

26/4/1978

Robbie Kilpinen

KH: So what happened to your back? Did you injure your back at work?

RB: It went crook when I was a kid, I think. I was doing pole vaulting and we had pine poles, and my pole snapped and I fell on my head, head first on the foot of this pine tree and I remember I flaked out and I must have done funny faces when I came up and all the kids were laughing. I never think - it used to get sort of - Once in a while it gets bad, and it used to get worse and worse and worse. And even after my trip to Kiandra, next day I was so crook I could just drag my legs around. But when I got hot and warm, I could ski. But if I slowed down, I will have had it. I had to just keep going. And then I had this operation. I was the first bloke in the world that had bones welded with the electric current. I had my story in the paper. I made the headlines everywhere but they did not mention names.

KH: Oh. I see. You have made headlines more than once.

RK: Yes, oh yes.

KH: Your skiing record is still making headlines.

RK: Yes, that one I had. Kossy - Kiandra, that sort of thing.

All the blokes talk of it, all the year, and they do a bit of a trip there and a bit of a trip there, and they try to study it.

And one bloke knows the first bit to, say, as far as Gungahlin

or Mawsons.

And somebody knows bits around Table Top. And none of them know the whole route. Some times they combine - last year Dennis Vanzella

did one end and Peter Thompson did the other end. But they did not last. They only lasted as far as Nordheim, and they took 8 hours to get to Nordheim.

KH: 8 hours to Nordheim. Oh, where Nordheim is now?

RK: Yes.

KH: From Perisher to Nordheim?

RK: Yes. It was a fair time, but it is still a long way to go - that is where you are going to get into trouble, around after Cesjacks. Trees have grown a lot too, since I went to Nora's place after

Robbie Kilpinen

last ^{winter} : And I walk round, where I have my route. I knew exactly where ^I had gone, and trees were a ruddy 10 foot tall there already. Like ^{the country is different,} there is lots more little scrub there. It would not be as easy to ski my route any more either.

KH: You don't think so?

RK: If you maybe mark it better. But when I went through they were doing grazing there, there was too much rubbish ^{around} there. There was ^{so} much snow in 64, too. Like you could just ski in that

KH: 64 was a big year, wasn't it?

RK: Oh, it was a good snow year. Grey Mare was covered to the top.

KH: That was the very big year when some of the roofs in places had their verandahs ^{bent}. And they had to tunnel into the Man from Snowy River.

RK: Yes. And when I went to Grey Mare, I left Guthega in the evening and I skied like hell, and I got to Grey Mare, and no hut! And I started taking bearings where it should be, and I skied over the chimney and snow fell in the chimney.

KH: Yes?

RK: And then I had to dig like hell. It was getting dark and I just dug in the front door. I had to prop the fly door open and ^I tore open then, and I got in. But it was up to the - the only time I have seen it up to the roof in Grey Mare.

KH: All round?

RK: Yes.

KH: No drift?

RK: No, it was that bloody snow.

KH: On both sides?

RK: Yes.

KH: Even the roof?

RK: Yes. The only time - I have been there in other good years and never been - it has not been even up to the windows. One year when we were up - it must have been 65. Ross Martin was

Robbie Kilpinen

up there with me, and Asko ~~Aski~~ Asilla, a bloke from Canberra. And then it was up to the windows a few times. But it was sort of blowing, it was not the same sort of snow. In 64, you could ski over the valley; take off from the hut and ski right down. It was dead smooth, no river or nothing. You couldn't see the river, well, most of the winter. And cornices on the top of the Gungarten - it was just fantastic - about a 30 foot drop.

KH: So you could go out to the edge - - ^{On Gungarten?}

RK: And two peaks there, they were connected by a big cornice. But you could not get down, only at the one spot in the middle. You had to know the spot.

KH: The whole length of Gungarten?

RK: Yes.

KH: One big cornice?

RK: Yes, yes. And there was one point towards the Valentine Valley where you could take off. It was good schuss down there, but it was so wide it was hard to see for a long time where to go down. Because I used to ski - I used to do my shopping in Cabramurra sometimes, and next time I might go to Island Bend ^{and} get my sausages ^{and stuff} from there.

KH: Island Bend was still going then?

RK: Yes. They had sort of a shop there, and they had good Italian sausages there and all sorts of stuff. And I bought mainly sorts of spicy meat there.

KH: So you used to come down the White's River road?

RK: Yes, I skied down it.

KH: Down in to ^{Munyang, Schlink Pass?}

RK: Yes. But I would ski - go ^{near} Cup and Saucer and beat my track there, and I would ski up Valentine Valley up to the Gungarten and down to the road, so I would always know how the snow was forming there. And that year it was beautiful. The whole valley was dead smooth. You could schuss down, just sit down, ^{and} it just went.

KH: ^{Because} No wonder you could do the best time. Barry Mar-

Robbie Kilpinen

shall, I was talking to him sometime ago, and I said to him, "You know, it is amazing that nobody has broken that record." And he said to me, "You know, it might never happen, because the chances of getting the right person and the right snow and the right weather and the right skis, altogether - - -"

RK: Yes. And that day, the day before I was going to do it, I had tried two times, other times. The day before, I went as far as ^{Schlink} Pass, and the weather closed in.

KH: The day before?

RK: Yes, the day before, I went as far as Schlink Pass, and I turned back because I saw it was going to close in, it was getting really bad. I went back. But it did not snow very much but it got really sort of a white-out, and I got back to Cooma Hut. The next morning I followed my track up to the ^{Schlink} Pass, and I got my special way to come across the Rolling Grounds. I come down to Windy Creek and cross about 45 degrees from - there is ~~that~~ snow gauge there, and you come right to the Schlink Pass. And that year - because Schlink Pass was smooth too, you could schuss down - it was horrible, really horrible fast, but you could schuss right down. And I thought - I was just after a good record, I schussed it down. I did not fall either, I went way, way up the other side, that climb up to Gungarten. I knew after a few runs like that, I knew that it is going to ^{be} very hard to beat. Like, other years, you cannot schuss down that. It has got ripples and roughened. ~~it~~ And I had been there a few times when it had not been like that. And that morning, too, I left about - what was it - the first light, anyway, it was still dark when I left.

KH: This is from Cooma Hut?

RK: Cooma Hut. And there was only one bit of cloud. It might have been a kilometre long, it was a little cloud, and it moved in the same direction I was going and it kept the snow cool, and I skied and skied underneath. I just kept going underneath this cloud. I was going like a bat out of hell and I

Robbie Kilpinen

stayed under this cloud till Happy Jack's. And then ^{white} I swam across Happy Jack's - it left me and I had to change ^{wax}. At least I was on a green stick and as soon as the cloud went and it was so much lower, I had to change to Klister, but I had had my good run then.

KH: So what wax did you say you were on for most of the run?

RK: The hardest stick wax. It is a special ^{green}. It is not very many days - every year there might be a day or two you can use that wax. It is so hard, it is like candle, it is that hard.

KH: Who makes it?

RK: They use it in Finland and when blokes go racing in Europe they use it. Most blokes do not even have it here. It is that hard.

KH: No. So there are different kinds of green stick.

RK: Yes, there is special green, it is sort of - - -

KH: Special green?

RK: Yes. When it is more than 30 degrees ^{below} Centigrade, really, really fine snow, you would blow on that snow, and if you can feel it, like ^{running in ash}. Sometimes you get really fine snow and it would not run, normal wax would not run, then you use special green. You might have to mix, even mix paraffin. This year in the world championships they had to mix paraffin in it.

KH: What temperature did you say it ^{was} for?

RK: Below 30 in Europe.

KH: 30 degrees Centigrade?

RK: Yes, but that morning, snow was sort of blown and it was really fine. It ^{wasn't} hard wind; and it was really fine snow, and because ^{there's} fine snow there is so many more particles to stick on your wax. And also these days they wax skis like I used to do. But I had wooden skis then, and I burned them with paraffin in the heel and in the tip, and I only waxed them in the middle - - -

Robbie Kilpinen

KH: *You burned it off?*

RK: I burned it with a blow torch, and I knew ^{were going to wear out} they ^{because I} had worn a few skis out, wooden skis they used to wear ^{out}. And I thought, ^{to wear this} best, because when it wears out through the tar, it gets low, it just starts coming out like toilet paper. I burned the paraffin ⁱⁿ, so when it wore out, it still remained fast. And they went round but they were still fast. And that is why I think blokes got faster skis now, they have got plastic skis. But my skis were, I think, faster. My skis kept wax a lot better, wooden skis. They were almost waxless because wood has got hair in it and it is rubbed one ^{way}, and it is a bit wax-less too.

KH: But your paraffin stopped that from happening? Stopped you from wearing through to the wood.

RK: Yes, it was wearing, but it always remained still paraffin in the *grain*...of the wood and it just kept fast.

KH: The paraffin soaks right in.

RK: Yes, it goes in, yes.

KH: Because they are the points that rub the most, aren't they?

RK: Yes, in the heel of the - yes, and if you hit a bit of ice on the side of the hill. I had one pair of blue Bonnar skis and they lasted a week, and they were so round you could not traverse with them. And I thought if I get only conditions like that, *yoy*...cannot make it then, because if you cannot control your skis on the downhill slopes, nothing *once they are round*.

KH: So what sort of skis did you ski on?

RK: They were Finnish skis - Jarvinen - they are not much of a ski, they were too light for Australian conditions, really. But that day the snow was good snow. You can still buy ^{them}. There is a bloke in Thredbo who has got - I think he has got 500 pairs of them. They brought lots of them out, and they were all right. And then started to come this first impregnated - the sole with the plastic. And then the wooden ski was finished, and because, if they put plastic in the wood, it was not the same ski any

Robbie Kilpinen

more. It started to come really hard, a bit like these polythene soles now. They are really tricky to wax. You have got to put the base wax on, and everything right. And even then you get poor snow. I also believe - with wooden skis they had big, round edges, that they were softer. They carried a bloke higher on the soft snow, I am dead sure. These new skis, they put so much camber on your middle ^{that your} ski does not touch the snow, and they are unsuitable for long records. I am dead sure. If they got good track, they would be a lot faster, but not when you have not got a track.

KH: You did not have a track?

RK: No.

KH: Perhaps you had a bit of a track from the day before, did you?

RK: Yes, as far as Schlick Pass, I had a little bit of a mark, and I knew exactly how to come. And I think when I came to Guthega, I don't remember - it was just a matter of minutes, it was not even 10 minutes when I came from Cooma Hut to Guthega. I went up again, and I followed my track from the morning before, sort of - a little bit of snow cloud once in a while, but it was so beautiful, and I flew down to the dam.

KH: You skied right down to the dam?

RK: Yes, oh yes. And my car, at that stage, was about 20 foot under the snow. There was 50 cars buried in the Guthega car park from the Balmain Cup meeting on. And my car was there, well, it had been there for maybe two weeks by then, anyway. And it was a few weeks later till I got it out and it was all flattened. The whole Guthega slope was like that. You did not see any roofs. Chimneys were sticking out. When you came up from the Perisher Creek it was like in Switzerland, the snow banks were about - I would say about 20 feet.

KH: On Perisher Creek?

RK: Yes, coming up from Perisher Creek. It took about a week with the big bulldozers - they had a sort of shovel with a

Robbie Kilpinen

long, long arm, and it lifted it up and dumped it over. Because there was that much of it, even that way it took a long, long time to get up. That machine was so big, when it got in the car park, the first two cars, it did not even feel them, just dumped them over and then they saw wheels spinning in the Snowy, and they thought they were *digging*..some cars. The two first cars, they were a complete write-off, they had got *the money back*.

