

THREDBO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Ferdl Nobl – An Oral History

**Interviewed by Jerry Krejzar, Chesaplatina, St Anton am Arlberg, Austria 16th January
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FERDL NOBL – AN ORAL HISTORY
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It's the 16th of January 2017 and I am sitting with Ferdl Nobl at Chesaplantina in St Anton am Arlberg. Ferdl we are going to talk about a lot of things this afternoon, but firstly Ferdl I would like to ask you that whatever

we talk about, the interview about your family and Thredbo, when we transcribe it you will allow us to use it for the Thredbo Historical Society so as it will be shown to the public in the Thredbo Alpine Museum. Is that ok?

Sure, no problem.

Good, good. Well let's start then, it's nice to catch up with you again, and firstly we will talk about your family, your grandparents, do you want to talk about your grandparents for a little bit.

Well yes let's talk about my family because the grandparents I didn't even know, how good, or how much involved they were in skiing. So as I was brought up as a kid, I always was very interested in skiing, because skiing ---

What year were you born Ferdl.

October 7th 1936, that's when I was born.

Just at the start of the war, very difficult years I guess.

I don't much remember about the wars you know, it didn't affect me, as a child; it affected my father, my parents you know, I cannot tell you ---

And where were you born.

I was born in, there is a little town, near a capital city around here, which is called Landeck, and there is a hospital, a very big hospital which is in Zams it's called, and in that hospital in Zams I was born in 1936.

So let's talk about your father and mother.

My father and my mother they came both, they came from very poor families, my mother was born near here as you go from St Anton east, there is a small town beyond Pettneau, and this is called Schnann, this is where my mother was born. And she came out of a family of twelve

children, twelve children, and in my father's family there were thirteen children. In those days we had tremendous big families all over the place, unbelievable. In these days you have no families any more, ah ---

How did she cope with that large a family?

Well it was a tough life, you see, I mean a family, a mother, she had to stay home because she had so much work with all those children, cooking, laundry and, and, and getting them through the school, and in these days there was only one person who had an income, that was the man, our father who had the job, and he was the one who brought the money so that we were able to survive, in other words.

What did he do?

My father was, he was involved with the Post Offices, and the State Post Office sent certain people from this village to the other village and so he was moved all over the place, to different offices you see.

(There was a pause in the interview as Ferdl hosts guests, who had arrived and Ferdl had to show them to their rooms).

Now Ferdl we were just finishing with your father and how the family lived in Landeck.

Where I was born in that hospital in Zams, that's where I was born and we used to live, and I don't know if this is so important, my father has moved through Austria a lot of times in different villages because of his profession as a Post Officer or manager, I don't know what you want to call it. He had a job by the State in those Post Offices, and they moved him all over.

And did you move with him, did you see some of these villages, what did you think of Austria in those years when you were growing up.

Well what can you say as a child? You move with your parents but your imagination, I don't know what to tell you. The most important part for me as a child was, always the place where I was born, that's home, you see.

Which village was that?

That was a village called Grins.

And that's in the Inn valley.

That's in the Inn valley, the Stanzertal valley as a matter of fact; the valley from St Anton down, going east, this is the Stanzertal valley and then follows the Inn valley in that direction. But I was in the upper part of Austria in the Stanzertal valley.

And what do you remember of your school years.

Oh yeh, the same situation, because my father, my family was moving all the time so we were in different schools you see, never consistently in one school, and the last one I visit was the one I didn't like very much, because the director of that school was my uncle, father's brother. And those guys in those days you could not run a school like you run a school now, they were tough, tough thing, you see, they slapped you in the face if you don't believe, and he thinks he thought he has more than the right to banish us as relations you know, and this is why in the last couple of years I did not enjoy it much.

Did many of your brothers and sisters go to the same school?

Yes, yes. In my family I have three sisters and two brothers, we are five in my family, and the one I was talking before that's the grand-parents family, the father's family and the mother's family, they had many children.

Your family was five.

My family was five that was it.

Now when you grew up did you come straight to St Anton?

No as I grew up after I finished my basic school, what do you call it, grammar school something like this. There was a very big thing the parents always said to us, you have to learn a profession that was number one. So, you know as a boy you are always interested in cars, motor bikes, speed, so I thought in these days the right thing to do was to become a car mechanic, so I learnt to become a car mechanic over three and a half years and after I had finished that profession I decided and the company or the company I worked for they decided to send me to Porsche, and I made there a special course to be specialised in how to fix Porsche, but in those days it was different, today it is all in an office, there is the work, you get the idea. So I did that and afterwards I have done that I decided to go into ---

This was after the war wasn't it. Did you remember anything of the war?

