

# THE MAINSTREETER

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WINTER ISSUE



*Sam Blotner Reveals Deal With Uncle Sam*

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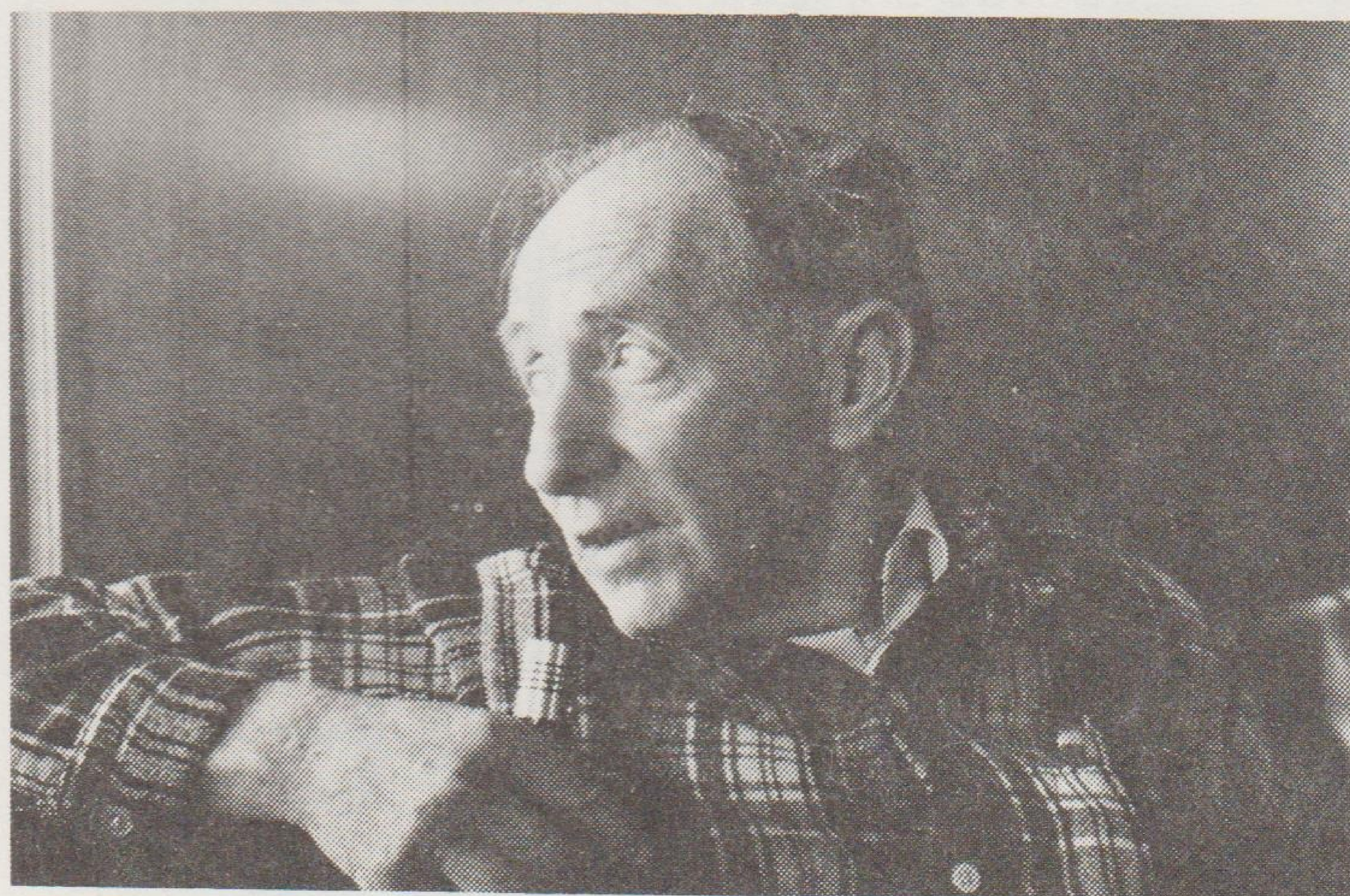
*Winter Memories of Aroostook County*

*Welcome To My World - photography by Voscarr*

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# Sam Blotner Reveals Deal With Uncle Sam

by Ted  
Sylvester



The man who gained national fame for purchasing a missile base at Connor, just north of Caribou, which led to no less than eleven appearances on the Johnny Carson Tonight Show, spent the summer at Presque Isle with his brother Norman. We are speaking, of course, of Samuel F. Blotner, a flamboyant wheeler-dealer with a Downeast twang.