KH: There were a lot of cars were write-offs that year, weren't there?

RK: Oh yes. And *George* Dudzinski had a ^{new} Citroen. He had lots and lots -.....and he had his new Citroen with a fibreglass roof which was all mashed and *broken*.. I had a Toyota Crown; it was almost new too. And you could see the motor through the bonnet, because *wet* snow had sunk on it, and it had forced the bonnet down onto the motor. It was that shocking, I almost cried about that.

KH: No insurance cover?

RK: Everybody's cars were fixed up, yes. That was really - I don't know - I don't think if they would do it now - but that time, everybody's car had got damaged, insurance paid them.

KH: That is a natural cause.

RK: Yes, it was, yes. But there was no warning when it started. We were all in the YMCA, *waiting for the* Balmain Cup and there was not much snow around, and then it started snowing *and it snowed for a while*.....and then it said it is intensifying, it has stopped, it is not moving any more. It just kept snowing, and we had 30 people in the YMCA, lots *full lodge*, and they were all beginners, and some racers. The racers got out, they could ski out; the beginners got stuck.

I was there with George and a few other blokes. I used to ski every day to Perisher and bring milk and bread and stuff. And we could not get out. And then *we*... went to Island Bend, they said the road would not be open till next month or something, because there was so much *snow*. And we told them they had to ski out. They said, "We can't ski." We said, "You have to ski

Robbie Kilpinen

at least as far as Sponar's Inn," because ^{that's} where buses could get. And everybody skied to Sponar's Inn when - - -

KH: That is right. I heard different stories about that. But to go back to your crossing, you skied on special greenstick all the way to Happy Jack's?

RK: Yes.

KH: On the one lot of wax?

RK: On the one lot of wax, yes. I did not rewax, all the way.

KH: And so your route was - you left Cooma Hut, and you left Cooma Hut in the dark, about 6 o'clock.

RK: Yes.

KH: And well, you just go over the saddle and straight down and across the dam. And then up the - what is that - Guthega trig ridge?

RK: I do not go on the ridge. I go on Guthega Creek. And that year the bottom of the creek was full too. You could schuss *down*, well, not right from the top, like it got too fast, you could not schuss down. But if you wanted to, you could follow the creek. It was not open, because a few months later *it sort of opened*

huge holes, big drops, and I thought, oh boy, if I skied into that, *I wouldn't come out* later. But I did not even think then, I skied right into the bottom, *got up* and over the top.

KH: *Your trip*..was in July, was it?

RK: Yes.

KH: What was the date? It does not matter that much - late in July?

RK: Yes, it was just getting ^{on} August, I think, when I did it. And I went - the whole winter I had on the Grey Mare, and I just kept studying how the snow was falling. And at one stage, Happy Jack was so good, I skied over Happy Jack's without taking my skis off. You did not know where *Happy Jack's* was, but then it opened up *the banks were about* four foot of snow even at Happy

Robbie Kilpinen

Jack's, and the river was fairly - but because I hit Happy Jack's fairly early, I really did not have to - I sort of waded across, I stuck my skis over - - -

KH: You had to wade across on the crossing?

RK: Yes, oh yes.

KH: What, did you just roll your pants up, or something?

RK: No, no. Had to put all the clothes in a bundle and throw them over, boots and all, and wade across. And I thought somebody would have had a good laugh if he saw me coming off the thing, because the snow bank was perpendicular, and I was trying to get my toes in and I just kept slipping back in the river, *I broke* enough ^{snow} to crawl ^{out}. But, oh boy, I was cold.

KH: But didn't you know of the bridge?

RK: No, there was no bridge then.

KH: It has been there a long time, two logs. Just two logs across the Happy Jack's, not very far on the - - -

RK: No, there was a cable, and I was planning to use that cable and go around - try to use the cable, but there was no bridge.

KH: There is two logs and they are very old

RK: Well, maybe they - - -

KH: Near Brooks.

RK: Yes, near Brooks. There was no logs there. If there were, they were that much under water, because it was running that well. But there was no way you could - and Kora and *Otto* went through ^{same year} and they almost drowned. They really got washed along for a long time.

KH: To keep to the same story, to go back to the route; you left Perisher and up the creek, up Guthega Creek, and then you actually went up to *Consett, Stephen's* Pass?

RK: Yes, over *the Consett*. Steven's Pass. But I think I was the first bloke to use the route down to Windy Creek - as far as the snow gauge there, a sort of steel pipe sticking on that right hand side, about a kilometre down from - in Windy Creek. And the

Robbie Kilpinen

best route is across the Rolling Grounds there, and you come right in the Schlink Pass.

KH: But you did not go right down to the Windy Creek Hut?

RK: No, no.

KH: No. About halfway down, and then you sneak across the *Rolling Grounds*.

RK: Yes, and you come 45 degrees and when you have skied it once, you never ski the other way. Like *the boys ski the* next morning, blokes like they knew I made a good time and they studied how I did it. They studied, and they could not believe the way I went. Like, they had been skiing there for donkey's years, too.

KH: Who was that?

RK: Kora, Grunsund, and *Otto Pinkas*. They came the next morning and they checked how I went, which way I went, because I did such a good time. And I think they also could not believe I went up to Gungarten, but when they saw what I *did*... behind at Gungarten, I think they saw the point. I took *David Elvin, Thompson and Vanzella* *then* up Gungarten, and that year Valentine Valley was smooth, too. And you get a few kilometres, just sitting there and you just cruise down.

KH: So you came across the Rolling Grounds *from* the Windy Creek side, came out *at Schlink*....Pass. And then what? And then went straight up the other side, did you?

RK: Yes.

KH: Practically very close to *Gungarten* trig.... *on the way to* Tin Hut.

RK: Yes, you go all the way to the trig. And that year, '64, they were still being - the two trigs - they were sort of connected by a big cornice. And in the middle of the cornice there was a route you could get down, and I just schussed - - -

KH: That is the way that I normally go to Tin Hut.

RK: Yes, it would be *a good back* way to Tin Hut, too.

KH: It is a lovely run back, too, back to Schlink Pass, terrific run.

RK: Yes, it is not too steep.

Robbie Kilpinen

KH: You can just swing, and let them run.
 RK: Yes.
 KH: So then you get to the top of Gungarten and then did you head towards Mawson's?
 RK: No, I sort of - - -
 KH: To the end of Mawson's?
 RK: Yes, I go on the right hand side of Cup and Saucer, and then I keep on very right hand side of that - sort of when the mountains drop off, I keep on the edge. I see Lake Eucumbene and the Monaro Plains all the time I keep on the edge. I ski different ways there. And I sort of ski a standard beat and I made some notes and things, and I found out what I thought was the best way. And also, what a lot of blokes do, still do it, they think they ^{gonna improve, take a short cut.} ... they do not think they lose 500 feet, and it is different snow. And the wax will not work there. But I get higher. I try to ski in the same sort of snow all the way. And that day, at least, it worked very well. ^{Kora + Otto} they try to improve my - they went on the other side of Mawson's, and going ^{lower} down. And you just slip for a while, and once your skis are slipping, or if you ^{ball}...up, you lose so much ^{time}.
 KH: So you stayed on the top? You really stayed on the high parts, didn't you?
 RK: Yes.
 KH: You went around the top of the Valentine and then around behind the Cup and Saucer; and then the Bulls Peaks, and then you came in near Nordheim?
 RK: Yes.
 KH: Near Nordheim, just to the right of Cesjacks'.
 RK: Yes.
 KH: And what did you do then, when you got to Spencer's Peak? Did you go to the left or the right of that?
 RK: I turned right from Cesjacks. There was a bit of ^a paddock going towards Eucumbene, and there was a big fence post there, and ^{fence runs} up in the gum trees there. And I fol-

Robbie Kilpinen

lowed the gum tree down. And the next creek, over the bridge. I don't know what it is even called. That creek I found out, it was all the way downhill to Happy Jack's. It was not all that direct, but it was all the way downhill, and I worked it out on the way to Cabramurra a few times. Like it was always double pole all the way to the river. And I went on that creek.
 KH: It must have been - I wonder which creek it was? Not Tibeaud's Creek?
 RK: I think it might be Tibeaud's, or something like that. I don't know the name of it. It is a long creek, it goes all the way from ^{ridge}.
 KH: Yes. You did not go past Tibeaud's Hut?
 RK: No there was no hut on that.
 KH: Or the hut near Spencer's Peak, past Cesjacks, there is another hut.
 RK: No, I did not see any hut. Only Cesjacks Hut I use as a base sometimes. And I knew from Cesjacks to Happy Jack's, I knew that bit. Peter Thompson found that way, and I think he - last year he did a bit of ^a study there.
 KH: Peter Thompson - he is the guy that makes films now?
 RK: Yes. He did it, but then he found - he tried to do it, but they ^p run out of puff.
 KH: Oh, that is right, I heard about that. They did it in 12 hours or something; is that right?
 RK: Yes.
 KH: But they stopped at Nordheim.
 RK: Yes. And they had ^{food there} they would have been better off if like - I did not have - all I had ^{was} a few sandwiches and then I had a few raisins, and I had ^{a cup}... to drink, that is all I had. And I only ate ^{at} Happy Jack's; but I should have, if I knew how hot it was going to get ^{at} Table Top, I should have had a lot more drink because I just dehydrated...?....the snow was soggy, and pushing through up to Table Top - that way I really sort of punished myself.

Robbie Kilpinen

KH: So you left - you crossed to Happy Jack's; you stripped all your gear off and crossed ^{the} Happy Jack's. And then did you - which way did you go up on to - did you come up to Arsenic Ridge? Up to Brooks Hut or Happy's Hut?

RK: I could see Brook's ^{Hut} when I crossed the river, but then I turned sort of a bit along the river, and I found out there was, looking from Jagungal, I could see there was one route; it went all the way ^{round} to Table Top. It was all clear snow. And I figured out ^{from behind the thing,} that right underneath that sort of ridge it would be dry snow, and it was, too. It was good snow. I skied all the way up there.

KH: You went slightly east across the creek, the river, you then headed east.

RK: Yes, it was sort of the wrong direction at that time, but - - -

KH: Yes, you did a dog leg.

RK: Yes. But I worked out I would get better ^{snow}, and I got better snow there, too. And every time after that, when I left the Table Top airstrip, and I went in the trees, I sunk down. It just would not carry my weight, and I was sort of crawling in the snow. And it was best to keep in the open, the snow had got cold and it was more windpacked. And in the trees it had not got cold and it was just breaking in. And that is where it ^{ke} comes hard, when you get - - -

KH: Where does it start to get hard?

RK: After Table Top. After Table Top you keep going towards Cabramurra for a while, otherwise you go too low down. Again I go towards Selwyn - I almost go to Selwyn Quarry, and then I schuss down to Kiandra.

KH: So, did you go over Table Top at all, or around it?

RK: I go - - -

KH: Over the top?

RK: Over the top, just about, there is that little bit below the peak on the Kiandra side, round there. And then I go

Robbie Kilpinen

to Selwyn Quarry.

KH: Because there is a fire trail that goes around that.

RK: Yes, they have opened the trail almost exactly on the spot where I went through then, too. I have not been there for a couple of years now.

KH: Yes, that makes it a lot easier, if you can find that in the winter.

