

# PERISHER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 17 Summer 2016/17

## Notes from the President

Winter 2016 appears to be one for the history books. Good skiing but interesting cycles – snow, rain, snow, flood, snow, etc and snow still falling long after season close. When I asked Ian Curlewis how long snow can persist in the Snowies, he recalled the last week of November 1956, when he and others were choosing a site for the Crackenback Lodge in Thredbo. The party camped at Thredbo, climbed up from Dead Horse Gap, and were able to ski across the top and then down Ramshead. Skiers generally seem to have a fascination with weather especially when it relates to snow. As we are constantly reminded, mountain weather can change dramatically in just a few hours and we know snow can fall on any day of the year. I understand some meteorologists are forming an opinion that there has been a two to three week phase shift in the seasons.

Congratulations to our friends at the Thredbo Historical Society who are celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. Celebrations are planned, including the launch of a coffee table book with illustrations of Thredbo and surrounds.

### Perisher Cup – 64<sup>th</sup> running

Over recent times the Cup has been sustained by the efforts of Cooma and Guthega clubs. A few years ago Perisher

Historical Society (PHS) offered to assist with publicity. It is therefore delightful to report that a vibrant Perisher Cup Organising Committee (PCOC) of six has evolved to take on the responsibility of ensuring that this much-loved event continues.

Michael Bunce and daughter Breana of Technology stepped forward, soon followed by Kim Easdale of Southern Alps Ski Club (SASC). Michael enticed his friend Terry Strong to add his computing skills and thus significantly enhance the automation of the ridiculously complex results calculations.

Race Rules were formalised and published and events defined. SASC donated a new trophy, The Perisher Goblet, for the winning junior team. Breana applied her publicity skills, information flowed and increased entries resulted. The reintroduction of Team Managers assisted in the appreciation of the behind the scenes administration. The more highly automated results calculation meant that, for possibly the first time in the history of the event, no lives were lost in their computation and the results were completed one whole hour before the advertised time.

Sincere thanks to all – competitors, clubs, SASC, SLOPES, the Organising Committee and Perisher



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(especially Barney Davis). It is important to appreciate the critical role Perisher plays, not only for event coordination and preparation of the courses in three disciplines, but particularly for enabling the event to be conducted under their insurance umbrella. Without this, fees would render the event far beyond attractive.

If your club has not entered a team for a while, I suggest that participation in the Perisher Cup can be a magic ingredient for a fun way to bond members. For many, it has been the bridge to competition and cross-discipline experience. As well, it is a proof statement for a club's obligation to promote and encourage sport.

### **Australian Alpine Snowsports History Association (AASHA)**

The next gathering of the collaborative group of historical societies known as Australian Alpine Snowsports History Association (AASHA) is set for Mt Hotham and Dinner Plain next April (28-30 April 2017).

Planning is well advanced with the annual meeting and dinner on Saturday 29 April 2017 together activities and functions on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. A range of attractive accommodation options will be provided.

Papers or presentations are invited on subjects involving skiing and alpine historical interest or the conservation of same.

The formation of AASHA as a collaborative group of like-minded organisations and people associated with skiing, snow and the Australian Alpine area has proved to be very successful and

mutually beneficial. It is much more than a gathering each year, it is the friendship, mutual support and shared enthusiasm which is generated by gathering the like-minded.

Already PHS has ten committed to attend the Hotham meeting including Pam and me and more to come. Make plans now to be there and meet others who love our alpine heritage. The date fortuitously coincides with the spectacular Bright Autumn Festival.

The history of Hotham is rooted in adventure, exploration, mining, and the spirit of 'forging on' in extreme circumstances. This is a great opportunity to view the spectacular scenery of the Australian Alps denied to us in Perisher by being on the eastern side of the range. The Dinner Plain resort is a bonus with its very special charm. The meeting is open to all and I encourage you to join us.

PHS is tasked with hosting the AASHA gathering in April 2018. Planning is under way: your thoughts and ideas are sought.

### **PHS June Dinner is now 'LUNCH @ Marritz'**

Thanks to a member's suggestion, the 2017 June Long Weekend event will be a PHS Luncheon. It is felt this may be more convenient for those travelling from Jindabyne and also allows guests to attend the Peak Music Festival evening performance. Lunch will be two courses; this will contain the ticket price. Again, we will return to Marritz Hotel, where the space is perfect for our needs, and we'll be able to enjoy the afternoon scenery. Please put Sunday 11

June 2017 in your diaries now.

We are delighted to announce that Peter McGuinn and Carel Laing (nee McGuinn) have accepted our invitation to speak about their father Stan McGuinn. Peter and Carel are the adult children of Stan, who was the very popular manager of the Kosciusko Chalet, Charlotte Pass, from 1954-62. Ken Murray was then fortunate to gain his services to run his Perisher operation from 1963 to 1972.

### **The PHS Newsletter Working Group**

This dynamic group continues to go from strength to strength and contributions are stacking up, with some really fascinating material planned for future issues.

### **Passing**

PHS used its network to advise members and others of the deaths of two people who made special contributions to skiing – Carl Melvey and Bert Gardner. A wonderful insight into the contribution Carl made to the Australian Cross Country community was provided by Gus Hearl's piece included in the Winter 2016 edition of the newsletter. A summary of Bert's extraordinary life and activities is included in this newsletter. For my part I was the grateful recipient of Bert's diligence as Treasurer of the NSW Ski Association. Too often unsung, a treasurer can make any president look good – thanks Bert.

As always, PHS is delighted to have your contributions, suggestions and your closer involvement, just call for a chat at anytime 0488 159 888 or email.

