

CHARLIE BELL

This is an interview with Charlie Bell and his wife on the 1st December 1981. Interview by Klaus Hveneke.

TAPE 1, SIDE 1

KH: I'll keep this going as a background thing mainly. I can't write fast enough to get all the information down and particularly because Ted is here as well and you two have obviously got a lot in common and know a lot of places that I don't know about, so it best to just have this going and let you sort of carry on.

CB: I think Ted might have been stamping around up there about the same time as me, but he used to come in from different directions. He used to come in from Pretty Plain and I used to come in from Snowy Plain. There is a difference.

KH: Yes, two different sides of the mountain altogether.

CB: Yeah I've had a few hard grinds up through them hills there.

KH: So you went skiing to Alpine Hut then did you?

CB: Yes, actually the Tin hut was our destination and we used to spend all our time up the Tin hut there, probably a fortnight at a time or a month, during the August period when the snow was at its best.

KH: Who was with you on those trips, do you remember some of the names?

CB: Oh yeah, Don Mowatt, Lorrie Tucker, Jim Muir and Harry Mowatt

...

TW: Alan Martin ...

CB: The fellows that used to come to the Alpine Hut was Dr Isenberg and Don Richardson, Ken Breakspear, "Crashy" Currie and Aitchen Chin and Dick ...

TW: Keith Salter!

CB: Yeah all those fellows. They used to get me to go up there as a capacity guide you see. During the War I was working for General Motors and Dr Isenberg, he rang me up and he said 'Charlie I want you to come with us up to Alpine hut, there's seven or eight of us going up for a bit of a holiday and we want you to come up in a capacity as guide' - in other words, chief cook and bottlewasher. I said, 'how will I get away from the manpower'. He said, 'what are you doing out there'. I said, 'I'm lecturing in oxy-welding'. He said, 'Well you had better come in and let me have a look at you'. I went in and he said, 'Yes, you've been exposed to ultra-violet and infrared rays on the welding and that and you're eyes are in bad shape, I'll have to give you a fortnight off'. So I give them the doctor's certificate ... I was on a very important project and this particular project

CB:

I was on was machine gun plunges and I was the only one there that could weld them. Well there was other blokes there that could weld them but they were making a hell of a mess of them and it finished up they give the job to me. I had a kerosene - a 44 gallon drum full of these machine gun plunges - it cost 4/- to reduce before they come to me. They had to be machined, actually it was a stem about a ¼ of an inch, 1½ long and it was welded into a disc about the size of a 10 cent piece and about 1/8 inch thick. It had to be welded, you'd have to be dependable you see, because if you're shooting Japanese and your machine gun broke down, you're dead meat. Anyway they give me this job of ... I had one of those oil drums full of machine gun plunges already welded and all they had to do was to buffer them up and polish them and get them ready for the assembly line and I reckon that would have been enough to keep them going for a while. I thought if they use all them there would be no Japs left. Anyway I went with them and a good job I did because we left on the Friday night and on the Saturday we got to Constance ... what's his name ...

KH: Constance's hut.

TW: The one from Balmain or the one who was cooking in Alpine!

CB: I don't think he was cooking at the Alpine. I can't think of his name. Anyhow he had a four-wheel blitz buggy and he took us out to Snowy Plain, we got to Naphali's hut and it snowed like hell. About five o'clock, it was coming on dark too, I said, 'I think the best thing for us to do' - there was a few fellows in the team - there was new chums who had never been on it, there was Les Dunlop, Neville Ward and a few of them who had never done any skiing - I said, 'well, if you never go into these sort of places with a new chum and there's a blizzard on like that, you won't know what you're doing, it's not a place for new chum to be in there'. But anyhow we had a vote on it. Well we had stopped at Naphali's hut for the night, get an early start next morning. They all voted in favour of going on.

KH: So Naphali's Snowy Plains house was still quite substantial then? It must have been removed soon after that?

CB: It probably fell down, moved, or one thing and another, I don't think it's there now.

KH: It's a ruin now.

CB: Anyway we went on. We went up Diggers Creek and up over Little Brassy and when we got to the bosom of Little Brassy there was about a foot of snow there and I said, 'Now look' - up to this time we'd been carrying our skis on our shoulders - I said, 'We'll walk to the top of Little Brassy Gap and then we'll get on our skis, you won't achieve anything by trying

CB:

to ride them up there because you can't herringbone, we can't side step and we can't do nothing'. They didn't know much about the game. Anyway Ken Nicholls and I, we took off in the lead and broke a bit of a trail, got up to the Brassy Gap and I'm standing there, I was getting cold, pretty blowy ...

KH: It's always blowing there.

CB: It was blowing like hell - I opened my rucksack up and got a pull-over out of it and got rugged up a bit and Aitchen Chin come up and I said 'Where the hell have they all got to, Chinny?' and he said, 'They're down there, Dunlop knocked up and Ward knocked up and Dunlop hung his rucksack up in the tree, they're coming'. I said to Ken, 'You wizz down to the hut and light the fire and Chinny and I will be down there directly and we'll have a bit of a feed' ...

KH: This is Kidman's hut?

CB: Yeah, Kidman's hut. We get down there and put the fire on, a billy of tea and a bit of feed, few sandwiches and then we took off back to see where these fellows were. When I got up to the Brassy Gap I couldn't find them, there was no sign of them. Well, I thought, there was only one thing to do, I'll slip down in here in the calm snow where it's not blowing too much and see if I could pick their tracks up. I picked their tracks up and they're all making up to the northern end of Little Brassy Gap and they went across the Gap and fortunately as soon as they got into a bit of timber there I pick their tracks up quite easily. I followed them round for about half a mile and at last I caught up with them. When I caught up with them there was all that long heather scrub, pretty rough place. I could hear them talking in front of me and I said 'Well how do you fellows think you are going?' and they said, 'Is that you Charlie?' and I said, 'Yes bloody good job it is too because you fellows have been having a night out'. It was 10 or 11 o'clock then. I said, 'You're off the track a bit, come back this way, we'll get round and go down to Kidman's hut'. Chinny had the billy on and we all tucked in there and had sandwiches. So we decided we would go on and Ward and Dunlop were both knocked up so we gave them a sleeping bag each plus their own and put Dunlop on the table and Ward on an old cyclone bed that was there - no mattress either ...

KH: It's still there, still the same.

CB: Anyway they were that tired, they were knocked up, they could have lay down outside on the snow, they would have been quite happy because were practically out to it. I said to them 'Now look you fellows stay here, don't leave this hut until I come back for you in the morning'. I needn't

CB:

have worried because they were pretty low. Anyway we took off and I said, 'Now there's eight of us here, I'll take the lead'. We went up over to Bolton's diggings and there's a brush fence come down and when we got up there, there was sago snow, it was really murderous, it was hitting us like machine gun bullets. My face was red and bruised from these hail stones, of course it was nothing. I said, 'Now we don't want to get separated, I'll call back "1", "2", next bloke "3", "4", "5", "6", "7", "8", then 8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1 you see and I know you're all there'. We get along about half a mile and called back and it never come back and I said, 'Oh bloody trouble here'. One of them was having a bit of trouble with the bindings and we got him going and we got to Alpine hut. Have you ever been there?

KH: Yes.

CB: Well Alpine hut is right out in the middle of a bit of a flat and a lot of big granite rocks about. We come out and I said 'That bloody Alpine hut is here somewhere' - standing right along-side her and up to the left and Boot(?) said, 'Look Charlie don't you think we ought to go over into the timber and light a fire and ride her out till morning?'. I said, 'No, we'll light a fire right here'. So I get off my skis and unbuckled my bindings and start probing around and at last I heard galvanised iron start to bang underneath the heel of the ski and so we found the end of it, then we found each end of it - we had to probe it to find out its exact position so we wanted to know where the door was. At last we were digging great big hunks of snow out - as big as that television set there - chuck them up on the bank - at last we got the door knob, give her a twist and fell inside the woodshed, snow and all. So we get in there and lit the fire up and put some soup on and have a bit of a feed, then went to bed.

KH: Ken Breakspear wasn't in the party?

CB: No, Ken wasn't with us on that particular trip.

KH: No one was out at Alpine?

CB: There was nobody there. There had been a party there - they left that day, they come up and we came in.

KH: Sounds like '46 when the very heavy snows were on!

CB: It probably was.

KH: I don't think it's been snowed in that deep very often.