Not much, not much, I also never ask, you hear a lot of stories of everybody is telling you, but I personally didn't feel much – I have not been involved in that, in that horrible time.

But you know there is that sort of history which people in St Anton don't like to remember, was the fact that St Anton was a bit of a playground for the Nazis, and I don't suppose you want to talk about that, but that's a part of history that is sad.

Yes it's very sad, but you know - the result of wars' is so horrible it only costs people's death.

So you were very lucky in that case.

Yes I was very lucky in that case you see.

So after the Porsche thing what was the transition from Porsche to ski-instructing?

After the Porsche I enjoyed being a mechanic but in those days it has been a very dirty work you know, dirty face, the outfit was dirty, and I thought I don't think that this is the real world, and then I decided that those were the days ---

What year are we talking about?

About 70 or 75

Would it be more like the 50's?

Yeh, yeh you are correct fifty seven, fifty seven, that's when I decided to put mechanics to the side and go into the ski-world because that was just beginning to grow. Skiing became famous all over the world through our pioneers like Hani Schneider.

Were you a skier before you decided to do that?

Yes, yes, you know what do you do? As kids when you live in the mountains and you see snow, skiing, that's it.

So in 57 you decided to come here.

I was already a skier in 57.

So what was the year you became an instructor.

57 was my first time that I asked the Ski School Director, who was Rudi Matt and Sepp Fahrner, I asked those two people, they were the two most important people in town in those

days; and I asked them, 'I would like to become a ski-instructor, can you offer me a job'. So Rudi and Sepp Fahrner offered me a job, they said ok you can come to the ski-school and we train you how to teach, how to please people, how to instruct people and all that. So for one winter I was just moving from ski class to ski class with the director to see how other instructors instruct.

So let's talk about Rudi Matt, for he must have been quite a famous Director because back then he had contacts with the Czechs, Karel and Sasha Nekvapil and Frank Prihoda and Tony Sponar who were here in 1948. Because from what I remember of the history is that Tony was involved with Rudi Matt when he raced in the 1948 Olympics, he had a long career. What did you think of him? (Rudi Matt)

He was a very powerful man, he has been fair to me and other boys as well, because in 57 there were about ten boys from St Anton who asked for their job, all ten of them, local boys got the job through Rudi Matt, you see; and Rudi was the one that has been in foreign countries, Rudi Matt used to be in America as a ski instructor, and he was also in Sun Valley, and he was offered the Ski-School in Sun Valley which he didn't accept. 'No, I don't want the Ski-School; I'm going back to St Anton'. He was just in America for a very short time.

Now what about Franz and Pepi Gabl.

Franz and Pepi Gabl I know both of them but Franz I didn't know as well.

Franz went to the US?

Yes Franz went to the US and Pepi Gabl as well and Pepi Gabl was also in Australia.

Yes, Frank knew him quite well.

Sure, I know Pepi Gabl very well and in these days I consider him as a friend of mine.

Yes Frank considered him as a friend as well. His son died, just now, Marcella's going to the funeral, they are related.

When did he die?

Just yesterdays; or the day before, because Herbert Rofner is his cousin and Herbert and Marcella are going to the funeral.

This is the saddest news I heard because I know little Pepi very well.

56, 57 or 58 years old. But we are getting off the subject. So what was the village life like in those years in 1957 and post-war?

That was the time that Austria had a very big name beside Switzerland, because of Hans Schneider and Rudi Matt and all that; and in these days all the Royal families used to come to St Anton, not to Lech, not to Zurs. So the Queen of England, all those people the Thatcheroyes, used to come to St Anton. In the 'Aldstat' around the Hotel Post, they all stayed in the Hotel Post, That particular time when St Anton was very very popular, and we had here a lot of rich people, a lot of rich people, and those people went to ski-school because all of them wanted to have a private ski instructor. So in 57 I was in the Ski School moving around with Rudi Matt and Sepp Farnher with people in this class and that class ---

I became an Austrian certified ski instructor in 1963, 63 was the time that I was fully certified as a ski instructor. And that offered me the door to the house, for the winter season; and from that on, I was a very good skier in St Christoph when I made the exam, we had different groups, group one, two, three four, five there were 150 ski instructors up there taking the exam, and I, because of my knowledge was able to be in the first group.

Fantastic.

And that helped me tremendously, and through that I got into contact with a group of very rich people, and I taught them how to ski not only in St Anton. They took me, they said, 'would you mind coming with me to France, ski with me there. Do you mind coming with me to St Moritz, to Klosters, to Zermatt to teach me there'.

This was before you went to the USA

Yes yes before the USA.

So we are talking about 1963 before USA, so what made you want to go to the USA.