*Phillip Woodman*

## Dates for your Diary

### AGM

Saturday, 11 February 2017  
Conference Room NPWS  
Jindabyne 2.00 pm

### Australian Alpine Snowsports History Association (AASHA)

28-30 April 2017  
Hosted by Mount Hotham  
Resort  
(new website aasha.org.au)

### Pre-Season Drinks

With Larry & Nan Adler  
Sunday 14 May 2017  
1024 Pittwater Road,  
Collaroy Beach, Sydney  
6.00 pm to 9.00 pm

### PHS Annual Luncheon

(previously Dinner)  
Sunday 11 June 2017  
12 noon for 12.30 pm  
Marritz Hotel, Perisher Valley  
Guest speakers: Peter  
McGuinn and Carel  
Laing whose father Stan  
McGuinn was manager of  
the Kosciusko Chalet, and  
manager at K G Murrays'  
Perisher resort.

### Hello in the Snow

Apres Ski Drinks  
from 4.00 pm  
Tuesday 8 August 2017  
Marritz Hotel, Perisher Valley

### Perisher Cup 2017

Saturday, 16 September

## Hello in the Snow- August 2016

Once again, a large happy group gathered in the Marritz bar on Tuesday 9 August for our annual get-together in Cross-country Ski Week, co-hosted by PHS and Perisher-XC. Nearly 60 members, friends and cross-country skiers were there to swap stories over a drink and delicious canapés and to help Christian Keller celebrate his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday. The lovely sunny afternoon gave no hint of the fierce weather that buffeted runners in the KAC Cross-country Classic the following day. For many, this was our last encounter with Carl Melvey, who was in fine form that afternoon, holding court at the bar. Our thanks to Manager, Simone, and her staff, for another most enjoyable Marritz occasion.



Top Left: Stuart Macdermid (Valhalla), Top Right: Christian Keller with Liz Hay (Oldina). Above: Perisher Stalwarts - John Sim (Telemark), Wayne Pethybridge (RAN), Peter Ward (KAC), Andrew Horsley (KAC)

### Mystery Deposits

We can't identify these two kind people.  
Thanks for your support but is this you?  
16 Feb 2016 - Family Membership \$55.00  
12 July 2016 - Paul Garske - Book \$65

### New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following:  
Wildspitze Ski Club      Yalara Alpine Ski Lodge

# Neville Clifford Gare (1929 - 2016)

## The right man for the time

by Dave Woods

Neville Gare, the first Superintendent of Kosciusko State Park (KSP), died on 7 May 2016. Neville or 'Nev' was pivotal in many of the decisions that affected the park and the ski resorts following his appointment as Superintendent in 1959. When he left the park in 1971 (by then Kosciusko National Park (KNP)), he had established a significant legacy for the next generation of park managers to build on.

I first met Nev in the mid-1980s while residing in the Thredbo Ranger Station (the former Alpine Way terminal of the Chalet Chairlift). I was a young NPWS work-experience-student-become-employee, consuming as much information about the park, its history and ecology, as possible. Although Nev was coming to the end of his working career, he was obviously passionate about all things Kosciuszko...and he was good for a fire-side chat; in turn, I was good for a fire-side education! These chats continued well into his retirement and he continued to drop into NPWS offices when visiting the Snowy Mountains.

Nev commenced his professional working life as a forester, having been awarded a cadetship with Sydney University and completing his study with a forestry diploma at the Australian National University. As a forester Nev supported environmental conservation. This was unusual in the 1950s in a forestry culture of managing tall trees for timber. I remember Nev telling me that this put him at odds with his

supervisors in the six years he was a forester, but some of the skills and experiences as a forester, and working on his parents' farm, stood him in good stead for his subsequent position as a park manager.

Together with his conservation philosophy, these attributes were attractive to Park Trust member, Baldur Byles, a former district forester who pushed for environmental imperatives for the park. Obviously Baldur saw in Nev the abilities needed to manage the park, including some of the big issues facing the Trust toward the end of the 1950s. These included enforcing the ban on grazing, working with the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority (SMHEA) juggernaut and managing the development of the ski resorts.

One of Nev's first jobs was to enforce the grazing ban. Nev said that this caused a strain in the relationship with the locals as it contested their heritage rights to graze the high country. But grazing had already been exposed as the major agent of soil erosion and catchment deterioration for more than 60 years. It was now up to Neville and his team of four to do the hard work of impounding illegal stock. Impounded stock were originally taken to Cooma before yards were built at Waste Point. In many cases the owners of stock denied they were grazing illegally but rather that "their cattle had wandered into the park!"



While Nev said that his hard stance gained respect from the locals, even if they didn't agree with the ban, he paid for it personally when he played rugby league against those graziers, or their relatives, whose stock he had impounded. Nev said he could fend for himself and the fact that he played football with the locals gained him respect. Nevertheless, one of his personal regrets as the first professional park manager in KSP was the burden that this placed on his family. His eldest son 'Johnno' had to endure bullying and taunting by the local kids. He came in for special attention because "his dad was stopping the Men from Snowy River".

There was tension between the SMHEA and the Park Trust before Nev commenced duties. To address some of the differences, Nev started to build a relationship with the SMHEA's Commissioner, Bill Hudson. He was never under any illusion that the SMHEA were going to change their methods overnight, but he did expect improved communications and a respect for the wider values of the park. Nev always

attempted to influence what could be changed, or at least provide a conscience and representation on issues not necessarily of concern to the SMHEA. Often Nev was consulted about environmental issues when problems occurred, but frustratingly he was seldom included at the pre-planning stage which would have prevented or lessened the impacts.

Nev told me he was always looking at the long term interests of the park and he was managing toward the day when construction would cease and the SMHEA would settle down and just operate the scheme. According to Nev it wasn't about obstructing the SMHEA's objectives but rather how they went about it. He was constantly patching things up as best he could and constantly challenging the SMHEA's philosophy of "you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs".