CB: Anyway she was covered right over. It was just a big hump of snow. Dr Isenberg said, 'Look Charlie, you're a wizard'. I said, 'Do you think so?'. He said, 'How did you find that hut like that?'. I said, 'Listen, if you'd had as many nights out as I've had in this bloody caper you'd find your way in without any worries'. We all got to bed and next

CB:

morning - I couldn't sleep - I woke up just about daylight. I slurred out of bed and made a cup of tea and took old Horace in a cup and I said 'The other blokes can get down and get some themselves, I better get down there and get those fellows up together before they get lost'. They wouldn't do as you told them you know - I thought they would get on their skis and go round and around and we'd have to go looking for them again but as long as they made a few tracks I wouldn't mind so much, but it was snowing. I go down and they're still in their sleeping bags snoring away. 'Come on you pair, no, stay there I'll whip down and get Dunlop's bag from underneath the bottom of the Brassy'. I flew down there and after a lot of trouble I found his rucksack. It was hanging up in the tree, all covered with snow, snowed right over - you could hardly see it - everything looked the same. I got his rucksack and I thought I could smell something - medicine. I undone it and took everything out and he had a bottle of cough mixture - what the hell he would take a bottle of cough mixture up the bloody Alpine - I never worked out, but you know what these doctors are like. Anyhow he fell down and smashed the bottle and the cough mixture all through his pyjamas and his towel and all his clothes and everything. I sorted all the broken glass and broken bottle out and one thing and another and put his things back in the rucksack and took off. We got back up to the Alpine hut about 9 o'clock and you know Dunlop and Ward had sat round the hut for about 3 or 4 days and never left the hut - Alpine hut - they wouldn't come skiing with us or anything, they weren't interested. They wasn't going to be in any more than they could help it, all they wanted to do was to get back home again and that was their skiing holiday. But the rest of us, we went over to Whites River and Dr Isenberg and I, we took off, and we said we'd go over and get things ready - we had no bread you see. I said, 'Get over here and cook a damper'. We took off and we got up on the Valentine and you know the fog there was that thick, you couldn't poke it away with a stick. It finished up we were thinking about coming - following our tracks back again. I said to Dr Isenberg 'Look there's a fence that runs up underneath the <sup>Kerries</sup> here, if we can find that corner post, the fence goes due west straight up over the top of <sup>Kerries</sup>. If I can find that corner post I'm in business'. Anyway away we go, we finished up we found the corner post and followed the fence - we run into snow drifts and disappeared. I said 'Well she's got to be over here in this direction', so we climbed over the snow drift and down the other side and at last the post marks started coming out of the snow and we was right. Well all that western face of that <sup>Kerries</sup>, it was just one icy patch, it wasn't snow, it was frozen ice.

KH: It's still like that.

CB: ... and Horace, he was side slipping and falling down and I said, 'Look take the damn things off and carry them until we get down into a bit of stable snow, you'll be able to stand on them then'. He couldn't stand on them, he was slipping sideways and falling down and at last we got down into <sup>Schlink Pass</sup> there and next thing we were off and we're going down there and got out of the fog. It was a bad light and I had my Browning automatic shotgun with me - I was going to shoot some foxes - I had this Browning automatic shotgun on top of my rucksack. We were going down there and hit one of those areas where the snow had sunk down into the creek - sort of a hole - it was such a bad light I didn't see this hole and I went straight into it. I went head first in the bank on the other side and Billy went out of sight and as I went in, to rub a bit of salt into my wounds, the gun give me a bash on top of the head and drove it in a bit further and poor old Horace, he's standing out there. When I extracted myself and stood up, he laughed but to kill himself. He couldn't get over it, it reckoned it was the greatest bit of work he seen, for me to get thrown into this snow drift. Anyway we get down to Whites River and got the fire going and talk about rats, you'd never seen anything like it. We got this fire going, and what I've got to do now is bake a damper. We had all this flour in bags tied up - we had it protected in bags and then hang them up from the ceiling so as the rats couldn't destroy them you see. They had a tub there, only a small tub, you know the small tubs, and the camp oven, it was one of the biggest camp ovens I've seen for a long time, the real big sort, wasn't a small one, I suppose nearly two foot across. Anway tip this bag of flour into the tub, got the dried milk out and plunged some dried milk in, salt, bit of sugar, mixed her up, eased the old camp oven up and dumped it in. Put the lid on and shovelled a lot of coal and ashes over the top of it and right-o, sit back. Dr Isenberg, he'd never seen these dampers made, he said 'She's going to be a rough old bit of bread when you finish her, Charlie' and I said, 'She'll be right, don't worry about that'. We give it about 20 or 30 minutes, brush the ashes off the top of the camp oven lid and stuck the poker into the handle, lift the lid up and have a look and give her a rap and I said 'She's right'. So we takes her off, tips her upside down on a teatowel on the table and left it there to cool off. Well we had tea off it that night, next morning we cut a couple of slices off for our dinner and some corn beef we had and we put the rest away, safe, so the rats couldn't get to it and away we goes fox shooting. We went way down Whites River and we get out about half a mile and come to a bare patch

CB:

and I said there ought to be a fox or two down here. I blew the whistle and up comes one bloke - bang - and he said "Charlie I think I should skin that fox. I said, "You couldn't skin that fox, what are you talking about, you might be able to open a bloke up with that *scalpel* of yours down there, but you couldn't skin a fox." "Well you show me how" he says "and the next one we shoot, I'll skin it". So anyhow I skined it and he said "You know Charlie you would have made a good doctor". He said "The way you handle that knife and the way you peel that skin off, you'd have made a marvellous surgeon". I said, "you think so", he says "Yeah". I said, "well, I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth, I never got a chance of being a doctor. Anyhow just as well I'm doing a pretty good job showing you fellows around these hills, you know, we can't all be doctors". So anyway we shot three or four foxes and got to Whites River hut. When we got back there all these other hounds had come over from Alpine hut and they eat every bit of that damper, eat the damn lot. I said "I have to turn around and make another damper". I made another damper for the next day then we went back to Alpine hut. We have a good trip over there.

KH: Did you go down to Mawson's hut?

CB: Mawson's, lord yes. Jim Muir and Don and Lorrie Tickner and I - they were staying at Mawson's hut and Don and I took off one morning and went over to pick them up. I remember after we picked them up we went on to Jargunal. We get up on top of Jargunal, oh it was a beautiful day. I didn't have much trouble, didn't hardly have to herringbone to get up it, it wasn't that steep and I thought 'oh it's not bad, it's pretty good, level' you know - the surface and that and when we got up and had our dinner, Don said to me "how are you going to take it Charlie". I said, "I can ride that Kiandra course and this is not near as steep as Kiandra, I can ride that with one ski". He said, "Oh well I'm putting in a few controls". So away Jim, Lorrie and Don go, see. They went down over the brows first and disappeared and after they'd gone I thought I better get going too. I pulled my cap down, jumped off the top. Well, did I get a shock. By the time I hit that first ram down underneath the site there I was doing about 70 or 80 mile an hour. When I got down there the snow was all wind-swept and icy in patches and one thing and another, the ice was hitting the bindings and your leg would get thrown back a bit. I finished up with fatigue in my legs. So I sat down, right down on my heels and got my knees together and I let them go. Well I went down into that valley, there's the Tumut River there, and I went past these blokes, I didn't have time to hear what they said or anything - straight down into this valley, up the hill on the other side and I couldn't

CB:

stand up when I got down there and I fell over sideways. I looked round and I could see them coming down. They were taking tosses, you ought to have seen them. I said, "Why don't you take it straight". They said, "We're not as bloody mad as you are". I'll never ever forget, I'll never ever do that again, by God that was the most hair-raising runs I've ever had in my life. But I'd never made it, if I'd have stood up I was finished.

We used to stay there for a fortnight, go down around Finns River and that there.

KH: Was the old Bolton's hut there then?

CB: Yeah.

KH: Slab hut?

CB: Yeah, I used to go down round there.

KH: That was in the '40s too, after the war. So you did most of these trips after the war did you?

CB: Yeah, during the war and after the war. I was up there a bit before the war too.

KH: Before Alpine was built? Alpine was built in '39 wasn't it?

CB: Yes. Actually - eh! '39?

KH: Yes, just before the war when Fred Fletcher was in there for a couple of years as the cook.

CB: That's right.

KH: That's what Oliver <sup>Moriarty</sup> told me and Fred.

CB: That's right.

KH: That's pretty-well documented.

CB: Previously, see I was working at the Grey Mare ...

KH: That was back in '34 or '35 - '35 yes. Your father opened that up again?

CB: It's a long story. See, the old man took the Grey Mare lease up in 1917, the Grey Mare lease and he'd been paying the rent on this lease up until 1935 ...

END SIDE 1

Charlie Bell

Tape 1, Side 2

KH: Kerry P rce ...

CB: Yeah Kerry P rce and he pegged the lease out and come and made an application to the Mines Department for a lease. They wrote back and told him that the lease was already in the name of George Bell and they wanted to find out a bit more about it or make him comply with the labour conditions on it or something like that. He had to see the old man, so him and dad got together and they formed a company and when they formed this company I got a job working there.

KH: So you were payed so much a week?

CB: Yes, I got 4 pounds a week.

KH: Where did they get the money from to float the company, did they have other money from other projects?

CB: They had seven thousand, five hundred pounds.

KH: That they raised themselves, from their other ...?

CB: One of the fellows named Bill Gill and Bill Minhart. The old man's share was - he give them the lease you see, give the company the lease. He had a third share in it. All the time they were there, I was always roaming around the area exploring, that's how I knew all about the Alpine hut.

KH: So you walked, this is during the summer time?

CB: Yes. I knew all that area like a book.

KH: And some of the men built the access track, is that right, around Jargunal, from O'Keefes?

CB: That's right, we cut a new road from Hughes Creek, up the Tolbar, over to Happy's and up the Happy's, past Brooks Racecourse and over the Doubtful, up to Farm Ridge, then to O'Keefe's hut and then round through the side of Jargunal, on the western side of Jargunal and then you come to Strumbo and then you meet the other wagon track that comes in from the eastern side of Jargunal. There's two roads then. We worked all the summer, there was about 15 or 20 men working on that road all the summer.

KH: That many?

