

Real Bldg. Bk.

# Adventurer wants second try at Pole

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Jim Taylor: now a real estate salesman, he led an unsuccessful 1975 expedition to the North Pole. (Staff photo)

By March, they were stranded less than 200 miles from the North Pole, and Jim Taylor was being rescued whether he liked it or not.

When a plane arrived to pluck the four-man expedition from Ward Hunt Island, the northernmost point in the country, it included members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, sent to make sure Taylor was on board when it returned.

That was nearly seven years ago, and the Malton man is still annoyed.

Earlier expeditions to the Pole were allowed to risk their lives without government interference, he says.

"They didn't keep an eye on them up there. Why should they worry about it if I want to take a chance?"

Taylor's plan, an attempt to make the first successful cross-country trek to the Pole, was the product of more than seven years of research, beginning in the late '60s.

At the time, he was chief pilot for Gander Airlines in Newfoundland, a job that often took him into Canada's north.

Snowed in occasionally in northern Labrador, say, or Baffin Island, he learned to love the Arctic.

## what are they doing now?

After years of reading, he began to prepare himself as an explorer.

It was an effort made without financial help from the federal government; without, in fact, official encouragement or even recognition.

Simply put, the government doubted the expedition would survive. The project, officials said, was impossible.

Taylor didn't — and doesn't — buy it.

"It's not impossible. Nothing's impossible. You just have to find the right way of doing it."

The right way, he says, is alone on a special arctic vehicle, a two-wheel-drive machine roughly similar to a motorcycle and less likely than a sled to tip and break.

And so, in February, 1975, the four men

boarded a plane in Montreal for the Arctic — first to Resolute, in the Northwest Territories, then on to the base camp on Ward Hunt Island.

Delayed twice by bad weather, it would be several weeks before Taylor — leaving his three colleagues at base camp, according to plan — set out, supplies in tow, for the North Pole.

He got no further than two miles outside camp, where he was blocked by a 150-mile-wide, impassable ice shelf.

It was a bitterly frustrating moment.

And while the expedition was over, the bills remained.

All told, Taylor owed about \$72,000 — virtually all of it to come out of his own pocket.

In the next few years, he would sell his farm, three horses, two tractors and a house to pay his debts, but remained about \$22,000 in the hole.

But it was all worth it, he says.

And, in fact, Taylor, now 47, is planning another expedition — "whenever I get the money."

These days, his career as a pilot more than a decade behind him, Taylor is enjoying life as a salesman for Re/Max real estate in Etobicoke.

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Taylor, Jim