

PAUL READER – An Oral History

**Interviewed by Jerry Krejzar,
19 Candelbark Circuit, Jindabyne, 1st September 2015**



PAUL READER – AN ORAL HISTORY
Interviewed by Jerry Krejzar, Jindabyne, July 2015

I am sitting here with Paul Reader in his apartment in Jindabyne. This interview is on behalf of the Thredbo Historical Society. Paul is going to talk about his early racing career and his skiing before Thredbo started. Paul also wants to talk about his involvement in the ski industry. Before we go there Paul, when and where you were born, and then talk a little bit about your parents and grandparents?

I was born 1st August, 1929, in Woollahra in Sydney. My grandparents came out to Australia from Ireland and England. My father died shortly after he married my mother, following a surgical slip with a knife and he bled to death.

Do you remember the year?

No. It was two or three years after I was born.

So you didn't know your father very well?

No, except he was an identical twin who stayed in England, so I could always see his progress as far as ageing was concerned.

So your childhood was spent mostly with your mother?

I would say so, up to a certain point. After World War II, we invited an ex- serviceman to come and stay with us at our house at Edgecliff in those days. He was a former lightweight boxing champion so he took charge more or less, of my sporting career which was quite varied and quite satisfactory over the years.

So you had a sporting career in your youth?

As far as sport was concerned, anything I touched I became an A-grader without any problem. My mother's brother, who decided to live with us, took the place of my father and he was quite a famous Australian. His name was Bill Beatty. He was an adjudicator to various musical eisteddfods and he introduced me to skiing. He became a well known author writing on Australia - some of his books on skiing were "On the Roof of Australia" and that sort of thing.

Can you remember the year that was?

We can probably find out from looking at one of these books. The one that comes to mind firstly is "The White Roof of Australia". He wrote about fourteen books but all on Australiana – he was Australian. He was a commentator on the radio and he had various shows of his own. He was a called by judges to court cases.

Do you remember the time he first took you skiing?

It was in 1946. He went before me but when he came back to Australia he said "Paul you have to take this skiing up. Its just up your alley, you will enjoy yourself." On that advice, the following year I went up to the Chalet. I stayed in the hotel first, then after the hotel, it was Bett's Camp where I had my twenty first birthday.

That must have been 1947 you say?

Yes, to the best of my knowledge.

How do you remember those times at the Chalet and Bett's Camp?

Great times because there were a lot of personalities there. Brian Davidson who you know – the one was famous from the bar; and there was the laundry lady who did all the cleaning of the sheets in the Chalet. She was always supplied with a hefty bottle of something in the galley. We had another chappie there – someone from a wealthy family in England. Unfortunately the alcohol got him. He was the black sheep of the family and he ended up by becoming a beach boy somewhere up in Queensland because he wrote me a letter some years after he had given up the grog.

It sounds as though there were some personalities there at the time. What about the skiing, do you recall the gear?

Absolutely fun times. We had no option but to use the Kandahar toe piece and heel binding. They remained in used until Tyrolia came up with the safety binding, and Marker of course was possibly the first. I know I bought in a pair from Europe before I ever had the shop. I knew a girl over there – I said to her “Get me a pair of these safety bindings.” I had broken my leg the year before and they cost me thirty six pounds for the toe piece, which was a lot of money in those days for my work. She travelled half way across Germany to get them.

The people in those days were mainly graziers, doctors and solicitors – may be to try and get away from telephones – Dr Schlink, Edward Hallstrom. Edward Hallstrom was curator of Taronga Park Zoo. He was part of a trip which you will hear about later – Kiandra to Kosciusko. **(See reference – Kiandra to Kosciusko 1954 - pp 11 to 18)**

He took us down for a drink and this voice said “Would you care for a cup of tea?” “No sir, thank you very much?” and it repeated “Would you like a cup of tea” “No sir”. I thought there was something funny going on here. It was a parrot – it was so realistic, because he had a zoo of his own. The other chap I mentioned was Silent Knight Refrigerators which I think was the first refrigerators in in the world.

