

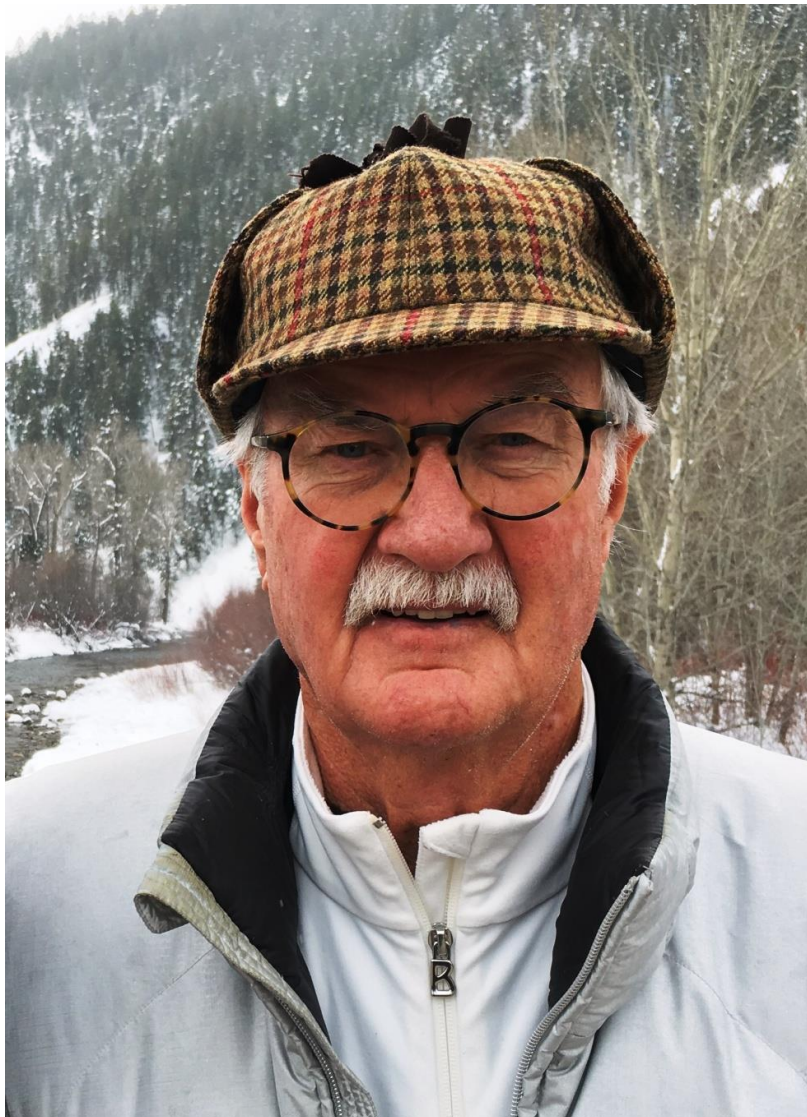
THREDBO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JOHN RUMBLE – An Oral History

Conducted by Jerry Krejzar, 2nd November 2015

72 Hopetoun Ave Vacluse, Sydney

(the Rumble family resides in Idaho, Sun Valley, USA)



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Jerry Krejzar on behalf of Thredbo Historical Society - I am sitting here at 72 Hopetoun Avenue, Vacluse talking with John Rumble, who is visiting Sydney and resides in Sun Valley, Idaho, USA. John would you tell me a few things about your background, about your parents and even your grandparents if you would like to.

My grandparents migrated from England. I am not sure of the year. My grandparents were farmers. They were on the land in the Junee, Harden, Murrumburrah area and then they had tough times during the Depression. So there were seven boys and one girl born to them, and they moved to various parts of New South Wales. My father went to Canberra where he worked on the building of Parliament House. In later years he became a builder in Canberra and that is where I was raised.

My first skiing was at Smiggin Holes on an old pair of skis hired from Hotel Kosciusko. That was probably in the year 1950, it could have been before that. So we “tried” to ski all around the Perisher Valley area. Perisher was very small then. There was almost nothing there. It was mainly Smiggin Holes.