One of Nev's first major tasks as Superintendent was to prepare a Master Plan for KSP. This was his chance to identify and protect significant conservation areas and at the same time consolidate areas for resort development. His 'Proposed Plan for the Preservation and Development of the Kosciusko State Park' included the concept of zoning to manage conflicting interests, thought to be the first land management zoning to take place in Australia. Pivotal in Nev's plan was the recognition of the alpine area as a Primitive Area. This was challenged by SMHEA's Commissioner Hudson because it would preclude the damming of Spencer's

Creek and the construction of an aqueduct on the western fall of the Main Range. Even Prime Minister Robert Menzies declared in Parliament in 1963 that the works should proceed, but Nev stood firm, was backed by the Park Trust and the new Minister for Lands and Conservation, Tom Lewis, and the plan was accepted in 1965.

SMHEA finally abandoned the proposal when Sir William Hudson retired in 1967. As Nev said, "the Primitive Area issue was a watershed in relations between SMHEA and the KSPT". It meant that science, mountain conservation and aesthetic values could not easily be dismissed without proper consideration.

While Nev was always looking for ways to reduce the SMHEA's environmental impacts, he wasn't shy to adopt some of their better ideas. Nev said he admired their publicity machine and how they promoted the scheme and the Snowy Mountains. From the outset he took a lesson from SMHEA's public relations and introduced regular press releases on the park, as well as the construction of a new information centre, entrance signs, information booklets, ranger uniforms and guided bus trips.

At the time of Nev's appointment in 1959, Thredbo's syndicate and Head-lease arrangement meant that the plan for Thredbo was set (or at least had direction). Perisher on the other hand was not. The KSPT had no real planning skills for resort development although the KSP Act was amended in 1952 to allow the KSPT to grant leases

for lodges. According to Nev the KSPT's work supervisor allocated sites without regard to proper access and services. There was a 'scatter-gun' approach without consideration for how the resort would grow and link together. Nev said that if he had had planning control from the start he would have nestled a village precinct on the spur behind the Man from Snowy River Hotel.

But by 1959 the playing field was different. Lodge applications and commercial interest were growing quickly. Nev needed to base his planning principles on satisfactory sewage disposal, optimum usage of available water supplies and access. He also recognised the passion of burgeoning lodge membership and the commercial interest of others, particularly the publishing giant Ken Murray, Sverre Kaaten of Perisher Valley Enterprises and James Wallace Holdings in Smiggin Holes. He needed to work with, not against, the demand for resort development while maintaining control.

In consultation with some stakeholders, he devised a staged development based on the existing buildings and infrastructure. Eleven stages and sub-stages were identified in 10 discrete areas. He used rough 'visual isolation' of boulders and tree stands to separate leases and lodges but linked them along a common access road. The wider Perisher area was also considered in terms of parking (below and above the snowline), current and future bed numbers, the number of commercial hotels, ski lifts and ski-lifting capacity, power, transport, storage and

emergency services. It was a total consideration in terms of a perceived carrying capacity, visitor enjoyment, manageability and environmental amenity. Nev also created planning statements for Smiggin Holes and Guthega and monitored the progress of Thredbo's commitment to meet its Head-lease conditions.

He also spent much time building up Sawpit Creek to be the new 'gate-way' of the Kosciusko Road, creating a below snow-line carpark, service station and transfer station for buses. It was also a convenient location for the new park headquarters which needed to be relocated from Waste Point/Creel Bay area in anticipation of the flooding of the Snowy River Valley in 1967.

And there were other resort proposals for Nev to consider, and some that he actively pursued. In 1968, Nev commissioned Tony Sponar to look at the feasibility of developing the Guthega-Blue Cow area, to keep further development centred around the Perisher Range and away from the Main Range. Although the proposal was not immediately adopted by NPWS, Nev was very 'satisfied' when it was later chosen as the preferred site for further development. If one looks at the maps, drawings and photographs in Tony Sponar's report, there's an amazing similarity to many of the runs and lift lines in place today!

In contrast, Nev challenged the proposal by Kosciusko Chalet Ltd in the early 1960s to build a chairlift from the relatively snow-free Thredbo Valley across the top of the Crackenback Range and down into Charlotte

Pass. He felt the chairlift would be exposed to the prevailing westerly cross-winds and accumulating snowdrifts in this area. However, construction went ahead and Nev's prophetic concerns were borne out in the first year of its operation in 1964 – accentuated by one of the biggest snow seasons on record. By the end of 1965 the company folded and went into receivership.

Following his 12 years of managing the Park in its most formative years, Nev went on to be Executive Director for the Papua New Guinea Parks Board, Deputy Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, and Director of the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. Between 1986 and 1988 he was the Commonwealth's representative on the Australian Alps Liaison Committee which professionally reconnected him to KNP ... a most appropriate way for Nev to again influence the management of his beloved mountains.

Since Nev's passing, reminiscences have been circulating amongst his former work colleagues, members of the KHA, early resort patrons and his friends. I think the most apt was by Klaus Hueneke who said, "If Ted Winter was a human hardwood splinter [borrowed from Paddy Pallin], then Nev was the tree trunk it came from!"

Indeed, Nev Gare was the right man for the time and he has left a remarkable legacy within and beyond Kosciuszko National Park. For that, we are grateful.

## Huts and Men

by Neville Gare

Bill and I took the strain on the trace ropes. Our boots crackled as they broke through the thin snowy crust into the snowgrass tussocks as we topped the slope into the Brassy Gap. A mile or so ahead of us, and mostly downhill, was Kidman's Hut.

It was late April 1965, and the Exclusive Squirrel Club was making a rations trip into Mawson's Hut to stock up before winter. All sorts of goodies were stacked on the sled with the wooden runners that Bill Kenyon had lovingly fashioned, and to which he and I were hitched like faithful Clydesdales. We had left the Landrover back towards Harvey's Hut, and by now the exertion of carrying the sled and the stores till we reached the first snow, and then pulling the lot over the thin fresh crust had given us a healthy glow and caused our breath to come in steamy puffs.