CB: Yes. We had to do a bit of ploughing on the side and put log bridges in and all sorts of things - they were too boggy to get over. Anyhow we made this road ...

KH: Did you have a bulldozer or anything like that?

CB: No, but we had a Fordson tractor, for the road cuttings.

KH: Because there is some quite steep cuttings down into some of the

creeks and up the other side.

CB: Yeah, well they're probably eroded out since.

KH: And then were the same men employed on the mine itself.

CB: Yes, they were all employed by the mine.

KH: There were already tunnels there weren't there? There was a top <sup>adit</sup> by then.

CB: Yes there's a tunnel there, goes in about 400 feet, that's the original tunnel. Then the old man and Kerry, they decided they'd put a tunnel in further down and the rock was so hard there, it cost them eight pound a foot to drive it, in this granite you see. Well it finished up they ran out of money and come May, it came on to snow and all these blokes that were working there, they grabbed their horses, pack-saddles and took off and the only bloke that was left there was me.

KH: Do you remember Andy Metcalf?

CB: Yes. There was a couple of Galvins there and Goldspink from Tumbumba, quite a few local fellows, I just can't remember all their names. Anyway we furrows down and I'd decided to stay there to look after the place until the next spring. I stayed there until the end of August and do you know what, there was no snow there until the end of June and I went into Adaminaby and I had to carry my skis from the Grey Mare, Snowy Plain - got them to pick me up in a car there and I went to Adaminaby and that night it started snowing and it snowed for a fortnight and never stopped. I'll tell you what, when I went back to Grey Mare, I rode the skis all the way back in. I was back at the Grey Mare at 3 o'clock that afternoon and my cat and my dog, my pup welcomed me when I got there.

KH: I bet they were hungry.

CB: No, I left them plenty of tucker. I've got some photographs I'll show you if I can find them.

KH: Because you were staying at the old Grey Mare hut then?

CB: Yes.

KH: The big place?

CB: Yes, she was pine-lined, she wasn't a bad shack until he burnt her down one night. I had a big ground about as big as that wireless set there and I used to put it in the fire and warm her up and then rack her out and roll a piece of hessian around it, a piece of blanket and then I'd roll her up and put her in my bed you see, it used to warm the bed up. Anyhow this night I put it in and it was overheated and when I threw the blankets off to get in she was - poof - exploded and fortunately I had a bucket of water just out the door and I rushed out and grabbed the bucket

of water and doused it, it put it out. But I got a terrific shock, I could have got burnt.

KH: If you'd hopped straight in without looking.

CB: Anyway it taught me a lesson about bed heaters, no electric blankets in those days up there. I had a very quiet time. The only four blokes I seen was Tom Mitchell and three doctors from Melbourne. They was coming through the Kossie ...

KH: Tom Mitchell?

CB: Tom Mitchell and three doctors, I forget their names. Tom knows their names, we often have a talk about it. They came up from Pretty Plain, they come up by horse to Pretty Plain and then the rest of the way by skis. But this day they arrived there, it was snowing like hell. I was standing at the door and I looks up the flat there and I sees these black spots coming and thought, 'wonder what the hell this was - somebody coming, I can't believe it'. Anyway Tom and his three mates turned up and we had a feed and I said "you'd better stay the night" and they said, "Oh no, we've got to get over to Mawson's hut". I said, "You'll never find your way over there" and they said, "No we were wondering if you'd show us the way over". I said, "Yeah, no worries, I'll take you over there". So I took them over to Mawson's hut, across Long Creek and Stony Creek, the Valentine there, to Mawson's hut and left them, came back to the Grey Mare and they were the only fellows I seen all the winter.

KH: You left again at the end of August did you?

CB: Yes, they wouldn't send me any money and they wouldn't give me any money and I got a bit browned off. Anyhow I'd had the place by then, stopping up there all the winter. Anyway I carried my skis, carried my rucksack on my skis, rode out to Snowy Plains, Nimmo, rang up for a taxi to come out and pick me up. When I went up over the ridge there between Stony Creek and Long Creek I looked back at the Grey Mare hut and said 'goodbye and bugger ya'. I didn't want to ever see the place again.

KH: Was that your first skiing at the Grey Mare? You'd skied at Kiandra before that?

CB: I went to school on them. I went to Kiandra when I was 10 years old and I'm one of the oldest trout fishermen in New South Wales.

KH: What did you say earlier - 1910 or something?

CB: 1914. Well I started fishing for trout in 1914 and I used to have to catch all the fish for the family and a few other families in Kiandra at the same time and I used to keep them all in fish and those creeks, rivers and streams around there, the Three Mile dam, the Eight Mile dam - they were loaded with fish. You could go and catch as many fish as you like. I used

to use a grasshopper and a worm - there came a time when you couldn't catch grasshoppers and you couldn't find worms and one thing and another, so I - the old man, he gave me some artificial flyers and I tried them - of course, they were a bit new to me, but I'd heard a lot about them - a lot of blokes around there talking about fly fish and one thing and another. Anyhow I tried one of these flies and from that day onwards I never used anything, only an artificial fly, I could catch more fish on that than I could catch on anything.

KH: How old were you in 1914?

CB: I was 10 years old and I've been fishing ever since for them.

KH: So that was your first skiing too?

CB: Yes.

KH: And you told me earlier that you went down the Grand Slam at Kiandra.

CB: That was the black stump down to the road, Kiandra ski course - the Grand Slam was Kosciusko.

KH: Didn't your main run at Kiandra have a name too?

CB: No, only the Kiandra ski course.

KH: Do you ever go over to the Mt Selwyn ski run, over in Pig Gully?

CB: Yes, we used to go to Pig Gully. When we came back from Nine Mile, we'd always come down by the Three Mile and see if there was any fish up <sup>Spawning</sup>, we'd take a few fish home out of the creek there. Round about August there used to be a fair few fish go up that creek, we used to go in there and get half a dozen fish to take home. You see you worked from Nine Mile all the winter, we used to come home Saturdays and Sundays.

KH: When was that, when you were still a child?

CB: That was during the war, 1916, 17, 18.

KH: When Bill Hughes and Bob Hughes were still out there.

CB: Bill used to go to school with me. He's the same age as me, Bill. Yeah Bill's one of my mates.

? Mrs Boardman would have been at school with you, she'd be behind you would she?

CB: I don't remember her. Well Frasers left there about 1914, just before we got there, but their house was there for years and years after - Frazer's house. They went back to Tumut. Oh yes, well, we used to go to school on the skis and there was a lot of competition. I remember one morning, I used to get up and light the fire and put the kettle on and get breakfast ready. One morning I got out and the snow was glistening and it was - there had been a big fall of snow and as far as you could see was white - expanse of snow. The snow was beautiful - a new fall on top of an old fall - all this powdery distinct frosty snow. Gladdie Quim came over and said "Charlie

we'll go up and give them a bit of run off the top. So we goes up the top - Ted would remember this one. Gladdie and I, we get up the top and I says "I'll toss you to see who goes first". So he won the toss and he says "I'll go first". I said "right" and away we go. He took off, went down over a ledge, down over the next rise, as he came out way down near the school and round onto the flat and I said, "well that's good, he made it alright, I'll have a go now". He had a blue cattle dog and this blue cattle dog, he stopped chasing rabbits in the tea tree just on the first ledge there you see and when he'd seen Gladdie go past, he took off after him - he followed Gladdie's ski tracks, right on his hammer, this blue cattle dog started looming up in front of me and I was going that fast I couldn't go one way or the other and I collected him. My skis went straight between his hind legs and out in front of me and he tripped me and I guarantee I started falling and I went 50 yards before I stopped rolling and when I get up I was covered in powdered snow. It was down my neck and in my shirt and down my trousers - you name it. You ought to have heard the language and one of my skis tipped off and went down and run into the fence. I thought it would be a write-off but it never got broke. Anyway I went back up again and started off again - do the job properly. I'll never ever forget that, it was a very fast ride.

KH: Did they hold championships on that run at Pig Gully?

CB: No, we never used to ski at Pig Gully.

KH: But it was cleared wasn't it for a ski run?

CB: Oh in later years, not when I was going to school there, there was no need to have any ski runs over at Pig Gully then, there was plenty of room.

KH: Do you remember who was at Pig Gully at the time?

CB: The only bloke that was at Pig Gully was old Bob Hughes, he had a little sluicing place out there and he used to ride his skis out every day and come out every night.

KH: Bob Hughes did?

CB: Old Bob.

KH: Oh the old Bob, Bill's father.

CB: Yes, young Bob's father - Rusty we used to call him. Rusty used to come back of an afternoon. He had this track - when the snow started to freeze a bit, the start used to get a bit fast. He always had these brake sticks, he'd come down, he be pulling the sleds with bloody kangaroo ....

KH: Like on the photos.

CB: And he'd come around there - Bill and I, we had decided to build a jump on his track.

KH: What, to trip him up?

CB: He came down there, he was going pretty fast, old Rusty he come around riding his brake stick hard and he started to stop and he hit this jump. He went from here to about the television set before he hit the snow again. You should have heard the language, I'll never forget that, poor old Bob. He abused hell out of us.

KH: He was the one with the beard, he was a mailman for a while?

CB: Yes.

KH: He worked over at the Nine Mile too didn't he?

CB: There was a lot of gold out there. I went over there one day where they were sluicing and you know these gallon oil tins, he had two of them and they were full of gold - those gallon oil tins.

