

THREDBO HISTORICAL SOCIETY



THREDBO SKI PATROL ASSOCIATION
60TH ANNIVERSARY REVIEW

*Tommy Tomasi
Suzy Ebeling
The Basin 2013*

THREDBO SKI PATROL ASSOCIATION

60th anniversary review

Jerry Krejzar

PART 1 -The Formative Years

On the June long weekend of 1957 Tommy Tomasi and Danny Coleman, both employed by SMHEA as hydrographers, and Geoff McClutchey co-founded a small informal group of volunteers to assist skiers who found themselves in difficulty; which in 1958 saw the formation of the Thredbo Ski Patrol.

John Barkley writes:- *'1958, the official birth of the Thredbo Volunteer Ski Patrol, patrol staff were Doug Thatcher, Roy Sturgeon and Noel Weston. In 1959 the committee saw David Crozier as President, with Adrian and Bob Studley, Roy Tutti, John Barkley and George Derschko as committee members'.*

With the passing of time there was a degree of contradiction between people about the facts of the formative years of patrol history. Once one considers the rotation of volunteers on an ad-hoc basis, which was the case in those early years, it is hardly surprising; and particularly when one considers the function of the passage of time and the fallibility of memories.

John Rumble states in his Oral History:-

'Those notes to my recollection are incorrect. What actually happened was that Danny Coleman, Tommy Tomasi, Noel Weston and Doug Thatcher were the integral parts of the patrol. David Crozier was not involved at that stage at all and neither were Adrian and Bob Studley. Roy Tutti was not involved at that stage. That was when Adrian Studley and I joined together with Danny Coleman, Tommy Tomasi, Noel Weston and Doug Thatcher. That was the nucleus of the ski patrol then'.



Doug Thatcher, Roy Tutty, ?? John Rumble and Danny Collman - 1959 (Tomasi Collection)

The initial patrol for the 1958 season (the year John Rumble joined), was Doug Thatcher, Roy Sturgeon and Noel Weston. The minutes also showed that the 1959 committee consisted of David Crozier President, with Adrian Studley, plus George Derschko and Roy Tutty.

In those days these volunteers simply wore an arm band of black and yellow embroidery showing 'Ski-Patrol'. The situation was to change in 1961 when Lend Lease purchased the resort from the Kosciusko Chairlift and Thredbo Hotel Syndicate. The terms laid down by the Kosciusko State Park to run the activity on the mountain, included the need to incorporate safety management and thus KT felt obliged to take over all aspects of mountain management. The Patrol would have been the vehicle for this. The new Manager, Albert Van der Lee in 1963 appointed Ludwig Rabina (an employee of KT) as 'President' (in name only), to take over and formalize



**Tommy Tomasi, Adrian Studley, John Rumble, Ludwig Rabina
- early 60's**

the patrol. Ludwig who had grown up in the mountains of Slovakia came here as a refugee from Czechoslovakia and started working for KT as a 'liftie' in 1962. He loved to assist less competent skiers. Ludwig or Cees Koeman, the mountain manager, would hand out subsidised red parkas to patrollers from the existing organisation who had first met an upgraded set of company guidelines, insisting that each patroller had first qualified at

a Red Cross, St John's First Aid course. By 1964 Ludwig with a committee comprising John Rumble, John Barkley, Bruce Trotter, and George Derschko had prepared the first patrol operational manual and this informal arrangement was to continue until the birth of TSPA. (Thredbo Ski Patrol Association).



**Jim Cleary, Rick Naylor, Wally Saar, John Rumble, Tommy Tomasi, George Weiss,
George Freuden, John Barkley, Adrian Studley, Ludwig Rabina & Tom Freece. (1969)**

The year I joined the patrol in 1969, once Tommy or Adrian had established you were able to ski in all types of snow conditions, you were simply handed a 'trainee bib'. I still recall Danny Coleman, a legendary ex ski-racer, loading a patient at the bottom of the 'The Catwalk' into an akja shouting, 'get on the back', and then to schuss!

Hanging on for grim death the next thing I knew we were at the bottom! What an introduction to patrolling!

Radios, there were none, so communication compared to today was much more difficult.



Jerry Krejzar, George Freuden, Tom Lewis, (the NSW Minister of Lands), Tommy Tomasi, Bruce Trotter, Paul Abeles, Ludwig Rabina, Peter Jeffery, George Weiss - 1970

Accidents were reported from the scene of an emergency to the patrol room at the bottom of the mountain, via the telephone landline which KT had buried under the main chairlift.