Most of the Squirrels were long-time members of the Kosciusko Alpine Club, whose mountain headquarters is a lodge near the Kosciusko Chalet at Charlotte Pass. Bill Kenyon was an engineer, Gus Fay a Sydney hotelier, Tony Furse a pharmacist, Maurice Joseph a physician, and Gary Parker a barrister. Tom Blyton was an ex-mountain stockman from Berridale, and Fred Porter made up the group. We guided the sled down the narrow track through the bossiaea scrub among the snow gums and black sallees to Kidman's Hut. Its load was heavy and the going in the gully dropping from the Brassy Gap

was not easy.

At Kidman's we stopped to boil the billy and take a rest from our labours. Kidman's Hut was small, of galvanized iron, and notorious for its smokey fireplace. I camped there once, but was glad this time that our overnight stop was to be elsewhere.

We doused the fire, and renewed the slow trek on to Alpine Hut. The snow was still very patchy and we spent as much time carrying Bill's new sled as we did skidding it across the thin early snowdrifts.

It was late afternoon by the time we reached Alpine Hut.

Alpine had a big deep fireplace, with a wide mantelpiece carrying empty rum bottles and half-used candles and boxes of matches. Built in 1939 as a ski touring base, it had separate dormitories with double bunks, a shower recess, food cupboards, a ski room/workshop and plenty of food storage. It even boasted running water, and had proper kitchen furniture and utensils.

We got a fire going and brought in some more wood from the wooded slopes of the Brassys. The unwritten law of the bush said you always replaced the wood you used. Our meal that night was simple, but chased down with a bottle or two of claret brought by Gus. Simple as it was, it garnered richness from the atmosphere of crackling fire, flickering kerosene lanterns, and good mountain company. By the time we turned in to our sleeping bags on the rough creaky beds we were warm and mellow in both body and spirit. We slept well.

There is nothing quite the same as the clatter of boots on bare boards early on a cold autumn



*Drawing of Mawson Hut by Neville Gare*

morning. It is a very effective alarm clock, though one is inclined to linger in the sleeping bag until the clatter has the fire started and the billy on.

It was bracing and chilly as we set off for Mawson's. Within a hundred yards or so we were at the steep slope of the Brassys. The track wound upwards through thick snowgum regeneration from the great fires of 1939. It was tough going, made tougher by the early season drifts of snow dumped below the lip of the range by the cold winds from the west. All hands were needed as we lugged the Bill Kenyon lifesaver up bit by bit.

Now the snow was thicker and though we frequently broke through the surface we made good progress once we topped the Brassy Mountains. On the slopes of the Cup and Saucer – small rocky “bogongs” sitting up on the ridge top – we took a spell and had lunch. The world of the Main Range was ours.

In front of us the shallow head of the Valentine river valley sloped gently past the northern end of the Kerries towards the Grey Mare Range and the Dargals in the distance.

Mawson's is not an easy hut to find. It nestles among a group of snowgums towards the head

of the Valentine, and people have been known to miss it and ski past, especially when the mountain mist blends with the snow to introduce “whiteout” conditions. But once you find it, it is firm and solid and eminently practical, and in the early morning a few steps from its door bring a magnificent view of the Big Bogong, pink with the rays of the rising sun.

We made camp at Mawson's about 6 pm. There was wood in the side porch and Tom lit the fire while the rest of us unloaded the sled into the hut, and stored the sled itself in the long porch. It was not far to the creek and soon the billy was boiling and the stew bubbling away. While our evening meal cooked we worked. A window was repaired and the hut swept out and tidied. The hand-carved “Exclusive Squirrel Club” sign was erected on the mantelpiece, and the rations for winter carefully stored in ratproof tins or thick plastic bags hung from the ceiling in the porch. The tool-chest was checked – its contents might be needed to repair broken skis as well as carry out hut maintenance.

We dined in splendor, seated on the stools made the previous year by Bill Kenyon. Gus' claret supply seemed inexhaustible and another couple of bottles were opened to further warm us. We talked of mountains and huts and men and how they might co-exist in the future as they had in the past. Engineer, hotelier, pharmacist, barrister, physician, grazier and park superintendent were joined in the common bond of those who love and revere mountains and wild country. Bill McKell would have smiled with satisfaction.

# Rex Cox

by Peter Southwell-Keely

Rex Cox, who celebrated his 98th birthday on 23 August this year, is one of the unsung heroes of skiing in NSW. Rex was born in Parkes on 23 August 1918, the eldest son of Milton and Lorenz Cox. Though forbidden to swim as a young child, Rex could not keep away from Brick Hill Dam and, unknown to his parents, taught himself to swim. Aged eight, he revealed this skill to his shocked, though secretly pleased, parents.

The family moved to Kogarah in Sydney when Rex was 11 and his life became full of sport. He participated in gymnastics, cricket, tennis, boxing, wrestling, rugby league and jujitsu.

In 1933 Milton died and Rex had to leave school to support his family. Prior to World War II he held storeman's jobs with Marquis Holdings and later with Producers Co-operative Distributing Society (PDS).

When war broke out Rex was called up and completed anti-aircraft searchlight training at Skyville and Richmond before being sent to Windang at Wollongong to help protect the steelworks. His regiment then spent two years in New Guinea during which time Rex went broke due to gambling. Rex was able to pay back his debts by doing laundry for his mates during the 'last guard' from 4 am to 6 am.

After the war Rex went back to work with PDS for a short time and then left to work with Kennards. This job came with a company car. Then, in his early thirties, he began work on his

own account as a manufacturer's agent, a job which took him all over southern and western NSW.

In 1949 Rex discovered skiing at Dainer's Gap and Smiggin Holes. He obtained his first and only ski lessons from Graham Chalker at the Hotel Kosciusko before it burnt down in 1951. For Rex, skiing was love at first sight and he went back as soon and as often as he could, his favourite destination being Charlotte Pass. In these early days he favoured downhill skiing over touring.

In 1954, at Peter Webeck's suggestion, Rex joined Southern Alps Ski Club (SASC) and has been an integral member of the club since. He was club captain on multiple occasions from the 1950s to the 1970s and twice during the 1970s and 1980s held the office of president. In 1957 Rex met Joan Gardner, starting a romance and friendship which continues to this day.