That's a very funny story. There was a singer in Germany and he sung all those most beautiful interesting songs from all over the world, and listening to his music, his music fascinated me, and that was the moment where I decided that this is not the end of the world here, you must go on, look across the ocean, see what's happening in other countries; and with that, that was the main reason because of his songs that I decided to go to North America. That was the time.

So where was the first place you went to.

The first place when I went to America was a small little ski resort called Sugarbowl in Donner near Sacramento very close to Squaw Valley where they had the very first Winter Olympics, that was the very first time.

Is that near Alpine Meadows?

Yes that's right, and there was a guy, he was the Director in Sugarbowl, Tony Marks he was there as the Ski School Director in Sugarbowl and he asked three of us guys to come to America, to Sugarbowl, and work for him, there were three, there was Tony Marks brother Christian, Fahrner Kott and myself. We decided ok, we had a contract with the company, the company paid our transfers and everything, organised all the visas we needed in those days, and so we decided in 1964 ok, goodbye St Anton. Rudi Matt was very angry when I told him, he said to me 'Ferdl I wouldn't do it', don't go to America', he said 'you never know when you are coming back you will have difficulties in coming back to the ski-school' which was not a nice thing.

So you sort of cut your bridges as they say.

The reason why I didn't understand was; he himself was in the US and to me he said 'you will have difficulties when you come back', that gave me a shock. Why have you been there and why shouldn't I go there, and I don't know the decision in these days, when I come back what do I do here now? You see, so I was scared. Anyway we three left the country, went to San Francisco in an aeroplane and somebody picked us up in San Francisco and brought us up to Sugarbowl. Sugarbowl, a small resort, it was ok but I was not happy there because it was too small. Sugar- Bowl, the word itself.

So how did you end up in Sun Valley.

So I stayed there for one winter. It was so small that coming from such a big area like St Anton you know, I said 'is this now my future'. Anyway then I met another guy in Sun Valley he was an Austrian, and he also came to Sugarbowl as a ski instructor. Mike Wiegele.

He ended up in helicopter skiing in Canada.

In Canada, and so I had a lot of conversations with Mike Wiegele and he said 'I'm not going to stay here, this is too small' and I said to him, 'I don't either'. So he said to me 'I'm going to Canada, why don't you come with me'; if I would have decided in these days to go with him to Canada I would be with -----, what is the company name? I would be there, and I said to Mike, 'I don't know how long I am going to be in the United States, I am not going to make a

decision' you see. So he went, and I stayed. After the winter season, the first winter season I came back home again, and then I heard about Sun Valley and I did know already that Sun Valley was the number one ski resort in the US, not that I am saying that, but because it is true but because Sun Valley always reminded me of the Arlberg region. Big mountains, long runs, terrific! So I then got in contact with Sigi Engel, he was the director. Sigi Engel was the director who asked all the top skiers from the examination in those years, from the Bundersportheim in St Christoph, he has asked those guys to come to Sun Valley, you see, and I had the chance to come to Sun Valley, this way.

So what years are we talking about from 1964 - to about those years you started in Thredbo in 1971

All the winters from 1964 on - for 18 winters - I spent 18 US winters in America.

So your time in Sun Valley; was it a good time.

It was the best!

Did you not meet some famous people you wanted to talk about?

That's right.



Well let's talk about them, you said Kirk Douglas and Bing Crosby, was that in Sun Valley.

When I came there I taught as a private ski- instructor and through Sigi Engel I met a lot of interesting people, celebrities. In these years I was doing all the races in Sun Valley, professionals, amateurs, and a lot of people met me because I was a top racer there.

Ferdi Nobl – Sun Valley, Idaho, USA - 1968

So I had a big name in Sun Valley; and one day, one day that's the story now, a guy came up to me by the name of Ray Stark.

Ray Stark movie producer the premier guy behind Columbia Pictures, and he said to me 'would

you mind to ski with my wife, she is up here in the winter and I am in California, I do go back and forth' and I said, I did not know Ray Stark in those days, then I found out what a powerful man he is you see; and so I started skiing with her, and then I started meeting Ray Stark, and Ray Stark he said to me 'I have a job for you, you could work for me, I am an agent for a lot of movie stars' you see, and he said, 'you know it could be that you are not consistently in Sun Valley, you would have to move around with those stars'. So I said 'that sounds rather exciting'. So he said to me 'I have so and so many people, Barbara Streisand, Kirk Douglas, Henry Mancini, Bing Crosby, just to name a few' and I skied with all of them and with their families; and at certain times he said to me, 'I have a star, and he would like to ski in Vail, or he wants to ski in Aspen, or I have people, they want to be taken to Europe'. So that worked out marvellous.

Who was your favourite celebrity?

