

Day one – Trailer to Rockwood – 98 miles (by sled)

It was once again time for the bravest of the Casco boys to ride into many a sunset, over a number of miles unthinkable by many. Mother nature and the mechanic gods dealt us a few 19 hands, but we prevailed.

Aligned with historic nature we depart dull and late (opposite of bright and early?) with sleds in tow. As one member required parts, we stopped at Cove-Side Wheel & Ski in Newport, Maine for an unexpected treat. We were greeted with an impressive display of 60s, 70s, and 80s vintage sleds. www.covesideatv.com, www.retrosno.com That Johnson was like the one my dad finally bought after much coaxing, as I recall.

We arrive at the Birches, Rockwood Maine at around 1PM and check into our cabin named "Feelin Groovy".

Moosehead was windblown and bare. It was not the Friday night zoo we saw last year. With enough time for a 100-mile shake out loop we decide that Moosehead trail loop might be a bit over ambitious and head over to Kokadjo and down to the B52 crash site. Route 66 was it's usual awesome, but ITS 86 down to the site was horrid. Lot's of logging going on. We checked out the crash site and headed back the way we came. I guess Matt and I were enjoying Route 66 coming back a bit too much. I saw Matt's headlight go out and knew this was not a good thing. His sled is down. Sucked in a reed we think. I tow Matt the 15 miles back to Rockwood, ouch.



Shameful, but the best shot I got of us all week. I just figured out how to do this. Camera on the helmet. Tuff to frame.



Don't think these are bogie wheels off a snowmachine!

←----- Where it all began for me.



Day Two – Feeling Groovy to Never on Sundays – 15 feet

That translates to: From cabin 5 to cabin 6. Day two, or one not sure which to call it. Lest to say I was not feeling well. OK, more like there was no way I could ride. I don't know why exactly, but this kind of thing always happens to me. I think it must be psychosomatic. I get worried about the what-ifs. I'm convinced it's a phobia, I'm working through it. Meanwhile Matt's situation is much worse than we thought. His exhaust valve worked its way loose and fell down into the cylinder. New piston, jug, etc....Ummm, and can you do it today? Cha Ching, Cha Ching. Things aren't looking good. We're waiting for the final nail in the coffin. Charlie's out figuring out Rockwood. Up Kineo down Kineo, I think he missed the spot where the lake ends and the cliff begins. Oh well, next year. I wish I'd drudged myself out there.



Feelin Groovy



Never on Sunday's. Damn right, we're outta here by Sunday!

Day Three – Rockwood to St. Jean-Port-Jolie – 246 miles!

Quite the dilemma. We're a day behind – our reservations are skewed by a day. The only way to get back on track is to skip Thetford Mines and ride all the way to the night 3 location. Ouch. We could shave off 40 miles or so by going direct, but still a long haul. The TC 75 trail was quite awesome and we did make up the time. It was a rush hitting 5, but the mighty St. Lawrence River was rather lackluster. It was windy as heck, and the drifting was bouncing us all over the place. And it was COLD as heck!!

How can I describe this cold? Granted, I don't have the most modern clothing, but I had every piece I brought on my back! The wind would find every leak in your protective barrier and amplify it 10 times. The locals were dressed up like us just to go to the convenience store. They have to plow the roads 24/7 even when it doesn't snow, because the wind keeps it drifting. Ok, so I was only there for one day. I'm sure at least 5 or 6 days a year it's nice and calm there.

The Motel la Seigneurie was like those shelter buildings you see at the South Pole. It was like a tent shelter with metal pipe and canvas/plastic all around the thing. Nice idea to keep the gale winds out, but noisy as heck. It would constantly bang around all night. Now, I know what it's like at the South Pole. I was glad to move on.



Too much snow maybe.

Ya baby, the other side..---->



Going in.....



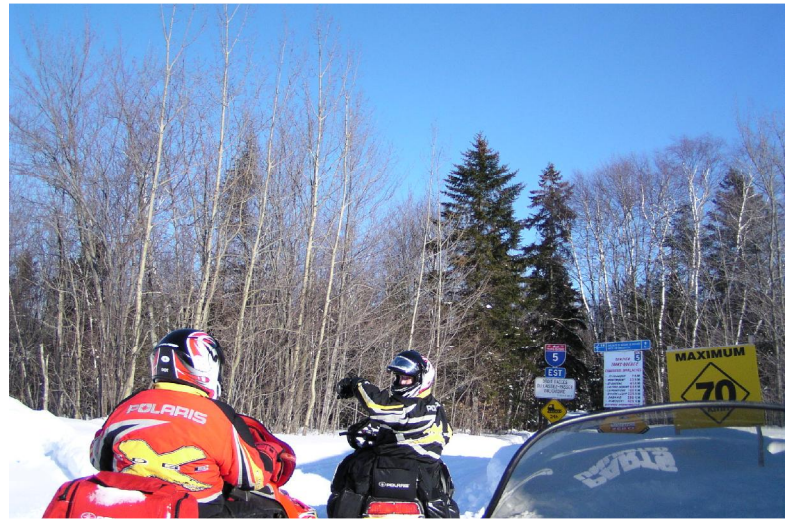
Got snow, baby?