Closing the mountain at 'sweep' we shouted and yelled, and some characters actually 'yodelled'! Looking back to the 60's, through the 70's, and 80's, it astounds me just how the patrol has evolved, not only in sheer professionalism but as a much more effective operation.

In 1969 Ludwig appointed the first professional patroller, Tony Eames from Lake Oahu, New Zealand. The following season, 1970, saw KT hire Hugh Smythe from Whistler Mountain Canada to work alongside Tony together with patrollers Jerry Shirley from June Mountain California and Bill Yaouk, and a few years later Frank Hussey from Grouse Mountain Vancouver. In 1974 Jerry Shirley attempted to introduce a fully professional patrol comprised of overseas paid professionals and it was only through the intervention of George Freuden who ensured that Harold Droga, on behalf of KT, readily rejected the idea due to the cost. What a pity Hugh patrolled for only one season, for catching sight of him nonchalantly heading to a 10/40 (accident) with an empty akja, airborne high over the lip outside top station was a beautiful sight indeed! Hugh eventually became the President and CEO of The Whistler Blackcomb Resort.

(Excerpts below from John Rumble's Oral History; Conducted in Vaucluse, Sydney, November 2015, interviewer, Jerry Krejzar).

'What we used to do was: there were then other volunteers who used to come in, weekend and weekend about, not on a regular basis, but they were good skiers, usually good skiers and friends of ours or members of the patrol so they were given arm bands.

So about the Constitution

As I mentioned earlier, we were a very ad hoc basis with no rules, except show up, work as ski patrollers and try and gain the respect of the public skiers. This went on for a couple of years and then in about 1962 or so, I was then Secretary, but we were not constituted so I proposed at a very informal meeting that we get ourselves a constitution and become fully constituted as a ski patrol, so with that I contacted Ian Curlewis in Sydney, a prominent attorney. He helped me draft the constitution. We then proposed that the Thredbo Ski Patrol be formed and constituted. Office bearers were:-

President: Tommy Tomasi

Secretary: John Rumble

Captain: Adrian Studley

So once the constitution was drafted we had a committee meeting. No, it would have been a general meeting of the then members, who were for all intents and purposes, informal members. We then proposed that the Thredbo Ski Patrol Association be formed and fully constituted on the basis of the draft forwarded by Ian Curlewis. Tommy Tomasi was elected President, I was elected Secretary.

Do you recall any minutes?

We did definitely take minutes. They were definitely taken, but where are they now I have no idea. We worked as we should have for Kosciusko Thredbo and the public. We gained some recognition as being an honorable entity. In the mid sixties or to the late sixties, Albert van der Lee approached me and said that he had heard word that the Perisher and Smiggin Holes Ski Patrols were about to form a body and were going to attempt to take over the Thredbo Ski Patrol. With that I circularized the other ski patrols and advised them that we intended to hold a meeting of interested ski patrols in Goulburn. That meeting was attended by the Thredbo Ski Patrol then composed of myself, Tommy as Patron, Adrian Studley as the Captain. George Freuden and John Barkley were in attendance also.

They would have been committee members, were they?

I am not sure whether they were committee members or not. I don't think they were but they may have been.

John, let's just step back a bit before that very important meeting in Goulburn and clarify the actual positions. Were they committee or executive positions up until that particular time?

Just prior to that meeting in Goulburn that is, we had a meeting of the Thredbo Ski Patrol and at that meeting Ludwig Rabina was elected President, I was elected Secretary, Adrian Studley Club Captain and Tommy Tomasi was elected Patron.'

Of these pioneers, who contributed to the foundation of what is the present day patrol, a number stood out. John Rumble in his capacity as an administrator; who saw the need to formalise the operation of the patrol and to ensure it became a legal entity. Adrian Studley as Captain who had established many of the operational procedures on the mountain; and Ludwig Rabina who served as the conduit between mountain operations and KT. Tommy Tomasi deserves a special mention as the founding member of TSPA, and who is likened to the 'Grandfather' of the patrol. Tommy was made a life member of the patrol in 1983, and two years later Kosciuszko Thredbo gave him a lift pass for life. He only retired from our ranks in 1990 and yet continues to ski with the patrol to the present day.

Following that eventful meeting in Goulburn in 1971 George Freuden who is fondly remembered as the modern day 'Father' of the patrol, realised that there was a move underway by the state branches, especially by Victoria, for a more unified and National approach to patrol procedural matters. In 1973 George set up a meeting to form the Australian Ski Patrol Association and was duly elected as its founding President, a position he held for 13 years. This development was to bring in a new era in TSPA's standing in Australia and to patrolling nationally.

