

THE VINTAGE EDGE

YOUR TOTAL MOTORSPORTS MAGAZINE

By Dan Wulff

While driving to Ft Knox, KY, with my old friend Kevin Weitzel, we talked about pretty much everything. We caught up on old times and eventually, as always, talked about old snowmobiles, new snowmobiles and just about anything related to snowmobiles. This is our passion. Yet, we also were deeply reminded of the war our country is in and how fighting terrorism has brought forth so many brave young men and women to serve our Nation and keep us safe.

How could parents, who once served in the military, now pass the torch on to our children? This is why we were on this trip, to see my son, Robert "Spud", graduate from Army Basic Training, and then say "goodbye" once again, as he went off to Georgia for more training, then three more years on active duty. Kevin is Spud's God Father and has seen our son grow up to be a man.

It was during this trip that we talked about bringing back a grass drag race, vintage show and swap meet to Albert Lea, MN. "How about giving everything we earn to the troops?" I asked. Kevin had a big smile and replied, "That sounds great." It was at this point that the Vintage Pride Show was born.

Kevin worked feverishly bringing other folks to the table to make this event happen. The discussion/decision occurred in May and now we were looking to bring it to fruition by September. Rookie guys trying to pull off a show with less than 4 months of planning didn't hamper our spirit. Kevin immediately contacted his cousin, Kevin Weitzel. Yep, two Kevin Weitzels that are related. (You would have thought the parents would have solved this issue years ago) Anyway, I will refer to them as Kevin



Members of American Legion Post 56, Albert Lea, MN. Color Guard prepare to officially start the day's event with the presentation of our Nation's Colors.



The Finishing Touch for Antique & Vintage Snowmobiles.



DQ (Dairy Queen owner) and Kevin Roofer. Kevin "Roofer" had been involved in the vintage scene for several years and his knowledge was indispensable for making this event happen. He was relentless gathering silent auction items and spreading the word. He contacted Rick Weaver, also a veteran vintage sled guy. Travis Boesch, a vintage sled gear head and team mate volunteered to help with the races. Larry Fisher, another team member of Sheer Determination Racing, and local business owner, also answered the call for help. It seemed as if the entire town of Albert Lea stepped up to make sure the event happened. They were driven by the opportunity to give back to the troops. I was simply amazed at how many folks cleared their schedules to give time and donations to the event. Large businesses, small businesses and families gave of themselves selflessly. I only wish the service members could have seen how much the community cares for them. It was truly inspirational and heart warming.

On a personal level, I had asked my brother, an Albert Lea High School graduate as I, to come to the event. He asked if he would need to be in uniform. He explained that if he were in uniform, he would pay for his own transportation, as he could not accept any "gratuities" as a representative of the Army. I thought to myself, how can I ask my brother to fly here for one day and have him pay for it himself? I felt like a schmuck, but told him that I thought it would be very nice to have him in uniform, but totally understood if he said no. He didn't hesitate and said he would be there for the event.

I hadn't seen my brother Tim in six years, as he was deployed to combat zones and was also stationed in Germany for over three years. So, the day before Vintage Pride, I picked him up at MSP Airport. We went to my home in Lakeville, after several shopping trips to find and gather Minnesota sports memorabilia. Tim is a huge sports fan, but never has been a great snowmobile enthusiast. He came home for family, friendship, and soldiers and apparently shopping.

Bright and early Saturday, we headed down to Albert Lea for the show. We took this time catch up on many things. We laughed, joked and spoke soberly about cops, soldiers, etc... Our lives had changed considerably in the six years that had passed since we last saw each other, yet it seemed like just a day or so had passed since our last meeting.

Upon arrival to the show, Tim immediately jumped out and began thanking everyone around. Here we were, trying to thank him, but he went around thanking us. How does that work?

