

Young Snowmobile Riders Learn Rules of the Road on Mackinac Island

Bradley Teaches Course for Years

By Karen Gould

Dennis Bradley has taught snowmobile safety to students for about 25 years, but is leaving the volunteer role after this year.

"I think it's time for somebody else to have some fun, he said. "It's just a hoot working with the students. I've done it a long time and certainly enjoyed every class I've done."

Tuesday, December 11, the day before his last class, Mr. Bradley was on Market Street teaching Joe Rogers and Blake Ruddle the skills of driving. The two students, from St. Ignace, came over on the boat for two days of classes. The students took turns driving as Mr. Bradley sat behind, reminding them of the rules of the road. With major off-season construction projects underway, they maneuvered among dump trucks, other snowmobiles, pedestrians, and horse-drawn wagons.

On Mackinac Island, snowmobiles replace bicycles as the winter mode of transportation, while on the mainland, most young snowmobilers train in fields and along groomed trails, said Mr. Bradley, who is also Mackinac Island's fire chief and airport manager.

"Over here," he said, "we use snowmobiles as primary transportation."

Driving to school on snowmobiles is common for Mackinac Island students ages 12 and up, who have completed the class and have a snowmobile operator certificate. So the advantage of taking the Island class, he said, is the traffic experience it offers.

The course work, which was



Dennis Bradley of Mackinac Island teaches snowmobile safety for the last time this winter after 25 years of volunteering to guide young people like Joe Rogers (front) and Blake Ruddle. The St. Ignace students traveled to the Island for his class December 11 and 12.

developed by the Department of Natural Resources, has not kept up with technology, said Mr. Bradley. When the class was designed, snowmobiles cost approximately \$4,000 and traveled at speeds of up to 70 miles per hour. Today, he said, a snowmobile can cost \$10,000 and reach speeds of 100 miles per hour.

A driving course is often set up in a field and requires students to drive around obstacles and in a figure eight.

"When I teach," said Mr. Bradley, who has taught his own children and grandchildren, "I have the students do a lot of driving."

The figure-eight exercise demonstrates control, he said.

Offered to students ages 12 through 17, the class requires 10 hours of course work, practical

experience, and the successful completion of a final examination. Students who pass the class earn their certificate to operate a snowmobile, if they are at least 12 years of age. The course teaches students about the machine's operation, trail rules, snowmobile laws, and sign interpretation. Police Chief Jim Marks teaches the law enforcement portion of the class.

Awaiting his turn to climb aboard the sled Tuesday afternoon, young Mr. Rogers said, "It's a great class. Everyone should take it."

Mr. Ruddle agreed. Both are eighth grade students at LaSalle High School.

"It teaches important common sense stuff," said Mr. Rogers. "To be a safe and responsible driver, you have to know it."



Dennis Bradley taught his last snowmobile safety class to Mackinac Island students December 12. Students earning their snowmobile driver certificates, pictured with Mr. Bradley, include (front, from left) Amelia Roe, Adrienne Rilenge, Hailey Armstrong; (seated) Brian Bradley; (back) Zhane Nash, Onaca Bennett, and Jessica Beaune. (Photograph by Susan Bennett)

Mr. Bradley has also retired from teaching a hunter safety course this year. In 2003, he was named Recreation Volunteer of the Year by Mackinac Island Recreational Development.

Tribe Lifts Gas Quota

Tribal members will not have to adhere to quotas for state tax discounts when purchasing gas, diesel fuel, and cigarettes for the remainder of 2007, the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians announced December 19.

Under an agreement between the state and the tribe, members are entitled to tax discounts on these items at the Midjim gas stations and casino gift shops. A quota determines how many purchases can be made.

The current tribal quota on these items will not be met by December 31, so the tribe is able to lift the restrictions on the discounted purchases by members.

While the quota has already been lifted temporarily twice in 2007, consumption is still not on pace to exhaust the amount allowed this year, the tribe reported.

Next year's quota goes into effect January 1.

Paquin Resigns as Board Chair

Fred Paquin resigned in late November from the Detroit Greektown Casino board of directors, on which he served as chairman, the tribe is now reporting. He was replaced as chairman by board member Tom Miller of Cooks, the tribe's Unit IV representative, who has previously held the chairmanship.

Mr. Paquin, 50, and a resident of St. Ignace, resigned in response to misdemeanor assault charges brought by a woman member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, of which Mr. Paquin is police chief and serves on the tribal board. He has pled not guilty to the charge and the matter is scheduled for trial in Chippewa County's 91st District Court February 14.

The Greektown board elected him chairman August 10 in a surprise unseating of Sault Tribe Chairman Aaron Payment, who challenged the move. The election was upheld by the full tribal board vote August 21.

He was suspended from his police chief position seven days later, pending the assault trial, but continues to serve on the tribal board.

Cory Wilson of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians said he does not know the exact date Mr. Paquin submitted his resignation to the Greektown board.



Living Nativity Presented at Cedarville

A group of children including (back) Kaylee Risher, (front, from left) Ali Eberts, Erin Smith, Alice Coyne, Nathan Smith, and Jennifer Sherlund recreate the story of the birth of Jesus during the Living Nativity in Cedarville Thursday, December 13. Other performers that evening included Kayla Merchberger and Kathy Sherlund. Farm animals including two sheep, Agnes and Patrick, and a 10-day old calf, Annabelle, were also part of the show at Clark Township Community Center during the evenings that week.

