



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT WAYNE PELKEY, Lifetime Member

March 2022



Wayne presenting a donation from the Sno-Bees to VFW Post 790 at the Wayne Pelkey Ride In for Veterans Event on 2/26/22

We at the Sno-Bees have a true gem among us that no other club has.... Wayne Pelkey, our own hometown hero, and co-founding member of the club. Here is Wayne's story told in his own words as he tells it best...

Love of snowmobiling and Sno-Bees, how it all began

I started snowmobiling October 1967 after watching a neighbor riding around the neighborhood on a 1967 Ski Doo Olympic that he had problems keeping upright. After being thrown off a few times, he called it quits and put a "For Sale" sign on it. The interest in riding the snow induced me to offer him \$125 and he quickly accepted.

Another neighbor (Gus Gosselin) down the street invited me to go for a short ride in the Windy Wood area, so I gladly accepted the invitation. We soon arrived at a small brook and Gus gunned his Moto Ski lifting the front skis and jumping clear to the opposite side. I tried to duplicate his feat but let go of the throttle while in the air and crash landed

with the skis stuck in the opposite bank. This lesson of being a novice and Gus having more experience, taught me I had a lot to learn about snowmobiling.

Interestingly enough, after riding more with Gus, we decided to form a club and the Barre Sno-Bees was born the same year as VAST, so we both became charter members!



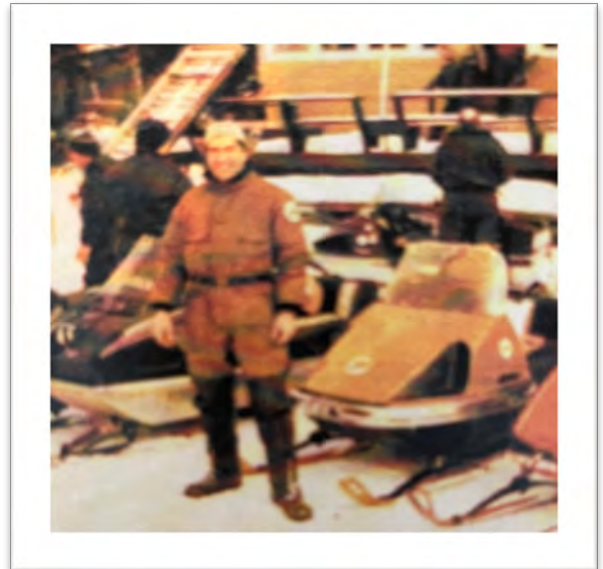
Wayne with the Sno-Bee's mascot



Scott Lange and Wayne

Wayne's take on snowmobiles –

The 1967 Ski Doo Olympic with 18 HP and bogie wheels was fast for the time and could now be considered a vibratory aid for arthritis. Very dependable, but a challenge to pull start with a clutch that needed a disassembly after a few rides to apply "Never Seize" to lubricate the engaging dogs. Over the years, I have owned 28 different sleds of Ski Doo, Arctic Cat (even 1 Wankel), Kawasaki, and Yamaha. With my wife Rene a rider, and later my sons Paul and Mike, it meant that I was the mechanic, fueler and chief starter before each ride. Needless to say, with the "cranky" Tillotson & Walbro carburetors, I was somewhat pooped before the four of us were dressed and ready to ride! My favorite sled was the Arctic Cat Panther; the first with slide suspension after riding so many years on "rough riding bogie wheels". In later years the Ski Doo long track and Arctic Cat were my dependable. My all-time favorite was a 583 Ski Doo MXZ furnished courtesy of Bombardier. Currently, my only sled ride for short rides, is a 1997 Arctic Cat Puma with electric start and reverse that my youngest son rescued from an overgrown weed patch where it was serving as a condo for field mice! Today's snowmobiles are more dependable and easier to start, with 4 stroke engines eliminating the smoke & smell.



Wayne on a few of his "several" machines over the years!



Wayne's snowmobile adventures

Most memorable snowmobiling experiences –

It is difficult to select my best snowmobiling moment but here are a few:

Retirement Parties

My surprise retirement party was at the VAST office in June 1997 where member Perry Armstrong erected a circus tent behind the office. Was I ever surprised and elated to have over 200 snowmobilers attend, including VT Forest & Parks, and officials from Maine and NH. The Commissioner of VT Forest, Parks & Rec, made a statement “During the first 6 months with Wayne pushing us, I did not think we could co-exist any longer but then I changed my mind to wonder how we could co-exist without him”!