My favourite celebrity was Kirk Douglas. Kirk Douglas I liked very much.

Was he a good skier?

No, no none of them. None of them were really good. Janet Leigh was a good skier, and the others were having fun.

How good was Janet Leigh? Could she ski powder?

Oh yeh, yeh. She skied lovely on the slopes.

So these were the best lessons of course.

Yeh, yeh but I didn't care less, for me these were people I liked very much and it didn't matter so much how good they are; I just wanted to guide them around, have a good time and show them little tricks to improve their skiing. So Ray Stark was actually the man who opened me with that job; very few instructors had that opportunity.

So you made a name for yourself in Sun Valley.

I had a big name there, I must say so.

So let's now talk about the Thredbo years. When you finished in Sun Valley did you come back for a little while to Austria, or did you go straight to Thredbo.

No, no while I was in Sun Valley we had all those top instructors and among those top instructors was a man by the name of Leonhard Erharter, and through Leonhard Erharter, he asked me, 'I would like to have you in Thredbo as a ski-instructor'. He was the man who opened the door for me in Thredbo.

It must have been in 1971. Because you said the first year was 1971.

Yes, yes 1971.

So that means when you first went to Australia he sort of facilitated you coming out to Thredbo.

Lend Lease was the owner at the time.

And that was easily arranged by Lend Lease.

Lend Lease was very powerful in Australia in those days.

Dick Dusseldorp, of Lend Lease.

Dusseldorp, Dusseldorp, I skied with Dusseldorp.

So before we get to Arnold let's talk about the early years, when you got there from 1971; you met Dick Dusseldorp. In those first years you skied under Leonhard.

He was the Director.

Let's talk about those times, 1971 72 and 73, what were your favourite times and impressions in those years.

I arrived in Sydney, I did arrive with some other guys; Helmut Wolf, Sigi Wolf and Helmut Pfister. They had been there much longer.

Sigi Wolf was there before you.

Oh yeh, he was there with Leonhard before my time.

What other instructors do you remember who were already there. I know that Sigi Wolf came from Stuben, but who knew Leonhard in the early days that were already there before you.

Leonhard was the Head Instructor in Zurs, the number one instructor in Zurs, and Leonhard came from a place near Kitzbuhel.

Hopfgarten and I believe that Bob Arnold got him to come out to Australia.

That I really did not know, because people knew him from Zurs.

So you obviously knew some of these people by reputation.

Oh yeh, sure.

In 71 72 73 you were a standard instructor under Leonhard, you only became Technical Director afterwards, but we will talk about that later.

In those days I was always a clinic instructor, a Thredbo instructor.

So please explain what that means.

Well those have been instructors from all over the world; in the early times around Leonhard I would say eighty five were Austrians, no question, and the rest were Australians because they had the qualification as well and they had the right to get the job.

Rod Dunning was one of the first.

And they all got a job we had a fantastic relationship with the Australian ski instructors. Only later when the Americans came over, it was like, a big family. It was terrific, we had a good atmosphere.

I am going to remind you about something. In those years in the 70's we used to stay in the Valley Terminal, and we used to share a dormitory there, where Ski Patrol shared the cooking facilities with you. I remember in the mornings when we used to have breakfast, a get together, with Ski Patrol mixing with instructors. But remember in the afternoon when you were hungry you would come out with your pot with milk, stale bread and apples, and you made this damned Austrian dish, I can still remember the smell, but I can't remember how you made it, but I just want you to tell me what it was.

(Laughter). It was Kaisershmarrn.

I know Kaiserschmarrn, no this one you used stale bread and apples, and you would simmer the milk, and you would put in the bread and the apples in with the milk. That's the one I remember, not Kaiserschmarrn.

Christ!

Well I remember you doing that, maybe it was just an old village recipe!

I don't remember it.

Well you see we were all in this cooking area, and you would see all these different dishes come out.

I did not cook that much in the Terminal, because Sigi Wolf was the cook. Sigi Wolf made all the dishes.

What did he make?

He made so many things, I tell you, unbelievable; and a lot of people were always jealous! And I was a very good friend of Helmut, he cooked for me and Helmut Pfister, and he invited Ski

Patrol for a special dish, but I really don't remember, it's such a long time ago but Sigi Wolf was the chef in town, and he just cooked for his friends and ran a bar and things like that.

Do you recall when we all used to go to the Keller, and you guys used to do the Schuhplattler? Describe the schuhplattler, how did you used to do it?

Schuhplattler, we didn't have 'lederhosen' we were just normally dressed, and there was a group of Austrians who played the accordion, sang and yodelled very much, and here, when I was a younger boy in St Anton I belonged to one of those groups. They were called the lustinger Arlberger, the team leader was Sepp Staffler and we were about sixteen people, girls and boys, and we did the singing and yodelling and the schuhplattler. There was hitting, dancing, jumping up and down and hitting heels, and hips and rear end to the rhythm of the music, that's what we did. In the Keller.

