

# Talkin' Fresh Powder

It was the cocktail hour before the banquet would begin to celebrate the finish of a very successful annual convention for the snowmobilers of North Dakota. I had arrived an hour before and was standing at the bar waiting for my hosts to arrive. I was about to order a drink when a fellow stepped up and offered to buy a round.

He recognized me from the drawing that appears on this page every issue. He said he wanted to "talk sleds." I replied that was exactly why I was in North Dakota that Saturday night.

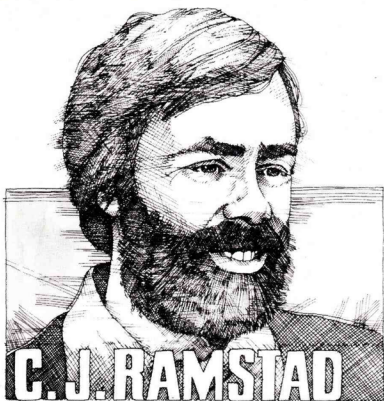
"Y' know," he said, as a familiar and faraway look tinkled up in his eyes, "I really look forward to snowmobiling. Heck, I can stand in my fields during the summer, watching the sun burn my crop, worrying about my yields, my costs, my equipment, wondering if I've made the right decisions and just plain worryin'. Then I'll all of a sudden start thinking about cold weather, snow and riding on the trails with the snow flyin' up behind and the drifts over the banks of the river. It sorta makes things seem easier. I guess things are OK as long as I can look forward to a winter of snowmobiling."

There was a familiar sound in his voice, the sound of a true snowmobiler in late October sensing the approach of his favorite season and loving it.

I wasn't the only one in the room who noticed. First we were joined by a couple from the same club. Then two or three more joined the circle, followed by three or four more. Soon we had to move away from the bar so the waitresses could put in drink orders.

We moved to a big table as conversations buzzed across and around. The distinct sound of snowmobilers getting charged up for the season lured still more into the mood. The subjects of the day — the new trail mileage, the legislative news, the membership figures — faded as the images of winter and the fun of all-day trail rides, weekend snowmobile trips and flurries filling the air took over.

I had planned a brief presentation for that evening describing the different kinds of snowmobiling I had seen in my



years in the sport . . . in the east, the west and in Europe . . . but the cocktail party was too much fun and the good ol' sledder juices were flowing too strong by the time we sat down to dinner. My little keynote message seemed dull and flat next to the hour's worth of good conversation just over. When I was introduced, I stood up and led the group in a cheer to make the grass hurry up and die. Then I told "war stories" about the time we got semi-lost in the northwoods, the big blizzard we rode through that set records in the U.P., the time I went trail riding with a banzai former racing champ, the young Swedish girls who couldn't wait to meet the "American snowmobile boys." If 300 like-minded people hoping for something had as much power as these North Dakotans felt like they had that night at the banquet, I'm sure the snow would've begun piling up outside the hall's windows immediately.

October is a little early to begin expecting big snowfalls. But, as I write these words, snow is filling the skies around the Twin Cities as kind of a preamble to the winter of 1984. While it won't stay on the ground either, two days of white will go a long way toward making the last little bit of waiting easier.

I have my snowmobile gear laid out and I've saved my anti-freeze bottles for take-along extra fuel. I've serviced the hubs on my trailer and I've reviewed all my trail maps . . . twice. Now we'll put this issue out and, right about the time you get it, the best season of the year and one of the best winters on record will begin. See you out there!