Contribution:- John Barkley and John Rumble.

PART 2 – Australian Ski Patrol Association (ASPA)

Federation Internationale Patrole de Ski (FIPS)

When George Freuden joined the patrol in 1967 nobody could have foretold the impact this Hungarian refugee from Budapest, was to make on the Australian Patrolling and Skiing scene. 1971 was to become a watershed year, for the long-term good of TSPA and Australian Ski Patrolling, with the formation of the NSW Ski Patrols where George Freuden was duly elected President, and concurrently Secretary of TSPA. This in turn led to a meeting in 1973 to set up the Australian Ski Patrol Association, (ASPA). Little was it known at the time that ASPA was to revolutionize the Australian Ski Patrol scene.

The same year Dr. Nick Crombie and George Freuden attended the Victorian Patrols' first aid seminar which was run by Dr. John Zelcer from Mt. Buller.



They soon concluded that the St. John's NSW course paled by comparison compared to Victoria's. It was apparent that the combined expertise of these two honorary anesthetists in first-aid and CPR would be of great service to ASPA.

Dr Nick Crombie – Thredbo Medical Centre – 1970's

Patrols throughout the country owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr. John Zelcer and Dr. Nick Crombie for their unstinting commitment to this cause. Once Crombie retired, Dr. Stephen Breathour of Thredbo, with his invaluable experience in cardiothoracic surgery and neurosurgery took over this responsibility. Steve revised and updated the exacting paramedical protocols in CPR and first aid that ASPA largely follows to this day.

Robert Montgomery's history on the formation of ASPA: (Australian Ski Patrol Association).

Perhaps one of Thredbo's brightest flags to wave is the banner which reads that it set the standard for ski area resort operation in Australia. TSPA's part in advancing and in many cases initiating techniques and protocols for care and evacuation of injured skiers and help to all belongs on that banner.

Complementing the implementation of the ASPA First Aid accreditation is the ASPA On-Hill National Patroller accreditation. To achieve the accreditation, a senior (only) patroller must first be selected by his/her local area patrol as a member of high on-hill proficiency. The candidate must then succeed at a level of excellence across 5 ski/snow board exams and 2 sled/toboggan exams.

The National Patroller accreditation is a unifying influence between professional and volunteer patrollers because it is available to both through the same ASPA-provided assessment stream.

Thredbo composed this highest of all ski patrol certifications from a very dusty, basic concept which had been hijacked by an anti-ASPA group.

In 1988, George Freuden (at the time either President or Secretary of ASPA [?]), telephoned me saying that ASPA needed my help. He said ASPA'S continuance was at risk of Victorian patrols breaking away because Victorian professional ski patrollers were not supportive of volunteer patrollers. He said ASPA needed to recover its all-inclusive on-hill "presence" in Victoria, representing professional and volunteer patrollers through its National Patroller accreditation.

In Victoria, ASPA's on-hill connection had been hijacked because the National Patroller accreditation was being kept by professional patrollers, exclusive to professional ski patrollers. The National Patroller qualification had been adopted as an increment entitling qualification in the pay structure for Victorian professional ski patrollers. They opposed volunteer ski patrollers having access to achieving the qualification.

It had been my experience during my first attempt in 1981 at Mt. Hotham, and during my successful attempt in 1983 exams at Thredbo, that the Victorian professional ski patrollers were not accommodating to the volunteer ski patrollers from New South Wales. There were no volunteer candidates from Victoria at the 1983 exams, so far as I recall. In reality, there was an air of hostility from the Victorian professional ski patrollers toward the volunteer ski patrollers.

Phoebe Johnson (now Hoy) of TSPA, David Genner and I (of PSPA), had madly trained between 1981 and the 1983 exam to try and break through as volunteers and achieve National Patroller status. In the end, each of us was, in the order of those names, successful in achieving the highest level of demonstrated to the examiner being the distinction level, then at 85%. These days, it is the equivalent of 75%.

On that history, I understood the nature of George's request. I was aware of personalities he identified from the Victorian professional ski patrollers because they were the ones who had come to my observation, deliberately refraining from encouraging Phoebe, David and I in 1983.

George's request to me in 1988 was that I attend the ASPA AGM with him and Bill Swinson (I cannot remember whether Bill was ASPA President, but he and George were on the Executive of ASPA at the time) to stand for election as ASPA On-Hill Vice President. I knew Bill Swinson to be a leading executive of the Victorian ski patrols.