More Day Three Stuff.....



After the 2 days ride in one. Yeah, A little tired.



Hitting Route 5 and ON SCHEDULE



Don't laugh, I saw another one selling for 18K!!

Day four - St. Jean Luke Pecarde to Fort Kent - 151 miles

Back on track and time to bid farewell to the tundra. It was a pretty easy ride to the border. It was a little unnerving getting close. Not much signage. I guess they don't want you to leave. The trail goes all the way to the border and runs alongside it for a while. So, we knew we were either going the right way or the opposite. The officers weren't as pretty as their Canadian counterparts, but it sure was easy. They just took a quick glance at our licenses and gave a bunch of shooten the breeze. "How'd you blow up a Liberty?", they said.

The trail up along the Alagash River was breath taking, and no wind. We sat there and almost coaxed some deer into coming up for a visit.

It was nice to have an easy day for a change. The railroad track up fromwas nice, but almost boring. Matt and I ran side by side for miles. (whoops is that legal?). Tracks in stereo....too cool.

Northern Door Inn at Ft. Kent is awesome – a keeper for sure.

<http://www.northerndoorinn.com/index.php>

Keeping in spirit we parked our sleds on top of the snow bank. We got the "you must be the ones that parked on top of that 6' snow bank" a couple of times. I couldn't figure out how to do it justice with the camera.

Matt was feeling a tad tired... or something like that...after dinner, so we took the opportunity to allow him to express his preference in snow machine manufacturers.



Back on the border



Northern Door Inn, Fort Kent

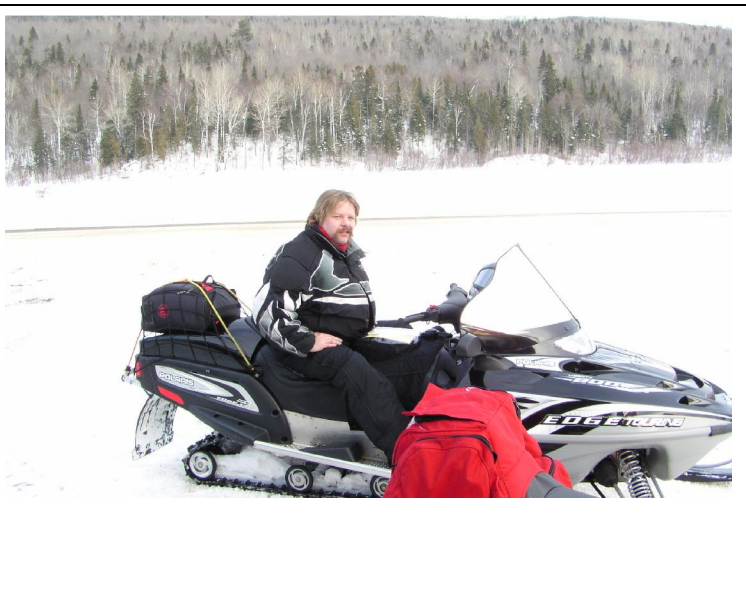
More Day Four Stuff...The Alagash.



Border cutten it.



The Deep.



Day five – Ft. Kent to Shin Pond – 147 miles

Back to been there, done that territory. Pretty easy non-eventful ride down through Portage to our traditional lunch spot. I'm pretty sure the two same guys were there that were there 2 years ago eating meat loaf. I might have ordered it if it weren't for my soft spot for lobster stew.

After the traditional stop at Oxbow Lodge to marvel at the animals it was on to Mt. Chase Lodge for our anticipated dinner.

<http://www.campstorent.com/chaselodge/chase.html>

Rick and Sarah were off seeing their youngest win her way to the state basketball championship, but we were left in good hands. When I clean my plate AND it's chicken you know it was awesome. My wife will surely freak when she reads that. Then it was off to our roomy cabin and not so prosperous games of cribbage, well for me anyway. Guess if money was involved I might not have been as careless, but Charlie was killer. Need I say Mt. Chase is a keeper? Let's hope this Quincy person doesn't screw things up. I hear she has 180 million and wants to use it to create a legacy for herself something like Baxter. But, she doesn't want to allow hunting or motorized vehicles on the property, which is quite huge. All of the major snowmobile throughways could be paralyzed. So, essentially you cut off all winter access to the area. You can't get far in a day on cross-country skis or snow shoes. I'm not a hunter, but I don't think many of my ancestors would have survived without it – it's a part of our heritage.