My other best moment was when the Sno-Bees threw a retirement party for me in September of 1997. Lot of humorous stories were shared, with my recognizable gold 1969 Walls one piece snowmobile suit draped over me!

Yellowstone Ride

My worst and scariest snowmobile story is in 1990 when I went to an Iron Dog meet in Yellowstone with my oldest son Paul, Bill Oakes, Milan Lawson, and Carmi Duso (89). Paul, Bill, and I ventured out together on a lengthy wilderness ride in the Targhee National Forest to Island Park, Idaho. On the way back, we were “trucking right along” to get back to Yellowstone before dark. I was leading followed by Paul then Bill Oakes.

After going around a sharp corner, Paul and I stopped to wait for Bill (who had stopped for a pee) and saw him come around corner catching ski on a root and tumbled several times, end for end. We rushed down and found him under the machine semi-conscious and spitting out snow. Here we were 25+ miles from the nearest help with dusk starting. Paul had EMT training and checked Bill out before sitting him up. Then Bill became the Bill we always knew by bitching that he had damaged the rental snowmobile from Bill Howell and Mitzi who would be on his case for the damages.

The machine would not start, so I used straps from my knapsack for a tow line. Bill drove Paul’s sled as caboose and Paul being lighter was behind me being towed while trying to pull start the damaged sled. After a few miles, he got the sled started and we rode into the hotel at Yellowstone as dark was descending!

St Zenon – Parent Ride

Another scary story was when several of us VAST members (My son Paul, Mark Eisenwinter neighbor, Ross, and Eric Page) went on a safari in northern Quebec from St. Zenon with destination Parent in the Mastigouche Wildlife preserve. Part way there, we stopped for fuel at an Indian village and continued on a poorly marked trail that became only a one sled wide trail and ended at a trap and a Fox. We backtracked and found a wood haul road with some signs and followed for 30 + miles, stopping at a wilderness retreat with no rooms available. We gassed up at \$6/gal and got some food arriving at Parent an hour after dark. We found lodging at a lumberman’s camp with wood bunks and no bedding.

The next morning, we got up to find the temp at minus 20 degrees, a foot of new snow covering the trail and very few signs. I lead our group using ‘dead reckoning genes’ passed on to me from my Native American ancestors. I was getting concerned plowing through the deep snow getting low on gas (still had our strapped on 5 gal. reserve cans) in a southern direction when we came upon an old Canadian WW2 camp with signs of civilization. I kept telling my group “I never get lost” but was beginning to have doubts!

Gassed up and headed south on an unplowed wood haul road, crossed a huge hydroelectric huge dam, used up our reserve gas and arrived back to St. Zenon with a ¼ tank left.

My son Paul said that was his last snowmobile ride in the cold northern wilderness and he now lives in warmer Charlotte, NC!

How has Wayne served the Sno-Bees over the years?

- I served the Sno-Bees as trail master, secretary, and treasurer from 1967 to 1995. Groomed trails with my own sled with homemade drag, a Skidoo Alpine, the 1968 Tucker with our custom made drag and roll pan, the 1980 Tucker (\$30 K brand new), and the 1999 Pisten Bully with 10-foot drag.
- In June 1987, I became VAST trails coordinator/ administrator and retired in 1997.
- Developing maps, groomed & marked trails, trail side services.



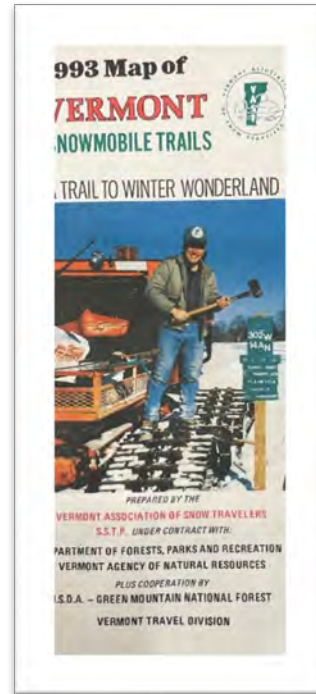
On his way out to install signs and the 1968 Tucker Snow Groomer