Then probably the same year I bought a pair of skis. I paid twenty pounds for them from the Aly Nish Sports Store in Canberra. A friend of mine and I we drove up to Mt Franklin. There was no access to the top of Mt Franklin so we had to walk in heavy snow. We got to the top. I put the “new” skis on – they were not new - they were ex Canadian army skis. I put the skis on, I thought I was good, went to take the first run and went straight over the front and broke the skis so that was the end of that.

I then joined Kosciusko Snow Revellers and I skied there for a few years. Then when Thredbo was founded I went to Thredbo and had a look around. It looked as though it was going to be a good mountain. But just prior to that I skied again at Mt Franklin in 1957 – may have been 1956 – in the Balmain Cup and that is where I first met Tommy Tomasi. I met Paul Reader and Kurt Lance and all that mob, and we then established very lifelong friendships until they all died except Tommy who is still skiing.

Was it Tommy who got you interested in the Patrol?

Well what happened, I saw Crackenback Ski Club being built and as I was looking at the place, Geoffrey Hughes was there. And I said to Geoffrey “Geoffrey, how do I join this?” He said “My brother Tom is the secretary. Get in touch with him.” So I did that and I became an early member of Crackenback Ski Club.

That was Tom Hughes, the QC?

Yes, that was probably in 1957. In 1958 the Chairlift opened.

What do you remember those formative years of Crackenback Ski Club.

It was very family oriented and friends that used to ski at The Chalet, for example Kasee Koeman who was at the Chalet then, came to Thredbo and skied.

Did the members have to participate in the building, and that sort of thing, in the early years, or was it already built in 1957?

No. It was already built. Constance Hughes was the architect – one of the architects. It was the first building to my knowledge in Thredbo apart from the old Lodge/post office.

Can we stick to Crackenback Ski Club?

I had met up with Tommy through skiing at the Balmain Cup and then I became acquainted again with him at Thredbo. And he said to Adrian Studley and myself “Why don’t you join the Patrol?” So we did.

Do you remember the year?

I think it might have been in 1959.

I am just going to read out some history which was written by John Barclay who was one of the early members. John commented “The Patrol minute show that the June long weekend was the first season and the Patrol consisted of Tommy Tomasi, Danny Collman and Geoff McClutchey. Both Tommy and Danny were employed by the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority (SMHEA) as hydrographers based in Snowy houses in Jindabyne and worked on the Snowy River at the end of the project. So they were very familiar with Thredbo and the surrounding mountain area.

The initial patrol for the 1958 season 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.



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

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

So this could have been just two guys that were just on the fringes?

No, they were not on the fringes in 1958.

John, it was about 1959 that red jackets were handed out to volunteers at the time.



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?



**John Rumble, Tommy Tomasi, George Weiss, George Freuden, Ludwig Rabina,
John Barkley, Reverend Roger Bush & Father**

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 honourable 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 circularised 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 Barclay 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.

That was in about the mid sixties.

Yes.

And the other thing to clear up, in regard to the naming in the first Constitution, it was constituted as "TVSP Association" In fact that Thredbo's Volunteer Ski Patrol Association never existed in fact..

It did not exist. That is an acronym. We were always known as the Thredbo Ski Patrol Association. That is how it was constituted.

So that acronym sort of crept in.

Thredbo volunteer Ski Patrol Association, although we were all volunteers, we were never known as the Thredbo Volunteer Ski Patrol Association.

Fine, I am glad you cleared that up. John, about the NSW body, can you just expand a bit on how it worked?



John Rumble, Stein Erikssen & Tommy Tomasi 1962 (Photo Tomasi Collection)

Although it was, if you like, the governing body for NSW, it didn't have a constitution and it was a little bit on the basis of ad hoc, but what we wanted to do at Thredbo was to prove to the other guys that there was no way they were going to take over the Thredbo Ski Patrol. So we exerted our authority and got it on record, that we were forming the NSW Ski Patrol Association. I was elected inaugural President.