In 1965 SASC decided to build its own club premises at Charlotte Pass and formed a lodge co-operative to fund it. Rex was one of the founders of the co-operative and put in the first £75 (more than \$1000 today) towards the lodge. He retired from active Board membership only in 1998.

From the first, Rex was keen on racing and, on a business trip to Japan in 1958, purchased a new pair of skis that he hoped would help win him the club championship. He was runner-up seven times before winning the club championship, a tribute to his determination.



Because of his own interest, Rex was keen to promote SASC's involvement in racing. In 1965, to celebrate the completion of SASC's lodge at Charlotte Pass, the first interclub competition between Kosciusko Alpine Club (KAC) and SASC took place at the October long weekend. This competition continued for 30 years until patchy snow at the long weekend forced its abandonment.

The success of the early interclub events led Rex (captain SASC) and Geoff Knott (captain KAC, but also a member of SASC) to propose the Charlotte Pass Race Carnival which began in 1970. The carnival ran for a whole week and was open to anyone in the valley and allowed the various clubs to conduct their own events within it. It took place every year until 2004.

Aside from Rex's interest in racing generally he had a specific and continuing interest in junior racing which he promoted enthusiastically in SASC until he could no longer go to the snow. Whenever and wherever there was a junior race Rex was on hand to officiate. This has



resulted in SASC becoming one of the strong racing clubs in Australia.

Initially a downhill skier, Rex developed a keen interest in cross-country and touring skiing and organised many day trips for SASC members to the summits of Mt Kosciuszko, Mt Caruthers, Blue Lake and other places. He also led small group treks of several days duration. Due to his expertise, Rex was asked by the Army to take soldiers out onto the Main Range to improve their skiing and survival skills. This he did for a number of years during the nineties.

Through his touring experience Rex came to know and love the many huts (shepherds and other) that are dotted along the Main Range. This interest led him to

become one of the founders of the Kosciuszko Huts Association whose aim is the preservation of these huts.

For many years Rex was an SASC delegate to the NSW Ski Association. Having benefited from it himself, he had a particular interest in restoring the snow train from Sydney to Cooma in order to provide access to the snow for the less privileged. He campaigned for it for a long time, unfortunately without success.

In 1996 the Paddy Pallin Company inaugurated the Rex Cox Cross-country Classic, a 12 kilometre race to be run concurrently with the Paddy Pallin Classic. Rex, who was nearly 78 in the first year of 'his' event, entered the longer Paddy

Pallin race preferring to leave the Rex Cox "for my old age". Charlotte Pass Snow Resort has also recognised his contribution to skiing with 'Rex's Ridge Run'.

When Rex learnt that Paddy Pallin was leading a trip to Mt Everest he wanted to go too but, finding the party full, added his name to the wait list. In the event there was a withdrawal and Rex made the first of his 14 trips to Nepal. On many of these trips Rex was trip leader for Ausventure.

Rex's contribution to all aspects of SASC and, in particular its junior programme, has been immense. He has been a major contributor to the administration of skiing in NSW.



# Joan Gardner

by Peter Southwell-Keely

No mention of Rex Cox can be made without also including his lifelong companion and best friend, Joan Gardner. They have done so much together that they are like two sides of the same coin, each one perfectly complementing the other.

Joan was born in Hobart, Tasmania in 1930 but came to Cronulla aged four and has lived in the area ever since. Joan attended Cronulla Public School and then did her Leaving Certificate at St George Girls High School before undertaking nursing at the Children's Hospital, Camperdown. Joan insisted that she was not particularly sporty when growing up but did enjoy horse riding and swimming.

Joan began skiing at Charlotte Pass in 1950. In 1952 she and a friend went overseas for two years. Joan worked for Roneo Ltd in London and then she and a friend went hitchhiking throughout the United Kingdom and Europe before returning home.

Joan worked at the Children's Hospital for a while and then did midwifery at the Royal Hospital for Women before moving to Sutherland Hospital where she remained for 30 years of a most enjoyable career.

In 1955 Joan returned to skiing at Charlotte Pass where she joined Southern Alps Ski Club (SASC) and met Rex Cox. They have been together ever since.

At her first SASC meeting Joan was made club secretary, a role

she continued for eight years, before becoming club president, the first and only female to have held that post in the club's history. She then became a founding director and long-term secretary of the lodge co-operative which was established in 1965 to build the club lodge at Charlotte Pass. Joan was president when the lodge was built. She is the only director of the lodge co-operative to have served the entire 50 years of its existence.

Through her involvement in racing Joan became the SASC delegate to the Charlotte Pass Ski Association (CPSA) which organised all the racing, insurance and trophies to do with the Charlotte Pass Race Carnival. In 1997, CPSA recognized her long commitment to the organisation with a special award. She is still involved with the Charlotte Pass Lodges Association, which provides a point of contact between the clubs and the head lessee, Charlotte Pass Resort P/L.

Joan has been just as committed to junior racing in SASC as Rex Cox and they have officiated together at junior races over a long period. For many years Rex and Joan were involved in the SASC junior bus trip to the snow, with Joan as the Den mother for all the children and Rex sometimes acting as bus driver. Joan still attends every Junior Committee meeting. She has also arranged sponsorship of junior racing at Charlotte Pass, in



particular the Paddy Pallin Junior Shield. Aside from actually officiating she purchased all the trophies for the junior races.

In recognition of her singular achievements, Rod and Chris Edwards presented her with the Joan Gardner Clock bearing the inscription "The lady who has time for everybody". The clock now takes pride of place in the Charlotte Pass lodge.

SASC is extremely fortunate to have two such generous and giving people as Joan and Rex so fully committed to its cause.

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*In the preparation of these two articles PHS has relied on information provided by Rex and Joan, Rod Peile and the history of SASC by Chas Keys 'All Welcome: The Southern Alps Ski Club Story'.*

# The Secret Wax

by D. & J.

With illustrations by "Wep".

