thing that really "stuck out" with his students was the need for clean water to stem the cholera pandemic. "I think what really shocked the kids the most was how 'cheap' the water filter was, but in reality — for Haiti citizens — that was a real big deal," said Klairter.

For more information, visit:
www.faithinactionint.org. •

MSU Extension develops oil and gas leasing webinar and DVD

(Submitted by MSU Extension)

An oil and gas leasing webinar (narrated slide presentation) that discusses what landowners need to know about oil and gas leasing is now available at www.msue.msu.edu/oilandgas. It is entitled "New MSU Extension Oil and Gas Leasing Video." Many sections of leases are negotiable and can be altered, if the landowner has the knowledge to know what pitfalls to avoid in a lease. The presentation discusses some alternatives to the language in the "standard" oil and gas lease that many landowners may find helpful. By knowing what terms are acceptable to other landowners you can negotiate your own terms that are consistent with your goals.

As a property owner, when you read the oil and gas lease you are offered, do you understand what you have read? Landowners who have never dealt with leasing their mineral rights for oil and gas production, upon reading a lease, may find that they have difficulty understanding the lease language. Determining the impact that the lease terms have on potential income from not only the oil and gas, but surface facilities and pipeline installations can be difficult to sort out. How can the environmental integrity of the property such as water aquifer quality, soil erosion and location of oil and gas wells relative to buildings, homes and agricultural operations be minimized?

There are key words and phrases in the oil and gas lease that relate to all of these situations. Before any exploration can begin, the landowner and the oil company must negotiate and agree to the terms regarding the rights, privileges and obligations of both parties throughout the exploration and production stages. Negotiation of these terms may be a landowner's first exposure to an oil and gas lease. Because of the complex legal nature of the leasing process, novice landowners may be at a disadvantage when dealing with an experienced land man or oil company. Finding resources to aid in this process could help to relieve some of the stress and may help lead to a better win-win lease agreement.

With the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources Communications, this same presentation is available as a DVD. The DVD can be ordered and sent to you by calling Oceana County Michigan State University Extension at (231) 873-2129. You can also order the DVD by e-mailing vanberg2@anr.msu.edu. There is a \$10 charge for shipping and handling. •