Did you ski with these fellows?

No not the ones I’ve just mentioned. They were from an era earlier. The main ones I would have skied with in the later part were George Day and Billy Day.

How did you go against these guys?

Billy Day and Danny Collman were well ahead of anybody. They stood out.

How about the races in those days?

These seem to go off without any hitches. Twin Valleys and some other courses - we used to conduct races there. We had to carry all the stuff across from the Chalet on our backs, so it was a fairly hard sort of day.

That would have been in the early ‘50s?

In the early ‘50s.

I had the first ride on the chairlift going across that they had started at that time. That was a great invention except for the high winds and chairs got wrapped around the cable, smashing into the pylons. It didn’t last long. No. The high winds of Australia got to it.

What about when you competed in those races in Twin Valleys? Do you remember some of the people who you raced with?

Roslyn Wesche – she was Kiandra Ski Club. She was killed as you know in that avalanche. There were a lot of doctors. I would have to sit down and really think about all their names.

In terms of skiing, from thereon in before Thredbo started, what other areas did you ski in?

Basically there was an area around at the Chalet where we had the State Slalom Championships. We also had them going from Mt Guthega down to the Chalet. Slaloms mainly right in front of the Chalet itself and downhill races were taken from the higher altitudes.

When Thredbo started, did you ski on the first ski lift?

1958, it was. That was when Geoffrey Hughes who was running a slalom or GS, on Crackenback and he caught a stump and impaled himself through the head. It took about six of us to hold him down in the car to get him down to a hospital. Geoffrey was my solicitor at the time. So later on, he took quite a while to recover. Even today the scars on his face are quite noticeable. What year that was I am not exactly sure about.

I think one of the sad things is that a fellow by the name of Danny Collman whom I mentioned earlier. He had a great ability and may have been slightly better than Billy Day, being quicker but he just didn't have the finances to go overseas and to train. It was all the Olympians from that time on were semi sponsored.

How did you go in respect to some of the other fellows?

I won a few but nothing spectacular. I won the National title in ski jumping in Victoria at Mt Hotham in 1956. Ken Breakspere had never been beaten in cross country racing, but I think I beat him once at Charlotte Pass. George Day was a sort of person everybody idolised – he as the real Man from Snowy River. You wouldn't want to muck around with him you know. He was the manager of the Chalet – Billy Day's father.

Did you go with well known Olympians overseas as well.

No, I went with people overseas to ski but never with the Olympians. I broke my leg before that and it put me out of any possibility of being chosen – mostly because I had won one national title in ski-jumping.

Do you recall your first years skiing? What was it like? All of a sudden there was a resort? Bearing in mind that there wasn't a resort before and you had to do all that work?

My first trip to go skiing was the ride up from Central Railway Station, which was at 5 minutes to 9. We hit snow at Canberra. They had power bars in the front, pushing through the snow up to a metre high going along the tracks all the way to Cooma. Then we got out of that, and then we bussed it as best as possible towards the Chalet. They would have had snow at best, 8 to 10 feet high. It was a winter wonderland. Of course the lake in front of the hotel site was completely frozen over. You could skate on that. Personally, I didn't but there were a few other people who did.

The skiing was limited, because our ability was limited. When we very first started, we had a Norwegian ski instructor by the name Martin Jansen. Danny Collman was another ski instructor. Jansen and another Norwegian ski instructor skated. A lot of people didn't know that the hotel had its own ice skating rink in the middle of the hotel and that it was black tie. You turned up with a black tie and the ladies came running down. Dressing by image.

You said you came in by train. The Chalet was owned by the Railways.

That and the Jenolan Caves and Yarrangobilly, and they were all owned by them. In fact one of the managers at the Chalet – Joe – he was the manager at the Chalet and the Jenolan Caves.

Was Karel and Sasha Nekvapil there?