Wayne's Accomplishments

Snowmobiling

- Lifetime member of Barre Sno-Bees and VAST. Also had honorary memberships with Woodford and Bayley Hazen
- Awards: Local Sno-Bees: Groomer of the Year, Lifetime Membership
- VAST: Dedication, Perseverance, Leadership
- Int'l. Association Snowmobile Administrators; Outstanding Leadership
- Iron Dog Association: Inducted 1991 as one of 100 in US & Canada



President John Plante presenting Wayne with Groomer of the Year On the cover of the '93 Map



Sno-Bees and VAST Lifetime Memberships

Military Service

- I served in Korean War as a combat infantryman- was wounded 7/15/53.
- Co-author of the book "*Christmas in July*" with other survivors of Christmas Hill one of the last big battles of the Korean War.
- Another amazing fact we learned when researching Wayne. He was friends with Barre sculptor, Frank Gaylord who designed and sculpted the soldier models for the [Korean War Memorial](#). Wayne served as a model for one of those soldiers in the memorial, the one in position 4 carrying a Browning Automatic Weapon (BAR).

Position 4



Service: Army
Duty: BAR Gunner
Race: Afro-American
Weapon: BAR

- Check out some of Wayne's more recent interviews:
 - [Wayne Pelkey - Korean War Legacy](#)
 - [Super Senior: Wayne Pelkey \(wcax.com\)](#)

Wayne's legacy to VAST

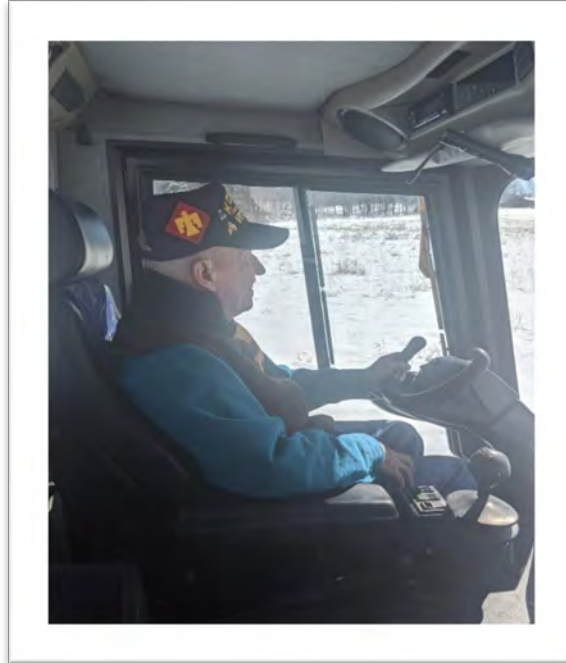
1. Developed detailed maps (I spent hundreds of hours hand drawing the routes and coordinating at National Survey in Chester, VT plus all of the informational blocks and safety tips)
2. Came up with the intersection numbering system
3. Spent 3 years working to repeal VAST reciprocity and implement trail pass system
4. As a legislature lobbyist, I pushed to get 100 % of registration over old 85 % allocation
5. I became an associate member of the VNRC; better to be a part of than an outside resistor!
6. Successfully negotiated an agreement with New York to access services at LC plus use of the Corridor 4 rail trail

Closing Comments

Old days were more closely knit friends on local hot dog roasts in sheltered spot of woods We even had one lady who brought along a red checkered tablecloth to drape over seat for condiments and desserts.

"...wish that I was back in the seat of the groomer that I did for 30 years. My youngest son Mike will be with me, and he is an Air Force veteran of 5 years and spent many hours grooming with me in 2 Tuckers and our first Pisten Bully." -
(Email from Wayne to Francine Perkins a few days before the Wayne Pelkey Ride-In on 2/26/22.)

Wayne got his wish! So much pride and happiness right here. Be well, Wayne.



*Wayne operating the Queen Bee IV – 1999 Piston Bully 200 groomer
Saturday, February 26, 2022, at the BeeHive
Wayne Pelkey Ride-In to benefit the Veterans*