RK: Yes, but if there is a lot of ^{through the gum trees} snow, 10, 15 feet, it might be still difficult to find it.

KH: That is right.

RK: And it is not only that. It is still - when you ski for 6 hours, you start thinking differently. You sort of think silly. Like, I got that far - I met some Snowy blokes, they were doing some task, measuring snow or something. And one was Danny Collman, I knew the bloke. And I was still - I had done a bit over 7 hours then. I should have been in Kiandra in half an hour at least. And soon after that, I just felt, oh, how stupid I am; I am skiing like this, and could I have a little ^{bit of} rest. I am mad skiing like this. And I sort of sat down voluntarily; the next thing I woke up; I had been lying on the snow, I must have fallen off the log, and I was shivering and I was cold as hell. And I just started skiing, and if it was a blowing day or something, I might have been in real trouble then. But then I got ^{into} Kiandra and there was a kiosk there open - but first I went in the post office and rang up back to Perisher, with the postmaster. And then I went in the kiosk, and I drank, I think, six large bottles of lemonade. The girl could not believe ^{it}. I just sat there and I drank slowly, and I just kept drinking, and she could not believe - - -

KH: Who is this?

RK: The girl in the kiosk - there was a little kiosk in the front of the Chalet at Kiandra. And I just kept sitting there and drinking. And after I drank - I must have got sugar back in my blood - I felt almost fit enough to ski back. But I knew I

Robbie Kilpinen

would not be, and I got a lift to Cooma then.

KH: So there was not anybody there to pick you up?

RK: No. Everybody's car was in the snow, buried.

KH: Oh, right. At Kiandra there must have been a lot of snow, too.

RK: In Kiandra, it was up to the eaves of the post office.

KH: Up to the eaves?

RK: Yes. Oh, it was really colossal.^s

KH: Was the road cleared?

RK: No, it was half had been opened for a while, then traffic was going through. But not many cars. I WAS like - - -

Robbie Kilpinnen

RK:a couple of days just lying flat on my back. Then I severely felt in my leg - it was starting to get sort of bad. And I thought I would never recover - I think it just went from bad - it got worse and worse. I could not keep my leg straight.

KH: Really?

RK: And then it started to wither away. It just was awful. I just could not do anything with this leg, and it lost all the strength. I could not lift my toes up, or nothing.

KH: You reckon it was since that time?

RK: Yes. It really got bad after that. And I still raced that year a few times, but I never - and I gave skiing up. That was last winter. I really ^{didn't do} a lot of skiing after that. I have not been fit since. Like I used to go to Percy Ceretty's camp in Melbourne. I did a bit of running in the summer, and I learned a few techniques; did not eat butter, did not drink milk, nothing like that. I sort of believe Percy's things. I don't know if they were any good, but they seemed to be.

KH: That was in the early 60s?

RK: Yes. I used to run 100 miles a week. I get ^{up} at 6 o'clock in the morning, run an hour in the morning; go to work at half past seven. I did not work much. I went to work to get some money and to pass my day. And ski - well, I used to roller ski behind the Black Mountain then. I lived in O'Connor.

KH: What year was that?

RK: Back in 63 and 4.

KH: You used to roller ski, did you?

RK: Yes. People ^{could} not believe - some bushwalkers saw me coming along ^a track and they did not know what I was doing. They must have thought I was some sort of crank.

KH: Are they all right on a bush track?

RK: Oh yes. I had bigger wheels then, my old things - they were all right. And on Saturdays I used to run up to Bulls Head turnoff in the Brindabellas and back. I did not work Saturdays. I went for a run. I swim across the Cotter - - -

Robbie Kilpinnen

KH: From here you used to run?
 RK: From O'Connor.
 KH: From O'Connor to Bulls Head?
 RK: Yes. And one day - - -
 KH: And back, in a day?
 RK: Yes. Every week I would have the one really long run. I did not run really hard. I just kept jogging, and then I swam across the river and might eat three blackberries, and run again. But I used to be back by 4 o'clock. And one night I did not get back. I did my ankle. And the people I lived with, they got really worried; they went looking for me in the forest. And I put a tree across the road, and I put a sign on it, so I thought somebody would be looking for me. And they came round, they saw the tree there but the note had blown off, and I said, "Did you find a tree across the road?" They said, "Oh yes, there was a gum tree across the road." I said, "I put the tree there and I put a note there." And they did not sort of believe I ran that far, I went that far in a day. But then they knew I had been there because they saw what I did.
 KH: And to go right back, did you work on the Snowy Scheme?
 RK: I never worked actually on the Snowy Scheme at all. I worked with the Yankee mob who did some work in *Roseville*. I worked with them in the hills in Adelaide, a place ^{called} Myponga. I was a tunnel ^{doing a similar sort of} man. ^{to} job what they do here, a big dam for the Adelaide water supply. And I did the tunnelling there for ten months.
 KH: Is that what you did when you first came to Australia?
 RK: Yes. And really ^{made} stacks of money then. I used to get - - -
 KH: There was tunnelling in Adelaide?
 RK: Yes. It was just 40 miles from Adelaide on the hills there, towards Victor Harbour. And the money was just colossal. I used to tell people what I earned and they could not believe it. I was doing all right. I could buy

Robbie Kilpinnen

myself a motor bike with the one week's wage and that sort of thing. And they would say, "Do you really mean you get that much money at it?" "Yes." It was really hard work. But I did not realise it was all the top wage - really good money. I did it for one year, and I had my car and everything paid off. And then I thought, oh - I was getting ^{infections} in my blood. My blood was going weak, because if you - dynamite fumes in the mine, in the tunnel, ^{deeper down the air} was getting worse there, it was getting - and I got all toxic. I thought it is not worthwhile. I do not see any sense in making a lot of money and being dead, and I ^{just} left.

KH: That was when you first came to Australia? You did that for a while?
 RK: Yes. ^{Back} in 58, yes.
 KH: When did you first start skiing here then?
 RK: I did not know there was snow in Australia, when I came here. I did not bring my skis, nothing. I met this Finnish bloke. ^{Beli Goskari (?)} who once won the ACT ^{Championship}. He had been Finnish champion in Finland. And he was a bit pissed when I met him, and he said, "Oh yes, you can ski too. You had better not come here." Because he was Finnish champion and he got beaten by the ^{S.} and there was this bloke ^{Grunnsund} who has been skiing ^{at Holmenkollen}. I said, "Oh, I might just go and have ^a go. Because I did not know that there was snow." "Oh, you just come with me." I moved to Canberra. I used to live in Sydney at that time. I moved to Canberra and started to do a bit of training. ^{The first race I went in I beat him, and} ^{only Kom.} ^{beat} me. And I thought it cannot be that bad. And I started to do more training.
 KH: That was about
 RK: 61, I think, or 62. It was sooner, 60, even - - -
 KH: That was when it was just starting.
 RK: Yes, it was just starting.
 KH: Perisher was just starting.

Robbie Kilpinnen

RK: Yes, if we had about 20 people in the race, that as a fairly good race. But there were Norwegians, a few Polish blokes. The Norwegians have disappeared. You don't see Dal Hanson (

Norda!...and...all these ex-Guthega blokes any more. And then Aussies started skiing - actually Ross Martin ^{was} the first bloke from Aussie. He came with me in 65, I think, yes, 65, to Grey Mare. And he did not believe how much I had skied, because there was nothing else to do in Grey Mare. I had my bit of breakfast in the morning; go up to Jagungal, and then we come back and might have a bit more to eat, because the sun was warm; you could sit outside and do something most likely. And then in the afternoon we might ski to Alpine Hut and raid their food store. ^{We'd go to Mawson}

^{and if it} was really perfect somebody had been there. Most likely there was a bit of jam around. We used to get a few supplies. We would ski ^{around} and have good fun. Sometimes we even went as far as White River in the same day. We did not ski that fast, but we just sort of - that was when Ross learned to sort of stride with his skis. He used to ^{just} run. He was with me in Grey Mare most of the winter. Then we went to New South Wales Championships, and he came second to me, and he beat the Snowies and a lot of ^{other}...blokes he would never touch before. And he never looked back, he started to really do his homework then. The first time I skied with him he had raced already a couple of years in Australia. I took him from Perisher to Grey Mare. We had rucksacks on and it was soft snow, and I had to carry his rucksack in from the valley; he was dead finished, he was ^{just} ^{pat}, he just could not make it. He was just going to pack it all in.

KH: Now, was that 65?

RK: Yes, it must have been 65 when I took him up. And after that - about a month later we used to ski a bloody lot then. And I used to take him out all the time, and he really picked up really fast. And he never complained. I could see he was going white; his nose was getting white and he was really

Robbie Kilpinnen

weak, but he would not complain. And he just tried to keep on, if he could keep on. And he would just keep plugging on, plugging on.

KH: Is he still racing now?

RK: Yes, he turns up for races even now. And if conditions get sort of ^{glossy or} a slow track, I think he is still hard to beat.

KH: So he is still training?

RK: Yes. He is very fit. He rides bikes to Sydney. He won some races last year, too. He got \$800 push bikes and really good - the best racing gear. ^{Carbon fibre} frames and things. He is a really odd bloke because he has got a lot of money - Martins Books, and what ever they were called.

KH: Oh, it is Martins - - -

RK: Yes, all the school books you buy - Martin Press. Ross Martin is the managing director. And he has got a lot of money. He might drive a Mercedes Benz and have a big mansion, but he goes bike-riding and he goes body surfing, and he runs country marathons, and goes orienteering too. He is just so busy.

KH: He married an American girl, didn't he?

RK: Yes, Toy Martin. Toy Martin rides, I think, on the - - -

KH: I think I have seen her ride somewhere.

RK: Yes. She really ^{cracks}...on a bit, though. A little bit sort of wild, but all right. She writes some children's books now. She is doing some books for children.

KH: I saw her, I think, on a cover or something of an orienteering book.

RK: Yes, she went in the Australian team to Norway. She is one of the best in Australia. Big stuff. And she ^{came} first. When she first came to Australia she was able to jump off the floor with her body weight in sand on her shoulders, 60 times, or something. She would sort of bump down on the floor and up again. She had legs like a kangaroo's. She was really - but she could,

Robbie Kilpinnen

like, we had lots of blokes after that, like ^{would have been} ~~Foy~~ fit enough to be one of the best in the world, but she just could not put it together. She has burned her energy and taken it too fast. And she never got away. Then we had - ~~all the~~ Barringtons and all these hot runners turned up. They thought, this is going to beifcould ski, he is the best bloke there. They never did any good, none of these people I know, really fit, fit blokes, they never - none of them never did any good. Some of them cannot even stay on skis, I wonder how they can run?

KH: So what was the first year then, that you went to Grey Mare? About 63, was it? Just a year before - - -

RK: I think that must have been - the first full year was 63. I went sometime already there in 62. The first time I went there was with George Dudzinski, early 62.

KH: Who was that?

RK: ^{George} Dudzinski.

KH: Oh yes, he ^{was on} the ^{ACT} Ski ^{Council}.

RK: Yes. He is the YMCA sort of - I think, ^{lap} captain of skiing. ^{He is}...quite a good bloke. He used to go bushwalking.

I went bushwalking with him, if I did not go running here. I went bushwalking from Kiandra. And he knew a lot of country around Kiandra, ^{as far as Grey Mare} and I went bushwalking with him many, many times. And a bloke called Tom Mitchell - not ~~Tom~~, what was his first name?