Karel in the early days, no. Sasha yes. She wasn't the first of course.

Tommy was up there for a while.

Tommy wasn't anything to do with the instructing. Tommy was a hydrographer who came up. A lot of the boys stayed on as a result of that.

Getting to the early days of Thredbo, compared seeing how difficult it was to get to the Chalet sometimes, can you recall the early years of Thredbo when you went there?

There wasn't much there as far as I was concerned other than my father in law and I had a lodge there, Christiana. We had that for a few years but there was no money to be made.

We are talking about the Christianna in Thredbo – before it became a club lodge?



George Derschko & Paul Reader

Yes. Al Kahane was the President of Southern Alps Ski Club - it took me years to get out of that and sell it.

So we are talking about the problems of the early '60s. For how many years did you have Christianna? For how many years did you have it?

About six or seven years. It was just a manager's residence so they were having a good time. We weren't making any money for ourselves. It was basically run from Sydney. They were entertaining the instructors every night and we were footing the bills for them.

As far as I know Christianna is a club lodge now. What year did you sell out of Christianna?

Yes it is – Southern Alps. I only sold out in the late 60's because there was no money to be made and a lot of worry.

Now Paul, what made you get into the ski industry? Your first shop? When did you start?

I started because no one else was doing it. Paddy Pallin was the only person before me. We were the first in alpine. It was in 1956 and up to the magic season of 1964.



Paul Reader - 1st Ski-Shop - Elizabeth Street - 1956

To import those too - before those people came on the scene.

Tell me about that

I dealt with all the Europeans on my own, Marker and so on. I had all those agencies at sometime or other until it came to a point where it became a big business.

So this must have been before 1964?

I imported most of the stock from 1956 until the late 60's when I gave up most of the agencies.

Did you liaise with these various manufacturers yourself?

Yes, the suppliers. I was basically the agent, but I wasn't selling to others.

So you were in competition.

I was a few years later. I imported everything – the lot.

There was a conflict of interest. You ran a retail organisation and you were importing the stuff you were selling.

No.

(Supplementary notes by Nicholas Reader)

Dad identified a need in the market. The small population of people that skied in the 40's & 50's went to great lengths to source product from Europe. This in turn limited the number of people who could conceivably take up the sport. Dad, through his now large exposure to skiers and the industry, believed he could bring skiing to a much larger percentage number of Australians. By sourcing the gear locally and internationally he could bring it together under one roof where he could pass on his passion for the sport and help grow it.

It was not a conflict of interest. It was more like vertical retailing. By not having an agent/wholesaler in between, Dad was able to keep prices as low as possible. I believe that pricing went up because of this, and Dad didn't keep a direct relationship with his manufacturers! He was trying to do the right thing by the Brands by letting them go to wholesalers but lost the sharper pricing as a result.

So John took off a whole lot of those agencies

I recommended to the overseas people to do that. Like Robert Jansen and Raichle, and all that. I had the Raichle agency for about ten years. I said to them, "I don't think I am being fair to you because I am not selling enough quantity, but I am recommending Bob Jansen." So it gave him a good start in the ski industry. Vince Coles, Robert Jansen.

So did you give Vince Coles his agency?

I didn't charge him anything. I just said "You can have it. You just do the right thing by these people."

So your first shop, in what part of the city?

Elizabeth Street, right opposite Grace Bros.

That was the first alpine ski shop in the city?

That's right. Then we moved to Pitt Street in 1963 to 1972 and then to Clarence Street from 1972 to 1987, and finally to York Street in 1988 up until the present. I've got nothing to do with it now. My oldest son, he is doing a good job. I had three children, two of them weren't interested but Nic was.

Before we go down that track, let's skip back to when you were actually setting up the shop. How did you see the ski scene then? How has it changed since that time? Let me give you an example: once we skied on 205 or 210 cm skis.