KH: Really!

CB: Yes, and that's a lot of gold - two gallons of gold - there was a lot of gold, of course, a bit of rock, but that's the gold they got there and they never ever put it in the bank and when old Bob died, that's young Bob's father, old Dusty, he left it to Bob. Bob had it in a safe in his place in the old school room at Kiandra there and when he got crook, he went down to Sydney and I didn't know anything about this or I'd have got the key off Bob and went through his safe for him. I used to look after Bob and keep his line of communication open and everything around the place and I was a bit upset that he didn't let me know that he was going to Sydney to hospital. He died in the Prince of Wales hospital and a nephew or somebody come and got the keys, came up to Kiandra and cleaned the place out and got all the gold and everything out of it. He had bank notes there, fifty pound bank notes and a hundred pound bank notes.

KH: I didn't know such things existed?

CB: They abolished the hundred pound bank notes and the fifty pound bank notes and I think the biggest denomination was ten pound. He got all that stuff out of Bob's safe and took everything of any value and then just walked out and left it and never went back again.

KH: That was about '63 or '64 was it, when Bob died?

CB: Yes.

KH: You'd have know Bill quite well then?

CB: I went to school with Bill.

KH: I interviewed Bill a couple of years ago, he's in Sydney now.

CB: He's at Albury somewhere isn't he?

KH: He was at Manly last, early this year, he's moved about a fair bit.

CB: I'd like to see Bill again.

KH: I'll mention it to him. I might see him over Xmas or I might <sup>write</sup> right a letter to him soon.

CB: Tell him to make his way out here.

KH: It would be nice to get the two of you together, it would be grand.

CB: I'll meet him at Albury or Cooma, whichever he likes, or I'll meet him by car. I'd like to see Bill.

KH: You would have been buddies I suppose, mucking around the mines and so on.

CB: Oh yes, we were thick as thieves. We used to go fishing together and shooting together and skiing. We were inseparable as a matter of fact.

KH: He was telling me a story about shooting the tunnel at the Empress. Coming down and hanging on behind the skiffs. You would have been the other partner I'd imagine in some of those exploits.

CB: No I wasn't working in the tunnel with him and Bob. We were working at the Nine Mile.

KH: Yes, this was out at the Nine Mile. He was telling me a story about - he wasn't actually working on the tunnel, but how, just for fun, would come down behind skiffs and hang on for grim death and have to dodge the supports and so on that went very close to the timbers.

CB: It had a bit of an incline but the trucks used to run a bit ... you've got to keep you head down or you'd get your head knocked off on one of the taps. Some of the legs were broken, cracked, just room for the truck to go through the ....

KH: That was very deep that tunnel wasn't it?

CB: 2,500 pieces of mountain ash in Nine Mile.

KH: That's the one that collapsed one lunch-time. Is that right?

CB: Yeah, who told you that?

KH: I don't remember now, I either read it of someone told me.

CB: Well I'll tell you all about that. The old man and Dick Looms, they were all in the panelling lift - you see when the company closed it down, they gave dad the option of working any part to try retrieve some of his share money out of it - so he was working a lot of places they by-passed to put the tunnel through. When they got to 2,500 feet it started to dip. The bottom started to dip and they couldn't run an engine in there, there was no electric light and no air. A candle wouldn't burn - you'd light a candle and it would go out - there was no oxygen you see. You had to go out too, or else if you didn't go out very quickly, you wouldn't have went out at all. So it finished up we put an airshaft into it ...

KH: Did they?



CB: This particular day, Dick Looms and my old man, they were digging this bosh out of the panel and chucking it out towards the drive where the trucks were and Bert and I, my brother, we were filling it into the trucks, taking it out and putting it into the bins where it was put through the boxes you see. We were just getting ready to go to lunch and I seen a few pieces chip off the top of the panelling work. And I said "Let out, she's coming in". They all dived out of it and the old man left his jigger sticking in the wall - he raced in to grap the jigger and he just got back out and down she went - the whole roof collapsed - it blew all the lights out. I was leaning against the truck there on the Fordson - it pushed the truck off the rail, pushed me up against the truck. Anyhow we got the trucks back on the rail and I grab<sup>(hold)</sup> the first one and I took off and I set sail for the wide open spaces. You had to go a fair way before you come to daylight then and when you get to daylight then you can see just a little speck of light way in the distance. Anyway I got half way out, I pulled up and I started to listen and I could hear another truck coming behind me and I thought I'd better got or I'd get a ram up the behind. So I took off and got out and they all came out and when we went back after dinner to start operations, sand would keep coming in and the water kept damming up behind us and kept on washing us out and more would come in and it finished up the tunnel was full of sand and gravel for 50 or 100 yards. You couldn't get near where we worked. We never got anymore work after that, left the rails and everything. A fellow named Smithfield come along, bought the whole lot - 3 or 4 huts and all the trucks, rails, you name it, bought it all for a hundred quid off the company. They sold it over the old man's head. That's how the old man got the lease, in 1917. He rode out there and pegged it out, used the rails and trucks from out there, but they never did it, they never brought any in because it was too expensive and too hard a job. I don't think he had the money anyway. He should never have left Tumb~~a~~umba, the old man. He had a better mine at Tumb~~a~~umba than he had over there.

KH: And the tunnel at the Empress was underneath the old sluicing hole?

CB: The Elaine?

KH: Nine Mile - the Nine Mile sluicing hole and the tunnel was right under ...

CB: Oh the tunnel was under the sluicer, yes. It went in beyond the sluicing - 2,500 feet it went in there.

KH: But was it under the sluicing hole, right at the beginning of the sluicing hole?

CB: Oh the tunnel started way down, a long way down below the cut there.

KH: One of the huts from there then shifted to Broken Dam.

CB: Could have been.

KH: There was a hut towed overland by Tom Yan which we now call Broken Dam. It's just above the Broken Dam.

CB: Could have been, yes. I left there and I don't know much about what went on.

KH: Oh you left after 19 ...

CB: I left in 1921.

KH: Then you came back to the Grey Mare in 1935?

CB: Yeah.

KH: Then you left again?

CB: Yeah, I went back to Sydney in 1930, I was down there until '35 and I came back and after that I went back again after 1935 and was there during - driving a taxi until the war started and then I got a job at General Motors in oxy welding and I stopped there for the duration - ammunition production. We done a colossal job there, worked from daylight till dark. There was one weekend there, everybody in General Motors worked back and they brought in 500 pigs in cases and we had them all ....

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2.

CHARLIE BELL

TAPE 2, SIDE 3

CB: .... went through that line there one after the other, they all went to pieces beautifully you know. They did a marvellous job there and we used to make 25 pounds. You know when they were sure of these guns - these Japs - they used to get up in the hills in New Guinea, above our fellows and blast hell out of them. Every time they tried to get up to them, they'd shoot you back you see. At last they got these 25 pounders, well they started lobbing these 25 pounders; shells in amongst them. They never even knew what hit them. They never got a look in after that, that was the finish. We were making them 25 pounders, I was very proud of that fact, I could always say I did something towards the war effort.

KH: But occasionally you got away skiing like that trip to Alpine and Whites.

CB: I used to get a doctor's certificate to do that. They wouldn't go without me. I reckon it was essential anyway because if those fellows went up there on their own they would probably never come back again, they would have got lost. You know what it's like Ted, when you get up there you want to know what you're doing.

KH: When did you first meet Ted up there?

TW: I never met Charlie at any of those times. I used to ski with Laurie and Jim O'Connell, Lee McPhie. They also skied with Charlie, but I'd never skied with ever Charlie or Don, no. See we only lived in the school holidays, that's the time I would be there.

KH: And you're on the other side of the mountains too.

TW: I'd been to Tin hut with Laurie, coming from Mawsons.

CB: But you used to go to Alpine hut! It's funny that I didn't see you there.

TW: Usually in there at the time - with the AOH mob.

CB: Yeah, the 'arss over head' bums.

TW: The AOH mob, there was a bloke there named Crashy Currie, we started to say AOH Club after him. Poor old Crashy, I said, 'Look Crashy, don't come up here boy' - he was a trier. He'd say, 'If you blokes can ride that I can' and he'd come up. He'd only go from here to the tree and over he'd go. We finished up nicknaming 'Crashy' Currie.

KH: There was a list of names of the door I remember, an Honours list of ski breakers, at Alpine. There were 30 names of people who'd broken a ski ...

CB: He'd be one of them.

TW: This AOH crowd had a badge. It was skier either heading into the snow with his skis out like this and underneath it it had ARS SUPER CAPUT - composed of course by Joe Elliot, who was an MA in Latin, later headmaster of Murwillumbah High - and Joe's interpretation of that was 'not beyond understanding'. Everybody thought it meant something else.

CB: You know an initiation process used to go on at Alpine hut. You see the outside, over the drift, the country dunny, you see, it used to stink a bit. When you went in to it, it was always a good idea to leave the door open so you could get a bit of fresh air. You didn't want to stay in there any longer than you could help it. Anyway, anyone that went in there, if they didn't close that door, all the boys used to come out alongside the snow drift and roll up a lot of snow balls, about the size of that jug, and at a given signal they'd all let fly at this open door - and this bloke sitting up there with his pants off - it would be bang, bang, bang. He'd come flying out of this dunny with his trousers half off. We used to have some fun there - God I used to laugh.