It was very well accepted.

Very well known and they loved it, and the only thing is one night, I broke my Achilles tendon.

Your Achilles tendon, doing the dance!

Doing the dance! And I had to quit the season because they operated on me in Jindabyne. I went there and came back and I couldn't ski anymore.

You didn't injure yourself on skis you injured yourself in dancing!

Doing the schuhplattler! I will never forget that time in the Keller.

There used to be, I can never say it, but 'gemutlichkeit'.

Gemutlichkeit, gemutlichkeit, gemutlichkeit, that easy 'being together' having a good conversation, no fights, no nothing, just teasing each other all over the table, you know, and jokes and whatsoever just, it was just lovely.

Social life was pretty good in those days wasn't it.
Social life was excellent.

Once the instructors moved to Jindabyne that was after your time it lost the atmosphere.

After my time. Exactly.

Let's get serious now, what about the technical aspects, let's talk about Leonhard. Leonhard when you first started, he always was the most technical skier, you could see --- you were a technical skier, how do you see Leonhard and yourself, in describing technique.

He was the God of the snow. Well he had such a big name, I wouldn't have the guts to say Leonhard you are no good, no way, I was in town doing my job, and he respected me as a ski instructor because he did know that I know how to teach in how to get the technique across, and this is why I was also his clinic instructor. And every season we had a clinic and all the instructors had to be there; and I was not the only one, we had more clinic instructors you see because the group was much too big; and in the clinic you had about eight or nine people.

So as a clinic instructor you would mentor other instructors to see how they were going, presumably.

Because we had one technique in those days, that was 'wedel', wedeling down, that was so big all over the world, and everybody wanted to learn that you see. And so, we brought the technique across to those instructors that we have a system that everybody has to teach that system. There was nobody who came over who could say no, I am teaching French.

So really when we get back to that, wedeln in fact, was based on the 'Arlberg Technique'.

Sure, it was back to that because professor Kruckenhauser, professor Kruckenhauser he was the big man in the Bundersportheim, and Hopplicher too established that. He saw, Kruckenhauser and Hopplicher saw, a man like Tony Seelos who comes from Innsbruck, and they saw that guy do wedel turns, and so that guy.

So are you saying that the 'history of the wedeln' goes back to Kruckenhauser who saw Tony Seelos, doing those turns!

Seelos, as a matter of fact Seelos, was the founder of the parallel turn and short-swing.

Not Sailer, Seelos, how do you spell it.

Seelos, Toni Seelos.

So when I say you guys, I mean when in the ski school and wedeln was established, you guys in the 70's, you remember seeing Lennie with Elyne Mitchell, you remember ---

I know Mrs Mitchell; I became very close friends with her. Now and then, not all the time, I skied with Mrs Mitchell but she would never take another instructor but Lennie.

I know, God!

God, he was 'the God'.

He did have a sort of God like figure at the time, didn't he, everybody thought so. How did he handle the interaction with the other instructors, how was he as a 'man manager'.

He was a very tough guy, you were not allowed to do a lot of mistakes, or misbehave, that, was not in his repertoire. So, if you did a good job he respected you and everything was ok. But it had to go after his mind, and this is why we had a system, and that system stayed – he didn't move too much left and he didn't move too much right, you see. That new way of skiing, carving and all that, that's a new thing – we didn't do that. We made carving turns.

Well that's what I was about to say. That's interesting, because you would see Lennie, coming out of top station, on ice, putting his gloves on, so you can't tell me that's not a carved turn, coming out on ice out of top station, huh.

This is right. Carving is a very old thing, even as soon as we had metal edges on our skis, from that moment on we skied parallel carving. Carving is a word which comes from America, carving means cutting a piece of meat.

That's a bit of a paradox because when we talk about wedeln, you think of people doing a sort of snaky turn, but actually they are on edge, of course they are on edge.

Of course you need that, an edge, because how do you wedeln if you don't have edges, you skid all over the place.

So in those times - of course we are talking about skis 205 centimetres, 210 centimetres.

And 215, 215! I skied on 210, all the time.

So that photo you showed me jumping Kareela ---

210, 215.

Now those days when Arnold Konrad, when you became the technical Director, did you become the Technical or Deputy Director.

No I --- Arnold was a top skier, a technician, which also came from Kruckenhauser, he was one of the number one skiers up there, and Leonhard had him on his side, you see, so he had him

always as a clinic instructor as well, and he was very involved with Arnold, they were friends. And so when Leonhard decided not to come to Australia any more, then he said to Lend Lease, Arnold will take over the Director's job.