Reprinted from the Australian & New Zealand Ski Year Book - 1935

"Did I ever tell you," said the oldest member (we filled his glass), "about Jorgensen 's famous recipe for wax."

People murmured, "No." The oldest member didn't wait for that.

"Well," he said, "Jorgensen had been getting around Kosciusko for some years and getting around pretty fast. It was all supposed to be the result of his secret wax. He used to make it quietly, in the dead of the night, and he wouldn't tell anyone or give anyone a piece. Most people just let it pass and occasionally envied him from a distance. But it worried two of the other regulars, Sam Knight and Marti Jensen, quite a lot, particularly when the big Langlauf was approaching and they couldn't get any kind of wax to run decently. They used to go off on mountaintops and scratch their heads and worry. Marti was a Finn, so he didn't say much. He just sat there, with his long, kind, melancholy face, and worried, partly about Finland and partly about the wax. Sam used to scamp up and down and think aloud and take the feather out of his hat to scratch his head. But they got no further.

As far as they could see this wax would climb straight up a precipice and then automatically clean itself of snow at the top and run like mad down any sort of hill, on any sort of snow. If you put it on properly, it would squeak on the snow when it was

lunchtime. And on any level ....."

"Did you say on the level? Asked someone.

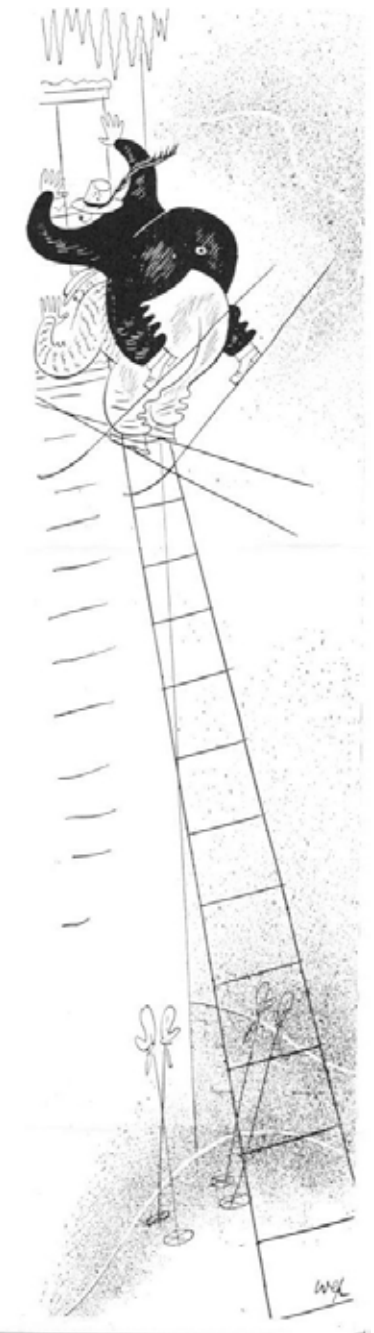
"Some day we'll have compulsory education here," said the oldest member, wearily. "On the level it would simply glide along, twenty yards for every shove with the sticks. And Sam and Marti couldn't find what caused it all. Jorgensen used to come home and tell them how he'd run three times to Jagungal and back that afternoon. Meanwhile the race got nearer.

They could tell some of the elements of this wax. They knew it was one-fifth Stockholm tar, one-fifth beeswax and three-fifths stink. It was the stink part that beat them. One day Jorgensen caught Sam sniffing, fascinated, at the soles of a pair of ski he'd left outside the Chalet and there was an awful rumpus. After that Jorgensen used to take his ski to bed with him. A very cautious fellow, he was.

However, one day Sam and Marti were cruising about the nursery slopes near the Chalet, worrying about the wax, when, suddenly, a particularly virile waft of this famous stink came floating up past the bottle-heap at the back door. They looked at each other for a moment. Then Sam said "He's making some of it!" and they both went, flat out, down to the Chalet.

Sure enough, they traced the smell to an upper room and could hear the roar of a primus

stove, where Jorgensen was at work. The problem was to get a look at the operation. The door was locked. Marti took off that cloth cap of his and began to cry. But Sam had an idea; he rushed off and got a ladder and they both climbed quietly up to the window.



Jorgensen was hard at work in the room, when he saw a shadow fall across the floor, a shadow of a hat with a long feather in it. Jorgensen was no goat. He knew what was happening. He got the recipe himself originally in much the same way. He did some rapid thinking. By that time he had got the beeswax and tar boiling merrily, though he hadn't yet added the stink. So he cast around rapidly for a few things to put them off the trail. First of all he went to the medicine cupboard and added a couple of aspirins, half a pint of iodine and some picric acid to the mixture. Four anxious eyes watched him closely, or, rather, three and a half, for Marti was slipping on the ladder and Sam had climbed on his back.



Jorgensen let his imagination go with the medicine cupboard. He was particularly proud of his idea of adding some cod liver oil and a pair of surgical scissors. That created intense excitement outside the window. A pinch of sawdust, a tablespoonful of salt and pepper, some cheap brandy, three olives, a fish's head and some honey followed in rapid succession. All were duly noted on the ladder. The dregs of two cocktail glasses, a slab of chocolate and some orange peel went in but, by this time, Marti had slipped below the window and Sam was repeating the

ingredients to him from a rung or so above.

"He's putting in some glue."

"Ah! Glue."

"He's got a canvas glove ready to drop in."

"Well?"

"It's my glove!"

"How much of it did he use?"

"He's putting in some aquavit."

"Holy Holmenkollen! My last bottle!"

"He's putting in some more acid."

That's the secret!"

"He's got the Chalet cat. He's wrung its neck. He's put it in!"

"Ay tank Ay feel lake Ay was sick."

Marti put a foot through a rung and they both fell to the ground. By the time they got to the top again Jorgensen had gone and the mixture was congealing. The feet of the cat stuck up through the dark mess.