KH: Were you there the time when they brought the bullock in and the snows came early and they couldn't get it quite to the hut?

CB: Yes.

KH: They slaughtered it near a tree or something!

CB: That was between Kidmans and Boltons diggings. Yeah Charlie Fletcher, Fred and I, we had to go down, and Ken Breakspear - we carted that up from there in our rucksacks, back to the hut. It was almost three or four trips but we got it all in, in the finish. We had some good meat too, really alright.

KH: It was strung up on a tree wasn't it?

CB: Yeah. Were you around that winter?

KH: No, no, but I heard that story from Fred Fletcher and all that was left was a nobbly backbone.

CB: Yeah, that's right. Jimmy Pattinson and his mates, they got lost there at Kidman's hut one night. They were coming up to Alpine hut and couldn't make it, they lost the track the next morning and had a night out in the snow there. When we found them they had been sitting over this fire to keep warm, and the smoke had blinded them and they couldn't see. They'd been smoke-blinded with fire and there was a great big hole in the snow where all the snow had melted away from where the fire had been lit. Anyhow we found them and got them back to Alpine hut.

KH: Jim was a good skier wasn't he?

CB: Yes. I seen Bill the other day, down Queanbeyan - Bill Pattinson - Jim's brother.

KH: I've never met him.

CB: He works at the butcher shop up the Sarah Road, he's in that butcher shop there.

KH: Billy - he was a good jumper?

CB: Yeah, he was a ferocious skier that Bill. He'd race Jim off the top there, off of Black Stump and they'd come down there neck and neck, there was no way of getting over that road, they had to put in a turn before they got to it. They'd be going that fast they'd start side slipping there at the first bend and they'd be still side slipping at the edge of the road. By holy ghosts they used to have .... they'd curse one another all the way down.

KH: Were you there when they had to build a tunnel from one hotel to the other across the road?

CB: Yes.

KH: Did that happen a number of times?

CB: Yes, we used to have to ski off the roof there and we'd build tunnels to the woodshed, over to the store, and the pub.

KH: So definitely in general there was more snow then, in the 1910s and 20s than there is now?

CB: Oh I think there was you know. I think there was more snow then or it appeared to me. Perhaps I could only be imaging this but we could never get the road open until well into October. When we used to get it open the bloody thing used to snow and fill it all up again - we used to give it away in the finish.

KH: Did you make your own skis? Alpine Ash or ...?

CB: We had a policeman there named Cook - Bill Cook - he was the Sergeant of Police and later transferred to Canberra and he was in charge of Canberra police - I've got a brochure there on it - he was at Molonglo. He used to make all our skis, he was a marvellous cabinetmaker. He wasn't a bad old bloke, I used to keep him in fish and one thing and another.

KH: I think it was Bill who was telling me, he apparently - there was a race on at one time - ski race - and he treated one person's skis different to another or something, or he made them extra fast.

CB: Oh that would be George Doran. George Doran had some moko, this is ski wax, we used to call it moko and it consisted of bees wax, resin and a little bit of boiled oil, a bit of candle fat or something like that in it you see. Well George came up with a formula for making this wax and he got some of this differential oil, thick lubricant. They used to add certain amounts of that to get it the right texture, so if he wanted a soft wax you'd put a bit extra in and if you wanted a hard wax you wouldn't put so much in. But he had this regulated and it was the fastest wax - in all my skiing

career I've never struck faster wax - there's all the Norwegian waxes and all these fellows who are supposed to know all about the waxes. There wasn't a wax that could come anywhere near it. It was like grease-lightning. As a matter of fact, it was so good, George used to put it on his skis in the race, and we could always beat George because he could never get to the bottom without falling, and our wax was a bit slower and we used to make it you see. It used to be his undoing because his wax was too fast, he couldn't stay with it - by God it was slippery.

KH: There was some big race - between Doran and one of the Hughes or Burgess and Burgess won the race - it was tied three times or something!

CB: I don't think we had any Burgess' there.

KH: Didn't you? There's a bit of a poem about it. They had two races and they still tied and then a third one - that was the decider. Do you remember that at all.

CB: Oh probably, we used to have a lot of duels there on the ski road. But Billy Patrick was the best rider we had there in those days. We were all on a sort of a par, what I mean to say, we could ride that course straight on any kind of a snow. If you could ride that straight on any sort of snow you were a good rider and a lot of those blokes who come in there, you know different people who come in say 'well we'll clean these Kiandra boys up', but they couldn't see which way they went, they couldn't hold a candle to us fellows. We were used to the course you see, they'd never get to the second landing before they were down and once you fall that's the finish - you've got to go through the winning post. I was likely to be through the winning post before they picked themselves up off the snow.

KH: When you were skiing out at Grey Mare, that winter in '35, were you just using waxes then? You didn't have skins or anything like that?

CB: Oh no, I wouldn't use - Don Richardson and Isenberg they used to have skins. I said 'Look you're only wasting your bloody time putting them things on. It takes you that long to put them on, by the time you put them on, I'll be up and over that hill there and down the other side'. I used to be always waiting for them to catch up with me. I'd stand there and wait and I'd say 'I'll burn all those bloody skins one of those days if I can find them when you're not looking'. They were only holding the business up, you could keep ... you can't herringbone, take them off and walk up and don't try to do things the hard way. They used to exasperate me a bit, but I suppose I expected too much of them because I was well experienced in comparison with them, I'd been in the snow all my life practically. Bill Hughes and I we used to roam round them hills, never used to take the brake stick or

stocks, never used stocks or brake sticks - no bloody fear.

KH: On Bill's big crossing in '27 and '29 I think he was using stocks then.

CB: I don't think he would have a pair of stocks, he probably wouldn't use them anyhow, he wouldn't need them.

KH: Did you have special waxes to help you climb uphill.

CB: I used to believe in klisters and different things to put on my skis. Half those bloody klisters, you'd put them on, they'd be alright, it would be sometimes snowing, you'd get into a bit of powdery snow and next thing it would be balling up underneath you. You'd have to take them off and wipe it all off, before you get going again, it would be all stuck up again. I'd put a bit of hard wax on and you could keep on going. I wouldn't put that klisters on my skis. It used to be worse than the skins - seal skins.

KH: On another topic did you ever go up to Tooma, up to Wheeler's hut, do you know anything about the history of Wheeler's hut? Did you ever meet old one-armed Will?

CB: I met him at Corryong, I think it would be the same bloke. I know all those fellows, old Charlie Lennar and different fellows.

KH: Do you know anything about when Wheeler's hut was built or anything like that?

CB: No, Tom Mitchell would be the fellow who could tell you about that or Charlie Lennar. I'll take you down to see Charlie later if you want to.

KH: He was a stockman up there was he?

CB: Yeah one of the boys. One of the old hands that's still left.

KH: How old is he?

CB: Oh around about 84.

KH: Oh really. Who did he work for?

CB: He doesn't work for anybody. He used to be a boundary rider, stockman and that and used to go up into those huts there in the summer time and look after the cattle, bring them back when the snow come.

KH: What about the river stone huts up in the Geehi! Do you know anything about that?

CB: Flo Nankervis, she'd tell you more about that than me because she built it, her and her fisherman friends.

KH: There's about five up the river there, there's Dr Forbes ...

CB: They all got the idea of building huts there for fishing, they were never used for anything else. Some of them might be used for stock huts, mainly fishing lodges.

KH: Do you know when they were built?

CB: They were built before I took the job on. They were there before 1950 because I used to be the fishing inspector and that's one of the first places I made for when I came up here. I used to have a bit of fun. But what I was going to tell you about was this old Mick Shanley getting perished in the snow there at Kiandra, 1921.

KH: Were you involved in that?

CB: Yes.

KH: In the search?

CB: Yeah I was in the search. I know all the fellows that were involved in that search, I can give you their names.

KH: Alright, fire away. It has been written up hasn't it?

CB: There might be a copy of it in the Adaminaby Advocate in museum there in Pine Valley. Do you know where the museum is? If you have a look at the Adaminaby Advocate, there's a story about it. I can give you a first hand story of that episode because I was involved in it - one of the blokes who were looking for him. I'll tell you what happened. Old Jack Cheney, he had his sheep on Happy Jack, on the Boobee. He used to stop and lived in the Boobee hut when we were out there and Jack Cheney - actually Jack Cheney's hut - I think they might have been the ones who built it.

KH: That's the old Boobee hut. It's gone now.

CB: Yeah, they burnt it down - it was a bloody good hut too.

KH: Was Jack Cheney a miner or a stockman?

CB: He owned a big sheep station down here at Humula and he had a snow lease on Boobee you see. They kept the sheep up there until August and there was no snow practically and at last it started - the weather started to break and snow - they decided to get them out. So he brought them down to Providence, then from Providence they took them to Kiandra and from Kiandra up through the Three Mile and down into Weirs Creek and up to Mary Lang and then on to Tumboraumba, down to Cooma where he owned his property you see. Well old Mick Shanley, he was working for Cheney and he helped them get these sheep through to Mary Lang and when they got over to there it came on to snow and he decided he'd come back to Adaminaby, where he did. Instead of him coming back through Sue City he went down through Lobbs Hole and I think - who was it that rang up - Mrs Forstrum I think - she had the hotel there at Lobbs Hole. They rang up to say that Mick had left to come through to Kiandra with his saddle horse and his pack horse - anyway he came up to McGregor's hut there - what they call the Tin hut at Snakey Plains, and then from then up the Three Mile and got on to Three Mile ridge there behind the Three Mile hut. There's a boundary fence that run right up that ridge there ...

