

## “Hey Bob”

“Hey, Bob, we are stuck in a ditch can you bring the truck over and pull us out.”

That cell phone call came a couple of weeks ago from my neighbor Jack and the other half of the “we” his brother in-law Harvey. They had buried both of their snowmobiles in the snow in a ditch about 2 miles from Jack’s cabin and were hopelessly stuck. Before they left I had urged Jack to take his cell phone and my phone number with him just in case they needed help. This was not the first time that Jack and Harvey had called me for help with snowmobile fiascos.

After I pulled their sleds out of the deep snow in the ditch they decided to head back to the cabin and rethink their next move. I offered my truck for their use and they took their sleds to a well groomed trail where help might be available if they got lost or got into trouble.

Previous to the above incident and a few years ago I received another “Hey Bob” call on my cell phone and again it was from the Jack and Harvey duo. “What’s up Jack” I responded “Harvey and I went through the ice.” “Where are you?” I exclaimed. “We are standing on a road, we stopped a car and are using their cell phone.” “I’ll be right there,” I said.

This was a rare warm January day and standing on a road I knew that at least temporarily they would be safe and that gave me a few minutes to throw some equipment into the back of my truck. I tossed in ropes, chains, a come along, ax, ice chisel and headed out, they were only a couple of miles away.

Jack had said that the back end of the snowmobile was still sticking out of the water and I realized that there was only one place they could have broken through the ice. Both were doubled up on Jack’s snowmobile and pulling my otter sled behind containing their fishing equipment, they were going to follow the tracks (I thought) that we had laid down the previous few days to where our fish shack was located. To get there we had to skirt one edge of a pressure ridge by going close to shore, bypassing the thin ice so I felt that this had to be the area they went through, but how?

After picking up Jack and Harvey on the road, wet but not freezing, we decided to see if we could pull the snowmobile back to shore or up on the ice or at the least put a rope on it and tie it to shore so it wouldn’t slip into deep water. We fastened a rope to the rear handle behind the seat which was the only part of the snowmobile sticking out of the water. We struggled with the sled for some time and after Jack and Harvey waded back into the water we succeeded in maneuvering it back onto the ice. With that chore done and the snowmobile safe back on the ice I took Jack and Harvey back to their cabin to dry off, say a few hail mary’s and warm up. While they were recuperating I picked up another neighbor (Aw nuts I’m late Chuck) and using a four wheeler we proceeded to tow the water logged snowmobile back to Jack’s garage.

Next to a warm fireplace Chuck and I joined Jack and Harvey in a round of drinks celebrating their escape from the grasp of mother nature and listening to the needed debrief on just how in the heck did all this happen.

Jack had followed our tracks all the way to where the pressure ridge was and then decided to veer off to the right about ten feet and maneuver across the pressure ridge which was about 18 inches high. He slowly eased up over the top and they and the snowmobile dropped in through the thin ice on the other

side. Harvey was holding a rope tied to an otter sled with all the fishing equipment, he let go of it before they plunged in and that stayed on top of the ice. I asked them what their thoughts were when they broke through the ice and I think the word “panic” was used most often.

Harvey was clinging to the edge of the ice with his legs floating up underneath (I need to ask him if he saw a bright white light) that was about the time he looked over and saw Jack standing up in waste deep water with his feet on the bottom so Harvey lowered his legs and stood up. They waded out of the water walked to the road and called me.

Back in the cabin and after one more round of drinks the words “now what” were spoken, what do we do next, we have a snowmobile sitting in an unheated garage turning into a giant ice cube. “Let’s call Bruce, he knows all about snowmobiles”.

“I have company but bring it right over here,” Bruce said. Bruce is a snowmobile fanatic and knows all about what we should do next. We watched as water shot out of the cylinders as Bruce turned the engine over and he did as much as he could to temporarily salvage the sled. After a couple of weeks being repaired by Bruce’s ace mechanic, Jack’s snowmobile was back up and running.

Last week, Jack, Harvey and Jack’s brother Ron snowmobiled past our place well after dark and well after they were supposed to return from an afternoon’s trip on the trails. I called Jack’s wife and asked her how come they were out so late and she responded “they got lost.” “Who was leading?” I asked. “Jack,” she said,” he missed a few trail signs.”

Thankfully, I didn’t get a “Hey Bob” call.

Geezer Bob



Jack and Harvey headed out again