There's a photograph of me with a guy by the name of Tony Mandlik who did a somersault off the tops of the sand dunes at Kurnell on 215 cm skis. Tony was a skier from the Chalet days. He was also an SMA chap. Safety bindings weren't in when I first started.

What sort of volume of skis and boots, bindings, in terms of everything else, what would you have sold in those early years compared to now?



Paul Reader, John Ecuyer, Andy Pap & Tony Mandlik

Not that much. It was quite a good business for a number of years, it was quite good, and it even got better. Actually Fleets were the ones that wrecked the scene through discounting. You had to sell one foot of space in a shop, it cost you so much to do that then of course prices went up and up.

Why was that?

Because of the attitude to selling. The industry thought their way was a better way, that way.

But you virtually had no competition for how long?

Dick Gilkes of Snowline was next. What am I thinking about. How I started in the business – this is interesting – Dick Gilkes was the manager of E J Pearson's. Pearson's were a well known clothing retailer in Sydney and I walked in one day when he had a pair of alpine skis sitting there. I remember saying to Dick "If you ever rip skiers off, I will open up in opposition to you." He actually had some alpine gear there. So that's how I actually got the courage to go into the ski business.

I recall that Walton's with Tommy, was a competitor. Then Fleets opened in the city did they?

Yes, and they were in the suburbs too because you had those theatre passes, and they got them delivered to your business. That was a big part of their businesses and very successful too.

Do you remember some of your customers from those years – your loyal customers?

There were people like Thomas Daley who was the head of the armed forces in Australia. There was Sir Edward Hallstrom who was a knight. Bill Day was a knight. Quite a lot came back. George Day, I don't know that I mentioned him. We had a very good customer relations. When I had the divorce, they had to postpone the case because all the judges around Sydney knew me.

Tell me about your family in those years

Nic and Marc are my sons. Kelly is my daughter.

Were they from your first marriage.

Michelle, my first wife is up here on a little farm. The boys raced. We put them straight into the Thredbo Ski Racing Club. From then on Adrian Studley, my brother-in-law,

Adrian Studley was my captain in the Ski Patrol. So he was your brother-in-law?

Yes, his wife Nicole who is a widow now, is my ex-wife's youngest sister. My wife was a Dekyvere, so there is also the Dekyvere family here too. Michelle was the eldest. I took them all skiing – the lot.

So you took the family overseas quite a bit?

Yes, but mainly I did that for groups.

So you took groups. When did that start? When you were in the retail business? In the late 50s? or '70s?

This lady, she took the girls from the up-market schools in Sydney. She was a finishing school you might say – like going to Switzerland. A group would form and she would take them over as chaperone. Adrian came in later on the racing side, he was only involved with the TSRC, one of the managers and club captain for many years in the 70's.

So Adrian was involved as well – he was taking some of the kids?

No not taking the skiing part. He would take the team kids.

When did you decide to pass the business over to your sons?

Only because I got jaded with the retail. Because in my opinion, all that all the sales was pure trickery with the public.

That is an interesting thing to say, from a retailer.

Well it happened a lot in Europe and a bit later in Asia. I will tell you a little story quickly: One day a Jewish man came into the store and he wanted a pair of socks. And he said "What sort of discount will you give?" So I said "We don't do discounts." "You have got to help me" he said. "My wife will kill me if I don't come home with a discounted price." I said "All right, OK" so I gave him a sixpence discount or something like that. And he was as happy as Larry.

It was that attitude that entered the ski industry. I found they would put their prices up before the sale and then bring them down for the sale. I didn't think this was the right thing to do. I'm old fashioned but that is how it happened.

The cut and thrust of competition is something you didn't like?

It wasn't the competition so much as the pricing system.

(Supplementary notes by Nicholas Reader)

Discounting: From what Dad told me many years ago, the margin most retailers work off was much less – so there was no room for discounts. Stores like Fleets believed if they sold much higher volumes they could in the long run, increase their profits! In the long run this was not sustainable and many of his competitors closed down or faded away.