Christmas Bird Count Planned This Week

In 1900, American ornithologist Frank Chapman asked birders across North America to head out on Christmas Day to count the birds in their home towns and submit the results as the first "Christmas Bird Census." His suggestion has evolved into one of the largest organized birding events in the world, and has become a holiday tradition during the Christmas and New Year's season for more than 50,000 birders each year.

The 108th Christmas Bird Count, as it is now called, started December 14 and is continuing through January 5, in 2,000 areas across Canada, the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Local counts are planned for the Les Cheneaux Islands area, Mackinaw City, Sault Ste. Marie, Seney, Whitefish Point, Cheboygan, Petoskey, and Rogers City.

These bird observations, collected during one-day field counts within defined circular areas, are compiled in an international database that reflects the distribution and numbers of winter birds over time. The results are sent to the Audubon Society, and the information is used to track bird locations and health.

The Les Cheneaux Bird Count,

now in its seventh year, will be the Saturday after Christmas, December 29. Birders will meet at 8 a.m. at the Cedarville Foods parking lot at the corner of M-134 and M-129. Participants will drive around the Les Cheneaux and Pickford areas searching for birds.

Participants in previous counts have identified more than 60 bird species, including hawks, owls, buntings, sparrows, and even robins and swans, in the 15-mile radius of the count.

Count leaders expect to travel between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m., and will take a break for lunch at Ang-Gio's Restaurant in Cedarville. Participants will buy their own lunch. Participants should bring their own car, but they may carpool in groups. They should bring warm clothing, boots, and waterproof clothing or gear, as there may be some walking through the snow. Coordinators will assign an area.

People can also count birds at their feeders December 29, and report their results at the end of the day to Nadine Cain by calling 484-2739.

Additional information is available from the Nature Conservancy's Upper Peninsula director, Tina Hall,

by calling (906) 225-0399, or by sending e-mail to chall@tnc.org.

A Mackinac Straits count will be coordinated by Steven Baker, who can be contacted at (231) 238-8723

A count in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, will be coordinated by Ken Mellwrick, who can be contacted at (705) 949-2864, or by sending e-mail to kmclwri@nrca.gc.ca.

The Whitefish Point count will be coordinated by Skye Haas, who can be reached at TheOwlRanch@aol.com.

For the Cheboygan count, call Ed Pike at (231) 758-3319 or send e-mail to aes05@localnet.com.

For many years, the Christmas Bird Count was organized by the New York-based National Audubon Society. In 2000, Audubon and Bird Studies Canada partnered with Audubon to coordinate counts in the United States and Canada.

Additional information on the Christmas Bird Count can be found at the Audubon Society Web site, at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc.

Last season's 107th Christmas Bird Count results were released in October, and can be seen by going to the Audubon Society's Web site and following the Christmas Bird Count link.

Students Make Christmas Cards for Injured Soldiers

Les Cheneaux Elementary students learned computer skills, and how the simple act of sending cards can be meaningful to recovering soldiers who receive them.

The students made the holiday cards with teacher Julie Davis and teaching intern Casey Zimmerman, who led them through a computer publishing program. The cards contain hand-written messages to soldiers. Most of the messages wish the soldiers happy holidays, a speedy recovery, and thank them for fighting in the military.

The exercise brought home the subject of those in the military service, and how an injured soldier could be anyone's son, father, sister, or cousin.

As the fourth grade worked on cards, for example, students chatted about the people they know who are serving in the military. Allyson Mrozek has a cousin in the United States Marines who is heading to boot camp. "He is going to protect the President of the United States," she said. Other students said they have relatives in the military. One student has a brother serving in Iraq.

Annie Eberts wrote in her card, "Thank you for being so brave for fighting for our country."

In addition to these cards, Kathy Tassier's fifth grade class made holiday cards for Private Joseph Johnson, the son of Cheryl Johnson, a part-time custodian at the school. He is stationed in Iraq, and his mother said he would really appreciate getting mail from someone other than his mother and grandparents.

United States military branches encourage people to send mail to soldiers, in fact, because notes

from people other than family provide encouragement and comfort, and demonstrate support from the American public.

The cards to the recovering soldiers will be delivered to the Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C., by the American Red Cross. The Red Cross is collecting, reviewing, and delivering holiday cards to any soldiers who are not specifically addressed on the envelope.

Since 2001, it has been the policy of military hospitals to return all pieces of mail that are not addressed to a particular soldier, or are addressed "to any soldier," because of security concerns from the terrorists attacks that year. Since the Red Cross took over checking the mail, cards like those made by the Les Cheneaux students will not be returned unopened this year.

Since the Red Cross announced its program the first week of December, about 35,000 pieces of mail were sent, and will be distributed to Walter Reed and 30 military hospitals across the country, as well as Red Cross offices in combat zones overseas, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and a regional military medical center in Germany, said Joe Moffatt of the American Red Cross.

This year, the program will stop after the holiday season, but Red Cross officials say they will evaluate the success of the program to see if it will be continued in coming years.

Les Cheneaux students are joining card writers from universities, military units, girls and boys organizations, other elementary schools, and corporations, Red Cross officials said.



Allyson Mrozek (from left), Daeshawna Nye, and James Lindberg work on cutting and assembling holiday cards for soldiers Friday, December 14, to get the cards out in time for Christmas.

Holiday Art Show Featured at Mackinac Island Library

The paintings of local artists Marta Olson, Tim Leeper, Pam Finkel, and Tom Boburka will be featured in a Holiday Art Show at Mackinac Island Public Library beginning Saturday, December 22. An Open House is scheduled for Saturday, December 29, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the library.

The works will be displayed through mid-February.