KH: So 62 was the first time you went to Grey Mare with George Dudzinski?

RK: Yes.

KH: So he showed you, sort of, where things were?

RK: Yes. And he showed me where, how to, not to go

^{there,} he believed snow was better in the trees. And we skied along the ^{Schlink Pass} road in the trees, half crawling in the trees, past Valentine, and all the time in the trees. I did not ^{know} where we were going and I did not believe it. He said it is going to be about three hours skiing, and we skied three hours

Robbie Kilpinnen

and we were not even at Valentine's. And he said ^{to me, pointing} it is just beyond there, and I thought he was joking. I thought, oh it is going to be behind the hill, but I did not say anything. And we skied all day from Guthega to Grey Mare. And he was the only bloke back in those days, back in 64, and 63 who came to Grey Mare. I went there the whole winter, and nobody ever came. Otto Pinkas used to come sometimes in 64, maybe once a year, two times a year. But Otto thought that Dudzinski used to drag his ...?.... and some other bloke - - -

KH: Fritz?

RK: Fritz Down(?) was the .. sort of, the YMCA bloke, a young bloke, and ^{they} came down. And it was really funny, too. You hear ^{about} people in Tibet, they can hear - some fantastic things they can hear, their hearing is that acute. And for example, they were coming to Grey Mare, and I was sitting in the hut. I was having my tucker; it must have been about 2 o'clock, something like that, I was in. And I could hear talking. And I thought, somebody is coming. I rushed to the door. And I could not see people, and then I waited and waited. And I skied up the hill. I still could not see people, and I thought, the buggers are hiding somewhere. Then I ^{asked} them, "Where were you then when you were talking about me? And you were saying this and that." And they were just coming ^{down} from Valentine's Hut, and their voices carried over the top of the hill to Grey Mare Hut. I could hear them talking, I knew what they were talking about. Lucky they were all my friends. And I was only there for two months, and your hearing gets that good. There was just no noise. I did not have a radio, I did not have nothing, and you could hear so many things.

KH: So, in 63, you just spent - you just did a couple of trips in, short trips?

RK: Yes, in 63, I was sort of doing a lot of ground work. I skied a lot around the Cup and Saucer, and Mawson's and - - -

KH: In 63?

Robbie Kilpinnen

RK: Yes.

KH: That is when you were there by yourself for most of the winter?

RK: Yes, the whole winter.

KH: The whole winter in 63. Was that a good snow year?

RK: It was not very good. You could not ski down to the river, but I could ski most of the way down, and then I had to take the skis off, run across and over the top of the hill there was snow again.

KH: You could ski all the way down.

RK: Yes, I did most of my training behind on the Grey Mare itself, on the Grey Mare Range. I had a sort of course on the top there. It was sort of ^{a good year} often it used to close in, and when it was so bad I did not like to go too far.

KH: Did you ever go right down to what we call the Grey Hill Cafe, a little hut, tin shed?

RK: Yes, I know where that is, but I did not go there. I went there in the summer time once.

KH: Quite a long way down.

RK: Yes, I never reached that - I never went that way down, that far down.

KH: Did you ever go ^{down} to Pretty Plain?

RK: Yes.

KH: You did? You skied down there?

RK: Yes, I have been down to Pretty Plain a couple of times..

KH: On skis?

RK: I think once I got as far as the hut with skis, but the other time I turned back. I saw the hut and I turned back. It was all sort of grass sticking through, and more or less not skiable stuff any more.

KH: But 64 would have been a good year.

RK: It would have been. But I did not know about Pretty Plain. I knew from the map, but I ^{was} just working on the Koss -

Robbie Kilpinnen

Kiandra ⁱⁿ 64. I just spent all my time there.

KH: and 63 too?

RK: Yes, yes.

KH: In 63, did you ski - when did you start exploring the Kiandra end, like - - -

RK: Kiandra end I did - George Dudzinski had these old army maps. And he had some old maps - they had some old bushwalking tracks that the Chinese gold diggers had, or carriers, or whatever. They had some tracks through Farm Ridge and round there. I had a whole heap of these old maps. And he took me through from Kiandra to Selwyn Quarry and then down to Brooks's - and we slept at Brooks's. And then we went to Farm Ridge and to Grey Mare, and then we were in O'Keefe's a few times. We went a few weeks ^{ends there} with .. George.

KH: Did you? That was in 63?

RK: Yes, in the summer time, we went bushwalking.

KH: Oh, in the summer?

RK: Yes, in the summer, yes. He did a lot of bushwalking. I was telling him - I told him I want to do it, and I don't know that bit. And he has done a lot of bushwalking there. In those days, Happy Jack's Road ^{was} open, too. Sometimes he would drive the car. He had an old Holden, and ^{we} would drive it on Happy Jack's Road, and we would do certain creeks, or we would study things like that.

KH: But when did you start exploring the route, though, like from Cesjacks - when did you decide what the best way was across the Happy Jack's Plain?

RK: '64.

KH: Did you look at that in the winter?

RK: Yes, 64. I went shopping to Cabramurra, and that just suited me. I went about - maybe three, more, four or five times, I went to Cabramurra, did shopping there. I skied to Selwyn Quarry and picked the road up to go through King's Cross to Cabramurra and come back. And then I found out, well, ^{I thought} there was no

Robbie Kilpinnen

other way. I tried to go straight, and you hit these few hills and then you ^{hit} bad snow, ^{and} there might be melting snow because it was in the sun a bit, and you ball up. There seemed to be trouble all the time. And then I went up ^{Jagungal} and I could see this thing like a horse shoe coming from the Table Top, and I thought I would go over there. And I went there. Next time I skied through that way, it was good. And on the day I did the record it was good, too.

KH: So what time would you have gone to Grey Mare? Was it in June? In 64?

RK: When the racing season started ^{in those off days.} the Balmain Cup was the very first race, and I gave up my work then. And I put all my things in the car, all my ^{waxes} and all my clothes and things, and skis. And I had to leave my ^{car} at ^{Munyang}... I stayed up there, and sometimes I would go - if there was racing in Victoria, I might go to Victoria for a weekend, and come back; leave my car in ^{Munyang} and back to Grey Mare. But I had to leave it there all winter. It did not cost me much, because I had taken all my food in the summer time. All the raisins and oats. I ate oats - I was like a horse. All the ^{Percy Gerotto} blokes ate oats. And that is what I had: I had biscuits in the ^{oats} and I put raisins; 50/50 raisins and oats. And that was ^{what} I ate.

KH: You used to cook it?

RK: No.

KH: Just a bit of milk, powdered milk and - - -

RK: Yes, powdered milk and water. I used to be 11 stone.

KH: 11 stone.

RK: I am just about 14 now, or thirteen and a half stone.

KH: You were a lot lighter then.

RK: Yes, I was very light yes.

KH: 11 stone? That is not much, because you are pretty tall, aren't you?

RK: Yes, I am 6 foot, exactly 6 foot. It was a good weight. Like, I had 2 15 skis then. In those days, skis were a

Robbie Kilpinnen

bit wider then. I could sort of ski on the top, I think, a lot better then.

KH: I see. So, what, the Balmain Cup was what, in early July or something?

RK: It was very early - it was even before ACT - it was the very first race. It always started - but now it is different. The Balmain Cup is the last one. But then in the early days it was the first one. And that was the time we all went up for the Balmain Cup and everybody was snowed in. All the cars were snowed in. Nobody got their cars out - for half the winter, all the cars were rotting in the snow.

KH: For three months or something?

RK: Yes, and we had sticks we put against them. Little bits from the windowsand I put it on the top of my roof so I knew where my car was. First I thought, I would just dig it out when it stops, but it never bloody stopped. And I had three or four sticks, and they just kept going up. And in the end, I had to dig my wax, you see, out, because I had my waxes in the boot. I had some - and I had Ross Martin, Pinkas, and this Finnish bloke, and we took all day. We had sort of a hole and steps, and one bloke throw snow to another. And we got to the boot following a stick down. And we got the waxes out, and then I looked through the back window, and I could see my car roof had collapsed, over the top. That was it. And I just forgot it then and I did not even worry. I thought when the snow melts I will get it again.

KH: Did it start when the snow melted?

RK: Oh yes, it started. Funnily enough, it started. And I went in the front seat and I kicked the roof ^{where it} went in, and hung the bonnet up a bit. ^{and it's alright.} I drove it down to Canberra. And they put a new bonnet on it. I think they fixed the roof up and put a new ^{boot} lid on. But the Toyota Crown had a huge frame underneath it, it is a big frame. And it did not have that much damage, because there ^{was} ice underneath the thing, and the ice did

Robbie Kilpinnen

not break the axles.

KH: What, some cars actually broke?

RK: Some cars got crushed, they just - - -

KH: Enormous weight.

RK: 17 feet of wet snow - it was 17 foot of wet snow on the top of my car.

KH: 17 feet, you reckon?

RK: Yes, 17 feet. And some cars had even more. And it was wet. Like when it started to melt, the sun got in it, and it started to melt, it was sort of coarse, wet, really heavy. *stuff.*

KH: But the dam wall must have been dangerous to ski across? The snow must have been above the railings.

RK: It was only up to the handrail. And funnily enough, it must have blowⁿ off there; as it was coming it was blowing off, too.

KH: Because I can envisage this - like a haystack.

RK: It wasn't like that, it just - - -

KH: No, I suppose it would not - it would blow off that.

RK: Yes, it blew off. It was safe enough. And all the ski lifts in Perisher, they could not use them. They were all stopped, the stations. They were - three weeks after the snow started melting and they had bulldozers and they dug in, and dug in, and they got a few running. And people could not go into the valley either. You go in the Perisher Valley and it was just empty for a long time.

KH: So you really started to look at the country in 63?

RK: Yes, that is where most of the blokes go wrong. They think they know the beat, but that is not enough, you have got to know the whole thing. And you cannot spend time, you just try to invent what you think. And what some blokes have done too - I tell all the blokes - I have been trying to teach these blokes - Dennis, and David Elvin and these blokes - not to change. Once you got *your thing* you stick to it, because you are in your best mind when you've decided. Once you have skied halfway there, you

Robbie Kilpinnen

are getting a bit *wrecked, you think,* on. it does not look right, you go that way. That is the first wrong thing. Even Kore Grundsund^g he has been skiing here for 30 years or whatever, a long time, he has been up to Table Top, but he can see Kiandra there, and he has decided he will go down to Four Mile Creek. He goes down to Eucumbene and he gets stuck there in the *bloody scrub*.... And he almost buried himself there, just going in the country like that. Well, it is just rules, when you ski that far you don't think straight any more. You have to stick to your plans.

KH: That is right. So you have got to ^{stick to} the ridges there. You have got to virtually head to Selwyn quarry, no, that is right.

RK: He has been two times - he has gone down the creek there towards Eucumbene, because he was convinced that that was the best way.

KH: Oh, you can go down Four Mile Creek, as long as you go up out of it again, across the top down into Kiandra. But if you go right down Four Mile Creek you end up in the Eucumbene River.

RK: Yes. That is where they ended up.

KH: Did they?