What happened after that, over the next year or so, we discussed the need for a national body but whilst I was Secretary up until December 1971, it didn't happen but it was left

on the table. In December 1971, I resigned as Secretary of the Thredbo Ski Patrol Association in order to pursue business interests in Western Australia, and I nominated George Freuden to the position of Secretary, which he then took and which he more than ably fulfilled the role right up until the time of his departure. He was a great administrator and he did a tremendous amount of work for the Thredbo Ski Patrol Association and, I understand, the Australian Ski Patrol Association.

Well that is about the time when you left, the inaugural time of ASPA, the Australian Ski Patrol Association, when George took that on. At about that time, were you involved with the Thredbo Lessees Association? Was that before this time?

This is another story. In 1985 it became apparent that our lodge was a fire trap and a dangerous place to live. The NSW authorities were on the verge of walking into Thredbo and condemning the various ski lodges and I think we would have probably been the first. With that in mind, what we wanted to do was to rebuild Crackenback Ski Club and there was no way we could rebuild Crackenback Ski Club under the terms of the existing sub lease which was a 50-year sub lease, I think it was a 50-year sub lease – these figures might be a little bit out.

So in 1986, I and Ray Mildren formed the Thredbo Sub Lessees Association. I was then working in Sydney and Ray, he was in Canberra – he was a Canberra attorney – and he came down to Sydney and we had a meeting with Kosciusko Thredbo – with the Board of Kosciusko Thredbo – and we told them of our concern about the building's deterioration, that we wanted to rebuild but under the terms of the existing sub lease, there was no way we could invest in a million bucks, a million dollars or so in a building that at the end of the day we didn't own. With that Kosciusko Thredbo company under - the spokesman was Mike Matthews - and Mike Matthews said "I'm telling you now, we will have the farm back."

What did he mean by that?

What he meant was: that when the sub leases expired, they were going to retake all the buildings in Thredbo including the commercial buildings, commercial and residential. With that I said to Ray "Thanks Mr, whoever the chairperson was, we are out of here!" With that, we got up and walked out. Ray and I went down to the pub next door, sat on a stool, had a drink and we thought "What are we going to do?" The first conclusion we reached was that we had to hire a lobbyist. So we said "OK, we are going to hire a lobbyist, to do that, we need money. What do we do?"

So we sent out a circular to all the sub lessees in Thredbo, including the commercial, asking for \$500 in the kitty to fight the Kosciusko Thredbo. All the residential donated, with the exception of the Ski Club of Australia who did not donate one penny, so we finished up with \$30 or \$40 thousand dollars, I can't remember the amount. We hired a lobbyist in Canberra. Ray Mildred and I briefed the lobbyist on our problem. The result was that we took out a full page ad in the 'Sydney Morning Herald' denouncing the terms of Kosciusko Thredbo's lease terms with the National Parks & Wildlife Service. That appeared on, say, the Wednesday. On the Thursday morning, I get a phone call from John Hagley, I think his name was, the managing director of Kosciusko Thredbo.

He said "What are you trying to do to us?" and I said "We are playing you guys at your own game. Because, you will recall, your Mike Matthews said 'We will own the farm'."

Do you think he actually meant it or was he?

No, he meant it. Oh, yeah. So John Hagley said "Come down to my office, I would like to talk to you." So my office was on the corner of Hunter and Elizabeth Street, right opposite the Wentworth Hotel, the Qantas building. So I marched in and he said "What is going on?" And I said "John, you guys won't listen to us. At that meeting they did not ask us for any proposals at all." I said "All we want to do is to get a sub lease that is fair and equitable. We are prepared to pay" I said "I know you have problems with infrastructure. I know our rent is peppercorn at Thredbo, but up until now, we are prepared - someone has got to pay for Thredbo. Well up until now it hasn't been the sub lessees." I said "we are prepared to pay."

But we are paying through our bed levy.

No, there was no bed levy at that stage, no. It was a peppercorn rent. We were paying like a hundred pounds a year, or a hundred dollars a year for a full year for the twenty beds we were licensed or supposedly licensed for. And he said "I can understand your problem, what can we do?" And I said "you've got to go and do some homework and come back to us with a proposal. So he said "I'll get my experts on to this and I've got a guy who will liaise with you." He is incidentally, the guy that was killed in the avalanche.

In which lodge

In the one that took the hut.