Sam, as he is affectionately known, has resided in Costa Rica for the past six years. He was in Presque Isle to tie up some business matters and talked with "The Mainstreeter" about his experiences in television, his impressions of Aroostook County, and a comparison between the way of life here and in Costa Rica.

The comical chain of events which led to Sam's being written up in national publications, and subsequent television appearances, started back in 1962 when the Army put the 28-acre Ajax-Nike missile base at Connor up for bid. Now being the patriotic man that he is, Sam submitted a bid of \$7,600, which was based on the year of the American Declaration of Independence - 1776. Well, Sam's bid was the highest submitted and he was notified of his purchase. As Sam tells the story, a few months later a Defense Department attorney arrived on the scene with a coded telegram from the Pentagon. Sam asked the young attorney what the telegram said. "He don't know what the telegram says 'cause he can't decipher the code," Sam said.

Anyway, to make a long story short, it seemed that the Army had made a mistake and should never have sold Sam the base without first notifying the Air Force which wanted the facility for a radar tracking station. The government offered Sam \$5,000 which didn't seem quite fair to a

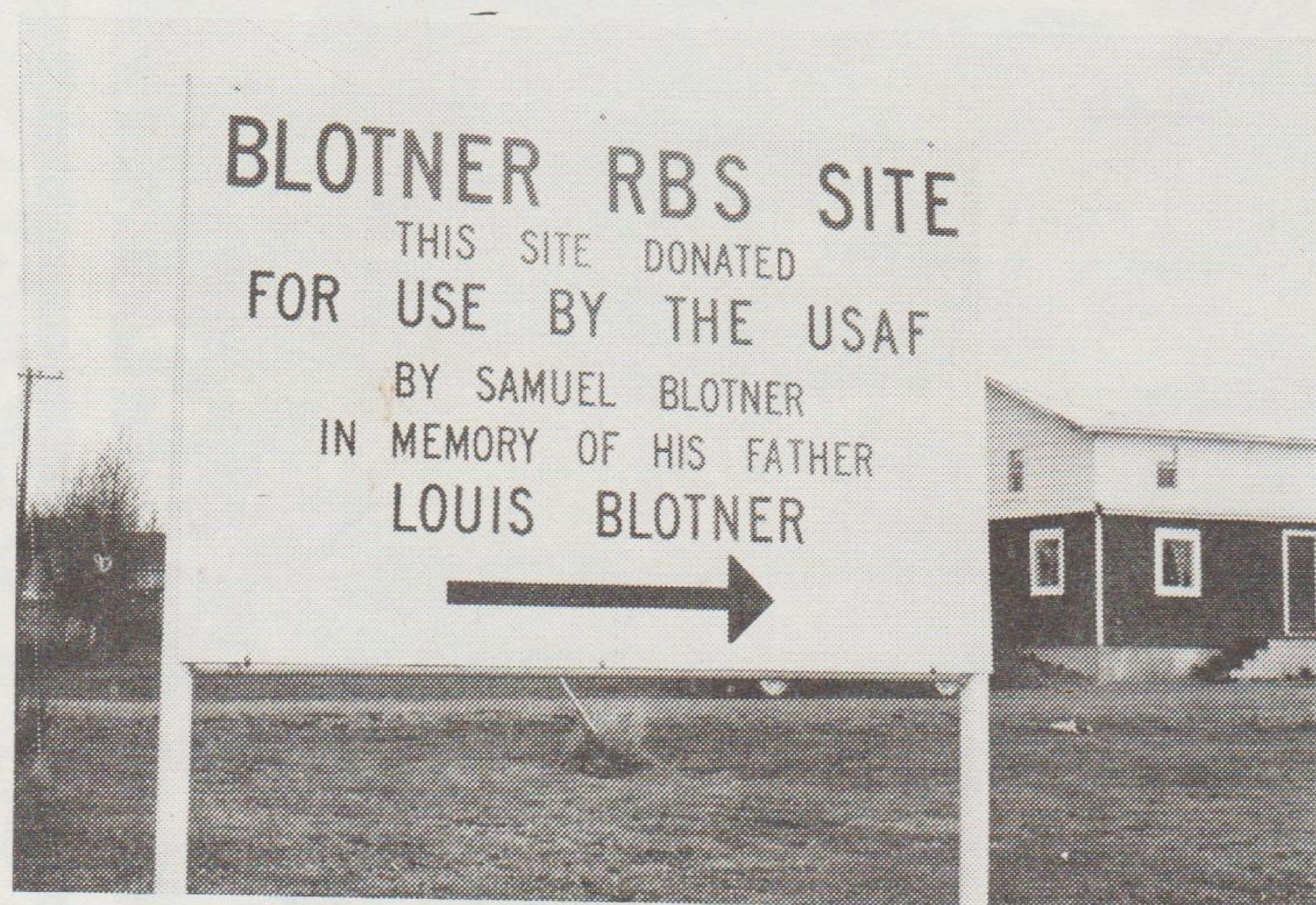
Downeast Yankee. Sam countered with an offer to sell the base for \$30,000 or lease it to them for \$1 - with a few strings attached. The Air Force finally accepted the terms of the lease arrangement. They would keep the base in good repair, and would revert ownership back to Sam or his heirs when they were through with it, and they would name the station after Sam's father. As far as is known here, this is the only base named after a private citizen. As anyone who travels between Caribou and Van Buren knows, the site is called the "Blotner RBS Site - This site donated for use by the USAF by Samuel F. Blotner in memory of his father, Louis Blotner."

