

NYSSA's Most Valuable Snowmobiler of the Year Award

This award is named in memory of two pioneers of organized snowmobiling in New York State.

BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN ALBERT

John was raised a farm, first on Long Island and then in Oneonta, NY when his mom and dad moved the family to greener pastures upstate. His first experience on a snowmobile was actually thanks to his wife, Joan, in the mid-sixties when she actually bought John his first snowmobile, a new '67 Polaris.

John, living in Waterville, NY – a largely rural farming area of central New York in southern Oneida County – was a key player in the formation of the Waterville Area Snow Travelers Association otherwise known as WASTA and now known as the Central New York Snow Travelers. He, along with Chuck Tanner and a few of their buddies, formed the club with hopes to not only establish local trails for everyone's riding pleasure but to get a trail from Waterville, north, to Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks – a pet project of John's for many years. John's specialty in trail establishment is best described as forceful yet tactful. John did not like to take "No" for an answer. He was a politician of snowmobiling, in essence. In his home area of southern Oneida County and into northern Madison County, there was no existing trail system or trails at all, for that matter. John shone when it came to landowner contact, whether it was a private landowner or municipal/County or state land, John had such a way about him that he would rarely hear, "No! Not in my backyard." With John's leadership WASTA would become one of the largest snowmobile clubs in the state, based on miles of trails. He was especially convincing with an abandoned railroad's owner! Although it took a couple years for John to convince the corporation that the economic benefit would be a great asset for a rural community such as Waterville, he took great pride in getting that old rail bed trail established as a trail. John was quite reputable with elected officials and he formed many friendships with local, county and state elected officials often enlisting their assistance in helping to clear a hurdle he encountered. He put many miles on his shoes in establishing a from-scratch trail system and numerous hours on the phone with landowners and politicians laying groundwork for molding good, comfortable relations between snowmobilers and property owners. With John's ambitious goal to ride a trail from his back yard to Saranac is how he eventually would meet Ed Dutcher.

Where snowmobiling grew even greater in Oneida County and eventually reached out to state-wide improvements was when, in 1986, a gentleman named Dick Pugh saw a need for revitalization of the then-dormant county association for purposes of hopefully, eventually seeing trail fund disbursement. He re-formed the county level snowmobile organization. He knew of John Albert from mutual friends and his own riding time in the rolling hills of southern Oneida County, and invited John to come aboard the Oneida County Area Snowmobile Association and help in steering the county in the right direction. John willingly accepted the invitation and it wasn't long before John and Eddie Dutcher met one another and became confidantes. From their first encounter and their collaboration on numerous trail projects in the county and their eventual meeting, in 1987, with a newly-appointed Director to the newly formed Snowmobile Unit of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Vic Wood, organized snowmobiling exploded from that

moment onward. John and Eddie were clearly valuable sources of information. The three of them, along with others including many Oneida and Herkimer County snowmobiling names, along with NYSCG, worked closely in the immediate hours of the formation of the Snowmobile Unit. Not long after, a plan was in place for a network of trails that would eventually cover the vast majority of upstate New York. John P. Albert died in 1995 at age 57 of a heart attack.

BIOGRAPHY OF EDWARD DUTCHER

Ed Dutcher snowmobiled in and all over Canada, he snowmobiled to Canada from Whitesboro NY and he snowmobiled throughout New York State. He would make as many as 10 trips a season to Quebec. He started these adventures around 1979 when he experienced his first trip north of the New York border and got his first taste of wide, pool-table-slat- smooth, highly visible, clearly marked, well managed trails.

Ed recognized the vast difference between Quebec riding & New York riding. If you were riding in the early 80's, you understand what he experienced. With these experiences in hand and knowing the difference between Quebec and New York trails, he man was on fire. He wanted these types of trails in his neighborhood. He also envisioned a network of trails throughout New York State. This had never been done in New York State. There was no manual or instruction on how to make it happen, but he had the PASSION to make others realize what he was thinking. The results were extraordinary & spectacular! They are what you see today when you ride New York! Ed was the kind of person that took that smoldering coal of interest you may have in snowmobiling and inspired you to greater amounts of PASSION for the sport.

Ed included you no matter who you were. He made you feel a part of what he was doing. He didn't necessarily say a lot and didn't need to; you wanted to be a part of the obvious fun he was having snowmobiling! He was the leader of inspiration.

In the 1980's, Ed, Dick Pugh and Lee Broomfield met informally. Ed stated to Lee and Dick at that meeting "We must bring Canadian style grooming and trails to Penn Mountain and New York." When we talk of grooming he knew that the old style drum grooming was not the way to go. He certainly had no patience for ungroomed trails which was normal at that time. He saw the Quebec style groomers and knew that is what worked. He saw their signs and organization, and wanted that for all of us here not only at Penn Mountain, but all of New York. That meeting resulted in the activation of a snowmobile club. They decided that they would re-activate the defunct Penn Mountain Snow Riders. Within 18 months the club went from the 3 members to almost 1000 members and from ZERO official trail miles to over 80 miles. The Club acquired grooming equipment like what was used in Canada, in fact, under Ed's leadership members travelled to Canada to purchase the first set of quality drags. The club established a banking relationship. The club didn't owe any money. At that time, there were no TRAIL FUNDS, in fact, their county refused to participate in any such trail funds.

The growth of membership and trails was due to Ed's passion for the sport and his vision! He was smart enough to motivate and involve others in that in that vision to make it happen. He was Penn Mountain Snow Riders' ambassador. Ed was an absolute major influence in why we are, where we are TODAY in New York State. He had a vision of an interconnecting NYS trail system & was

involved with the New York State Snowmobile Coordinating Group which became NYSSA. The interconnecting trail system is a REALITY after many years of smart, hard & persistent work. He would be proud to know that it has come to pass. If he were here today he would greatly applaud our successes & passion across New York State.

Ed was the guy that would ride his sled to the groomer, so he could groom for 12 hours then immediately go riding just because he loved snowmobiling. Ed would be proud of all of the volunteers that have the vision, that have the persistence, that have the dedication, that have the talent and MOST of all that have the PASSION! Those attributes along with a great sense of humor is what Ed was all about. *Edward R. Dutcher died in 1999 at age 57 of ALS – Lou Gehrig's disease.*

~~~~~

These gentlemen left an indelible mark on snowmobiling in New York State. Their talents, ambitions, and contributions will likely never be matched. Aspiration to reach the heights they achieved is a bar that is well worth the effort in attempting to achieve.

The NYSSA Snowmobiler of the Year award memorialized in John's and Eddie's honor is a special award that each recipient should hold dear. And, by the way, if you care, you can take a ride from Waterville all the way to Saranac Lake by uninterrupted snowmobile trail! You can thank John and Eddie for that opportunity.

*This information was written and provided by Lee Broomfield and Rick Pugh of the Penn Mountain Snow Riders Snowmobile Club.*