So he dictated the appointment, not necessarily Lend Lease?

Exactly, Dusseldorp believed everything what Leonhard said.

Dusseldorp was not a good skier I believe.

Oh he was ok, ok but he liked skiing, and his wife liked skiing down there.

Did you socialise much with Dick Dusseldorp.

No not as much as Leonhard.

What about some of the other lodge owners?

You name it, Leo's.

Do you remember Maria Pock?

Sure.



Because I remember there was a gathering of instructors in Leo's which was a very social ---

We spent a lot of time in Leo's, and we spent a lot of time at the private haus, what's the name ----

Candlelight.

Thredbo Ski-School - 1978

Yeh Candlelight we were up there a lot of times, and then there is a Family there, Hungarians?

Ferdl so the Ski School in your last year's became quite international and well regarded under Arnold, and you left in about 1989, is that right. Happy years though ---

I would have Thredbo, but reason why, did not come

**Ferdl
Kareela**

I worked one Roland decided, and I want anything longer and I'm not coming back to Thredbo that was the end.



stayed on in Wanner was the the reason why I back to Australia.

**Nobl – jumping
Restaurant - 1980**

winter under Wanner, and I told him I don't to do with him any

It's a pity that you didn't because you stayed for a long time. When you came back to Austria, did you come back straight to St Anton, and is that when you started Chesaplatina, your building.

Not really, I started Chesaplatina before 1982, I was travelling back and forth, and I was still in those resorts, and when I was travelling back and forth I started the foundations of Chesaplatina.

When did Chesaplatina open as a commercial lodge?

1989

So you were building from 1982 to 1989 and opened in 1989, and ever since you have built up a successful clientele.

Yes.

When you came back to St Anton was it hard to become accepted after travelling all this time overseas.

You're right, you're right, before I decided to come back in 82 there was the Ski-School Director Karl Schranz, and I wrote Karl Schranz a letter from America in US winter, I said 'Karl', we were close friends, we were really close friends.

You are friends now.

Yeh, I had been before, as kids, friends. I wrote Karl Schranz a letter and I said, 'Karl I have decided to come home and I would like to settle here', because that had a lot to do with my construction with this building; I said 'Karl I want to come home, do you offer me a job, can I work in the Ski-School', and Karl wrote me back, he said 'you are welcome, come back, you can work in the Ski-School'. The only thing is, he said, 'you do not become a shareholder right away, you have to be two years', which I agreed, I said 'Karl I'm really surprised and happy that you offer me a job' and I come home.

Because the village is close-knit, and you can't always get back in can you. So it's good to have a friend like that.

And I came back, and they accepted me but a lot of times through conversations I was told, 'why didn't you stay overseas'. International, wide open, when I went to America I looked this way, in America I opened my eyes, looked left and right all over the world, and in conversations, you know how conversations started sometimes, they turned out kind of nasty in a way, and then they said to me 'if you don't like it why didn't you stay over there'.

That's that small town mentality, sometimes. So Karl was ok as a Ski-School Director, and when did Richard Walter start.

Much later.

Was there somebody in-between, Karl Schranz and Richard Walter?

Harold Rofner.

You mean Herbert's brother, who I stay with.

He was before Karl Schranz, no no wrong, Karl Schranz was first, then came Rofner, and then Richard Walter.

Was Herbert a deputy director of the Ski-School?

No no, I had Rudi Matt, Sepp Farnher in St Anton, Karl Schranz, Rofner and Richard Walter. Five directors since I am home.

What do you think of the current directorship, there is a bit of controversy as there is another Ski-School.

Well look it's not easy for a boss to run a business. I'm telling you, try to get 300 instructors under one hup, you tell me that. There is no way, there is a line and you have to be tough and say 'that's it, if you don't like it' ---- it needs a tough man as a leader. You see this was the problem with Rofner, he was a pussy-cat, something has happened and he got scared.

What was Herbert's brother's name, Harold did you say.

Harold Rofner, no Herbert Rofner.

No Herbert is my, where I stay. Herbert actually came back and worked for Tony Sponar did you know that.

That could be.

In the 60's, because when Tony left and he fell out with the directors he started his own, Sponar's Lakeside in and that's when Herbert came out in the early 60's. Herbert went to Mt Buller, but we are talking about Herbert's brother the Director for a while, and he was a pussy-cat?

(Laughter) This is the reason he didn't stay very long because, you know, when you always get punched in your face you get sick of it, so he gave up on it. He decided no, that's not my cup of tea.