Sam told us that he retained the 19 acres on the highway, which in the past was used for a restaurant and nightclub. Sam said the property has been quite badly vandalized in recent years. As for the RBS Site, Sam said he was there last year, but the young officer in charge wouldn't let him on the property - security you know. Sam said he was assured that the base was in good repair and that recent improvements have included air conditioning in the big building and the replacing of the big ball from an air inflated to fiberglass.

"Gee I'm lucky. I won't have to get up there every day with my bicycle pump and blow it up," Sam noted.

Sam loves to talk about being on television. He is also a walking Chamber of Commerce on the joys of living in Costa Rica. He said that a result of being on the Tonight Show, several persons have moved to the Central American country.

"When I'm on television I get letters from many different places, from people of all types -



politicians, poor people, millionaires. They want to know how I like it down there. They want to come down to see me, usually."

As far as a comparison between the people of Costa Rica and the people of Northern Maine, Sam spoke very highly of both. He described them both as being very friendly and nice people. "About the only difference is that the people of Costa Rica have a southern accent," he said. Costa Rica is basically

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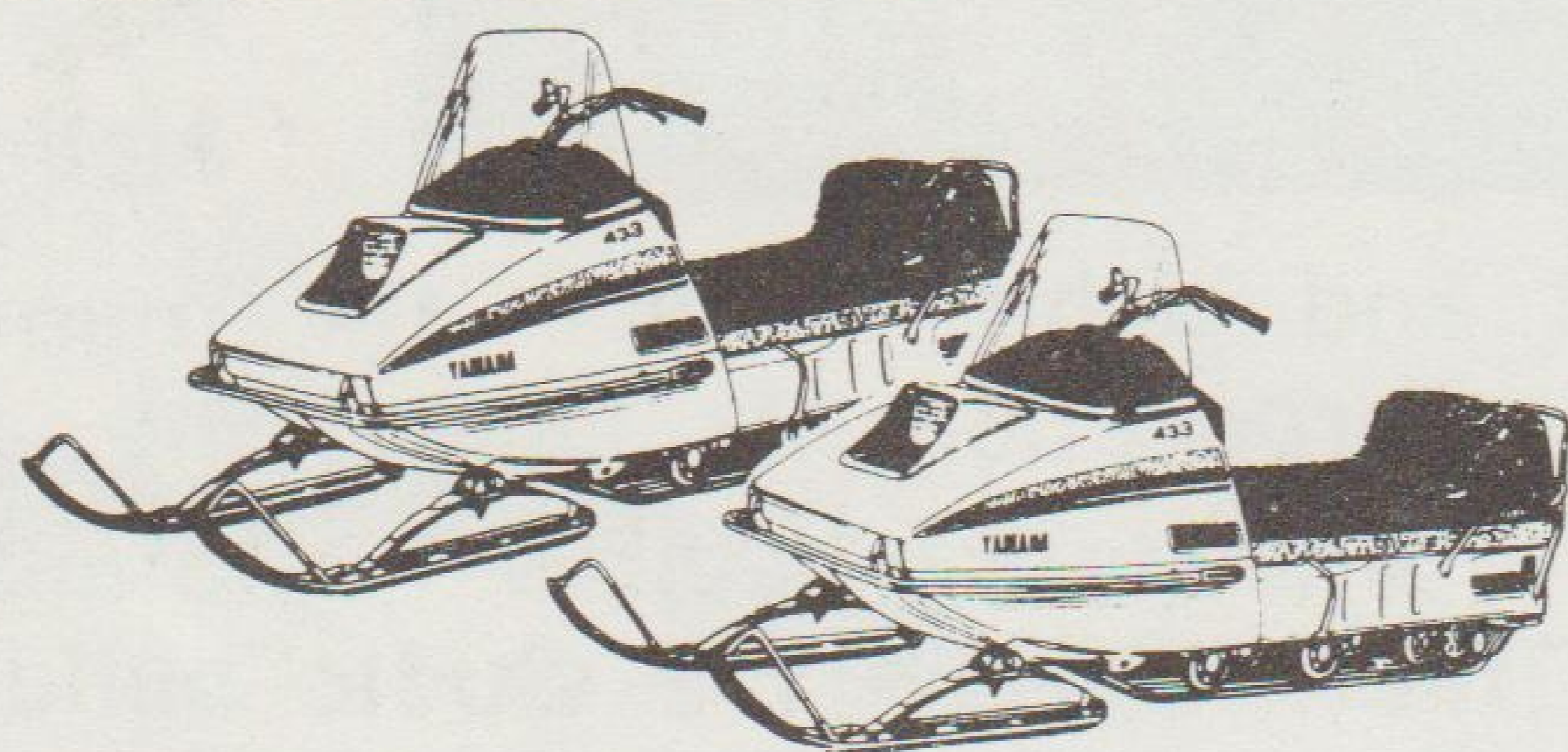
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## Sam Blotner Reveals Deal With Uncle Sam