RK: Yes. I know, he is too old anyway, now. But he went to Table Top - at one stage it ^{got} that bad, Kor^a had a skid^{oo} and he made a skid^{oo} track all the way as far as he could. And then they *start with Ross Martini* and they ski ^{ed} like hell. And they never would make it, even on that. And blokes who work in the valley, they told me, 'You go and have a look, they have got all the track going up *Guthega Trig* and across the Rolling Grounds. Where do you think it is going?' And they were all sort of - Lenny Harrington, who is sort of, a bit of a big mouth, and he wasn't Kor^a's friend, and he thought that would dob Kor^a in. And I skied round, and I could ^{see} this track quite well. I thought, "Oh yes, he is going to have a go." And they could not even do it then, and that was the last time Kor^a did it, when he tracked it and he could not do it, only his back track - - -

Robbie Kilpinnen

KH: What year was that?

RK: It must have been 66. And they tracked back up with-
Kora. It would have been 67.

KH: Kora and Otto had a number of goes, didn't they?

RK: Oh, they must have ^{had} a dozen, I think.

KH: They started in 63, didn't they?

RK: Yes, they had lots of goes.

KH: And they had a couple of goes when you did, too, didn't they?

RK: Yes, in the same year they tried to do it. And the following again.

KH: Did they have a go before you did it, that year? 64?

RK: No, I don't think so. I think it was after. That year, I think that I was the only one year, first. And then as soon as I did the fast time, they ^{checked} how I did it, and they sort of tried to improve my way. But I think what they did not - as I understand it, they went too low. I would rather get high to get with the good snow. They tried to ^{cut it straight} and I don't think it worked out. I don't think it ever will work out. You have got to keep on the trail on the good snow, and not cruise out, not try to make short cuts.

KH: But you did not go around Crook's ^{Racecourse?} You see, you could have gone right around the Great Dividing Range, right around the Happy Jack's Basin. You did not do that. You cut across the Happy Jack's Basin. You have not got to Happy Jack's Plain. Some people say it is better to go right in or further east.

RK: It might have been all right, too. But I had sort of skied that way to Cabramurra, so I thought it was very good there. And I had worked it out. And also when I went to Cabramurra, I used Brooks Hut in case it closed in, I knew where the hut was, I could call in there. And that was what I thought, ^{on my h-} if it closes in, if I am on the edge, I might not find it ^{it gets} white-out and I might not find Brooks Hut. Now I knew where Maw-

Robbie Kilpinnen

son was; I knew where Cesjacks was, and I knew where the Brooks were, and I could just pull in if it turned bad. But I never had to use it.

KH: You never stayed at Brooks Hut?

RK: Only in the summer.

KH: Only with George Dudzinski.

KH: Did you get - back in 64, or even in 63, did any other people come out? Any other ski tourists?

RK: No, in 63, I don't think anybody came out, full stop.

KH: You were there the whole winter?

RK: Yes, the whole winter.

KH: Nobody else came?

RK: Yes. And 64, Otto came around a few times, and George came. And later in the season - like I came out in August from Grey Mare. I never stayed much past ^{the middle of} August. In August, the Australian championship time I come out, and that is the end of my holiday. I came back to Canberra and started ^{ted} working.

KH: So you usually had about two months, July and August?

RK: Yes. And I had a good time there on my own. But as soon as the snow come, I would drive from here to Munyang, even earlier if there was any snow, and I would leave my car ^{there} and I would go up to Grey Mare. Often in the middle of the night.

KH: From Munyang?

RK: Yes. And I had really funny experiences, too. I went once - there was a bit of snow on the ground, and I had basket-ball boots ^{on} and a rucksack on, and I was jogging around. I got to Cesjacks, and there were these boy scouts. They were a bit lost, they could not find - they were near Valentine Hut. They could not find the hut. I got there and they could not believe I was coming on my own. And they said, "Where are you going?" And I said, "To Grey Mare." And they would not believe I was going there. ^I said, "I go there quite often, it is all right. I know where it is."

KH: Where was that? Which hut was that?

Robbie Kilpinnen

RK: Near Valentine's, the boy scouts were. It must have been about midnight when I met these kids there. I was running on my own. And when I run in the summertime, I used to have this baseball cap, really long peak. And even if it was pitchdark, when you could not see the stars, you could see where the track went. And I generally use it when I go fishing. I get some really ^{big} _^hat so you cannot see the stars. There is still a little bit of light around. It can be pitch dark. But as soon as you see lights, I think your eyes sort of don't see so well.

KH: Did you ever meet Ted Winter?

RK: Yes, I met him a few times.

KH: But not then, in 63, 64.

RK: No. 64 he had ^{been} _^ in the hut, and he wrote some poems and things - - -

KH: He wrote a poem about the murals, about that time.

RK: Yes. But it was ^{a few} _^ years later till I met him. And he used to be - one bloke came up from Geehi, too, ^{Polish} bloke. But he came up - I was up there in September with some YMCA people, some girls and blokes and - and this bloke came up from Geehi, and I don't remember his name. But Geehi Walking Club actually did some work later on in Grey Mare. We fixed it up with George Dudzinski. I used to hire a Land Rover, and we pulled some huts down. There used to be a hut below Grey Mare, too.

KH: Yes, the old Grey Mare Hut.

RK: Yes, we pulled that hut down, and used the posts to make the sauna and fix the ceiling up in the mine office hut. That hut that is up now, it ^{was} _^ the office for the gold mine. The old hut was bigger, but it was all leaning like this already. And we put the rope on it and pulled it a bit with the Land Rover, and it just went - like ^{a pack of cards} _^ and we got all the materials. And I got a lot of firewood out of that, too. Like, if I was ⁱⁿ _^ Grey Mare now, there would not be even much firewood around.

KH: No, that is right. It is very hard to get wood. the

Robbie Kilpinnen

trees are growing up, but they are so young, there is no dead stuff. It is really a problem ^{at} Grey Mare. What we usually do - you see, I am the ^{Hut's} Maintenance ^{Officer} for the Kosciusko Huts Association -and we have trips in in the summer. We just load up the Land Rover - - -

(end of tape)

KH: That is staggering, you know, that in those years there were so few people in that part of the world. Because now, I mean, even weekdays there is hardly a time when there is nobody at Grey Mare Hut.

RK: I went there once in Easter time, that must have been 66 - you could not get in the hut.

KH: 66? At Easter time.

RK: Yes. And you would not get in the hut. *I just walked past. I thought it ^{wasn't} my hut, but there were people living outside, sleeping outside. I went to Pretty Plains *and stayed there.**

KH: How big was that old hut at Grey Mare? would it have had about four rooms?

RK: Oh, it was at least twice as big as this hut now.

KH: Twice ~~as~~ big?

RK: Yes.

KH: With an iron roof?

RK: Iron roof, yes.

KH: It did not have wooden shingles?

RK: No, iron roof, I think.

KH: Iron roof, and what, weather boards?

RK: Weather boards, yes, horizontal weather boards round it.

KH: Was it a - it was not slab?

RK: No.

KH: It was all sawn timber?

RK: Yes, sawn timber, because we used the timber in the *that Dennis Vanzella* sauna [^] burned down. And that way we got most of the material - the sauna was *from the* old hut. But it was beyond repair. It was that bad. It was that dangerous you would not walk in.

KH: It is just down to the right, isn't it, down in the little gully there.

RK: Yes.

KH: And there is still some machinery there, I think. I saw it last winter.

RK: Yes. In the maps even, these days, there is still two

ROBBIE Kilpinen

huts marked there. But the other hut is not there any more.

KH: Were there any more huts there?

RK: No, that is the only two I ever saw there.

KH: But mostly the Grey Mare Hut was the way it is when you first went there in 63?

RK: I think I went there about 62, summer, with George Dudzinski. No, I went first in the winter. And they had put a door on it. They did not have a door on it. The summer before they had put a door on it. It did not have ⁹ front door. Somebody had *Knocked* the front ^{door} in, it had fallen off, or something. *But* it did not have windows. We put those little windows on it. It did not have windows. It must have been a really dark hole.

KH: It was all closed up.

RK: Yes. We put those two little windows in it, and we put the ceiling in it. It must have been a bloody cold place. The ceiling came from the old Grey Mare Hut, too, I think. And then we got some bunks from the YMCA *Ski Club* in Guthega, we brought the bunks ^{up} and mattresses. But they *brought things up there*too.

KH: ^{So} the mattresses are still there.

RK: Are they?

KH: There are mattresses there? Last winter, yes.

RK: Somebody told me that there are no mattresses at all there.

KH: No, all the bunks have mattresses.

RK: That is good.

KH: That hard sort of horsehair or kapok.

RK: Kapok. Yes, we got them from the YMCA. We brought them. One night we drove all the way from the Schlink Pass and down to Geehi and over the mountain, in the middle of the night. It seemed like driving for ever. We were driving and driving and driving.

KH: So was Max ^{Burke} - did you meet him there?

RK: I did not meet any Max ^{Burke}.

KH: So it was mainly George Dudzinski, and you - and

ROBBIE Kilpinen

anybody else who sort of, rebuilt it ^{or} fixed it up?

RK: There was this bloke, Richard Down. Actually he is back from - - -

KH: Richard?

RK" Richard Down. He is a diplomat now. He was working with the public service. He must have been ^{working} for ^{foreign} ~~service~~ ^{service}, even then. And he was a good skier. He was as good as Malcolm ^{Milne} at the time. He was bloody good, and a really fearless downhiller too. And he was tough. He would come with me...^{de}...the Grey Mare run - run to Grey Mare sometimes. And he was a very good cross country skier too. And I have never seen anybody who lived in Australia who could ski like he used to ski down the mountain. A big ^{moqui!} skier, hit the top, bang! And he had long enough legs to ^{take it}. And often in the Balmain Cup, if you look in the old records, there is Richard Down there, really fast times in the downhill. He is not so good any more. He is sort of big in the middle. He plays tennis. I saw him the other day - he just came back from - from Brazil he came back this time.

KH: There was an open fireplace, wasn't there, then?

RK: Yes, there was.

KH: Did you put a stove in?

RK: We put a kerosene we put in. Two primuses we put in, and then we dragged the trolley up from the mine, tip it in the fireplace. I don't know if it still there or not - the steel trolley, that was the fireplace - was standing. And somebody else came and put the doors on the fireplace. It could have been Peter Ormay

KH: Peter Ormay?

RK: Yes, he used to do a lot of work.

KH: Yes, I know him.

RK: He went to the South Pole. You know that he was racing too. He was pretty good. He was running every day.

KH: In the 60s?

ROBBIE Kilpinen

RK: Yes, then he gave up. And he never - I have not seen Peter for I don't know when - a long time.

KH: He was living in Aranda, I think.

RK: Yes. He might be well off now. Like he went to Antarctic, and he made a bit of money there.

KH: He went back to college.

RK: Did he?

KH: A course in ecology and land management, wildlife management. Because he was very keen on wildlife, like birds and things.

RK: Yes, he is that sort of bloke, really nice bloke.

KH: Yes, ^{pretty} quiet.

KH: And what year did you ^{rebuild} the sauna, then? 1964?

RK: In the 64 summer, yes.

KH: So you had that all that winter?

RK: The big winter, you had your sauna?

RK: Yes.

KH: ^{It was} probably snowed under.

RK: It was not quite sort of snowed under. It was funny - the sauna was sitting on the - - -

KH: On the edge there.

RK: Yes.

KH: I remember that.

RK: Yes, the sauna was sort of sticking more out, but the hut, because it had ^{few gum trees} and it was more on the flat bit, the hut was as - I could not believe - like it was getting dark and I was sort of getting worried. I could not see where the hut was. I knew fairly well where to find it, then the snow fell in the chimney. And the chimney was ^{exactly underneath that} It had sort of - - -

KH: Gone, had it?

