

Doug Lubahn and Vintage Snowmobiles

When did you start collecting vintage sleds? Rode my first snowmobile, a 1966 Sno Jet single cylinder Hirth powered sled at a friend of mines in Okemos Michigan—I was hooked. Another friend's family had 2 mid 60's ski doos- and we rode them every night after school and even got to take them "up north" to Cadillac to his grandparents and rode on some so called real trails. It took me a few years, but I finally convinced my parents to get a snowmobile – a 1970 Ski Doo Olympic 335 from Wohlfeil Hardware in Saginaw. (we moved to Freeland in 68)

Our family had a small cabin on Houghton Lake – and we had 5 sleds within a few years- and every weekend was snowmobiling on the trails and on Houghton lake. College/life/kids life etc. was such that stepped away from snowmobiling in the mid 80's and came back in late 90's – when Sue and I bought 2 new Arctic Cat's and started trail riding often with Jim/Louise Kelts – and we all joined OHSC in late 99 or early 2000.

We did many sled trips with the Keltses all over Michigan and many with the club. Including one with a larger group to West Yellowstone. I got bit by the "vintage sickness" in early 2000 when I found a couple of nice Arctic Cats (1970's) in central Ohio- the rest was history.

How did you get interested? I had always loved Arctic cats from late 60/70's and the passion that Arctic Cat built with its followers. I really loved all the early race sleds from Cat. I soon started to focus on all the small engine 250/290/295 race sleds from Cat—Z's, EXT's, Sno Pro's and Specials. Before I knew it, I was saying "I quit counting at 100" – when asked how many I have. And my collection was expanding down to the early 60's and into the mid/late 80's sleds too.

When did you start showing them at your house? In the Vintage Hobby – the first real group was VSCA- Vintage Snowmobile Club of America and they had an amazing website. There was an event for a few years called LOS Live on Ski's up in International Falls MN. Larry Preston (grandson of Polaris founder – and founder of the VSCA website) had reached out to a few key players and asked who would like to host a similar event in their states. Michigan had 2 sites picked—our house in Lapeer and a location in SW Michigan that only hosted for a year or so.

We had our first LOS in 2007 and hosted it for 5 years- up to 2011. Had to take one year off as I broke my leg just ahead of the event. We have 30 acres and use of our neighbors 50 acres of nice wooded rolling terrain with lots of trails and lots of parking. I plowed snow for all the parking, and Sue prepped the garage and made her world famous sloppy joes. Lots of folks brought dishes to pass after the first year. Our last year here at LOS Lapeer was 2011 and we had about 110 people and over 130 sleds at our house—it was official—we outgrew it and time to move it to the Club.

I was already a Trustee at OHSC and had sold the idea to many of the board members- some still had doubts – but those were quickly diminished after our first year OHSC Vintage Snowmobile Show and Ride 2012. We had great attendance, great feedback, gained lots of new members and started building a very solid reputation in the hobby.

How big was your first show? The First show that I helped host was called Mid Michigan Vintage Snowmobile Show & Swap by Erskine Marine—in Hope Michigan and 2004 was our first year- this show quickly became a must attend and it was the official "kick off event" of the hobby as it was first weekend in August. We ran this show until 2015 – when we proudly hosted the 2015 10th Annual VSCA National Championship at the Midland Fairgrounds. These shows were all cohosted with my best buddy from Jr high onward – we met in Freeland in 8th grade and still great friends to this day.

What antique clubs do you belong to; ASCOA Antique Snowmobile Club of America; VSCA, and we have been supporters of the Top of The Lake Snowmobile Museum in Naubinway pretty much since it started. I'm a life member of MSA/MISORVA and have joined many regional small clubs when visiting/riding in those areas.

How many sleds do you have? Stop counting at 100.

What other cool related vintage stuff do you have? Tons of helmets, suits, signs, books, small memorabilia, photos, owner's manuals/service manuals, oil cans, tow behinds/cutters, old covers, and of course tons of parts and stuff.

I have had a strong interest in the 1967-68 Plaisted Polar Expeditions to the North Pole since reading about the first one (1967) in Nat Geo in jr high. Sue and I got invited to attend the 50th Anniversary event in Duluth MN of this global achievement – first confirmed attainment of the True North Pole by man on 4-19-68 by Ralph Plaisted and 3 others in his expedition.

What is the oldest sled you have? 1966 Arctic Cat – have a model 100 and a model 170D. Had a 1963 Bonham Spartan (1 of 25 ever made) that is now in a MN collection.

What is your favorite? 1966 D100 – I am 2nd owner and it's ridden by many at every show and by all of my grandkids as they grew up from Kitty Kats to 120's then to this, then to Jags, then to other sleds. -(FYI: Kevin and Janet Sessink have ridden this sled to park cars at our shows)



Do you take them to any other shows? Yes many other shows. I have also hosted the vintage display at the Amway Grand Hotel in Grand Rapids for the MSA/ISC international conference a few years ago. It was the first time sleds were allowed in the building up on the 2nd floor. 4 days in middle of a hot summer but what a blast Bryan and 2 other key collectors helped with this display that was awesome.

I helped organize and we showed sleds at the Gilmore Car Museum in their "winter fest" a few years ago—another amazing experience.

I was 1 of 4 people that met for over 2 years and we wrote and got passed the Historic Snowmobile Registration law of Michigan—which now has brought out over 8000 old sleds onto the trails and helped promote countless winter events all around the old sleds.

Why is collecting and showing them so attractive? I love the stories and the nostalgia and the people. It's often said, and I firmly believe that the snowmobile itself is just a vehicle to bring people together. There isn't anything as beautiful and soul cleansing as a ride out in our wonderful Michigan Winter Wonderland- truly nothing can compare to this hobby. Having a good old fashioned day out in the Michigan winter is a pleasure that many never get to experience or understand- and my goal with our event has always been to help share that with others—just a fun day in and on the snow – enjoying the sleds, the trails, the people and building new stories—all while enjoying the memories from the past.

I take a lot of pride in our show and what it's done for OHSC and for the communities we serve. It's hard to believe it's been 14 years already- with lots more to come. I am proud of our club for how successful this show has become, and for all the help that everyone provides on show day (prep day too). It's been a blast to host this show here, and help with the continued growth of our club.