I was told that George and Bill feared that if the then Victorian professional ski patroller who was also Ski Director of one of the Victorian resorts and the current ASPA On-Hill Vice President was re-elected, ASPA itself was likely to fail because of inadequate traction with on-hill standards and education. At best, ASPA would have continued as only the provider of its first aid course.

I recall that in that telephone conversation, in "classic George Freuden speak", he used words to the effect of:

"Monty, you are a lawyer, and you have the demonstrator examiner marks for Nationals. You are the only one with the skills who is bastard enough to take on these bastards."

As we all know, when George spoke about persons whose approach disagreed with his own in those terms, he both:

- (a) Meant it; and*
- (b) Quite curiously could still not dislike the person.*

I recall the ASPA AGM was held in the Goulburn Commercial Club. I recall attending with George and Bill, and I recall it being an uncomfortable meeting in which the Victorian professional ski patrollers were outvoted, including by the Victorian volunteer ski patroller representatives Bill Swinson and perhaps Raoul Picot (I do not now recall if Raoul was there).

From 1988 to the present, I have attended in most years the National Ski Patrol on-hill exam, always as an examiner, frequently as the "top of course" person reading the preamble and explaining the requirements of the exercises to candidates, and regularly as a demonstrator.

Between 1988 and about 1991, my role as On-Hill Vice President was not a comfortable one because the Victorian professional ski patrollers resented a New South Wales volunteer ski patroller holding the position.

Soon after my election to On-Hill Vice President, I recognized that the utility of the National Patroller movement was not just individuals achieving the National Patroller status; but their use of it in the education and training of ski patrollers in local resorts. After all, improvement of skills was and remains ASPA's mission and reason for existence.

The basic reality was and remains that there is no National Ski Patrol. ASPA is made up of local ski area patrols. I directed the National Patroller qualification toward being a status desirably to be held by the trainers of on-hill techniques in local ski area patrols, and the achievement of that status to be an incentive for experienced local ski area patrollers to become candidates to improve their own skills.

In order to build co-operation between the ski area directors and the ASPA National Ski Patroller On-Hill Committee, I resolved the argument over whether the annual ASPA On-Hill Executive Sub-Committee meeting be held in Sydney, Melbourne or somewhere in between on the Hume Highway by fixing it for lunch on a Saturday at the Corryong Hotel, Corryong.

I selected Corryong from a road map because it was the most equally inconvenient place to get to for all attendees from their local ski areas. I can still recall having telephoned the hotel to inform them of the first meeting and promising them that it would be an annual event so that they would have sufficient stores of food in order to serve lunch to a meeting of about 20 people in addition to their normal (small) country town lunch expected clientele numbers. The Corryong Hotel, Corryong, remains the venue for that annual meeting, held in May, and has provided delightful country hospitality every year. It has become a meeting which the Ski Patrol Directors and ASPA On-Hill Sub-Committee members look forward to. They do not have much opportunity to see each other through each winter or even through the year, and yet, for the purposes of ski patrol business, they deal with each other regularly by telephone and correspondence.

I undertook what I saw as the obvious need for the education purpose of National Ski Patrol, which was to write an On-Hill Manual. In order to achieve that, I collected every piece of paper I could find ever written by anyone in any of the local ski area patrols on Akja Sled technique, Cascade Toboggan technique and patroller-required ski techniques. Over a couple of years, I wrote the first edition of the Australian Ski Patrol Association On-Hill Manual. Phoebe Johnson (now Hoy) and David Genner provided assistance by proof-reading my written descriptions of techniques. We did not have the facilities of video. The first edition was published in about 1990.

In the Manual, I prescribed what a National Ski Patroller was, and I set out the exam exercises including the exact preamble which was and remains read to candidates at each exam. I did this so that within the local ski patrols, National Ski Patrollers could train candidates in practice exams and thereby the candidates would improve their skills.

Most importantly, the Australian Ski Patrol Association On-Hill Manual included six tickets for staged training in Akja Sled and Cascade Toboggan running competence. Today, in each of Australia's local ski area patrols, tickets for staged training of techniques have been drawn to meet the local ski area topographical and equipment specification needs. Were each of those local ski areas today to look back over the history of the development of their staged ticket teaching, they would find it commenced with the first edition of the Australian Ski Patrol Association On-Hill Manual.

Today, David Genner and I, who partnered for training as a team for the Akja Sled for the 1983 Australian Ski Patrol Association National Patroller On-Hill Exam at Thredbo, remain the two longest serving and currently certified examiner demonstrators in the history of the Australian Ski Patrol Association.

