

2011 MILITARY RIDE HONORS OUR TROOPS

By Diane Voight



Fifty-five riders and guides enjoyed the Third Annual Military Ride of 2011.

Derby weekend in Eagle River is always an exciting event for snowmobile enthusiasts but for some special guests to the area, it was the lead-in to a couple of days of recognition for their service to our country.

Participants in this year's Military Ride, which would take place the Monday following the Derby, were invited to arrive early and take in the excitement of the races, culminating on Sunday at 3 p.m. with the final Championship challenge. But the big race cannot begin without the United States and Canadian National Anthems followed by the flyover by F-16s, however, this year's flyover was a little different than usual. Instead of the standard F-16s, Col. Metzger arranged for a single refueling tanker for the flyover. The tanker pilot came in boom down, which is a salute to the crowd, then for the next pass he tipped a wing, which is a wave.

ROLLING OUT THE TROOPS

Bright and early Monday morning, while the participating troops gathered at the Derby Expo Hall to complete the necessary paperwork and choose a snowmobile from the multitude of donated sleds, I made a quick detour across the street to see Butch at Trackside. There I picked up the sled I would be riding for the day. A Polaris Rush was his choice for me and it was a great ride – thanks Butch! I arrived back at the Derby track in time to hear Todd give an informative review of trail etiquette and proper handling of the sleds.

As we waited for departure time, I had the pleasure of chatting with a young lady who during last year's Military Ride snowmobiled for the first time, riding double with her husband. This year she decided to try driving a sled on her own. She asked if I thought she could do it. Of course, I assured her, she would be just fine! Another participant also shared his enthusiasm with me. "I am so excited for today. I grew up in the northwoods snowmobiling with my family, but then moved away and haven't ridden since. I have now relocated back to Rhinelander and am anxious to ride a newer machine."

Before starting the machines to hit the trails the participants formed three riding groups – experienced,



The experienced group is ready for their northwoods adventure.

intermediate and beginners. The experienced group led the way out of the parking lot heading north out of Eagle River on trail #17. Light snow was falling to make the trees sparkle as we passed by. The first group arrived in Conover for a short pit stop at Tippler's. They provided a delicious breakfast pizza, along with other snacks, and coffee and hot chocolate for all to enjoy. The intermediate group rolled in to take their break as the experienced group was departing, followed by the beginners. A thank you gift was presented to Tippler's for their generosity in opening for the riders, as they normally are closed on Monday.

From Conover the groups took different routes but all



AWSC President Doug Johnson, second from right, welcomes newcomers to the sport.



ended up in Land O' Lakes at the Gateway Lodge within a few minutes of each other for an awesome pulled pork sandwich lunch. Thanks to Sandy and the crew for the genuine northwoods hospitality. With tummies full and a brief pause for a group photo, it was back to the trails for the return trek to Eagle River. The afternoon pit stop was at Bauer's Dam for a warm up and refreshments. As has become a tradition, upon returning to Eagle River everyone took their victory laps around the derby track before turning the sleds in after a wonderful adventure in the northwoods.

The evening would be filled with a pizza and broasted chicken dinner at the Derby Inn, followed by acknowledgments to the businesses, AWSC, the Decker family and the guides for all they do to make this event possible. Kim Simac, author of American Soldier Proud and Free was unable to attend the banquet but provided free copies of her children's book for everyone. Also on display was a restored Chevy truck that has been making the parade circuit to honor our troops. The evening wouldn't be complete without the presentation of the coveted toilet seat award for the best oops of the day. It seems that a couple guys that may have been eligible for the award had left to go home, so the only two left to compete were Dan Cashin, the videographer for a dropped lens cover and Col. Ted Metzger for a slight bump into the rear of the sled in front of him.

As the evening drew to a close, the silent auction items were awarded to the highest bidders. The funds raised will help with next year's event. Just an update on the young lady, originally from sunny, warm Venezuela, driving a sled for her first time ever. She purchased a snowmobile coat from the silent auction and plans were being made to go home and buy sleds. She loved it!



Cruising the snow covered winter wonderland.

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- ★ Silent Auction Items Courtesy of Ken's Sports, Kaukauna
- ★ Hats Courtesy Design Solutions
- ★ Videographer Dan Cashin
- ★ Guide Service By Dick Decker, Ray Tencza, Rick Meyers, Todd Achterberg, John MacArthur and Dave Everett **WEN**

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