RK: It was that damp. Every sunny day I put my sleeping on the tin roof, try to dry it out. And it is always damp by the morning. It ^{felt} really damp in the hut. And soon as the sun came up, a little of light, I just go skiing, because it was so

ROBBIE Kilpinen

horrible in the hut, a long time.

KH: Did you have a shovel?

RK: Yes, we had a shovel.

KH: You must have done a lot of snow digging.

RK: Yes. 64 was a good year. It did not blow much. Once the snow came it sort of eased up and there was not very much sort of blizzards ^{or nothing}. I had a lot worse times - yes, 65, one night, I thought somebody was dying outside the hut. I woke up in the middle of the night, and bang, bang, bang. And I went outside, and I could not see anything. And it seemed like somebody wasthere. Then I went back again and I listened very closely, and it was on the roof. And there was a gum tree - it was really windy and the gum tree branch bent over the corrugations. But it was such a good - like if somebody was banging on the wall. And I had to go out in the middle of the night to check.

KH: I remember seeing - I was there the first time in 68, at Grey Mare. I remember seeing a box of Ross Martin's food - "please don't touch" or something.

RK: Yes, oh, his supplies.

KH: He must have been there for some years. He must have been staying there a fair bit.

RK: Yes. Do you know what happened? Ross, he thought what I did. I went there; I skied on my own; I was there. He went there and he lasted exactly one night. There are a lot of people, they cannot take silence like that, nothing. There is no radio, nothing, only you, and a few rats. And he was there one night and he went to pieces. He did not use his food, nothing. He just had to leave, he could not take it. He lasted one night. He went back to Perisher. He never stayed on his own.

KH: This was 65, or something?

RK: Yes, 65, he must have been there on his own. And he could not take it. He lasted one night and that was enough. He is that sort of bloke, he had to have friends, and he had to have

ROBBIE Kilpinen

radio - and he just could not take it. He said he could not believe it himself. He thought he could - he had been there with me and he knew what it was like. But when he ^{was} there on his own he just could not take it. He just came down, and all his food was there. He had a whole winter's food sitting in a heap.

KH: It was still there in 68.

RK: It would have been, because he had a lot of stuff.

KH: It might still be there.

RK: Yes, he could not take it.

KH: And when was the last time you went to Grey Mare?

RK: It must have 67 I skied there with Dennis *Vanzella*.

KH: Did Dennis go down there? Was he skiing then?

RK: Yes, He has been skiing - he was a young boy then. He had taken up the sport. And I took him to Grey Mare. *to see if he's tough or not and he started to wince* near Gungahlin, he thought I was going the wrong way. And later on he said, he was wrong, I was going the right way. Like, when we got on just past Valentine, we could see there was no snow ⁱⁿ the valley and I was going the right way. I was coming on the snow. He wanted to go right and he would have run out of snow.

KH: Did you ever win the Australian championships?

RK: I won it two times in a row.

KH: 63 and 64.

RK: Yes, I think so, yes. 65 Kore beat me.

KH: Kore ^{beat} you in 65?

RK: Yes, I had the wrong wax.

KH: Did you?

RK: We had this new silver wax ^{came out} I always, ^{Rex was} the wax, and I never doubted it. And it said, "*Course, wet snow.*" and I said if *Rex says "In wet snow"*, that is what it is. And bloody thing, it would not run. And we had to save the course in Cabramurra, we *went* near the Round Mountain because it rained the whole week in Cabramurra, and we could not race there. We went to Round Mountain. And we had to wax outside, and I had put my *silver Klister* on *because it was still*

ROBBIE Kilpinen

..... black spots, no it was not bloody - wax was not running. And my blow torch and these gas *torches* they do not work in the cold wind. They just do not have much flame, and I just could not get the wax off. And then I thought, "Oh bugger this." So I saw the other blokes were waiting and I just the red *Klister* over. And on the first lap he just about caught me; on the second lap I left him but he had beat me a bit. But I was then much fitter then. I could have run rings round ^{him} if I had the same wax. And when we went to ski first - Kossy/Kiandra was - from Cabramurra to Perisher in 65, and we started skiing from Round Mountain along the road.

KH: That was the first *Paddy Pallin Classic*.

RK: Yes.

KH: Were you in that?

RK: That was the first one, wasn't it ^{from} Round Mountain, that is right.

RK: Yes.

KH: There were five of you.

RK: Yes.

KH: There was Kore, was Otto Pinkas in that?

RK: ^{I was that fit} Otto Pinkas and Charlie Derrick and Bob Madison. And I knew ^{we} started fairly fast and I pushed on and I said to Ross - Ross had been with me to Grey Mare, and we went up to Jagungal just about every day, and I always left him by miles going up the of Jagungal. I said to Ross, "Don't hang on. Like when I go up to Jagungal, I am going to leave Kore there, and he is never going to catch me up." And I went, and I left him a long way behind. And Otto Pinkas was sort of - he could still yell to me when we got over top, and the weather closed ⁱⁿ, and Otto started yelling, "Oh, don't leave us, don't leave us. We will all die here. They don't know where they are going." And I stopped and we waited. And it really turned bad, it had closed in. And we were just sort of - -

KH: Was Ross Martin in that too? That was 64, wasn't it?

ROBBIE Kilpinen

RK: Ross was in it, yes.

KH: There were six of you, then.

RK: Yes, Ross was there, because I told Ross not to try to hang on. And also there might have been one other - I don't know, I don't remember if the Finnish - there was one Finnish bloke used to ski there too, Asko ~~Asko~~ *Asko*, but I don't think he was there, because his stomach started to play up. No, he would not be - - -

KH: Was that in 64?

RK: 65, was the first.

KH: 65 was the first. It was not the big year.

RK: No, no, it was not the big year.

KH: It was the year after.

RK: Yes. It was a crook year. It had lots of days like that. They turned out - it was beautiful when it started, and then it turned as nasty as it comes. You did not know where you skied, as you ^{were} going. We were going near to Mawson's and we were skiing sort of, lining up, and I knew the way to Mawson's and the blokes were behind. And Otto skied next to me, and the next thing he was 30 foot below and there was a cornice. You could not tell where the snow was. It was that bad. It was just sort of a whiteout.

KH: So from Jagungal you went together?

RK: Yes, we all skied together. And then this Bob Madison started to get cramps and he was really getting bad. Lucky, with the blokes they had a snowcat in the Schlink Pass and we got Bob in. And they took Bob back.

KH: They came to meet you?

RK: Yes. They had sort of ^{a drink station there} *^...^* and we skied all the way together then to Perisher. There was no race at all. By the time we got to Guthega there was that much soft snow, it was all sort of - - it was new stuff, really new sort of fluffy type. And we all.....skiing in the one row, walking along.

KH: Taking turns making the track, I suppose?

ROBBIE Kilpinen

RK: Yes, it took a really long time to get out.

KH: Was Paddy Pallin at the start?

RK: I don't think - he was only at the other end. John Morgan and some Snowy blokes It was good organisation, they had radios on, and one snowcat followed us to the foot of the *Jagungal!*...when we turned off to *Jagungal!*.

KH: Did they have a track? No track.

RK: No track. They were too poor to have a track. We had the snow cat track as far as Jagungal. It was fast enough to Jagungal, *we sort of did a bit of orienteering* to Mawson. After Mason's *W* there was no track whatsoever. And it really got nasty because the new snow, it balls up too. And you would need a yellow stick, if you had - it might be right somewhere, *next place it bloody freezes up and we used to throw rabbits on the skis -*

KH: I know all about that.

RK: If somebody has practice skis, then fishscale, I think he *could* have skied away. Some days, there has been days *when a lot of races could have been won on the types of the skis* but lately the tracks are getting so good now,.... skis don't bite so well any more. But in the old days, there was not much tracks. I skied lots of races - one bloke went in the front with the flag, and if you started number one you just about catch him up. On the second lap you would get a bit of track. But these days they have got track setting machines.

KH: Did you participate in the second Paddy Pallin Classic, in 66? That was when they started them from Perisher, wasn't it? Perisher up to the Chalet and back again.

RK: Yes, I think 66. I don't think I - I might have come up here, to see, *Ross came* from Norway in 66. But I never *tried*...I sort of gave up skiing then, I did not do much *training*. For a while I did not even - somebody bought my cross country skis. I had a few pair of *Finnish* skis. Bob Madison, in fact, bought my roller skis and my *racing* skis and he got really keen and he went to

ROBBIE Kilpinen

Sweden - he is there today. He just got married there. He has got some sort of building company going. He is doing all right. He never came back.

KH: Really!

RK: And *his dad* runs a pub in *Bright or Bobunga(!?)* His Dad is a publican. They have got pubs there, and he was sort of *a* really well-off *kid* - it must be all right in Sweden. He never came back.

KH: That was Bob Madison?

RK: Yes.

KH: What was the year you had your operation? On your back?

RK: 71. It took a long time. It was going from worse - it was getting bad, and I could not do much. I could not run any more, and so I thought - I just - I did not want to have an operation, but it just got that bad. In the end, I could see my leg was just going to - would not bend at all. And then I heard about this bloke in Sydney, and I went and saw him, and he said they had got this new thing. They were going to fuse the bones with the electric current. It made sense. Like, I can understand galvanising and all that sort of stuff, or nickel plating. And he said, "Oh yes, it works." and I said, "I'd better have a go." And in two weeks I could put my hands back on the floor again. I have been good since.

KH: And you think it was caused by this accident that you had as a kid?

RK: Yes. Oh, I am dead sure, looking back now.

KH: It was a spinal injury.

RK: No, it is between the third and fourth lumbar, the vertebra down there. All this was crushed, and the nerve ... in my right leg was going away, getting - - -

KH: Did you have it x-rayed at all after it happened as a kid?

RK: No, no.

KH: You just ignored it?

ROBBIE Kilpinen

RK: Yes, I got up, and I might have been sore for a few days, or whatever. I just kept going. It did not really play up until I got more adult, sort of grown up, it started to play up; once ⁱⁿ a while I have these backthen it goes away again. A lot of people have crook backs, and even priests and public servants. I was in the hospital - at the time I was in, the next bloke was a priest, and then there was some doctors and things. It does not matter what you are, you can still have a crook back. It was surprising how many people. That is why chiropractors do so well. There are so many people with crook backs.

KH: They say, I think, that 60 per cent of the population have something wrong with their back at some stage in their life.

RK: And I think that sort of brought - pole vaulting and that - you have got to have good ^{gear}. like, we did not have foam mattresses and nothing like that.

KH: They land on great big things now, don't they?

RK: ^{hurt} Oh yes. When you land on the soft foam rubber you do not hurt your back like that.

KH: So it really sort of started to deteriorate in the late 60s?

RK: Yes. It was really getting bad.

KH: And after your operation did you go back to skiing then?

RK: Not really. I have managed lodges in Perisher for ^{Snow} ^{Revelers} club. I managed that for two winters.

KH: Yes, your wife was saying.

RK: I skied then, and I instructed in the valley, but I did not really do- I did some long runs ^{too} - like we went to Jagungal and back with David Elvin in the one day, and a few long trips. But I did not do any training. I was wrecked, even skiing to Jagungal and back. I was ^{just} finished.

KH: In a day?

RK: Yes.

ROBBIE Kilpinen

KH: From Perisher?

RK: Yes.

KH: That is a pretty big day.