Best of all, ASPA did not fragment in 1988. From about 1991, with the opportunity of exchanging ideas and information in patrolling and ski patrol operation and procedures at the annual Corryong Hotel meeting of the ASPA On-Hill Executive, and through the status and purpose achieved for the National Patroller accreditation through education in excellence of ski patrol techniques in local ski area patrols, the National Ski Patrol On-Hill Executive became and continues to be a cordial group of persons who hold each other in high regard and deal with each other with respect'.

ASPA ensured representation of the disparate Ski Patrol Associations by one single national body and this development was to lay the foundation for the future. ASPA gradually developed and implemented a higher more professional standard in first aid and CPR on a national basis. All that was required up to that time was a basic St. John's first aid certificate. The compulsory ASPA exam became a mandatory requirement for recertification on a 3 yearly basis.

In 1975 George was appointed to the International Ski Federation (FIS), Legal & Safety committee.

In 1979, in Calgary, Canada, George co-founded the Federation Internationale Patrol de Ski, known as FIPS with Mark Labow, who at the time was the President of the Canadian Ski Patrol. Mark was a pharmacist by profession, with medical knowledge and he and George became firm friends. Mark became the President of FIPS and George became his Vice-President. This formidable and lasting partnership was to have a profound impact on the world of ski patrolling.

Throughout the 1980's many major accomplishments were achieved which were to herald a new and improved environment for individual Australian patrols. The FIPS conference at Jay Peak in 1980 saw a number of ideas exchanged regarding equipment.

At the FIPS conference in Thredbo in 1981, the inaugural exchange of patrollers from Val d'Isere was initiated. Two years later at the FIPS conference in Meribel (83), entonox for pain management was introduced.

In collaboration with Hugh Smythe of Whistler Mountain in 1985 a Canadian Patrol exchange program came about. FIPS conferences were later convened in Santiago (87), Rijkgransen (89), and Thredbo (91), which saw George retire as president. George was awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal (77), the ASF (Australian Ski Federation) National Patroller of the year award (91), and it came as no surprise to his fellow patrollers when in 1992 he was honoured with The Order of Australia.



The Order was bestowed as recognition for his tireless service to skiing, his stints on the NSW, Australian, and International Ski Association (FIS) as well as the National Parks Advisory Committee.

During this time he co-organised the FIS congress in 1983 with Kurt Lance and chaired both of Thredbo's FIPS Congresses in 1981 and 1991.

Looking back to the symbiotic relationship between TSPA and ASPA you start to realize the face and complexion of the patrol may have taken on a completely different hue without that interrelationship.

George Freuden wearing the Queen's Jubilee Medal (1977)

Our organizational make up, our colorful history, the individuals and experiences we shared, the evolution and direction the patrol was to take, in the main came about through the birth of ASPA.

ASPA over time has evolved into a truly Federal forum, for sharing information and setting the standards for first aid theory and practice and the formalized practical procedures followed by patrollers nationally to this day.

Contribution:- Robert Montgomery

PART 3 – Operational Matters & Sundowner Lodge

In the 70's there was Abba and there was the Thredbo 'Ski Patrol Dorm' situated at KT Bottom Station. From the outset the company assisted with bunk-house accommodation, but 'Dorm' space was always at a premium until the official opening of the 'Sundowner Lodge' in 1995 located at Woodridge.

In 1979 Peter Jeffery as Captain introduced the first Saturday evening 'Bull Sessions'. This review of the key events and operations of the preceding week has since become obligatory for 'signed-on patrollers' and the KT paid patrol Manager (or his deputy).

Soon the sessions were followed by a beer and as the convivial atmosphere helped to forge a greater degree of team building the practice continues to this day.



George Weiss, Peter Duval (1), Naomi Freuden, Tommy Tomasi (2), Louise Bartlett, Tony Weaver (3), David Kuhn (4), sitting Anne & Peter Jeffery (5), Former TSPA Patrol Managers: (1) 2004 to 07 (2)1973 to 78, (3) 1983 to 97(4) 1997 to current (5) 1978 to 81

Operations on the mountain are a vital aspect of snow safety and accident prevention control in Thredbo. Historically the Duty Captain was entrusted with this highly responsible task serving as the Commander-in-Chief, responsible for day to day operations, with constant reappraisal of snow safety issues, delegation of Area Leaders, and more. Up to 1968 Ludwig Rabina or his appointed 'pro' patroller was solely responsible. The situation changed on the 5th October of the same year when Adrian Studley was officially elected Captain. Adrian left a solid foundation for those who were to follow to build on after he retired in 1973; he was followed by Tommy Tomasi who ran operations until 1978. Peter Jeffery started as Vice Captain (1974-78) and took over from Tommy till 1981 when Peter became President. Peter in both roles led and consolidated the operational base of the patrol. Sometime in the mid 1980's the focus of management had been directed by overseas information to the prevention of accidents, and litigation.