KH: Up Wallace's Creek?

CB: Yeah, right on the dividing range. Old Mick got up there, and by this time it must have been getting late or something and he came down along the fence for about 500 yards and the snow got that deep and impossible to get through, he decided to go back. Instead of him turning round and following his tracks back, the way he come, he took off straight down into Wallace's Creek.

KH: He didn't have any sheep with him?

CB: No, just his pack horse and his saddle horse.

KH: And why was he coming up.

CB: He was going home, coming back to Adaminaby. Anyhow Jacob Wilson got the message from Mrs Foster and he went up the Three Mile, there was a blizzard on - oh, it was a terrible day - they couldn't find hind nor hair of Mick or see anything of him. He came back again and the next morning we all went after him - looking for him. We looked for Mick for three days, it was still snowing and on the third it cleared up - or the third night. It cleared up and the snow started to settle down. On the third day we got onto these horse tracks that come down the ridge and you could see the trench where the horse ploughed through the snow, it was all sunk down. We followed the horse tracks right down into Wallace's Creek until we found them. We found the horses underneath the water fall and they were eating tea tree and they have icicles hanging on their tails and their mane, the saddle still on it - we couldn't find Mick. We went back up to the top and Cook the policeman and old Jacobs, they decided to come down and have a look, to see what was going on. In the finish, they got down almost within 50 yards of where the horses were and there was a bit of Mick's face exposed - the snow had thawed off his face and they found him. So we had to get a mountain ash pole, we got the stirrup leathers and the girth and we lashed Mick on to this pole - mountain ash pole - and we man-handled him right up the side of that mountain. It is terribly steep and at last we got him up and onto the toboggan on top of the hill there and got him into Kiandra and put him in a bed and covered him over with a sheet. The next morning we had to take him out in Jimmy Allan's hearse - he had a horse-drawn hearse - we had to take him out. There were six of us pulling this toboggan and we left three o'clock in the morning. There was Snowy Hetherington, Les Hetherington, Jack Yan, Bill Hughes and myself and Harold, my brother - there was six of us. We used to take it in relays pulling it you see. The reason why we left early was so we could get him out on the hard snow and the toboggan runners wouldn't get bogged in the snow. Anyway we got him out to Rocky Plain and then we started meeting all the McMahons and the Crows and the Shanleys, the Russells - everybody from Adaminaby - on their horses - come to meet us, help us. They all had a bottle of scotch and a bottle of rum

and one thing and another and by the time we got old Mick out to Jimmy Allan's hearse at Alpine Hill, which was half way down Comet Hill, where Alpine Creek is - we got down and met Jimmy Allan with his hearse and put old Mick in and took our hats off and said goodbye to him. Then Snowy said, 'oh well, boys, I think we'll get back to the resthouse and have a bit of dinner'. By this time we were stiff and pretty tired and the only bloke that wouldn't have any drink was Bill - he wouldn't drink. So anyway we took off, we went over Raceback to the RestHouse - we left our dinner then, Mrs Wilson packed some sandwiches in a sugar bag and then we left them there at the RestHouse and we'd get them on the back you see - so we get back to the RestHouse and Jack Larkin, the mailman, he brought in a dozen bottles of Jamaican rum for Jacob you see and on account of all this heavy snow they couldn't get it into Kiandra and he left it at the RestHouse, it had been there for a week or so. When we were leaving to come out, old Jacobs said 'Listen boys, when you get back to the RestHouse, bring a couple of bottles of rum each, two bottles will be easy to carry, there's six of you - two bottles each - and don't break it'. I can remember the instructions, Jacobs was worried about his rum. When we got back to the RestHouse Snowy said, 'How about we chuck in two bob it's 13 bob a bottle'. So we chucked a couple of bob each in and opened one of Jacob's bottles. He said, 'I'll put three bob in and all you other fellows put two bob in'. We all get stuck into this rum, have a few rums. Harold was going pretty well and Snowy said, 'Hey Bill are you going to have a drink'. He said, 'No I don't think I'll have it'. He said, 'Well if you don't we are going to get you down in the bloody snow and pour some into you, so you please yourself, if you want to drink it amiably, you drink it, if you don't you're going to get it poured into you'. Bill says, 'Oh if you going to do that I suppose I had better have one'. That big mug, you know those big enamel mugs - Snowy tipped a great big wad of this Jamaican rum into this mug and give it to Bill. Bill took a mouthful and it took his breath - well, you've never seen anything like it - he started jumping round and he said, 'Come on Charlie, I'll race you home'. Bill and I we walked up to the old road where it used to go up over .... anyway Bill got up there first and when we got up the top he said, 'Come on Charlie, I'll race you to the bloody river now'. I said, 'Oh you wouldn't be able to race me nowhere'. Anyway away he went and he started skating down through those snow gums there and the first go he come to is full of tea trees and all the snow had bent all the trees down and there was all big lumps of snow there. Bill went down through these snow gums and he hit these tea trees and as soon as he hit them all the snow fell off and the trees went up and Bill went down on his back and finished up in the bottom of the creek. I could see where he went in but I couldn't see where he come out. I found

him laying on his back in the creek and he says 'Give us a bloody hand out Charlie, I can't move'. He went down back first, so I grab hold of his skis and pulled him up and got him out, he sho. himself and away we go right over a snow drift - down on the western side of Sawyer's Hill is all these wind-blown areas with no snow on them - about as big as this room, with no snow, it would all be blown off. He's going down there and he's jumping these like a bloody kangaroo and I thought he'll break his neck - there's was rocks and everything on them - I thought he'll break his neck.

END SIDE 3

CB: We get up on Hospital Hill, that's the hill this side of Kiandra and there was a big drift behind, as high as that ceiling there - you'd go down over the hill and then drop off this drift. We reckoned we'd have a few runs over this snow drift, so away we go, we all went over, except Bill and Harold my brother. Snowy said 'I'll back Bill Hughes to ride that drift against '. Bill said, 'I don't think you better put too much money on me Snowy, I'm not feeling too good'. He says, 'You'll be right Bill, you'll be right'. So anyway they say 'Go' and away they go. The next thing Bill sat down before he got to the top of the drift and Harold went over it head first and the snow was just starting to freeze with that icy crust on it and he went into it face first and you ought to have seen Harold, oh it cut him - did it cut him - and he's bleeding like a stuffed pig. Bill sat down ... we had all our handkerchiefs working on Harold's face to stop this bleeding and we finished up with going back to the hotel. There was a sitting room inside the hotel, Mrs Wilson, when she was doing chores around the place she'd sit in the sitting room doing knitting, darning socks and one thing and another, and Mrs Wilson was sitting on the chair, Jacob's laying down on the couch smoking his pipe. We all went in and Mrs Wilson was sitting on one of these chairs with a cane back on it and Harold's got his foot caught in the leg of it and he was pretty full and he fell over and landed on the top of Mrs Wilson. Old Jacob's jumps up and he said 'Oh poor Harold takes a bloody fit, get the rum quick'. So they were alright but wasn't game to take him home, mum would have killed him. Next morning Mrs Wilson she said, 'Snowy' she said, 'Hey Snowy, what's the 13 shillings for in the bag'. He said, 'Don't worry about it just put it in the till, it'll be right'. And just then Jacob came in and he said 'I say, Snow' he says,

'Only eleven bottles of rum there, where's the other bottle'. Snow says, 'Forget about it Jacob, the money's in the bag there' and then Mrs Wilson started going crook, she says 'They don't have to do that sort of thing, you can put your cards on the table and explain everything without going through those sorts of things'. She went crook at Snowy for handing the 13 bob over. Anyway that was poor old Mick.

KH: Wasn't there something about the toboggan getting away at one stage, down through the Alpine ash! Whereabouts was that?

CB: Well when you get out of the RestHouse you go down along the ridge, go straight down towards the crossing, there was no bridge over her.

KH: The Eucumbene river crossing?

CB: No, Rocky Plain Creek. We had to get down off this ridge you see and we went along until we came to a nice clear run down, no timber, no trees and we decided we'd take him down there. It was snowing - Harold and Jink Yan on the ropes, on the toboggan. One of them fell over and the other fellows all fell over with them and away goes Mick in the toboggan straight for the creek and Bill and I after him. He goes over the flat and starts to slow up a bit and we caught up with him, grabbed a rope each and slowed him down and stopped him from going into the creek. Then we met these blokes from Adaminaby then and we were right.

KH: This was running of the ridge of Mt Tantangra?

CB: No, the ridge going down behind the RestHouse.

KH: Down into Rocky Plain, yes I know.

CB: That's where he got away from us, we caught him, there were not worries about it much - it wouldn't have hurt him.

KH: Bill Hughes, when he told the tale, he reckoned that Mick had never travelled so fast in all his life.

CB: He was moving, we couldn't catch him for a while, but we caught him when he got down on the flat. We didn't want to tangle with him when he was going down the hill or we would have gone arse over head too. We weren't that-good-a-skiers I suppose, we couldn't see any harm in the way he was going anyway - it was the way we wanted to take him, so we reckoned it was a step in the right direction.

KH: Were you involved in any other rescues or searches for dead stockmen?

