

Rudi Schätzle: Face of Thredbo

Rudi Schätzle is one of the famed entrepreneurs and business people of Thredbo. He began life there during the very early 1960s, shortly after arriving in Australia from his native Germany where he had developed skills in joinery and wood crafting. In Thredbo he worked initially in ski hire and then in the development of ski runs, felling trees by hand to fashion the Little Beauty and International runs and others of the early trails. Later, he cut the lift line for the Merritts chair. He was also involved in the construction of the facilities at the top of the mountain at Eagles Nest and in painting lodges in the village during summers.

Before long he discovered that his niche in the mountains was in the purveying of food and drinks to hungry, thirsty skiers. With his wife Christine he at one stage operated all of the refreshment outlets on the slopes, providing a vital and essential service demanded by skiers. Between them the pair ran the restaurants and kiosks at Eagles Nest, Kareela and Merritts as well as the smaller facilities they established next to the Basin T-Bar and Middle Station and at the bottom of the Crackenback run. In the village itself Rudi also held the lease on Bursills lodge (on the site of The Denman), which it is said he ran like a well-oiled machine during the 1970s and 1980s. Rudi's, in fact, became **the** place to go for Sunday lunch in Thredbo, and many people remember with fondness the high standard of cuisine on offer there in those days. He also established the bar underneath the lodge.

All Rudi's business ventures were successes, a testament to his organisational skills, his customer focus, his strong work ethic and the contribution made by Christine. In all, the family was involved in Thredbo for forty years.

Rudi was highly regarded by Dick Dusseldorp, the Chairman of Lend Lease (and therefore the supremo of Kosciusko Thredbo) from the early 1960s until the mid-1980s. When the management of the on-snow food outlets was under discussion in about 1964, Dusseldorp's view was clear: "There is only one Rudi". With his wife strongly involved in his business activities, and later their daughter Sonja (who established and operated the Santé restaurant in the Village Square), Rudi fulfilled Dusseldorp's confidence in spades. Some say that the standards of quality and service he and Christine established in food retailing have not been exceeded in Thredbo since. He was a magnificent pioneer, of great importance in several spheres in the development of the resort over a long period of time, and he is a worthy addition to the Faces of Thredbo.