The policy resulted in a fair degree of turmoil, especially amongst the paid patrol. 'We're just a glorified trail crew!' was the prevalent mindset of the day. Tony Weaver employed by KT as Patrol Manager, endeavored to task volunteer patrollers with similar 'trail crew' responsibilities as that of his own paid patrol crew. The volunteer patrol saw this tendency as detrimental to TSPA's primary focus; snow safety, customer-service and patient care. KT's managerial focus overlooked the patrol's main reason for being.

These factors when combined with over-heavy workloads affected morale which threatened to undermine all that had been achieved. The state of affairs, had some impact on day to day operations, but could have been much worse, (there was talk of a full-time, paid resort patrol) had not Peter Jeffery and Joe Di Falco (Captain 82 - 93), combine their leadership strengths to support Tony.

Both these two office bearers left their marks on this era.



TommyTomasi, Nick Crombie (patient), Joe Difalco TSPA Captain 1982 to 1993

In tandem they updated mountain operations, on-the-hill akja training, and procedures during their tenures. Peter retired as President in 1988 and Joe as Captain in 1993 to serve as President until 1995. Peter Duval was a great support to Joe as Vice Captain (86-93). Peter served as TSPA Captain over the last 3 years before his untimely death of cancer in November 2007. At his funeral his patrol mates honored his legacy with a ceremonial patrol 'guard-of-honor'. Peter just prior to his death was awarded the National Medal for his 38 years of diligent service. Maurice Stewartson held the post of Captain from 1995-2000.

Nowadays the paid resort Patrol Manager is responsible for snow safety and mountain operations. Tony Weaver came to the post in 1983 and diligently led the paid resort Patrol in his characteristic manner for many years, until his untimely death in 1997 in the Thredbo Landslide Disaster.

Tony was just one of the tragic casualties of the landslide disaster, whom we mourned in their untimely deaths. Since David Kuhn took over the leadership in 1997 the working relationship between the volunteer and paid patrollers has become much more harmonious and united, and the volunteer and paid patrol members have seldom worked as effectively as they have under David's command. Surely this is a tribute to his talented leadership in fostering positive change.

SUNDOWNER

In 1991 TSPA Committee Members Leon Bovaird, David O'Dowd and Joe Di Falco approached the Local Member for Gordon for the NSW Legislative Assembly,



Minister for the Environment and Assistant Minister for Transport, the Hon. Tim Moore M.P. regarding an allocation of beds for a Patrol Lodge. Ten (10) beds were granted with a further ten (10) donated by KT.

The Sundowner Lodge at Woodridge – home of the Volunteer Ski-Patrol

The project began to look feasible after the sale of eight (8) beds. George Freuden was a prime negotiator early on, and even though the project was well underway before the beds were sold, with others, Peter Jeffery took over to make sure it happened. However to see this eventuate more funds were still required. It took the dedication of Nigel Oliver and Carol Di Falco, who organized endless fund-raising activities, to achieve this ultimate goal. John Thompson, a patroller and project manager, begged and badgered a number of construction companies for the donation of building material, and this endeavor was to prove crucial to ensure its completion. A number of patrollers with trade qualifications also generously volunteered their services to ensure it was built. A grant of \$65,000 from the NSW Dept. of Sport Recreation & Racing guaranteed its construction was completed over a 2year period. Sundowner probably had the first 'accessible bathroom' in Thredbo; the theory that it could be used by S&R (Sports & Recreation) over the summer. Sundowner Lodge was officially opened by The Honorary Gabrielle Harrison, NSW Minister for Sport and Recreation on 15th July 1995.

Many of the first-generation patrollers have either retired or died, yet in the period leading to the development phase of Sundowner a number of them had put in a lot of personal time and effort to see Sundowner come about. George Weiss, who died just recently in August 2018, is a typical example. George not only sold raffle tickets in tens or twenties, he sold them by the book-load, and singularly, would have contributed tens of thousands of dollars towards the project. It is most unlikely that today's patrollers would be aware of the contribution George made, as well as many other first-generation patrollers who contributed with their time.