CB: Yes I was. I remember I was up there during the Depression - we got burnt out at Kiandra - the Kiandra hotel, we were living in that and it got burnt out. So I went back to lend Harold a bit of a hand with his hydraulic sluicing. George Doran and Harold, they were playing '500' there one day, they were playing cuts with just the sevens in the pack and they'd be two blokes playing one bloke all the time. If you win six hearts, or eight hearts, you and I be against - you'd try stop you from getting them

and so on. They dealt me a hand and I had seven sure tricks in my hand, two Kings and the saver and they put me out to slam. I thought, well, I'll have a go. I went slam hearts and when I picked the kitty up, you know what was in it, the 7,8,9 of spades and I had two Kings and a saver in my hands. So I threw the two kings and saver and I kept the 7,8,9 of spades and I'd let all my hearts out, joker, two bowers, ace, king, queen and they're both chucking spades you see. Harold chucks ten of spades and George chucks a jack and Harold chucks the queen and then George chucks the king and it finishes up with this whole heap of spades. When I let all my hearts out I just threw the 7,8,9 of spades, I got my slam - you know they nearly had a fight over that - 'why didn't you save it' ... Anyway I got me slam. I got tired of playing cards and I said, 'I'll get me gun and go fox shooting'. Oh about 10 o'clock I got on my skis and away I goes, down to the river, took me boots off, waded across, put them back on again, took off up the side. There was no bridge over the Eucumbene river in those days. Sometimes there was a footbridge, sometimes you could get over and sometimes you couldn't. I gets a way up around the side of Sawyers Hill there, and all the snow used to blow right up over and cover the road right in and once you could see the tussocks and on the bottom side you could see them again. In the middle of the road there was 5 or 6 feet of snow in places. Anyhow I'm skiing along and it's snowing like hell, I put my ski on the roof of a car and when I put my weight on it, it slipped down. I thought I'd dig down here and have a look and I could hear somebody singing out - there was four people in it. They were crammed from Bulli, there was the mother, her two daughters, who were nurses and her son. They'd been in there all night, on Sawyers Hill. I went back over to Kiandra to get the boys and bring a toboggan over for their luggage and one thing and another. We got back and got them into Kiandra and they had to put the winter in there with us at Kiandra.

TW: What year was that Charlie?

CB: That would be about 1930 or '31.

TW: Who was running the Chalet then?

CB: Greg Day and his wife, they were running it there for a while, a bit of a guest house.

TW: Wally Reed and George Alberg came later!

CB: Yeah they came in later, old George and Wally.

KH: How long was Yan's store going, do you know?

CB: It went right up until about 1930 odd - might have been there 1930-35. It was still there then.

KH: In trade after the war or into the second war?

CB: No, they didn't trade after it, they weren't there then. They shifted down into Lobbs Hole, the Yans.

TW: When was the last store operating at Kiandra - would it have been Yans?

CB: Yeah, Yans would be the last one operating.

TW: Where did the school go from Kiandra?

CB: I don't know what they did with the school.

TW: I mean when did it close down?

CB: I wasn't there when it closed down. I think Edie Pattinson was the school teaching there in the finish. She married Greg Day, I was at their wedding down at Yarrangobilly. There's nothing left there now, Kiandra's gone.

KH: What about the dredge, do you remember the dredge on the Eucumbene?

CB: I don't remember it working, but I remember it full of dredge holes. There used to be some good fishing in some of them holes. Left some nice big holes there.

KH: The ones below the bridge?

CB: Yes, there's a couple there, they weren't dredge holes, they were elevator holes. They were sluiced out by hydraulics.

KH: So the dredge was up further, up towards where Bullocks Creek comes in?

CB: Yeah, well they dredged Camp Flat and then they dredged the Mill Hole and then they went up the river, that's where it finished up.

KH: Hansar's Creek?

CB: Bullocks Head Creek is the one up further ...

KH: Beyond that!

CB: Yes, that's below the Mill hole. They left more gold there than they ever took out you know. There's more gold in that Eucumbene river area than they ever took out. They dredged it and they were never able to clean the bottom and it's a very hard rock bottom and as they disturbed the over-burden, the wash, all the gold from down in the crevices and cracks is still there. They never cleaned the bottom, it's all under water. There's more gold there than they ever took away - that's what I reckon anyway. I don't think I'd be too far wrong.

KH: What about the dredge on the Gungahlin? When you went in across the Snowy Plains house, was it ever going or was it already a ruin by the time you got there?

CB: No, it wasn't working, it was closed for a long time before I ever went there.

KH: Do you know anything about the history of it?  
 CB: No I don't.  
 KH: Was it burnt out when you got there? All the superstructure apart from the metal has been burnt.  
 CB: It probably was too in bushfires. I don't know much about it. I only went through there a couple of times - the Grey Mare to Adaminaby - I never used to bother about - I was going one way or the other and I didn't have time to go bugging around in dredges - I wasn't interested anyway. There's only one bloke that could give you information about that - that's old Bill Napthalie and he's dead now.  
 KH: They had a bit of a sawmill there didn't they, at Snowy Plains House?  
 CB: Well that was Broadhead. Broadheads had a sawmill there.  
 KH: The same people who had the mill on Alpine Creek?  
 CB: Yes.  
 KH: After Alpine Creek they had ...  
 CB: Yes, I've got Bert's book there somewhere. He had a mill there somewhere - I don't know exactly where it was. I know the one at Alpine Creek - they had a water wheel there. If you go round that sharp bend, going into the creek there, down your left, very close to the road. That race went away round up the creek ...  
 KH: But some of the remains are down further, there's a bit of a hut. If you take the highway back further there's a road down into Alpine Creek lower down.  
 CB: There's a sawmill down there too.  
 KH: That's separate is it?  
 CB: That was Stewart Kellys.  
 KH: There's a bullock dray still there, a bit of a steam engine, a bit of a hut. That was Stewart Kelly's sawmill?  
 CB: Yes.  
 KH: Where was he from?  
 CB: Adaminaby.  
 KH: He was still going in the 40s or 50s was he?  
 CB: I think he'd have been closed down by then.  
 KH: But the Broadheads, they were there way back weren't they?  
 CB: Right in the early days.  
 KH: 1870s, 80s.  
 CB: Old Bert's still alive you know.

KH: Yes, 'Big Badja', I met him a few years ago.  
 CB: I must go and see him when I go to Cooma next time - poor old Bert. We were pretty good mates. Old Dan, <sup>his</sup> brother, I used to take old Dan with me when I used to go and fish for the fisheries inspection.  
 KH: The Broadheads went to Teddys Creek and Snowy Plains hut after Alpine didn't they?  
 CB: No I think they were there before they went to Alpine Creek.  
 KH: Cutting some of that timber up towards Brassy Gap?  
 CB: Yes, there's good timber in there. Old Bert - he's written all about it in his book anyhow. I had an uncle who used to play cricket with old Dan's brother. It wasn't Bert it was Jim. Uncle Jack was the wicketkeeper and Jim Broadhead was a fast bowler, they used to go through these cricket teams like a dose of salts, they were pretty good players.  
 KH: Do you know Tom and Molly Taylor?  
 CB: Yes. Tommy and I grew up together. He used to be way out there at Long Plain, round Peppercorn, Rules Point - he had two or three sisters. One of them lost her arm, I forget what her name was now.  
 KH: I know Irene, Irene Harris married to Bill Harris. She's the only one of his sisters that I know.  
 CB: I don't think there's any of them alive now.  
 KH: We stayed at Currango, where Tom and Molly Taylor are, just last week.  
 CB: We had to go to a funeral at Tumut the other day, Ted Quinn's wife died, Ivy. She's related to Mrs Boardman.  
 KH: It sounded like a big collection of the old community.  
 CB: Yeah, there was really some old hands there. Greg Day was there and Buster - three Day fellows there, some of their sons. But Ivy was an old mate of mine, she was at Kiandra when we went there first, she used to work at the Alpine Hotel with Jacob Wilson. Jacob had a couple of girls, there was Florie Thomas and Ivy, they used to do waitressing, bedmaking, and chores around the place.  
 KH: Do you remember Bob Hughes's hut on Four Mile Creek at all? After the Elaine mine folded up, apparently he built a hut on Four Mile Creek.  
 CB: There used to be a hut - Jack Jarvis' hut.  
 KH: On Four Mile Creek?  
 CB: Yes. Some of the old Boltons may have rebuilt it or done it up.  
 KH: Bill Glennie had a hut there too I believe.  
 CB: Old Glennie died, he got burnt - he fell in a fire - he was an old pensioner. I don't know whether Bill got his money or who got his money, or whether he had any. Bill used to look after him.



KH: Did you know Tom Yan?