RK: Yes. But I did not do - I did some training. I ^{just did} a bit of ^{sking} on the five ^{km} track with Elvin. Then Elvin said he liked ^{to have a crack at} the Kossy/Kiandra. I said, "It is not like like that. You have got to know where you are going." And I ^{skied} with them once. I take them as far as Ces-jacks, and they can work the other one out. I even volunteered to ski from the other end. But they never - I think they got sort of put off when they skied the first half. But that is one bloke - I think ^{who could do it (?)}

KH: He is skiing now.

RK: Yes. David Elvin. He is very sort of - he is a tough boy.

KH: Is he ^{from} here?

RK: Yes, ^{his Dad} is the big nut in the Woden Valley Hospital, Dr Elvin. Sometimes he manipulates me when something goes wrong.

KH: He is a young bloke.

RK: He is about 20 now, I think, 19 or 20. He ^{has} still got many years to try it. It does not matter ^{who it is}, you have got to get good conditions, ^{too}.

KH: Are people pretty keen to have a go at the Kiandra/Kossy run?

RK: You go to Cooma ^{Hut} and every night they have got their ruddy maps out, and all this. The way they going, and they sort their ^{things} out and there is big arguments, and they got bloody big plans. They are both like - I don't know if you know Ken Baxter - - -

KH: He has won some of the Paddy Pallin - - -

RK: Yes, he is a good skier, yes.

KH: He won a Paddy Pallin race.

RK: And he knows - I think they go over to Kore's hut, and

ROBBIE Kilpinen

he is doing a big of work there. But he have to get a lot of things together at the same time. Like he has got to get the decent snow all the way, and fairly good snow too. And I - these new skis - like these *stiff* skis. Actually skis are coming softer again for a while. Last year's skis, racing skis, were that big, no-one could squeeze them together in the middle, no-one. You had to really jump on it to get it down. And even big races this year, in the *...world....* championship they had soft skis there - they are going back. And I could not really - *I* learned to ski with a wooden ski, and I never learned to ski properly with these really big plastic ones. Because you have got to jump like hell to keep them down. And my style was not like that. I started to ski mostly on the soft tracks and no *tracks*, more in the bush. And I could not ski with that sort of technique. I would ski for a while, but not a long race. Well now, these skis are getting better. Skis are changing. They have got one ski in Finland now, they banned it, it is banned at the moment. It is like a javelin, it is 30 millimetres in the heel and on the tip, it is actually the wrong shape. It is like a boat. They call it javelin, javelin skis.

KH: 30 millimetres.

RK: Yes, 30 millimetres in the tip and in the heel. And it is 45 in the middle. It is the wrong shape altogether. It is banned. Next year they can use it. Funnily enough, one bloke in a big ski *.....* who won the gold medal in the World Championships was able to use them, but they have not banned that result. But the Finnish junior team went to the European championships and they got chucked out, with their skis, because there had not been - any ski now has to be on the market for a full year before you can race with it. And that ski had not been.

KH: Is that right?

RK: Yes, they have to be on the market for a full year and they have to be available to all the places. If it ^{is} some new product you cannot put it in the race any more like that. I

ROBBIE Kilpinen

think it is a good law, myself.

KH: But then the person that wins, wins it on ability rather than - - -

RK: On the *gear*. Another team coming - the Norwegians have got this new type ski, they have all these high tips now are out. The new racing ski has got a lump, it pulls off the track better, it has just got a lump, like your wrist, a lump in the tip. And it does not wobble on the track. All of this racing gear, it is just going stupid. You just could not use ^{it} in normal use. Like you could not ski with a javelin skis. You go on *no track* or something, how can you steer things like that. You would be all over the road.

KH: You would be spearing into the snow *gums*.

RK: Yes.

KH: When did you meet your wife? Did you meet her in the mountains?

RK: Yes, in the Cooma Hut. She used to work in the valley.

KH: She did not come out to Grey Mare with you?

RK: No, she has never been to Grey Mare so far.

KH: So in 63 and 64 you spent all that time by yourself, most of the time?

RK: Yes.

KH: You would just come down occasionally for some shopping or to go in a race?

RK: Yes. In the races I used to come and stay before I would go in a race. ^{Funnily enough} In those days most of the blokes used to ski really close together, not Kore, but all these new blokes, Otto and Ross - they would ski fairly close. ^{Then come} to Grey Mare - Otto came once to Grey Mare to spy on what I was doing, I guess. And I had this kilometre track ^{in the bottom, I was timing,} and he could not believe it. He had told the blokes, my tracks, they were like - really wide. And he could not believe it. And later on he worked it out himself. It was much better for balance, you learned to transfer your weight there, and he started to ski like that too.

ROBBIE Kilpinen

But you used to get really funny stories, like they knew I was there, and they knew I wasn't working, I was bloody skiing all day. They really got scared when I came out of Grey Mare. It was a good time.

KH: Did it really make a big difference? Like, were you a lot faster than the others in the championships that you won? In 63, 64.

RK: Yes. Mostly I was four minutes in front - that sort of time.

KH: That is a lot, isn't it?

RK: In Victoria, they still are real crook. They don't like any New South Wales or ACT bloke to win there. They would do anything - I went there, and they said, "It is not fair, all the racers get the last lot of numbers." They put all the numbers together, and I thought, oh yes, it is better to give the new blokes *a. gp. too*. And I don't know - they put the numbers in the hat. But my number must have been - I don't know how they did it - I drew number one. I went in a bloody blowing ^{snow} storm and started number one, and I thought, they have got me ^{now}. I beat them I think, by 10 minutes. They never beat me at Falls Creek, never. It was always crook, it was all frozen over, all snowed over, really bad. Every time in Victoria. I won it four years in a row. They never touched me there. It was really bad. It *does* not matter what they did. There was this bloke, *Dick* Walpole, he is a really bad sport - Victorians are bad, so far, from what I have seen, they do not like anybody who comes from outside. And they just change the rules or try to do anything to beat you, not fairly. What they did, I think, the year before last, Ken Baxter and *boys* went there, and because they had entered wrongly, they let them race, and these New South Wales blokes got the first and second whatever. And then they said, "Oh, by rule so and so, so and so, you were entered wrongly," and they did not get anything. They did not even get a mention in the results. And there was a big stir. Like we let folks come from Victoria,

ROBBIE Kilpinen

and you can enter the same morning, if you get one more run off. But not in Victoria, you could have sent your entry there in the summer time. It is not even put in a month before.

KH: The guy next door to you - - -

RK: Barry *Marshall*

KH: Barry was saying last year, I think he said, "I'm not racing any more. There is too much politics."

RK: It is really bad. It is unbelievable.

KH: Because Barry was quite good, wasn't he? He was one of the top racers for a while.

RK: Yes, he was keen. Barry - for track technique - like Barry would never last - no way he would ever ski fast *to Kiandra. Unless* even doubt if he would last that long time anyway. But he has got a sort of different technique. He has got a really fast *tempo*, he sort of shuffles along. But he was really good - but mostly our tracks get slow. You get a few blokes, and you get wet snow tracks start and it gets always wet. And it is funny, snow - only in July, in that certain condition, you got dry snow. Other times you might think it is dry snow, but it is not really dry snow. Very seldom you use blue stick, if you look back.

KH: That is right.

RK: And say, in Finland, you can just about put blue stick on any day, and in the middle of the winter, you have put on green for weeks. And you never change your wax. How easy! It just makes you sick. I went to Finland in 73, and the warmest it got was 18 degrees all the time I was there, and that was still *special green*.

KH: 18?

RK: 18 below zero.

KH: Minus.

RK: Yes, minus celsius, yes. And it never gets that cold here, full stop. And that was the warmest. It was 20 and 27, and that sort of thing. And some days it was 18, and oh, it was

ROBBIE Kilpinen

beautiful. And that is when it really puts me off,^{too}. Like people ski in Finland, they ski so much. It so easy too. You ski here and have all the hassles going up, that is what starts putting me off now, all the hassles going up the bloody mountain. This year they have got some new law - I don't know if you read about it they are going to put signs on a certain section of the Kosciusko Road - - -

KH: Where you have got to take chains. You have got to have chains on you?

RK: No, but ^{the way they put it} in the Canberra Times, you have got to put ^{them}.... on ⁱⁿ certain sections. And if they put it like ^{that} I won't go up.

KH: No, I don't think so. It is just that you got to have them and that they will make you put them on, if it is necessary.

RK: Yes, if it is like that, that is fair enough. But ^{the way it was} in the paper, they had already - - -

(end of tape)

Robbie Kilpinen

KH:Happy Jack's that way, going from Kiandra to Broken Dam, it is further to - - -

RK: It is a pity somebody does not open some sort of place again in Kiandra, because Kiandra is nice. It is sort^{of} easier to get there, it is a good road, and it is good country for cross country skiing.

KH: But there is good skiing at Selwyn quarry.

RK: Oh yes.

KH: Do any of the blokes - - -

RK: Yes, my brother went skiing there last winter. He came from Sydney - they went - - -

KH: It is quite popular.

RK: Yes. Apparently there was hundreds of people there.

KH: Really?

RK: Yes. People live in Tumut and they come up in the bus ^{for the day} and they go back again. And that is what they are doing there.

KH: It is really good touring - Kiandra.

RK: Oh yes.

KH: If you come from, you know, Selwyn quarry to Table Top. It gets a bit wet sometimes, but it is nice country.

RK: Even last winter there was skiing on the Yarrangobilly turnoff, there was good snow a long time there. You could ski around there. And I did not ^{go} that far in 64. One time I went to Kiandra last year ^{it}...was as good as in 64 - almost as good, it was not quite as good. But there was a lot of snow in Kiandra at one stage last year.

KH: Last year, yes, there was. When we had the celebrations, when we had the 50th anniversary - you know, the 50th anniversary of the first crossing?

RK: Yes.

KH: We had a lot of snow then. That was the end of July.

RK: Yes. It was really good. I thought I would go skiing a bit there, too. But I went round with the young blokes in the races.

Robbie Kilpinen

KH: But there were periods last winter when you could ski across Happy Jack's River.

RK: Were there?

KH: Yes.

RK: That must have been good then, because even in 64 it was just for ^a while, early July. Yes, you could ski across and then it collapsed and you had big snow banks there.

KH: Yes. When we went across it was already broken through. But we found the footbridge.

RK: I wonder - I have got to find out about that footbridge. Because I went there in the summer time, there never was any. We always went across - -

KH: It is very close - it is straight on the way - it is almost on the route from Mackay's Hut to Brooks. It is very good, you don't have to get wet, or anything.

RK: Yes, I think somebody has done it after that. I am dead sure.

KH: Yes, it could be. It just looks like it has been there a long time, because the logs have got mosses on ^{them.} But I suppose they could get there fairly quickly. But the murals at Grey Mare - you were saying that somebody - a Polish bloke or somebody - had drawn those.

RK: If I remember rightly, it was some mine manager. Do you know who was manager in the mine, who lived behind - when the mine was closed. Two doctors owned that mine.

KH: Two doctors?

RK: Yes, two doctors from Victoria. The two doctors put the money and somebody led them - in this bloody bullshit a lot of money to be made there. And they put the finance in; they put the, the diesel and everything else.

KH: The which? The diesel?

RK: Yes, there is still a diesel in the hills there.

KH: A diesel motor?

RK: Yes, it is still there, and a big fly wheel.

Robbie Kilpinen

KH: There is a fly wheel?

