

don't want to abuse it. When I scout out an area and find that it crosses private property I go in and ask people if they'd mind if I take a safari through it the next weekend. And in most cases they'll let you cross. But you've got to ask first."

Many of the parties guided by Nivelt return year after year. They've given him the handle "PBD"-Pucker Brush Dan, based on an experience they had years ago when he led a party through some unexpected brush. Others affectionately call him "Mr. Snowmobile."

Most are families who know each other. They may include parents, grandparents as well as children. A safari may involve from three or four to as many as 50 snowmobiles. "I prefer families because you don't get into the drinking and rowdiness problems. Kids range from 4 and up, whenever the parents feel can handle the cold. Usually that's not a problem nowadays because of the clothing available. We used to take along our own kids, when one was just a baby and rode in a backpack."

Before taking a party out, Nivelt reviews rules he insists be followed. And he personally checks the gas tanks of each snowmobile. "I've found that people who come up from downstate aren't accustomed to the distances we will travel. Down there they think 40 miles is a long way. Up here, we seldom go less than a 100 miles on a trip, so a full tank of gas is essential. I'll carry a couple extra gallons on my sled, besides what's in my gas tank. It's a lot more convenient than siphoning gas. I also carry a first-aid kit, and a packet of tools just to be on the safe side."

Most safaris are "day trips." These begin from Indian River and may extend into the Pigeon River Country Forest, across to Harbor Springs and Lake Michigan, or over towards Rogers City and Lake Huron. Day trips average 100 miles, with frequent stops to look at wildlife or to enjoy a particularly nice view.

Longer trips, which may last up to a week, normally always occur in the Upper Peninsula. The longest trip last year, involving his only all-male safari, covered 470 miles in a single day.

With the tools he carries, Nivelt normally is able to repair sleds that may breakdown along the way. If it's a more serious breakdown that cannot be fixed on the spot, "we'll leave the sled at the nearest road. Then, in the evening, I'll go back with the people and get their sled."

"For food, I try to plan day trips so that we eat lunch out someplace, about 12:30 to 1 o'clock, and then ride until evening before returning home to eat here in town."

"In the Upper most often we'll make a base camp at a motel and take day trips out into the forests and return each evening. This year, though, I've got a group that wants to start in Indian River and go across to the Upper and all the way to Copper Harbor."

One of the repeat annual safaris Nivelt enjoys most involves a party from Angola, Indiana-not so much because of the places he takes them-but because they are such a "happy, fun-loving group. They love the snow. They may have a drink at noon, but they don't drink on the



TRAIL BLAZING-- Despite the large number of groomed trails nearby, Dan Nivelt prefers making his own path through Northern Michigan's spectacular scenery.

trail. For them, it is the outdoors adventure, the togetherness that's fun. Not gulping alcohol."

No tea-totaler, Nivelt never carries alcohol, and he makes sure that others follow his rule--no drinking and driving. "If someone gets out of hand the safari ends at that point and we go home. Problems like this are rare."

In the meetings before the safari begins, he reviews hand signals, goes over a variety of other rules, among them: "Never pass the leader."

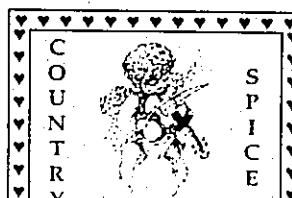
"It's absolutely important that all members of the party stay behind the leader because if you don't know the area and you pass me you could hit a wire or bounce into a road you don't know is there."

Generally, the poorest riders are placed immediately behind Nivelt, where he can better judge his own speed to accommodate them. If they were in the rear, they could fall behind and get lost. In longer safaris that may stretch for a half mile or so, Nivelt will hire an experienced driver to serve as the "drag rider"--the snowmobiler who brings up the rear to look out for the breakdowns and persons who may become disoriented.

The most important rule of all is, "Have fun!"

Aside from the outdoors and the weather, "it's the people I meet who make leading safaris enjoyable. Except for one occasion on all of the trips I've taken the groups have been very nice, congenial, happy people. I get Christmas cards from them; some stop by in summer to say hello and chat. They come from as far away as Cincinnati, Ohio."

In 13 years of leading safaris Nivelt has left only two snowmobiles in the woods. Most breakdowns are Please Turn To Page 34



Valentine Gifts

*Remember
Valentines Day
Feb. 14th With A Gift
For Her At Country Spice*

- All types of framed prints
- Cats meow village
- Hand woven baskets
- Grapevine wreaths
- Jelly cupboards/pig safes
- Shaker style furniture
- Lots more of country decor for the home

COUNTRY SPICE

125 W. Michigan Avenue,
Marshall, Michigan
Phone (616) 781-3953
Mon.-Sat. 9:30 - 5:30



Ella Sharp

Michigan Historic Site
Victorian Farmhouse
Farm Lane with 7 Historic Buildings
Four Exhibition Galleries
Granary Restaurant
Planetarium
Gift Shop
Research Library

*Open Year Round
Tue. - Fri.
10 A.M. to 5 P.M.
Sat. & Sun.
Noon to 5 P.M.*

3225 Fourth Street
Jackson, MI 49203
(517) 787-2320

JACKSON'S WINTER FESTIVAL & CHILI COOK-OFF

(FREE ADMISSION)

February 2 & 3, 1991

- Carnival Rides • Games • Food Booths
- Horse Drawn Sleigh Rides
- Snow Sculpture Exhibition
- Dog-Sled Weight Pull
- Guest Appearance By: Miss Michigan "Victoria Fair"
- Tethered Hot Air Balloon Rides (Weather Permitting)
- Chili Cook-Off (Sunday Only)
- Art & Crafts Show (Sunday Only)
- Special Weekend Motel Rates

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Jackson Convention & Tourist Bureau
P.O. Box 193, Jackson, Michigan 49204

517-783-3330 • 800-245-5282

Register For A "FREE" Jackson Pleasure Package To
P.O. Box 193, Jackson, Mich. 49204
Or At The Winterfest Information Booth

Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
Telephone _____ (GLC 1, 31)