As Dad said in this interview, some of his competitors were marking up to mark down! This put Dad off. As he put it 'Trickery'!

Dad was one of the nice guys and a gentleman. He didn't believe in pushing wholesalers into giving better than 'normal wholesale'. Conversely, he didn't like customers that asked for discounts! Old world retailing! He conducted business in a world that had retail pricing at more than half the margin as it stands today, so there wasn't much room to move. Customers however were seeing discounts offered, but on mark-up prices!

For that reason you passed the business over to your son and they are doing well?

Mark decided not to go into that, Nic decided to take on the shop. My daughter was not interested.

Kurt was involved with the FIS. Were you involved with the FIS?



Not so much. I was secretary of the NSW Ski Council. As you know Kurt was the maker of the first ski clothing along with Lois Preiss' Olympia brand. Kurt had a Humber Snipe. When World War II finished he came out here to Australia and I would travel about every weekend with him up to the snow. He would pick me up after Friday night after work and ski and then go all the way back again. In those days it was only a bitumen road to Canberra. From Canberra on to the snowfields it was all dirt road and rough. They made the road nice for politicians to Canberra and then let it go from there on.

Well you must have been quite involved with a lot of racing with Kurt?

Oh yes. He liked jumping but I beat him a few times. He was quite good. We were lucky. We got so many good guys from the Mountains Scheme – the Czechs, the Poles.

Now why don't you want to talk much about the Australian Ski Council?

The Australian Ski Council - wasn't much to report - except for the George Chisholm Course, renamed Twin Peaks. George Chisholm was a well known Victorian official. But other than that, the Council wrote letters.

So you moved to the mountains from Sydney. You didn't move here first.

I bought a block of land in 1978 before we divorced and moved there permanently in 1988, on the Alpine Way. It was John Sheddon's – he was the doctor. John had this company that bought this bit of land up here. He was the first doctor and he sewed me up when I slashed myself up with a chain saw. He said to me as he started sewing "Oh, I haven't done that job since I was in South Africa." I didn't do anything much with it for quite a few years. Then I got divorced

Is that the property you ended up selling to Michelle and Heinz.

Yes, they love it as much as I did but it's just one of those things that happen in life.

Now you have moved here into Jindabyne. It must be nice to be here close to the mountains?

I miss the property. I didn't want to sell but I needed a bit of help. I paid a lot out to Michelle. That's when I brought up the story of 'the judges', they couldn't judge the case – I knew so many of them.

Well Paul it is nice to see you here settled in Jindabyne, close to the mountains. It has been a wonderful interview talking with you. Could I just ask on behalf of the Thredbo Historical Society if you mind if we transcribe it.

Oh no.

Thanks very much



Paul Reader and Douglass Baglin (Photography: Douglass Baglin)



Caught in a Blizzard 1954

Paul Reader

The members of our party were Keith Field, Douglass Baglin and Paul Reader, and we set out from Kiandra on 4th July, 1954, departing from Kiandra Chalet at 9am. After some very rough going we arrived at our camp No. 1 at 5.30pm. This was the north side of Happy Jacks River [probably the Tumut River] on a rock measuring 6 feet by 6 feet, the only suitable site. We were unable to erect our tent and spent our first night under the stars. The final approach to this spot was down a rock slide 1,000 feet in length and of a 70 degree angle. This was the first of a series of hazards we were to encounter. We all took nasty falls coming down, as there was no snow covering the rocks and they were balanced on one another like marbles. Doug broke his stock jumping out of the way of a minor avalanche I started 100 feet above him. Both he and Keith lost the seat out of their pants before we had negotiated half the slide.



Keith Field and Paul Reader at Cabramurra in 1954. The first township was just being built. (Douglass Baglin)

Keith took a nasty toss at one stage and it was only that I happened to be in front by about 20 feet and was able to grab him as he flew past that prevented what may have been a nasty fall of 100 feet or so. The evening was pleasantly fine, but cold. We had no fires, and our meal was cooked by means of a small primus stove. Our packs weighed an average of 57 pounds.