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an agricultural country, still using quite primitive methods. "You get a guy to cut the grass and he doesn't use a grass cutter; he uses a machete. You give them a lawn mower and he probably wouldn't want to use it," described Sam.

Coffee is the number one crop, next to sugar and bananas. Cattle raising is one of the biggest industries of the country. Potatoes are grown in the northern part of the country near the volcanoes. In fact, Sam said he wrote to the Maine Potato Council once on behalf of a grower who wanted to buy some seed. Things didn't work out, but Sam is convinced that if some enterprising broker would learn to speak Spanish, he could pick up some business South of the Border. Sam feels with air transportation into Bangor as it is now, there is a great potential for import and export of products between the two countries. The cost of living between the two countries is markedly different. Prices in the United States "give me indigestion" Sam commented.

Besides the eleven appearances on the Johnny Carson Show, Sam has been on numerous other interview shows shown locally in the metropolitan areas. If it was figured out, he has probably collected more than enough from the television exposure to cover the cost of the missile base which started the whole thing. Sam told us that on his last appearance on the Tonight Show, his expenses and No. 320 appearance fee came to over \$850. On this particular show Sam appeared with Jerry Lewis, and had the famous comedian holding his sides with laughter as Sam spun a tale about his horses. Sam has rubbed elbows with such famous personalities as Bob Hope, Jimmy Stewart, Joey Bishop, Joan Blondell, Eva Gabor, Tony Bennett, and Bill Cosby; who according to Sam - "wasn't even famous when he was on Johnny's show the first time." Sam keeps in touch with Ed McMahon, Johnny's right hand man, and said he expects to go back on the show again.

Sam likes the idea of having a private dressing room and being worked over by a make-up man. "The eight times I was on live from New York, Richard Nixon's makeup man, excuse the expression, put on my make-up. His name is Voegp or something like that. He does all of Nixon's makeup work. Me being a Democrat, the last couple of makeup jobs he did wasn't up to standard, I didn't think. He's a good guy though. I look good in the mirror, but wipe the make-up off I look like, you know, I look normal; I don't look so good, you know."

Getting back to Aroostook County, Sam said he

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would recommend to anybody to come here. "I figure this is a good place to live. The people are very sincere. They live in a very relaxed atmosphere - not the rat race like other parts of the country. This state, basically from Aroostook (County line) up is very unspoiled. I own land in St. Francis and along the Allagash and when I go up there I say 'gee such a difference between this solitude and the rat race of New York or Los Angeles. The air is so good, the people very friendly, and you don't have to lock your house'."

