

# Vermont, one town at a time

## Manchester man joins '251 club'

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Staff Writer

MANCHESTER — There would be no blatting and bawling, no decisions made without a vote, and no way they would miss an opportunity to get ice cream.

Yes, this was the "Big Dogs 251 Club" and David Quefnel and grandsons Zachary and Eric Shambo would get things their way because this was their quest to visit all 251 Vermont cities and towns.

Mulling over ways to keep active in his youthful 50s a few years ago, Quefnel joined the 251 Club, an organization with some 4,000 members whose mission is to visit every municipality in the state. He got his grandsons interested in participating and in the spring of 2001, the three armed

themselves with maps, a camera, loose leaf paper, pens and a tent and set off in Quefnel's pickup truck.

Pownal was the trio's first stop in April 2001 in what was to be a trip hundreds of miles long, stretched over many weekends and costly, thanks to the many gasoline and ice cream stops.

Last week, the group completed the journey with a scheduled get-together with Gov. James Douglas at the Statehouse in Montpelier. This Tuesday, the Manchester Select Board proclaimed Quefnel as "Honorary Manchester Ambassador to Vermont" for making the journey.

Middlebury residents Zachary Shambo, 10, and Eric Shambo, 8, said the best part of the adventure wasn't the stops at various elemen-

tary school playgrounds, covered bridges, museums, campgrounds, diners, cemeteries or even an encounter with former Red Sox pitcher Bill Lee.

Instead, getting to meet Douglas was their greatest thrill.

"I enjoyed seeing the governor and actually meeting him face-to-face," said the freckle-faced Zachary Shambo.

The governor autographed the group's notebook with a note about the state's strength being in its rich and diverse communities.

"You have a better understanding of our beautiful state," he wrote. "Best wishes on your next adventure. Good luck."

Quefnel and the Shambos' nicknamed themselves the Big Dogs from a now-defunct Manchester business and occasionally

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Chris Parker

Manchester resident David Quefnel, center, poses with grandsons Zachary Shambo, left, and Eric Shambo, both of Middlebury, on Friday, for what was likely their 300th photo opportunity since 2001, the year they began a quest to visit all 251 Vermont cities and towns.

## Travelers visited about six towns everyday

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went driving with some family members. They would visit about six cities or towns a day, taking snapshots at distinctive locations. In some of the photos, they appear tired; in others, beaming and giving each other bunny ears, showing off muscles or raising hands in glory.

The Big Dogs had rules they and others had to follow, the main rule being no one could complain. Still, there was the occasional disagreement that developed between the Shambos. While there were occasional arguments about who was the better baseball team — the Boston Red Sox or the New York Yankees — those were

usually settled over ice cream.

The solution at hand one winter in Waitsfield was, instead, a mammoth snowfight. The event made for a funny picture.

"It was fun," said a smiling Eric Shambo. "I wanted to do it again."

Quefnel said the journey was a "one of these days" thought that turned into reality. He said he didn't even think about the miles he put on his vehicle or the impact on his wallet because he isn't one to sit around the house.

"For me," he said, "it's just my heritage and I'm very interested in it and I can share it with these guys so they have the rest of their lives to keep it."

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