July 5th — At 9.30am we commenced our swim across Happy Jacks River [Tumut River]. There was nothing happy about the crossing. By 9.45 am a snow storm had commenced with the temperature at 29 degrees [F], or three degrees below freezing point. We had removed our clothes for the crossing, hoping to keep them dry; as it turned out this was all to no avail. By the time we had floated all our gear across this 55-foot river, which was running a-banker, three and a half hours had passed — all this time without clothes except for a sweater between swims. At the first attempt Doug and I together, with a pack strapped between, were swept off our feet. Doug was carried 100 yards downstream before he was able to scramble out, whilst I managed to grip a rock after only being swept about 10 feet. Fortunately, I had been able to keep hold of the pack and perhaps saved us from yet another nasty incident, as this pack held most of our food and fire equipment. The cold was intense, and it was at this



Paul Reader and Keith Field after swimming the Tumut River. (Douglass Baglin)

stage we all became victims of frost-bite. The balance of the day was spent erecting camp No. 2 and endeavouring to thaw out our frozen bodies by means of a meagre fire. The camp site was under an overhanging rock face of decomposing granite on a sandy spit a foot from the river's edge. All we had, including our sleeping bags, was sodden, despite our earlier efforts to keep them dry on the crossing. The cameras were the only items not wet. We spent a very cold and miserable night with snow falling throughout.

July 6th — Despite the rigorous night the sight we beheld on emerging from our tent was breathtaking. The frightening rock slide we had descended the day before was now blanketed with 18 inches of beautiful powder snow and the trees simply groaned under the weight of snow on their branches, whilst the river gurgled its silvery length through this crystal paradise with a foot of ice at its edges. It was not long afterwards our awe turned to frustration, as we lashed and floundered up the side of the steepest mountain I have ever climbed. It rose from the river like a pyramid, and one only had to lean slightly back to plunge down the face. This mountain turned out to be a freak, for when at last we reached the top we were dismayed to find another joining it twice as high again. The unusual point about this first mountain was that it was joined to the second by what I was later to find out is a ridge called a fishback. This freak ridge left a drop of 800 feet on either side, and was so narrow that Keith was forced to negotiate it by sitting down and passing it between his legs as one would a pole. We continued our climb, with snow still falling, till 4 pm, and then we were still a day's climb from the top. At this stage we chose a site for camp No. 3. This was to be a foxhole between two granite rocks, perched on such an angle that one only had to trip to fall hundreds of feet down. All our equipment was still sodden, as the heat generating from our bodies melted the snow falling on our backs. Even with our tent pitched over the opening we still had insufficient room for the three of us. This necessitated having to take turns of about hourly intervals during the night. One would crawl into the hole and try to sleep against the wet moss-covered rocks, another would stoke and choke over the fire, whilst the third would sit outside the tent in the falling snow. By this stage we were so exhausted that we even slept during part of the night.

July 7th — The scene confronting us the next morning still held some of its grandeur, but we were not really in the mood to appreciate it, and after a hasty breakfast we commenced climbing once again. The snow stopped falling that morning, but with the gums so laden one only had to brush them, or a slight ripple of wind disturb their branches, for one to be enveloped in a cascade of white. We climbed all day and over some really terrifying rock outcrops, where every step brought down rocks. By 3 o'clock we had reached the top and stood dwarfed in the middle of a forest of huge gums, here and there splintered and twisted like matchsticks by past storms and lightning. By four we had picked a site for camp No. 4. This was by a hollowed gum on a small knoll. We made a bed out of gum leaves spread over the surface of snow, covered them with our ground sheets and two sleeping bags (Keith had lost his the previous day climbing the fishback ridge), and after pitching our tent we spent a very comfortable night. Keith tried getting into the same bag as myself, but after a few embarrassing hours we gave the idea away.

