

How Do You Quantify 50 years of Dedication to Snowmobiling?

By Jack Welch

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Sharetrails.org/BlueRibbon

First, how did this 50-year journey start? I got involved in snowmobiling when I purchased my first snowmobile, a 1968 Sears 18 HP Snow Cruiser. I was working as Winter Sport Manager at a Sears Store in Lakewood, Colorado. Now it is 2018 and I, Jack Welch a veteran of snowmobiling, will celebrate 50 years of dedication to preserving access to public lands for snowmobiling.

The question is how can I quantify 50 years of involvement in organizing and maintaining access for recreational snowmobiling? Is it the number of miles traveled by vehicle? I estimate at least 150,000 miles. Is it the number of miles traveled on snowmobiles? I estimate 125,000 miles. Is it the number of hours attending meetings? I estimate 10,400 hours. Is it the number of meetings attended, i.e. International Snowmobile Congress's (ISC), Western Chapter, International Snowmobile Media Council (ISMC), state snowmobile associations, quarterly meetings, local snowmobile Clubs, etc.? I estimate 2650 meetings in the United States and Canada. Is it the number of meetings and hearings with Governmental agencies like National Forest Service, BLM, National Park Service, State and local governments, etc. I estimate 1800. Is it the number of Raffles I have run, and Raffle ticket purchased? I estimate 750 tickets purchased and over 100 raffles run. Is it the people I have met over the 50 years? Yes, just to name a few, Kay Lloyd, first President of American Council Snowmobile Associations (ACSA), Ed Klim, President of the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association (ISMA), Chris Twomey, Past CEO of Arctic Cat, Clark Collins, Founder of the BlueRibbon Coalition, Clyde Seely and Bill Howell, local leaders of the effort to maintain snowmobile access to Yellowstone National Park from West Yellowstone MT. and many more. Is it the friends I have made because of snowmobiling? Too many to mention. And finally, is the number of snowmobiles I have owned in 50 years and manufacturers that have supported me? This a simple answer I have owned one Sears Snow Cruiser and many Arctic Cats sleds, and the entire snowmobile industry has supported me over the 50 years.

What are some of my contributions to recreational snowmobiling over the last 50 years? I helped found the Colorado State Snowmobile Association. I was also a founding member of several snowmobile clubs, a trail boss, member of a search and rescue team, safety instructor, volunteer lobbyist. On the state level I was Chairman of the Colorado State Motorized Recreational Trails committee which included snowmobiling. As Chair of that committee I realized that Snowmobilers, OHV riders and

other motorized riders need to get organized, so I worked with these groups and helped create the Colorado Off Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO). In addition, I worked with Colorado State Parks helped create the Snowmobile and OHV registration programs. In addition, I have worked with many National Forest on their various planning efforts. After an appointment by the Secretary of Agriculture to the Continental Divide Scenic Trails Council, I soon realized that the issue of motorized use, especially snowmobiling, was under attack as a legitimate use of this national trail. I made sure that snowmobile access had a voice at the table. In addition, I have lead efforts to stop additional Colorado Wilderness legislation that would affect snowmobiling access.

Because of my efforts for trail users, Colorado Governor Romer appointed me to the first statewide recreational trails committee where I served for ten years, two of which were as Chairman. During that time, I helped create the BlueRibbon Coalition (BRC). I was elected to Vice President of the Coalition and later its President. I served the BRC as President for eleven years. I, worked with Clark Collins Executive Director of BRC, in promoting the original Symms Trail Fund legislation, known today as Recreation Trail Program (RTP). It passed Congress and is today a major funding program for snowmobiling. My experiences over the years have helped me to organize numerous expos, fairs and conventions, including the first Motorized Recreation Fly-In to Washington D.C. I have served as Volunteer Executive Director of the Colorado Snowmobile Association (CSA), conducted fund raising raffles, help to develop the CSA map and information program and served as its volunteer legislative liaison. While keeping up all my duties on the state level, I soon moved on to the international level attending International Snowmobile Congresses (ISC) in the United State and Canada. I currently am a member of the International Snowmobile Media Council (ISMC). I currently write many monthly snowmobile-related articles for various publications.

Not all my snowmobile activities over the last 50 years have been all “work”. I also have participated in several major snowmobile adventures. First, a “Friendship Ride” across Alaska on the Iditarod Dog Sled Trail. Eight days of extreme challenges, is one of my fondest experiences. Jack Sheets, Past CSA President and I put together the “Colorado Border to Border” ride across, Colorado from Wyoming to New Mexico. Two weeks, forty riders a bus and 5 semi-trucks, and traveling 1100 miles on snowmobiles.

I have received numerous awards for my dedicated efforts for snowmobiling. To mention a few they are, Induction into the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame in 1999, State of Colorado Leadership Award for State Recreational Trails Program, Snowmobile Magazine Western Snowmobiler of the Year, Iron Dog Brigade’s George A. Eisenhuth Distinguished Service to Snowmobiling Award, SnoWest Magazine 40th Anniversary Snowmobile Advocate Award, and many more.

Looking back over 50 years of snowmobiling, one thing I have accomplished stands out! And that is my leadership that started in 1997, at the ISC in Toronto, Canada where I was appointed Chairman of the ACSA/Blue Ribbon Legal Action Task Force. I have led that Task Force and the snowmobile community to Victory by keeping Yellowstone National Park open to snowmobile access for the last 21 years and it is still open to snowmobiles TODAY!