Oh, Kunama Hutte?

No, the one that took the hut in Thredbo.

Oh, the Slide. Who would that have been? The Property Manager.

Yes. So we did our liaison with him and then John Hagley. They came back to us with a proposal which was a bed levy.

So that is how the bed levy came into existence?

Yes. They came back and said "How does this suit?" And I said "I've got to get in touch with my co-director, Ray Mildren". So we liaised and he came back to me and said "This is all acceptable to me, it acceptable to you" and he said "Yes". I was then chairman of Crackenback Ski Club and I took this to Crackenback, and I said "this is what has been proposed: they will enter into new sub leases. They were offering a new sub lease for another 50 years on these terms and conditions, which is acceptable." So it was debated and I subsequently convinced the meeting that we should go ahead. So I got back to either John Hagley or the guy that was in the landslide, Colin Warren, and I then said "I'll have our attorney contact your attorneys and we will draw up new terms and

conditions.” And Crackenback was the first lodge to break the nexis and it was the first lodge to sign this lease – the sub lease.

So what you are describing is the beginning of what is the levy system, which is now in use all over Thredbo. We pay the same as Crackenback.

Exactly.

Then yet again, the managers come and go. Well Mike Matthews...

Well he was hopeless. Anyway he got off the Board, and he died later, but he was a member of Crackenback. Then he resigned before this all happened. So with that, we rebuilt Crackenback. As I said, it was the first to take up the sub lease on the new terms and conditions for that extended period. So that is the end of that story. But I can tell you this, except for Ray Mildren and I, but I wouldn't have been able to can't foresee in the future. I can't look back and say "God, who would have ever taken up the mantel to break the nexis of Kosciusko Thredbo and the sub leases that we had.

Well thank you for that information about the Sub Lessees Association, John. I will go to another point. I know now that you left Australia and that you are now settled in Sun Valley. I know that some of the Thredbo identities that we know, like Alan Pennay, Peter Pickup, have also quite a long history with Sun Valley. Would you like to just talk about these guys?

With pleasure. I first went to Sun Valley in 1976 or 1977. It was after Leonhard Erharter, who I knew very well and he taught me to ski or tried to improve my skiing, and he was instructing in Sun Valley in that year and he said "This is a great place, you should get over there and have a look." So with that Peter Williamson, ex 'Nip'on out to Willows', the ex Nissan dealer in Sydney. Peter Williamson went to Sun Valley and we skied there and it was great. I skied there on and off for a few years, and then I skied Aspen for most of the '80s where I had an apartment. I later sold that and later bought an apartment in Sun Valley where now we have two apartments. But some of the entities, or identities rather, in Sun Valley – of course - Peter Pickup, he skied there. We skied there for year after year until he died early last year. His brother Roger Pickup still skis in Sun Valley for a couple of weeks a year. Alan Pennay of course lives there

Just to go back onto Alan Pennay. A lot of Thredbo locals would know him well, because he was going back into the '70s. He was great on the piano, going back into the '70s.

Yes, he played in the Tom Groggin Room. He now plays intermittently in the Duchin Room at the Sun Valley Lodge. He is a well known identity in Sun Valley, as is Peter Williamson who lives there. We spend most of our time in Sun Valley than in Atlanta – we also have a house there. But we spend all the winter in Sun Valley and summer as well. So it is a great place.

John, thanks for those recollections. We have touched on several areas – the important one of the Thredbo Ski Patrol Association and of course the Crackenback Ski Club, as well

as your thoughts on the early days of the Thredbo Sub Lessees. Could I just ask that on behalf of the Thredbo Historical Society, you will allow this oral history to be transcribed.

Yes Jerry, subject to you just checking some of the dates because I'm going on memory and I don't have any of the dates in front of me, and they may be inaccurate. But apart from that you are quite welcome to do whatever you want with it.

Thanks very much.



Tommy Tomasi, Adrian Studley, John Rumble & Ludovit Rabina, July 1964

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Interviewee.....[Signature].....Date.....2/11/15
JOHN RUMBLE

Interviewer.....JERRY KAETZMAN.....Date.....2/November 2015
[Signature]