The next thing was to make the wax themselves. This proved extremely difficult, as Jorgensen had almost cornered several of the rarer ingredients. However, they managed it all, even the cat. Marti got badly scratched. Pale and shaken, but happy, they proceeded to apply the mixture to a ski. Full of excitement, Sam tried to rub it in. His hand stuck to the ski. He tried to get it off. No use. There was a frightful hullabaloo, while Sam ramped round the room, yelling at Marti to pull the ski off his hand. Marti tugged like mad but nothing happened, except that Sam lost some skin. Finally they got it off by putting the ski in the new vice and getting the hand off with a

chisel."

"What!" said the youngest member, waking up hopefully in his seat near the fire, "a new vice?"

He was kicked to death quietly. "After that," went, on the oldest member, "Sam rubbed his hand on the seat of his trousers, leaving some of the wax there. There was a fizz and it ate most of the cloth away. After that they were more careful, but they succeeded in waxing their skis very thoroughly for the race. Meanwhile Jorgensen had made the proper mixture and he arrived at the start, bursting with laughter and feeling rather pleased."

The oldest member took a drink.

"You know," he said, "Jorgensen's wax was dead slow on the day. It balled all the way and he was almost last."

"But Marti and Sam?" we screamed.

"Sam? Oh, Sam won easily, running perfectly, both uphill and downhill."

There was a moment of respectful silence. Then someone asked, "What about Marti?"

"Well it was funny about Marti," said the oldest member, rising and knocking out his pipe. "He was going just as well as Sam, flying down the schusses and going beautifully uphill, till met the dog-team coming up from the Hotel with the mall. They sniffed at his ski, gave one concerted howl, broke the traces and went after him. You know, Marti swears his skis ran him up a tree and then spat at the dogs. I think I'll turn in now."

# Bert Gardner (1925 - 2016)

## A determined reformer

by Brian Mahoney

The saying goes: “If you want something done, ask a busy person”, and on a hot summer night in 1970, when skiers gathered in Sydney to elect a president of the volunteer Perisher Ski Patrol, it was apparent that Bert Gardner was a very busy man.

When the impressive list of Bert’s achievements was read out in support of his nomination, the other nominee for the presidency, Barrie Mitchell, who had launched the patrol in Perisher two years earlier, graciously withdrew.

After Bert outlined what needed to be done and how it could be achieved, everyone in the room knew they had the right leader. Bert was an organised person. As his son, Ross, pointed out at Bert’s funeral in September this year, Bert was renowned for his bullet point lists – an effective way of planning and prioritising. Those who worked with Bert would tell you the saying should be changed to: “If you want something done, ask an organised person.”

It was that clear-headed, planned approach, and the determination to get things done, that helped Bert play a pivotal role not only in improving the safety of skiing in Australia, but in advancing the progress of an astonishing array of skiing and non-skiing activities.

His full title gives an indication of that array of activities. He was Albert Richard Gardner AM, MBE, RFD, RD, RANR (Rtd), MIR. Within skiing he was

a Life Member of the NSW Ski Association, the Australian Ski Federation, Perisher Ski Patrol, and Orana Ski Club, of which he was President until two years ago.

### Home made skis and recycled bindings

Bert was a graduate electrical engineer with AWA during the War and moved to the NSW Railways where a colleague who was a member of Snow Revellers got him interested in skiing. His introduction to the Perisher snowfields was a summer visit in 1948 with the First Ramsgate Rover Scout group. He then convinced them to build Orana ski lodge, one of the first five in Perisher, which was completed in 1954.

Bert made his own skis, steaming them in a metal drainpipe and clamping the tips over the curve of his workbench. His bindings and metal edges



were salvaged from skis destroyed in the Hotel Kosciusko fire of 1951. Like others who made the trip from Sydney to the snow many times each season, Bert wrote off two cars on the dusty Canberra to Cooma dirt road. The electrical engineering firm he operated with his brother, Reg, won the Sundeck Hotel contract, serving to deepen their involvement with the snowfields.

As well as involving his entire family in skiing – wife, Maida,



*Bert (left) on an early trip to the snow*

and children, Jan, Ross, Ken and Jill – Bert engaged himself in all aspects of the sport.

### **Taking up the reform challenge**

Starting as Orana's delegate to the Perisher Ski Association and then being elected to the NSW Ski Council, Bert was instrumental in the historic move to form the NSW Ski Association in 1972.

On the Ski Council, Bert formed a close friendship with George Freuden, a founder of the Thredbo Ski Patrol and an equally determined reformer, and Kurt Lance, a ski clothing and equipment supplier and ski jumper who championed the building of the giant wooden ski jump at the entrance to Perisher Valley.

"George and Kurt were as equally driven as I was and we decided we had to improve the way the Australian Ski Federation operated. The NSW Ski Council, led by Dr Peter Blaxland, was beholden to Victoria for everything. The Guss family had a grip on the Victorian Ski Association, so nothing would happen at the national level unless the Gusses agreed," Bert confided a few years ago. It didn't help that Bert and George Freuden were also not great fans of Geoff Henke, another Victorian Ski Association leader.

Building the Perisher ski jump had financially weakened the NSW Ski Council. To overcome this and strengthen NSW representation at the national level, Bert convinced the Perisher Ski Association, which represented more skiers than any other NSW body, to enter

as a 'white knight.' He led a move that in effect merged the financially insecure Ski Council with the stronger Perisher Ski Association, forming a new body, the more broadly based NSW Ski Association (NSWSA).

The book *Highway to Heaven* records: "NSWSA was founded on 20 November 1973 with Bert Gardner as first President. It had committees for the Perisher, Smiggins, Thredbo and Charlotte Pass Zones, Finance, Skiing Development, Safety, the Alpine and Nordic disciplines, Social, Publications plus Olympic and Australian Ski Federation delegates."

Bert saw it as a sad irony that one of his first duties as president of the new body was to order the demolition of his friend Kurt's 'baby', the Perisher ski jump, which had deteriorated and would have required major rebuilding to meet safety standards.