Before that time a group of about 8 patrollers were using accommodation in an old private lodge “Rainbow” that belonged to one of the patrollers’ family. This fostered long-lasting friendships and ensured patrollers had a bed over the winter period. Rainbow was subsequently rebuilt as part of the Boali development, which attracted several patrollers to buy in as the location was so convenient.

Those who put in many hours working on Sundowner over the 2 years never ended up staying there – or needing to. The goal was to put patrollers in beds in the village for low cost, not primarily intended as family accommodation at the expense of needy single patrollers. These very patrollers, who had regularly attended to their own accommodation needs in the village, opined; that once ‘Sundowner’ was up and running ‘the patrol would never be the same again’. Unfortunately over the last decade or two, this prophecy has largely come to pass.

Today’s volunteers see accommodation for themselves and their families as a god-given right, as part and parcel of their patrolling duties. Once ‘Sundowner’ opened the ranks of the patrol grew exponentially, and the number of mandatory patrolling days, compared to past times shrank. Sundowner had not only become the focal point for accommodation but also for most of the social activities associated with the volunteer arm of TSPA; seen as somewhat of a ‘social club’ by the patrol employees. In contrast many of the KT patrol employees live in Jindabyne and elsewhere, and tend to fraternize together. Except for a few personal exceptions, nowadays there exists much less interaction between the two groups compared to times past. History can often move in cycles, so hopefully the events that occurred in the 1980’s are not repeated yet again. Only the current crop of patrollers can ensure that this does not happen.

Are patrollers of the day more experienced than patrollers of the early days? Not necessarily so; I believe that the patroller of yesterday was just as experienced in first aid and patient care as the patroller of today. A mandatory triennial training regime to update our St John’s certificates was needed to operate, and commenced in mid-1970 prior to ASPA. However there is little doubt that changing standards in snow safety, emergency patient care and retrieval, (at times by helicopter) has exposed today’s patroller to a wider range of skill sets.

Modern Workplace Health & Safety (WHS) standards have also taken a toll on patrollers as they need to be skilled in prevention of accidents and management of unruly skiers and snowboarders which did not occur to such an extent in earlier years. This has almost eclipsed the retrieval of casualties.



David Kuhn (front of akja) current KT Patrol Manager

More patrollers nowadays see employment as a regular career, working in the European and Northern American winters as well as in Australia. Over the years they have gained valuable experience and training in avalanche prevention and search and rescue procedures during these overseas stints; via the patroller exchange scheme.

Their expertise is very highly regarded indeed.

TSPA continues to have a reciprocal patroller exchange scheme with Val d'Isere, France; and by comparison opportunities to gain experience in snow safety in the formative years for the first generation of patrollers were limited.

These highlights cannot do justice to the rich 60 year historical tapestry of TSPA, these intangible human assets can rarely be quantified, nor each and every individual honored. These highly qualified first-aiders are on duty year round, not just for the ski season, as oftentimes they come across accidents of varying nature at Thredbo and elsewhere and help out.



Thredbo Ski Patrol Association – 2018

Yet members past and present, whether their tenure covered 5, 10, or many more years of service, have singularly contributed to this shared history. TSPA has always been a very close knit family, despite its current size, with more than sixty volunteer and up to twenty full-time employed resort 'pro' patrollers, the family bonds remain strong to this day.

Over the past sixty years TSPA has acquired a long standing pedigree in voluntary service and an enviable worldwide record of excellence in first aid and snow safety. Let us hope that the legacy established by a small band of volunteer patrol pioneers will continue to grow and prosper well beyond the centenary!

Contribution: - Anne & Peter Jeffery, Joe Di Falco and David Kuhn.

THREDBO SKI PATROL ASSOCIATION 60th Anniversary Review

October 2018

Jerry Krejzar

MILESTONES

PART 1 -The Formative Years

1957 – *The informal beginnings of The Thredbo Ski Patrol.*

1958 - *The official birth of the Thredbo Volunteer Ski Patrol.*

1963 - *TSPA was incorporated and a constitution drawn up.*

1964 - *Patrol operational manual prepared.*

1969 - *Appointment by KT of the first professional patroller.*

PART 2 – Australian Ski Patrol Association (ASPA) Federation Internationale Patrole de Ski (FIPS)

1971 - *Perisher attempts takeover of TSPA- formation of NSW Ski Patrol Association.*

1973 - *Formation of Australian Ski Patrol Association (ASPA).*

1975 - *George Freuden appointed to FIS legal & safety committee.*

1979 - *Formation of the Federation Internationale Patrole de Ski (FIPS).*

1981 – *FIPS meeting in Thredbo sees the inauguration of the ‘patroller exchange scheme’ with Val d’ Isere.*

