

'Carrying enough beer—that's gonna be our big problem.'



Old buddies plan 700-mile joy ride across the snow



By DENNIS ROSENBLUM

Dashing through the snow
In a one-horse open sleigh
O'er the fields we go
Drinking all the way.

Ah, the sporting life.
For Harold Binkley and friends, winter is a time for zooming across snow-capped fields in search of the elusive snowmobile heaven, a time for twisting the cerebral throttles and striking out with internal combustion into the great outdoors.

And the time is drawing near for their biggest excursion yet.

"Carrying enough beer—that's gonna be our big problem," says Binkley. "Oh, I was just kidding."

The gang — Binkley and some friends — have been planning on this one for about two years. They just want to see if they can do it.

THE MASTER PLAN is to take off on snowmobiles for a week-long safari into the north country, camping out and generally escaping civilization.

"We get the hell away from people. That's why we go," says Binkley, a Livonia resident.

"We just wanna do it, that's all. We'll see if we can make it this trip, then we'll try something else."

The group of five or six is planning to take off

Harold Binkley (second from left) and most of his band straddle the machines which will take them on a cross-state escapade. (Staff photo by Art Emanuel.)

Feb. 21 and drive to Tawas on Lake Huron, unload the machines, cruise across the state to Empire on Lake Michigan near the Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes, then turn around and return to Tawas. They figure it'll be around 700 miles, as the crew drives, so to speak.

Included are four truck drivers, Binkley and the son of one of the truckers who was laid off from his nursery job. They constructed two sleds they'll use to carry supplies — tents, sleeping bags, food, a tool kit and, of course, the beer. Another sled will hold a tank for extra gasoline.

They plan on self-sufficiency for the trip, making it "without going to town, or going to the store or going nowhere," as Binkley puts it.

The group frequently takes off for weekend jaunts. And every Christmas, the clan heads for snowmobiling country. This year, 18 of them — ranging in age from 7 to 60 — made the trip, which lasted through New Year's.

"It beats getting drunk driving around here," says Binkley.

WHILE MOST of the neighborhood spends the winter watching TV, dreams of sunny afternoons in the Bahamas, grumbles about shoveling the snow out of the driveway and figures out how to pay the gas bill, these guys happily toast themselves to a zoom through the snow and the cold.

But aren't they worried about, say, getting lost?

Nah.
"We'll be lost half the time, like we are anyway," Binkley explains. "But you're never lost till you're out of gas and beer."

Shuffle ends space war over judges

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

The tune is called "The Courthouse Shuffle." When the music starts, the county's entire executive administration, the prosecutor's office, three circuit court judges, the auditing department and the reimbursement department will sweep out onto the dance floor.

The 1979 addition of three new judges—Hilda Gage, Gene Schnelz and Bernard Kaufman—to Oakland County's Circuit bench resulted in cramped, temporary courtrooms being set up throughout the courthouse.

The other 14 circuit judges demanded permanent courtrooms and enough space for private chambers and jury rooms for the three newcomers.

To get the space, the holdover judges issued an administrative order which in effect evicted Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson and his staff from their fourth floor courthouse offices. The judges were counting on the support of the Michigan Supreme Court in getting the space they felt was necessary.

LAST WEEK the battle of the judges against Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, the 27-member board of commissioners and Patterson ended.

The parties agreed to massive in-house shuffle that will result ultimately in Murphy and the rest of his administration moving from the courthouse.

Circuit Judge Richard Kuhn, speaking for Chief Circuit Judge Richard Andrews who was unavailable, termed the agreement "reasonable." "This will put us in good shape for years to come," he said. In response to the agreement, the judges rescinded the order evicting Patterson.

UNDER THE terms of the agreement, the reimbursement department, which was operating in space earmarked for one of the permanent courtrooms, will move soon, and construction of the court chambers will begin.

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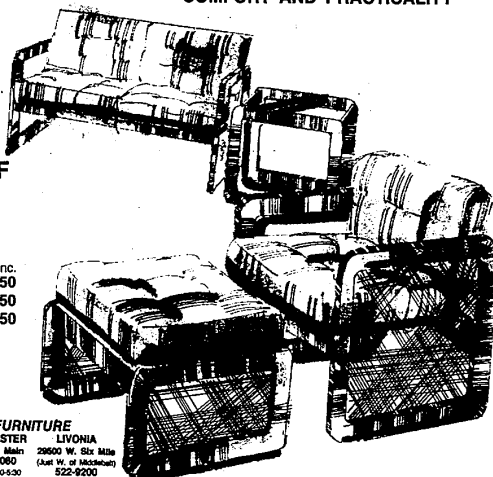
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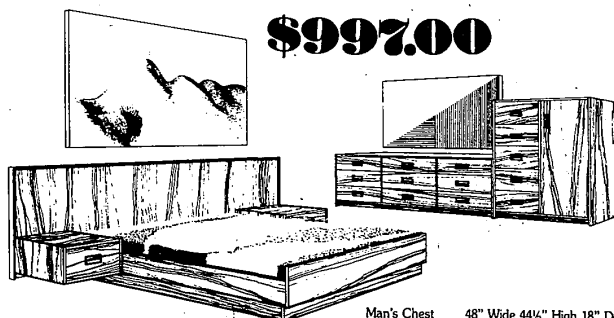
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