After serving as president of the association he later became its Finance Director. In 1975 Bert



*Bert in Lech, Austria 1972*

was manager of the Australian Ski Team at the World Cup in Europe and became involved with the Australian Ski Federation (now known as Ski & Snowboard Australia) the peak Australian skiing body which guides Australia's international skiing competition involvement, its funding and management. He was its Secretary General for five years.

### **An organised approach to skier safety**

When his son, Ross, joined the Perisher Ski Patrol in 1970, Bert could see it was poorly organised and skiers deserved better. Training and testing of volunteers was done by the three professional ski patrollers, led by John Gerraghty, and it was apparent they didn't want a bar of the volunteers, whom they regarded as both disorganised amateurs and a possible threat to their existence.

"I realised the patrol needed a hierarchical structure with set responsibilities, but the most important thing to be done was to make sure everyone could do the job properly. That meant everyone had to earn their St Johns first aid certificate, which had only been given lip service until then."

Bert then went about finding a base for the patrol, as initially patrollers kept their equipment in the lift operators' huts at each lift. "Harold Droga (Valley Manager) was always trying to get the maximum for nothing, so I spent my time convincing him he had a problem and we could solve it because we had first aid to help injured skiers," Bert recalled.

Bert organised the volunteer

patrol's own first base of operations, a rented caravan parked on the snow at the foot of Centre Valley – perhaps too close to beginner skiers, as some crashed into the van, holing its side. After a couple of seasons, the patrol moved to the dank rooms under the All-denominational Church, which had flooded floors from snow melt, and then to the Valley garbage room, kept warm by nearby snowmobiles. In 1991 the NSW Premier, skier Nick Greiner, opened the present purpose-built headquarters, designed by Mark Cambourn, the patrol President who succeeded Bert.

By then the patrol had progressed to a well-organised group of trained volunteers using the latest equipment and techniques of on-snow first aid and rescue. Injured skiers can thank Bert, and others who have led the patrol since, for lifting standards of care to their present level.



*Pioneer NSW ski patrollers at the 1991 opening of Perisher Ski Patrol's headquarters. L to R: Tommy Tomasi (Thredbo patrol) Bert Gardner (Perisher), George Freuden (Thredbo), Mark Cambourn, Paul Korbel, Brian Mahoney, Barrie Mitchell, Ross Munn and TJ Clare (Perisher patrol).*

During the '70s the Gardner family decided the best business to be in was their hobby. So they began importing Schwendener skis from Switzerland. After great success with the first metal-edged, mohair base cross-country skis, they went on to importing Head skis.

Seeking safer ski bindings, at a time when the technical focus was on avoiding boot-binding friction in slow twisting falls, they brought in Gersch and Moog plate bindings. While these were a technical advance in terms of safety, they were cumbersome to use, so became a short-lived episode in ski safety development. Looking back, Bert believed the most important advance in skier safety during those years was the advent of the ski stopper. It eliminated the mis-named leather 'safety' straps that tethered the ski to the skier, causing more injuries than they prevented.

## And there's more...

Skiing was only one facet of Bert's amazingly diverse life.

He was involved in scouting from the age of 13 to the end of his life, with a succession of roles that led to him becoming Chief Commissioner of NSW and being made a Life Councillor of Scouts Australia NSW branch. He attended many jamborees and was Australian Leader to the World Jamboree in Canada in 1983. His services to Scouting earned him the Medal of Merit, Silver Acorn, Bar to the Silver Acorn and in 1981 Scouting Australia's highest award, the Silver Kangaroo.

He joined the Naval Reserve in 1950 and was the first officer appointed who was not an ex-service person. "Everyone looked at me as though I'd come down in the last shower; and I felt like it, too!" Bert recalled, but he remained in the Reserve for 35 years, serving on many ships. One he should have been on was HMAS Voyager when it sank after a collision with HMAS Melbourne in 1964, but a serious leg injury while out sailing with his brother had kept Bert shore-bound.

He retired from the Reserve after 35 years service and was awarded the Reserve Forces Decoration, the National Medal & Clasp and the Australian Defence Medal.

His involvement with football spanned five decades, from playing with St George District 1<sup>st</sup> Grade, to serving as President of St George Association and then becoming a referee at the age of 62. During the same time, he took on honorary roles with the Cronulla RSL Sub Branch,

including Metropolitan District Councillor, Secretary, President and Pensions Officer, earning him Life Member status.

Bert was appointed to the first Advisory Committee to the Kosciuszko National Park in 1978 and chaired it for eight years until 1989. He was appointed to the NSW Police Board for three years from 1993, and was Chairman of the Board of the Police & Community Youth Clubs 1994-98, being appointed Life Governor of the PCYC.

In 2000 he completed a Marine Operators Certificate and joined the Volunteer Coastal Patrol and NSW State Emergency Service. That year he was given the

honour of carrying the Olympic Torch for his services to the community.

Throughout his busy volunteer 'career', Bert managed the electrical contracting business of R&A Gardner with his brother, while the pair also started Endeavour Yachts. In 1970 when the yacht-building business had become a flourishing success, the two brothers specialised, with Bert heading the electrical business and his brother the yacht making firm.

In 2008 he became Bond University's oldest student to complete a Masters in International Relations, receiving the Dean's Award for his

contribution to the faculty of Humanities. In recent years he was a prime mover behind the elaborate musicals staged at the Woollooware Shores village where he lived until his death on 24 August 2016, aged 91.

Bert's life story is chock-a-block with activity and accomplishments, but for many NSW skiers he will always be remembered as a driving force in reforming skiing's sporting bodies and putting them on a more organised footing.

His was a life that demonstrated if you want something done, ask an organised person.



*Sled to Perisher hut. Bert on Mt Perisher 1956. At Perisher hut 1952.*



# SEASONS GREETINGS



On behalf of the PHS Committee we wish all our members and those involved in snow sports a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and safe travelling during the holiday period.