The Legion Post in Albert Lea attended with their Color Guard. Promptly at 1000hrs the sounded "To the Colors" bugle call, while

Top photo: The vintage sleds were truly unique and rare. Included were Fred Smith's World Champion 73' Blizzard, a rare Team Decker's 81 Formula, which was an actual campaigned race sled that was unrestored. Rick Weaver's beautiful Rupp Rebel, Rik Stocky's immaculate Skiroule and many more great vintage snowmobiles were on display.

2nd photo: Fred Smith and his team talk about the up coming race season with Dan Wulff.

3rd photo: Rik Stocky donated a vintage Eagle River trophy for a "Soldier's Choice Award". The 76' Ski doo SnoPro of Sheer Determination Racing was honored to receive the award. Pictured from left to right, Colonel Tim Wulff (Army Active Duty), Specialist Laite (34th Inf.Div, MN National Guard), Dan Wulff, (Retired Bomb Tech) Note: Tim Wulff refused to vote because he did not want to show any favoritism.

4th photo: The Three Stooges couldn't begin to describe this group that is the inspiration for one of next year's races. Driver, Kevin Weitzel, SteveAnderson and Dan Wulff show the proper form for the Three Up Race on a beautiful Massey.

raising the American Flag to mark the official start of the event. What an honor to have those veterans show up for the presentation of the Colors.

The show drew in some really fantastic veterans of the snowmobile industry. Mike Decker, of Team Deckers, the most winningest race team in snowmobile history. Les Pinz, driver for Scorpion snowmobile race team during the hay days of snowmobile racing made the trek to the show. (I even got him to sign my copy of Race & Rally's book, Best of Sno Pro 1973-1978) Fred "Bullet" Smith was on hand with his champion race sled, 73' Blizzard. All three of these legends shared stories and spoke with all of us. It was awesome to hear how the old factory teams designed their sleds, what it took to be a factory driver, etc... They were just like the rest of us there.... normal patriotic folks with a passion for snowmobiling.

The weather was sunny and cool, despite raining several days before and after the event, the weather on the day was perfect. Families showed up to climb the rock wall and run the obstacle course brought by the Minnesota National Guard. The Guard's support for the event truly made the event for the "troops".

Food vendors were on hand and swappers began to show up the night before. Sledgers were running up and down the

Chuck Root holds on for dear life as he flies down the track on his Herter's Rocket sled!



Colonel Tim Wulff, a 1980 graduate of Albert Lea High School, returned just for this event as an honored guest. Tim recently returned from a tour in Afghanistan and is now stationed in Alabama.



Charlie Root's Speedway Blue ran awesome and was frequently out front in the races.

grass drag strip. Head to head challenges were made and sleds of different eras ran against one another. It was pretty darn cool to see mid 70's Rupp run against modern Skidoo Revs. All I can say is that that ole tired iron from days long gone, aren't as tired as you would think. Some youngsters might have been dealt a couple of life lessons from some ole Speedway and Rupp.

For the first year ever, we were very excited about

the turn out. It was both a very personally rewarding day as well as just an all around great family day. We raised over \$6,000 dollars and after a few bills were paid, we figure the troops will buy quite a lot of, Beef Jerky, Gummi Bears, etc... All sent to them, courtesy of the snowmobiling community. It really doesn't get any better than that!

So, are we doing it again next year? You betcha. My brother, Tim, the Colonel, said that we should maybe consider doing this for the Police, Fire Fighters and Teachers of this great nation. We'll see. All I know is we will continue to give all the proceeds back to the folks who serve our country.

On a parting note. I can guarantee we will have some pretty darn fun and goofy races next year. Already in the planning stages is the "Three Amigos Race" which will involve three passengers on a 1975 and older sled. Maybe even a "blind" two person team race through several obstacles or a backward/reverse race for the sleds with reverse. So dust off those old sleds in the barn and bring them next year. I'm sure we will find some event for it to run. If we don't have an event planned, we will invent an event that day. The one guarantee we will make is that you will have fun.

Thanks again for all the support and most of all, thanks to all of those who server the great nation of ours.



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