We certainly wouldn't want to hunt these beautiful animals to extinction, but I certainly hope we have that under control. It's one of those consequences of freedom, where a rich (insert bad word here) person can buy up all the land and destroy the livelihood of thousands of people. I imagine this must be a rare case where such a huge tract of land became available all at once, but it is certainly devastating.



You might see this one in the MSA newsletter.



The food is unbeatable at Mt. Chase



As are the cabins

Day Six – Shin Pond to The Forks – 195 miles

Ah, well this day was a near miss for Mr. Navigator (me). Not physically of course, navigationally. Anyway, read on. Two years ago on our first jaunt, a local told us about an extremely cool trail through Baxter SP. The images going down Abol camp trail are still so vivid. This year wasn't quite the same. Furthermore, last year our belt escapade into Millinocket kept us out of Baxter. I found the unmarked right turn past the main gate onto the Tote road just fine, but the left turn onto Abol trail was eluding me. I hate to give up on something, but the possibility of running out of gas in the middle of Baxter was growing. I started dropping weigh points and it became quite obvious we were on the northward leg of the loop. Too bad, because the scenery was awesome. I can see us spending 2 days at Mt. Chase next year and doing the Park Tote road loop for sure.

That was one thing that crossed our minds a few times. Pete and I have crossed the state (and points beyond once) three times. Maybe it's time to slow down and do more local exploration.

So, we turn tailed and headed back to the main trail. As we passed through Kokadjo and descended on the trail we experienced on the first day, we knew the conditions were not good, plus it was all southward from there. I expected to run into total crap.

But, that wasn't the case. South of Greenville the trails were pretty screamer.

We made it to Three Rivers

<http://www.threeriverswhitewater.com/> with lots of time to settle in and have a relaxing dinner. This was the beginning of the unbelievable hospitality we received there. Three rivers is a keeper. It started with simple friendly treatment in a comfortable atmosphere. That gets complimented by an awesome dinner. Really, they aren't paying me to say this either. I'll get to the extremely helpful part later since there is some preparatory verbiage required to lead up to it.

After dinner Charlie and I rode our machines across the short field from the pub to our cabin. Matt and Pete finished their phone calls and whatnot. Apparently Matt, while trying to keep his doggy bag from falling off, hit a tree. He was going plenty slow enough, and didn't get thrown. But, of course it



An ice flow on Doubletop Mountain. The Appalachian trail is up there somewhere. Picture just doesn't do it justice.

doesn't take much to crunch a cowling in. As the pipe was bent too we figured we better leave Matt and his sled and swing by with the trucks and trailers on the way home.

Well a few on the staff at Three Rivers heard about it and offered to load up Matt's sled in their truck and take it up to our trucks since they are going near there anyway! Well I gotta say that's way above and beyond the line of excellent service!! I'll make sure I tell everyone I can about that for them.



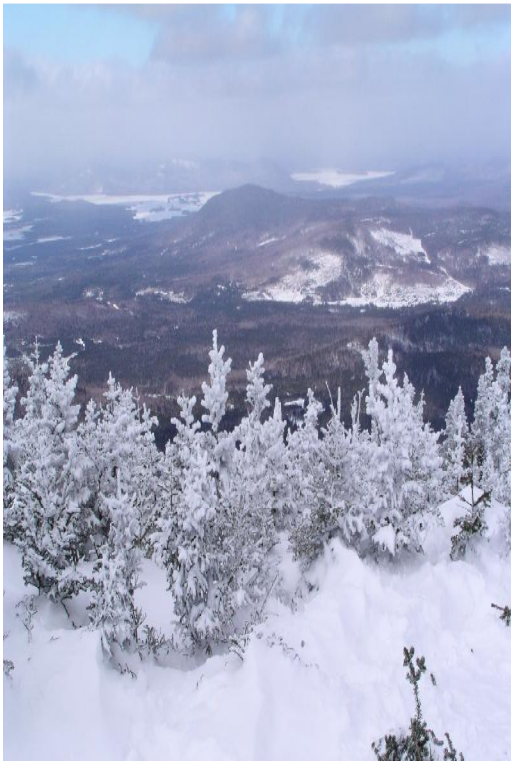
Mr Shovel, help Charlie!

Day Seven – The Forks to Rockwood – 90 miles

Can't think of a whole lot to say about this day. We rode back to the Birches and up Mt. Coburn in between. Charlie had his little mishap. Pete had one too, but I didn't get a pic. It was pretty tough getting Charlie's sled out. Guess I'll just throw in the pictures I couldn't fit up above.



Mr. Coordinator on top of Mt. Coburn



Whoops. Mr Shovel, help Charlie.