Sam said he hopes to spend six or seven months in Costa Rica and the rest of the time in Maine. "If a guy has ice cream all the time he wants to change to something else like apple pie, for example. I feel this (Aroostook) is the apple pie, and down there (Costa Rica) is the ice cream."

So look for Sam to be around Presque Isle in future years. He undoubtedly wants to keep an eye on the Air Force to see that his own private "Blotner RBS Site" is being taken care of properly. Also, don't be too surprised if you're watching Johnny Carson's Tonight Show some night, and a little guy with a Downeast twang has them rolling in the aisles.

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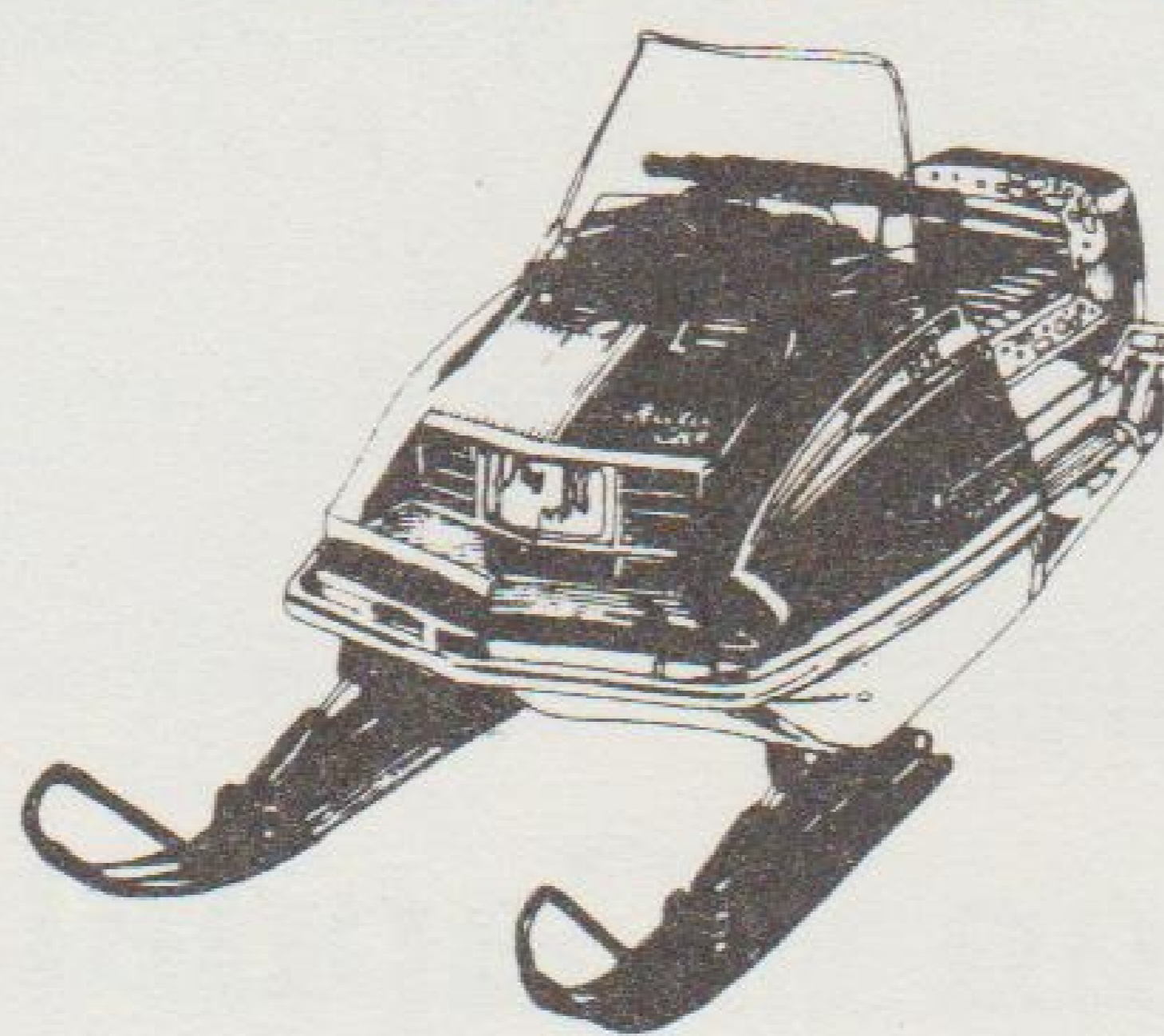
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