CB: Yeah I went to school with him. I knew his grandfather too, old Tommy and Jimmy AhDoo - they were there when we went to Kiandra - there was three Chinaman. There was old Jimmy AhYung at the Nine Mile and Tommy Yan and Jimmy AhDoo. Jimmy went to bed, he was smoking in bed, burnt the place down with his cigarettes. That's why I'm cranky on cigarette smoking - people smoking cigarettes - used to smoke in bed and all this sort thing - they only ask for bloody trouble you know. I can remember Tommy Yan's store when I first went to Kiandra. He had all these Chinese foods, Chinese wines - he used to have a feast for all the dead Chinamen over in the cemetery. Mrs Wilson, that's his daughter, she used to cook all the fowls, poultry and hams and all sorts of things, they'd take them over to the Chinese graves and old Tommy would lay them all down on a table cloth over the grave and he'd get down and he'd be bowing and scraping, moaning and groaning and going on with a lot of bloody nonsense. Then to finish up we'd all get stuck into this food. They had this wine in these earthenware jars - very potent stuff. Tommy used to say 'Charlie you catch'm duck, you bring'm duck, I cooky duck'. I said 'Right-o Tommy'. I went over there one day and I shot a big black shag. I thought he's not a bad duck, I'll have to cut his head off. Took him back and Tommy skinned him and cut him up into little cubes, cooked him, par-boiled him, par-fried him and done all sorts of things. He said, 'We have Chinese sweet and sour duck'. So I got stuck into this shag, it wasn't bad. I didn't tell anybody it was shag. I used to bring Tommy ducks and fish, he used to cook, he was a marvellous cook - had some great feeds with old Tommy. I was only a boy at the time. Then there was another identity there, Black Christy - I forget what his other name was - they used to call him Black Christy. I used to have to milk seven cows before I went to school of a morning - Christy had a beautiful shotgun and he had a beautiful violin, a Stradivarius violin and he had gut strings on it - he used to play this violin. When he was playing it, he used to pull all the faces around the place, he'd screw his face up, I used to laugh like buggery. I started to learn to play the violin, Mum sent me up the policeman's wife, she was the music teacher - she was going to get me taught the violin. I was just starting to handle it you know, learn all the notes and everything and I finish up - I thought I'll have a go this. I started playing by ear, I was playing 'Home Sweet Home' and all sorts of funny tunes. Mrs Cook found out I was playing by ear and she wouldn't teach me no more. I used to go down Saturday night and play for the dances - by ear. Well, Christy came over and he said 'Good morning Charlie' - elbows on the rail - 'any

chance of getting a drop of milk'. I said 'Oh yes my brother can dish out a bit, any chance of getting a loan of your violin, Saturday night'. 'Ney' he said, 'I will not lend my violin'. I said 'No, well bugger you then, you won't get any milk'. He stalked away over to his hut and goes in. After I'd finished milking, I'd take the bucket over and I said, 'Right-o give us your billy can you black bugger'. I give him a billycan full of milk. He says 'All right Charlie you can have a loan of my violin for Saturday night but you must not let that Fred Smiles' - Fred Smiles was the dingo trapper and he used to get it on his hip and used to give it hell, he'd rasp and he'd rasp and tear the blooming guts out of it. He said, 'I'll give you the key and when you're finished playing you lock it up, don't let that Fred Smiles play it'. So Fred comes in with his spurs on and his rodent leggings and one thing and another and he stalks up the hall - click, click, click coming up the hall. He says, 'Right-o Charlie I'll give you an extra'. I said 'O.k. Fred, thanks, I'll have a dance'. Anyway he goes over to the violin, it was locked, he says 'Where's the key'. I said 'In my pocket and it's staying there too'. He said 'Why'. I said 'Christy told me I wasn't to let you play his violin'. He said, 'The black so-and-so, I'll give him a punch in the bloody nose'. Christy's looking through the window - scrapped the paint off the window with a razor blade so he could see in, see whether Fred was playing his violin or not. They had a terrific argument out on the front of the verandah. Anyway he never got Christy's violin, he wouldn't let him play - I didn't blame him anyhow - he used to break all the strings off - he was too rough, tried to get too much sound of it. That hall, Bob Hughes bought it, at Kiandra.

KH: The School of Arts!

CB: No, we had a hall there, Bob bought that and then he made a sulky shed out of it for his sulky - Herb Hain's got that sulky.

KH: He's probably still got it.

CB: It would be worth a bit of money, it was a very good sulky, very good order. Bob used to keep it like a new pin, used to take a lot of his girlfriends out in it. A little grey pony he had.

KH: Bob?

CB: Young Bob.

KH: Bob had girlfriends?

CB: Yes - he was in pitching for my sister, yeah too right.

KH: I was led to believe that he was a very quite fellow, wasn't very interested in the ladies.

CB: After that he wasn't, after she gave him away, they split up - I don't know whether she gave him away, or he gave her away, never come

to nothing. He never had anything to do with women after that.  
Dolly, his sister used to live there with them up the flat there and Harold  
and I were going shooting one day ...

END SIDE 4.

CB: 3/5/34

CB: ... Harold's sitting there on the box and up on the shelf above  
the mantelpiece was all the tea tins, baking powder tins and all sorts  
of things along the shelf. There was one tin there, it was 'Edwards Tea' -  
King Edward had his picture on this tea can and Harold's sitting there and  
he said 'You watch me knock old Edward's hat off Charlie'. I said 'Don't  
you point that bloody gun around' and he let fly - he didn't know there  
was a bullet in it you see. Well every bloody tin erupted on the mantelpiece,  
flew everywhere, about six bloody shingles went off the top of the roof,  
bloody great big hole and Dolly took off down the hallway screaming. It  
frightened hell out of her. Poor old Dolly, I'll never ever forget that.  
Harold was as white as a ghost you know, if he'd pointed that gun at somebody  
he would have shot somebody. It was really funny, I'll never forget that.

KH: Should we have a look at some of the photographs that your wife's  
got out. If you'd like to perhaps comment on them.

CB: That's Don Marret, Errol Darby, there's Charlie Stanley, that's  
Charlie Bell ...

KH: Do you spell your name 'ie' on the end or 'y'.

CB: Charlie ... that's me, I forget that blokes name, and that's  
Jim Sandford, and that's one night's catch of fish.

KH: What river was that?

CB: Eucumbene. That's the Tin hut and Charlie Bell.

KH: Can we have a look at some of the others, it's good to use them  
as prompters for information.

CB: There's Tugger McGrath there - ...

In the course of a sporty existence  
I've had a lot of experience with trout  
I've walk some bloody long distance  
Trying to pull a few of them out.

That's an old Scotch bloke I used to know - he always had a bottle of scotch.

KH: Is there any more of that poem?

CB: There is more of it yeah. This is old Sergeant Noble, he was  
one of the old brigade.

KH: At Kiandra?

CB: He's all over the place - down at Canberra, he was stationed  
down there - Goulburn.

.... Looking at photos.

KH: This is when you were out at the Grey Mare?

CB: Yes.

? Did you ever know a Frank Noble or a Joel Noble.

CB: No, he could be related. June would probably know.

Looking at photos.

(Inaudible - overtalking).

CB: You know it's a bloody small world. When I was living at Clovelly  
I was going up fox shooting up to Adaminaby with Don, Don Marrett and I  
...

That's the Washington Hotel at Lobbs Hole.

KH: With the mud walls?

CB: Yes, I stayed in that hotel. That was George Yan's place up  
the river a bit.

Well the story was on that - we had twenty odd head of cattle  
you see - in Lobbs Hole we had a town common and Kiandra had a town common.  
These Lobb Hole fellows used to bring their cattle up and run them on the  
common at Kiandra and in the winter time the Kiandra people used to take  
their cattle to Lobbs Hole in the winter time. They used to take it in  
turns. We had our cattle down in Lobbs Hole in winter and when it come  
spring time the old man sent me down to get them. When I went down I couldn't  
find them. These bloody - Abe Thomas and Charlie Wilesmith and Cec  
He\_therington, they had them planted up the gully, Yarrangobilly River.  
When it come to collect the cattle I couldn't find them. So eventually  
somebody told me where they were and I went down to collect them. When  
I was driving them up past the Washington Hotel these three blokes tried  
to stop me from taking them home. They got stuck into me with a stock  
whip, I said 'have a go if you want to, but it won't be worth your while'.  
Anyway I took me cattle home and I told [Dad] about it and when they  
came up to Kiandra, he gave them all a big hiding.

KH: Has this got any bells in it.

...

KH: I spoke to Stewart Ross this morning.

JB: He's related to Miles Franklin from Brindabella and the Bridles from Tumut. I was just reading about 'Bung' Harris. This is George Ford too, a tribute, I've kept it.

? Jack tried to write poetry - there was a song of his sung by the Sett

JB: Charlie has the record of the Settlers and the little monologue, the Irish man talking about Brandy Mary's flat. Don't you think that is really beautiful.

KH: They've recorded a new one altogether. They had a reunion a couple of years ago - they split up about 10 years ago - they got back together again and put down some new songs. There are three now that I know of, three LPs.

JB: Well Major Clews, they mentioned him on one side. They mentioned him on one, having his in the hotel and Major Clews losing his dentistry and his teeth used to always trouble - Cliff was always trying to get a photo when they dropped. Cliff Noble was our photograph. That photograph he did in there did win him a prize. It hung in Blaxland Galleries and Bill Dobell's opened the exhibition.

END SIDE 5

CB: 2/6/36

CB: ... wrote my book.

KH: What book do you want to write?

CB: I want to write a book about my fishing experience.

JB: ... it was before the Snowy Scheme came. 'Men of the Snowy Mountains'.

KH: There have been a number of books. There's one by Wigmore it's a very big book.

JB: I don't know it, but this one I got for 20¢ when the book-lovers library closed when Miss Enid Upward died in Cooma. They sold all her books for 20¢. I got that and quite a lot of very good books for 20¢.

CONCLUSION