

Businessman North

Miss News

...foam in back tire

Pole bound - on a bike

By NORM ALEXANDER

Reason

Some men have a dream and never see it realized, but Jim Taylor is a man who puts his dreams into action.

For seven years, the Mississauga Real Estate agent has been planning a trip to the North Pole. Now this isn't so unusual in this age of jet planes and men on the moon but what is unique about his expedition is his means of locomotion, namely a motorcycle!

But the trip to the Pole is only the tip of Taylor's accomplishments. "An early employer of mine told me I wouldn't get my pilot's license but within a month I had my commercial pilot's license."

For the past 17 years, he was employed by ~~Aviation in Newfoundland~~ and was the private pilot of Don Jamieson, the former federal transport minister.

Just last year Taylor quit flying and took up ~~as a~~ a real estate agent for Polzler Real Estate in Mississauga.

"Some people thought I was crazy to go into the real estate business but within seven months, I had \$1 million in sales," commented the affable Mr. Taylor.

Taylor is no novice when it comes to the Arctic or to motorcycles. He has flown aircraft in all forms of all kinds in such places as Alaska and the Yukon Territories, where cold conditions closely rival those of the North Pole.

He also raced motorcycles when he was younger but gave it up "when they started to get a bad reputation . . . but the fact that I broke a few bones as well, was also another factor."

The 40-year-old Taylor, would liked to have left for the Pole seven years ago but there was one problem. . . he couldn't find a sponsor to pay the ever-escalating cost of an arctic adventure.

For years, Mr. Taylor tried to convince Canadian firms and money men to send a Canadian to the Pole. He approached everybody and his brother for money, the list included Dominion Stores, Shoppers World, B.S.A. motorcycles and the hero of the Royal Alexandra Theatre, Honest Ed Mirvish himself. In every case, the result of these inquiries was a polite, but firm refusal.

Pulling a mammoth folder out of his valise, Taylor showed me letters he had sent to various corporations and individuals, giving his historical background, his reasons for going and the money required for such a trip. Each one ended wishing him the best of luck but refusing any financial backing.

"I was constantly discouraged by every firm I talked to," commented Mr. Taylor, "but then I decided to call on Suzuki Canada's head office in Toronto and they went for the idea."

Two of the men he talked to were Bill Jennings, the sales manager and Bill Fullerton of the Advertising and ~~Pacing~~ Department.

"When he first came into the office I thought he was telling us a fairy tale but after investigating his background of the north, we came to the conclusion that he knew what he was doing, so we decided to sponsor him," said Fullerton.

Taylor's initial reason for trying Suzuki was their introduction of an all terrain vehicle (ATV) type motorcycle, which it was introducing to the Canadian market.

What makes it different from all other trail bikes is its design, with a heavy frame, oversize balloon tires and the high ground clearance needed for extremely rough conditions.

"The only other bike to rival it has three wheels and that was no good for Jim's use," said Fullerton.

Suzuki will outfit two RV-125s for Taylor, one for the trip itself and another as a back-up unit, which could be air-dropped to him should his first vehicle fail to function.

The Japanese-based company is modifying the vehicle for Taylor, by filling the back tire with foam, which will allow him to traverse the 60 foot pressure ridges that build up when sheets of ice meet. A ski will replace the front wheel and various equipment carriers will also be part of the well integrated bike.

"There's no doubt in my mind that a motorcycle is the only way to go to the pole," said Taylor, "the crew that used Ski-doo's to reach the pole spent costly hours and days digging through the ridges and once they got over them, the snowmobiles overturned constantly on the irregular ice surface of the Arctic," he observed.

Taylor will eliminate this problem by going right over the ridges and since the bike is balanced by Taylor himself, it's highly unlikely that the bike will overturn.

Outfitting

The retail cost of the bike is \$867 and along with the outfitting the costs could reach significant proportions but as Fullerton noted "The program has really taken off in the last month and we haven't set a ceiling on costs yet, but they are bound to be substantial."

The Oshawa native will start his trek from Cape Columbia at the northernmost part of Ellesmere Island, some 500 miles from the North Pole. Taylor doesn't know how long the trip will take. "It could be anywhere from 12 to 60 days," he said.

The reason for the great variance in time, is due to the changes in weather conditions which may see Taylor "socked in" for days at a time, as snow storms

and high winds wreak havoc with the man's health and equipment.

Even more dangerous than a snow storm, is the threat of the ice pack opening up, thereby engulfing anyone who happens to be on it at the time. "If I were to fall into the water, I would be dead within five minutes," said Taylor.

The food problem would be solved by an Oakville firm which will de-hydrate the food he will carry, thereby reducing the weight of his supplies by quite a lot. In case Taylor does lose his supplies, the handlebars of his motorcycle will be stuffed with raisins, which will allow him to survive for a few days until help could arrive.

As Taylor pushed toward the Pole, caches of food and gasoline were dropped to him and identified by a brightly colored balloon, a radio beacon or by a searchlight. The investigation process has led to the abandonment of this idea.

Only fear

Dr. Fred Roots, of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources told Taylor that caches of this kind tend to attract polar bears and Taylor admits this is the only fear he has about the whole trip.

He has talked to polar bear experts in Ottawa who have offered their assistance in telling him what to expect and how to combat the menace. "Apparently the best thing to ward off the bears is marjoram," said Taylor, "once they bite into them, they go crazy and run away." Needless to say, he will be taking along a few bags of the odorous substance.

Taylor himself puts more faith in his .37 magnum pistol which he claims could bring down any polar bear from 15 feet.

In addition to the weight of the rifle Taylor fears that it would be rendered useless in the low temperatures: "At least with the handgun I can keep it close to my body which will ensure its operation, should the need arise," he said.

Taylor will carry two tents under his seat and also a tank of ether, to be used in starting the 10 horsepower bike, in the expected temperatures of between 0 and 60 degrees F.

When this latter-day Perry reaches the North Pole, special letters, which people will purchase for \$1, will be brought to the pole, flown to some point south of the pole, then run by dogsled to Frobisher Bay for official cancellation. The names of these people will then be placed in a time capsule and sunk into the water at the pole.

Conditioning

The slightly built Taylor said physical conditioning is the key to the whole trip, and to that end, has commenced in-depth psychological and physical tests.

To combat boredom and loneliness, Taylor intends "to do some reading, singing and a lot of fantasizing," before falling asleep for his nightly three to four hours sleep, "any more and you become very uncomfortable, no matter how warm you are," observed Taylor.

The trip, which is scheduled for March of next year, will be the first trek to the Pole by motorcycle and the first by a lone Canadian. As Taylor puts it: "I'm not in this for myself, I want to do it for Canada." He said he hasn't contacted any American sponsors because he wants the trip to be all-Canadian.

The coming weeks and months will see Mr. Taylor on television and on radio, telling everyone of man's "Last Arctic passion." "After I make it to the pole, the thrill of going there again will mean nothing."

Although experts have told him he's crazy to try, Taylor merely replies that he will go "no matter what."

When I asked Taylor if he actually felt he could make it to the pole against all the odds, a smile spread across his face and he said "sure I will. I've never failed at anything I've tried in my life."