Just one other thing, in respect of the Thredbo St Anton connection, it's not accepted here that there is such a connection, because Sponar, when he had that dream of starting an international village, of Thredbo, he modelled it on St Anton because he thought St Anton was always the cradle of alpine skiing. He was an instructor here.

But it is the cradle of alpine skiing.

Yes but the strange thing is that the locals do not accept that connection, because, it was too close to after the war, 1948, so they don't want to resurrect the fact that the Czechs started the first automated transport with that jeep, which is now the present St Christoph T-bar. You know the story, I'm sure you do

This is true.

This is true, but the local Tourism office does not want to know much about that. I'm just passing this up in conversation.

No, no you're right' you're right

Do you think that there is still that tendency not to raise the fact that the post war years because it's so close to those times, in the war. When the Nazis used to come to St Anton, there is some truth in that. It's best forgotten I suppose.

It's just one of those things you know and ---

That's a bit of history we will never resurrect. But the thing is that Thredbo is now an international resort, and when you think about that connection to St Anton, it was very real.

You know the interesting thing, I don't want to be obnoxious, not at all, and not because I am from Austria, I respect other nations as well, but the thing is, Australia, it needed that start because there was a line, a law, and that's what got things going. In these days it is a little bit different, the whole thing, it's become international; and I don't think that those resorts have Austrian directors, those are Australian directors, the reason why they are directors now, because we learned them how to ski. This is Austrian way of doing it, you see. It has started, Australia has started because of Austria, you see; what they know now, they don't need us anymore. They do the same thing what we do, international, we ski the same way.

But I don't think you are being obnoxious, you are explaining the history. There was that history when Austria was regarded, because of that historical connection to the start of skiing, when it was necessary to pass across the techniques, because Australia wasn't a great skiing nation, except for the very rich, like the Bob Arnott's, they skied, but not the general public.

Exactly, that was all over Europe as well, the average was not able to afford a hotel and a lift. That was all over the world; also here it was a different clientele which supported this sport which were able to afford it. Nobody else, that was a different group of people that was built in those days for rich people; and later, nations and people became successful in business, they started from zero and made their way up and now there are those people all over the world.

And now it's become a universal sport, it's not a matter of money any more. But just touching on some of the aspects that we haven't touched on, as far as St Anton is concerned, you were involved in two different facets of St Anton life. One is that apart from your lessons, you go to a

whole lot of different resorts with private individuals. You also take people in summer, hiking, on trails, so do you want to touch a little bit on that.

Yes sure. I started the Reiner Arlberg Guiding School. I am the director of the Reiner Arlberg Guiding School, and I run the whole outfit, I have fifteen people working for me in the summer guiding people in the mountains. We also guide them all over the place, we do trekking tours; that means trekking, you start in St Anton you hike to a hut, you stay overnight in that hut and you continue on to the next hut. So we do trekking tours for two to three days. And mainly the people who do trekking tours are Japanese people.

That's a surprise, I would have thought there would have been a lot of Germans and ---

They do that too, they do it by themselves, but the Japanese people want to be guided. So I work with three Japanese travel agencies and I bring out every year a program for them, and they publish that program in Japan, and then people book that program, and they come from Japan; first they go to Switzerland, Matterhorn in Zermatt, and then they come to St Moritz, from St Moritz they come to the Arlberg region, and I guide them. There are a lot of Japanese staying in Lech and St Anton. All those people who are staying in Lech and St Anton we guide them, so we make those trekking tours and what we do a lot is nature guiding; that means you are taking people out there, show them the alpine flowers, animals, wild animals, eagles, ibex deer, marmots and all that, that's what we show them during the summer. We go and see some animals and we have a program which is called 'Photography with Wild Animals'.

Do you always see chamois and wild animals?

Yes chamois we see ibex deer, you name it, marmots, and foxes, there is a lot of things around. So that's what I do in the summer.

How many years have you been doing that.

I think now, fifteen years.

Has the program become more and more popular?

Yes.

So summer activities have increased in St Anton.

Exactly, and the Tourist Office has also a problem with guests in St Anton and they write information to all the hotels. Tomorrow we have this hiking, that hiking, flower hiking blah,

blah, blah, and they call us; we work very closely with the Tourist Office and he calls me and he says, 'tomorrow we have so many people who do this and who do that and I'm in charge', you see, like a ski-school director; and most of the people I'm working with are all local people.

You've got to know the region.

You've got to know every rock on the mountain, and most of us, those fifteen people are all ski instructors

But that would be just as much enjoyment; as if you're a skier, and you love the outdoors; if you're a ski instructor you would like the same thing in summer.

If you just talk to the people, they ask you questions and all

And you know the area just want to leave that alone, other aspect of your work, each do the historical skiing when up in historical outfits which the 20's.

Ski show; that goes back to the in 1901.