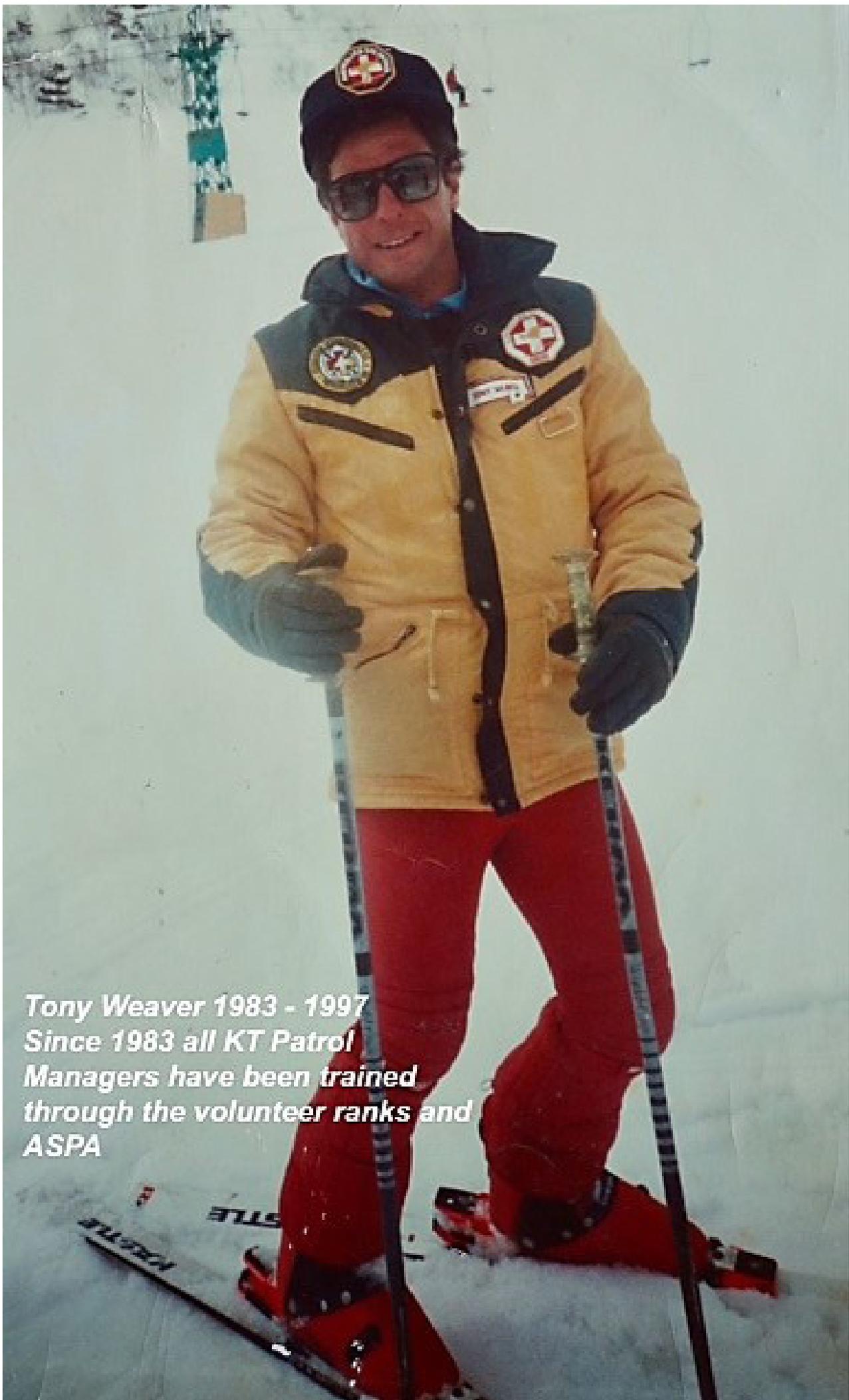
PART 3 – Operational Matters & Sundowner Lodge

1979 - *Peter Jeffery as Captain introduced the first Saturday evening ‘Bull Sessions’.*

1995 - *Official opening of the ‘Sundowner Lodge’ located at Woodridge.*

***Contribution by: - John Barkley, John Rumble, Robert Montgomery,
Anne and Peter Jeffery, Joe Di Falco and David Kuhn.***

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*Tony Weaver 1983 - 1997
Since 1983 all KT Patrol
Managers have been trained
through the volunteer ranks and
ASPA*