July 8th dawned a cloudless, sunny day. Realising we were days behind schedule, it was decided to omit a search for Boobee hut and make the most of the good weather. Our progress was laboriously slow, and I doubt if we progressed more than 2 miles, though it seemed like 10. The powder snow of previous days had turned to wet, heavy slush, and as our climbing skins were already wet, it clung in thick lumps. The undergrowth kept coming through the surface and catching our bindings, so that every step had to be watched, and with each ski seeming like a ton weight we shuffled on. This was the first day we had been able to wear skins, and similar

conditions were to prevail until Mt Jagungal was reached three days later. I might add that at this stage we were completely bushed and had been since our departure from Happy Jacks River [Tumut River]. I put this down to four main factors: the surrounding mountains were unfamiliar; due to the storm we had been unable to see for more than a quarter mile over the past three days; we had been forced to ignore the compass on so many occasions due to changes of course forced on us by nature that it was impossible to make the necessary corrections; where we had crossed the river the formation of its course was so unusual over one and a half miles that it should have shown up very clearly on the map and allowed us to pinpoint our position — however, there was nothing shown which even slightly resembled its course. I am therefore forced to the reluctant conclusion that the map leaves much to be desired. (Now I really have let myself in for criticism.) However, we did find many cases where trig stations were not marked.



Exhausted but happy to be out of the Tumut gorge, Keith Field and Paul Reader. (Douglass Baglin)

While I am dealing with this subject, I may as well bring up a rather sore point. Surely it is not asking too much of those people erecting these stations and who go to the trouble of painting them black and silver, to also, with a few strokes of the brush, write either the name or at least the height of the mountain on the woodwork. This would at least assist the lost wanderer in pinpointing his position and may someday avert a tragedy, which may well occur for lack of a few seconds' extra work.

That night, rather than lose precious height by dropping into the valleys, we decided to camp on a plateau of snow. The fire we made at camp No. 5 was unusual to say the least. It started on the surface of the snow and was no larger than 18 inches in circumference. By morning it was resting on the ground 3 feet lower down and had melted a circle 26 feet in circumference. We were therefore able to sit in this hole with our backs against the wall with our legs stretched out to the fire. It was very pleasant, and another enjoyable evening was experienced. From this plateau we had been able to observe Mt Jagungal for the first time, and it certainly boosted our morale.

July 9th dawned as had the 8th and we lost no time starting, determined to peel off the miles. Progress was reasonable and uneventful. We were still carrying about the same weight in our packs, as what we had lost in food consumed had been replaced by water absorbed by our sleeping bags, tent, clothes, etc., which we had been unable to dry out. We made camp No. 6 in a clump of gums and, after a hearty dinner, bedded down for the evening. We all felt anxious that the weather would not last; but others besides ourselves must have been saying a few prayers, for it continued to hold.

July 10th — Ever since Mt Jagungal had been sighted a new hope and determination to win through had sprung up, and this day we really burnt up the miles and before we fell exhausted at our next camp we must have covered close on 20 miles. During the day we passed close to both Farm Ridge hut and O'Keefes, but not wishing to waste time in searching for them we pushed on. After all, we were becoming very used to sleeping in the open and rising every three hours to replenish the fire. Camp No. 7 was staked out on the western face of Jagungal. I shall always remember my mixed feelings when I first stepped on to the slope leading up to the crest. This jewel of a mountain, rising majestically out of the surrounding plain country, beckoning us on when our spirits were low and yet never seeming to move closer. At times as distant as the Star of the East and at others the Helping Hand towards our ultimate goal. Who but those who attempt the unusual know the fear of the fight or the thrill of the conquest. Since time immemorial those who have sat back and said, 'what fools they are' have themselves never lived.

We were cutting timber for our fire when Nature stepped in with a paint brush and we were made witnesses to one of the most spectacular and beautiful pictures we have ever looked upon. The sun, sinking in the west, threw its reflection from the crystal snow on to the face of Jagungal, and in 20 minutes changed it to three distinct colours. First we saw a mountain bathed in a delicate pink, then blue, and finally yellow. Fortunately, Doug was able to catch each change in colour film. That night we slept the sleep of the contented. We were halfway to Kosciusko with the hardest part over.