So that's meant to represent Show each Wednesday night. 'Nostalgic Group' 1901

It's all the techniques up until every type of technique what since the beginning with Hani present.



explain the area, that you know.

backwards. Now I put that aside; the Wednesday you you get dressed must go back to

'Cradle of Skiing'

that on the Ski Ferdl Nobl – Director

now. You see we have in skiing Schneider to the

But you demonstrate the old techniques on Wednesday; so do you have skis without metal edges or not.

Yeh sure. I'm in charge for this group, for the Ski School I'm in charge for the 'Nostalgic Group'. So I have about thirteen people skiing in my group in very old way called 'Hannes Schneider stem-christiana'.

Is that what the 'History of Skiing 1901' represents?

1901 that was when the first ski club was started, 1901, but skiing was before that. And while you are looking here on those things, I am probably, probably the only Austrian ski instructor which has all qualifications as a ski instructor. I am American certified, I am Australian certified, I am Austrian certified. Not that many, probably only me that has done all those qualifications; I went in America and did and in Australia also.



Ferdl and a 1901 'Nostalgic Group' colleague - Wednesday evening demonstration.

Well that's a fantastic career record but also let us touch on your, as the 'Austrian Ambassador of Ski History 1901' saying that you have a gold medal for representing Austria and in the world. In the USA, Thredbo Australia, Bariloche Argentina, and as the coach of the Argentinean Women's Ski Team. So tell us a little bit about this 'Ambassadorship'.

Well 'Ambassador' represents the same as having the gold medal representing Austria. So that we have nine states, and Tyrol, I am the Ambassador of this state, Tyrol. And in Austria it's this, the gold medal I will bring it to you, show you.

A short break – Ferdl explaining the ambassadorship and what it represents and comes back to show me the gold medal.

The gold medal that you have seen was presented to me in Vienna from the Austrian Government; 'The gold medal for representing Austria all over the world in 'Ski Sport' , only Ski Sport.

Which happens to be our topic of conversation, that's good, and it's an impressive looking medal too with the Austrian eagle there.

It was given to me in Vienna.

Who presented it to you?

The president of Austria, it was given to me, I don't remember any more, but it was the President, I would have to look it up.

Look Ferdl I think that is a very fitting finish to our interview, because that's a fantastic career, you must be very proud of your skiing career. We are very proud to have had you in Thredbo in those years, and of course we have had some good times together as well. So thank you very much for sharing your memories, and of course as you have said you don't mind if the public has access to this in the Thredbo Alpine Museum.

Please do that, I will be very happy, Australia means a lot to me. People in Australia, I have met a lot of wonderful people, really, and enjoyed all these years in Australia I have had; and I would not miss it for anything in the world.

Well I am very pleased that my friend Marius who stays here with you, that we are all good friends, and thanks very much because we all enjoy your Stories.

***Austrian Gold Medal –
Representing Tyrol as Ambassador for
In Ski-Sport***



Austria



Mr. F. Nobl,
Ski Instructor,
C/- Thredbo Alpine Hotel,
THREDBO VILLAGE NSW 2627

14/5/81

Dear Ferdl,

I wish to express my most sincere thanks to you for teaching me to ski.

As a former teacher I could, while being taught myself, appreciate the patience and skill with which you were imparting your knowledge to me, and I consider you an excellent teacher.

You have opened up a whole new world of enjoyment for me, and I am very grateful.

Best wishes and kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(KEN BOOTH)

Oral History Interview Agreement

In this agreement, the interviewee assigns copyright to Thredbo Historical Society Incorporated. Your recorded interview will become part of Thredbo Historical Society's collection, where it will be preserved for future researchers. The Thredbo Winter Sports Museum is grateful for your participation in this oral history project.

This is an agreement between the **INTERVIEWEE** and the **Thredbo Historical Society Incorporated** (please fill in your details):

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I have been asked and have agreed to be interviewed by Thredbo Historical Society Incorporated, subject to this agreement and as part of the Museum's programs. The Museum has advised me that it wishes to preserve the Interview as part of Thredbo Historical Society Incorporated's collection. Once the Interview is preserved at Thredbo Historical Society Incorporated, I understand that it can be used by the Museum for a variety of purposes including, but not limited to, exhibition, research, education material, public presentations, publication, website, broadcast and transmission unless I place restrictions hereunder on any of those uses.

Name: FERDL NOBL And Thredbo Historical Society Inc trading as
Thredbo Historical Society
Contact: AS ABOVE
Address: _____
Postcode: _____



[Handwritten signature: Ferdl Nöbl]
[Handwritten text: Signed: Ferdl Nöbl]

NO RESTRICTIONS :-

10/01/2017