July 11th — Yet another perfect day. By 10.30am we had climbed over the top and were skiing down the eastern slopes which, in my opinion, runs into the finest skiing valley in New South Wales.

From Mt Jagungal we set a compass course for Alpine hut but made a very stupid mistake by not allowing ten degrees allowance for magnetic north. Our mistake went unnoticed till it was too late and we were in the hut area. We attempted to correct our error, but after tramping on for hours ended at a hut which we thought was Kidmans, and lies to the

north of Alpine. We had covered about nine miles that day. The reason progress had been so slow was because we had run out of food (except for powdered milk) and energy, and had been stopping for drinks of water far too much. On arrival at the hut it was necessary to dig ourselves in, as the snow was up to the windows. Unfortunately, there was no food to be found, but we managed to find some sugar and tea, so for the first time for days we were able to have something sweet. There was a large quantity of snow in the hut which had come in through the chimney, so after clearing this out we drew the beds up to the fire and for the first time since we commenced the trip we were able to sit in comfort and warmth. Doug and I puffed contentedly at pipes and it was so pleasant by the fire, each with his own thoughts, we stayed up till 1 am before turning in.

July 12th — And still the weather held. After cleaning the hut and replacing the wood used, we set a compass course for Alpine hut. (Second sore point.) Surely regular visitors to these huts could scratch the name somewhere on the building. As it turned out, instead of the hut being Kidmans it was Tin hut; therefore the other side of Alpine. Consequently, the course we set just didn't exist and after many wasted hours' searching we found Dicky Cooper hut, which isn't the most habitable hut on the range, as many 'Main Range Rats' know. Had we struck a blizzard in our weakened condition we could well have perished. It is with a view to the future that I mention these points, as I said earlier, for a few seconds' work, tragedies may be averted. We backtracked from Dicky Cooper hut (not knowing at the time that this was its name and therefore once again unable to pinpoint our position) till we came up Whites River Valley. All we could see of the hut from a distance was the radio mast. We were tempted to ski down, but the climb out of Whites is long and, wishing to save as much energy as possible we bypassed the hut. We held a meeting on Dicky Cooper Bogong and decided we would eat a little powdered milk we had left and then press on all through the night till we eventually reached the Chalet. By 8pm we were enveloped in a thick mist and visibility was restricted to 6 feet. We were then running over the Granite Peaks approaching the Rolling Grounds. At 8.30, as we climbed Consett Stephen Pass, the mist lifted and to our east we noticed a glow in one of the valleys. I was leading at the time and was first to see this light. Not wishing to build up false hopes in case it turned out to be just a trick of the moon on low clouds, I kept silent. About ten minutes later Doug spied it and let out a shout. Fortunately our luck was in, and a half-mile further on we were able to pat one another's backs. We had come upon the Norwegian Camp at Guthega. Considering we were then fairly exhausted we decided, rather than push on the extra miles just for the glory of saying, 'we made it' and then probably spend the next week in hospital, to pocket our pride and ski down the two and a half miles to the camp.

None of us will ever forget the wonderful reception we received on our arrival. The first person we met as we staggered on to the road was one of the four Australians in the camp. Unfortunately, I have forgotten his name; all I know is he used to work at the Old Hotel. We all piled into his truck and, after receiving permission, we were driven to the residential area. Here we met the medical officer, whose name I think was Kevin Graham. Kevin went out of his way to see we received food and accommodation for the night. There was so many other kindhearted people that I would like to mention all their names, but unfortunately I have already made this story too long.

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Paul Reader

Interviewee.....PAUL READER.....Date.....1.9.15.....

Interviewer.....JERRY KAEJAK.....Date.....7/09/2015.....

Jerry Kaejak