RK: Yes, and on the right hand side there is a big cylinder, I think, that is the in the diesel there. And they put all - - -

KH: Was that 1949; is that right?

RK: Yes. Something like that. ^{It's a pity that} old visitor's book ^{got eaten by rats} it had all that information. A bloke kept a log all through the winter when he spent his time there, what went on. It was all in the old log book. And then somebody left it outside and rats bloody ate it.

KH: So it was a very old visitors' book?

RK: Yes. It was sort of like a log book, it was a really big book.

KH: And it dates back to the time when the mine was ^{running}.

RK: The mine was running, yes. The old bloke was left, and it mentioned all the names who were - and how they got the things in. They used bloody bullocks and everything to drag their things in. And this winter, last time, this one bloke was left in, and he went the whole winter there. And I thought ^{it} his name was something like Beetson. And I think he ^{was} the bloke who did the murals, but I could be wrong. But if you ring up George Dudzinski, because he has been there a lot more times than I have been, and he had been years before I had been, too, he most likely would remember the bloke's name, too. And he knows most likely the blokes who own the hut. It was actually owned by two blokes, these doctors, I think even today, sort of - at least they had put their money up.

KH: There was a fellow called Bell who was involved with that mine, whether he ^{was} the manager of the mine - George Bell, or something like that, that I have heard. But it was going before, too, wasn't it? Like, the Grey Mare mine has been started a couple of times.

RK: Yes.

KH: The last time was - - -

Robbie Kilpinen

RK: And then somebody told these doctors, oh there is a really good gold mine, you will have to put a few bob there, and you must really dig the old ^{fortune out} and that. And it was not like that at all. They rarely got gold there.

KH: But none of them were around when you went there? In 63?

RK: No, I never see any of the blokes who actually owned the thing, or had anything to do with it. But there was one funny bloke in Outward Bound, had a base in the ruddy Alpine Hut - - -

KH: Yes, that is right.

RK: And they had a Danish bloke there. He was a really funny bloke, too. He had been there on his own.

KH: He lived at Alpine on his own?

RK: Yes. And actually, I never met the bloke himself. He was always out when I called in. But he had a lot of books. He had a fair library there. And they had - it must have been a whole load of butter. They had one cupboard full of butter - it went bad.

KH: Butter?

RK: Yes, it went bad. It was a lot of butter, it was just in there, wrapped in the - it must have been from a dairy, it was not even in proper bags. It was just in the paper. And it stank. And he had a little sauna in the ground, in a ^{great sort of} hole in the ground, and [?] pot belly stove. And I went there many times, and every time I went there, they had in a book, they had "gone out" somewhere, and this guy had gone out again. He had some Outward Bound boys there.

KH: What was his name? You don't ^e remember?

RK: He was a Danish bloke, anyway. If it was Andersen - a real Danish name, too.

KH: Because their tins of food are still there. There are still big 5-gallon drums of dried onions and dried vegetables and rice. And kilograms of pepper and kilograms of salt. In-

Robbie Kilpinen

credible, it is still there. It is going to be there for ever.

RK: Do they still have gas lights there?

KH: The gas lights have gone.

RK: Yes, they had bloody gas lights. I went there one night, I thought I was going to meet him. I skied there and I took ^{my sleeping bag} and I thought I would go in the night, and I would most likely meet him then. I went there and it was really cold, and I turned the lights on, and bloody things, they really started, sort of, not working properly, big flames everywhere. And I ran and turn^{ed} them all off. It was lucky they did not burn it down. I don't know what was wrong with it. Just big flames, really big flames came out of it. I just had a fright.

KH: They used to have gas lamps? What, with gas bottles?

RK: No, they had one big bottle in the hall, and then they had gas lights in the - - -

KH: they must have brought the gas bottles in with a truck.

RK: Oh yes. They had fleets - four-wheel fleets. They brought all their supplies in the summer. They had a lot of stuff there. I don't think they skied much, because I never saw anybody else up - even tracks up on the hills there. I don't know what they did. Maybe they just came and walked round a bit. I never saw them skiing.

KH: Where did you meet Ted Winter, for the first time? You had heard about him?

RK: I think it was in the Cooma Hut, a ^w years after. I never met him - - -

KH: You never met him out in the bush?

RK: No. I met Paddy Pallin and ^{his mates} once, I think ^{at} Schink Pass or somewhere. Oh no, it was Consett Stephens we met him. They were actually surveying what was the first Paddy Pallin route, and I had never met Paddy Pallin before. And I met this old fellow then.

KH: In 65?

RK: Yes. I did not meet too many blokes then in the moun-

Robbie Kilpinen

tains. Even bushwalking in the summer, you did not come across a lot of blokes.

KH: No, when I was bushwalking in 68, there were not many people.

RK: Yes. But it is different now. You even go fishing to Pretty Plains, or somewhere around there, and you always see people.

KH: But you would have seen people in the winter at White's River, wouldn't you?

RK: Yes, it was like Pitt Street. During the holidays they all came to bloody White's River.

KH: Or Valentine's.

RK: Yes. Oh, not many even to Valentine's, most ^{to} White's River. Skis outside, hundreds of pairs skis, they all came as far as White's River.

KH: Or Mawson's did they go to Mawson's?

RK: Oh, very few to Mawson's. And then later on, it must have been 65, there was this new club, the Squirrel Club, or something - -

KH: Yes, did you meet the Squirrels?

RK: No, I never met any.

KH: 65, you reckon they started? They were not there in 64?

RK: I don't think so, because ^{all of a sudden} I think it was the year when Ross Martin came up, we skied down there - this new ^{beard} Squirrels Club, and they had all new ^{books}. and a lot of food there.

KH: In 65?

RK: Yes. We used to laugh, because their wood heap was so bloody perfect. We used to get some supplies from there.

KH: They had a big tool box.

RK: Yes.

KH: Slippers, books. Did you ever meet any stockmen up there? No, by the time you got there, most of the stockmen finished about 58, even in the summer you would not - - -

Robbie Kilpinen

RK: I never saw any cattle there, never.

KH: Grazing had finished by the time you got there.

RK: But funnily enough, in 65, we found dead sheep, not far from Mawson's sort of towards ~~Alpine~~ ^w from Mason's on the flat there. We were skiing and there were foxes on the snow, we could see a long way away. And I said Ross then, "There has got to be some animal they are eating." And when we skied there, there was a sheep there. And Ross had been working as a jackaroo with the ^{Haslingden's of Kelton Plains} in Cooma, and he said, "Oh yes, this so-and-so many years old sheep, it must have been a stray sheep, and they have chased it up on to the snow." There was a sheep there. It was still sort of - it was not old - it had been just been killed recently. It was not very - nothing.

KH: We still find stock up there. There was some cattle near Doubtful Gap all through the winter last year, they survived.

RK: They must have ^{had} a tough time.

KH: And there are now wild sheep, too, in some parts.

RK: Have you ever seen little wombats in the snow?

KH: I have seen wombats.

RK: Gee, they are funny. I used to watch them at Grey Mare. They were in the creek there. And little bastards like that, and the snow was really ^{deep} in 64. They sort of swim in the snow.

KH: They are amazing in the snow. They drag their bellies in it.

RK: Yes, really funny.

KH: But when you were talking before about how you have scratched your way out of - when you crossed the Happy Jack's River, and you scratched your way up the other side, well, I saw a wombat do just that very thing. I was filming at the time. And I got him trying to do this. And I ran out of film, because it took him so long to get up this bit of a - and he would scratch and he would try to get the back leg up, and it would slip

Robbie Kilpinen

again and again and again. Finally, after about 5 minutes, he made it.

RK: Once I had a really funny go - I was going to Cabramurra to do the shopping. And what I used to do, I would tie my skiS together and throw them over the river and put the stocks and everything in the one bundle. One day, one ski got loose and it slipped back in the river, and the river was sort of half open and there was a bit of ice, and open again. And the ski went underneath this ice float, it went underneath and came up again, and I did not catch it in the first one. Oh, I really - I was panicking. I could see it going where it was going, and then I caught it, and I had to go in the really deep water to catch it, too. And when I knew I was just going to stop it I used make it such a bundle and it just would not slide anywhere; I put all my clothes round the bindings, and if I had a rucksack, put the rucksack there too.

KH: But that would have taken you on that crossing in 64, That would have taken you what, a quarter of an hour or so, out of your time.

RK: Oh yes. Then I waxed too. I ate and waxed. Once I get over I put my - - -

KH: Oh, you waxed it?

RK: The only wax I did.

KH: What wax did you put on then?

RK: Purple blister right down ~~to~~ purple blister.

KH: Purple blister?

RK: Yes, right down.

KH: From green stick?

RK: Yes, green stick.

KH: Straight ^{down} to purple blister?

RK: Yes, because I had double poled down the creek, ^{Tibeaud's} or whatever that creek - but I double poled all the way. I was slipping already then I was coming down. but it did not matter because I was double poling. I got there and I could

Robbie Kilpinen

see it was getting warm. I had lost the cloud, and I knew it was going to get soggy, and I put the purple on, and that is the only time I waxed. It bloody worked too.

KH: And then you ^{met} two guys near Table Top?

RK: Yes, Danny ^{Collman} and

KH: How far past Table Top?

RK: Sort of - they were down from Selwyn quarry. There were sort of poles, the measuring poles on the flat there, the open bit, and they were measuring the poles, for the measurements they take from them. They had a snowcat there. And I felt thirsty then, and I thought - the snowcat was sort of way, way up, and they were sort of down about over there. And I thought I would ask for a drink, but I could see they did not have a drink with them, and it would have been in ^{the Porsche} and I did not want to waste that much time to ski there and track these blokes down. And I thought, oh, I will make it. But gee, I was ^{short} of drink..then.

KH: So, did you talk to them?

RK: Yes, I said to Danny, I said - he said, "Where are you going?" I said I am coming from Perisher. And he said, "How long - - -" I said, "Seven hours, a bit over seven hours - it is the fast bit, over seven hours ten." And if I just could have kept going I would have gone under eight.

KH: That is right. You were almost there.

RK: Yes, oh yes. I could have been under eight. But then I thought - I just felt so stupid, like you have been skiing that long, and it did not make any sense pushing on like that.

KH: So what was the time that you did?

RK: Eight hours eleven minutes.

KH: So that the man at Kiandra was your official timekeeper?

RK: Yes, the postmaster. He was an ex-skier himself, too. He had - one of those old pioneers.

KH: Not Bill Pat^{erick}?

Robbie Kilpinen

RK: Yes, most likely, a sort of an old bloke, a really old sort of little bloke.

KH: I have never met him. He is dead now. He died about 1973. He used to ^{be a} Kiandra ski champion.

RK: Yes, must have been the same bloke.

KH: He had the post office the last, I think.

RK: Yes. And he was in there, and he was skiing. So he had skied himself too. And he rang up for me from the post office.

KH: That is very interesting. It is interesting that that is quite a historical thing, because Bill Paterick was one of the - oh yes, he was a real old timer, as far as I know.

RK: Yes, he was really nice. He lived in Kiandra at that time.

KH: That is right, he lived in the post office, I think.

RK: Yes, yes, he was there. He was a bit like - if I went in the house somewhere in Finland - his door was shorter, it was not quite buried in the snow, but it was sort of up to the eaves. It was just like ^{a house somewhere} in Finland or somewhere in the Alps. It was all in the snow. Yes, that was the good old days.

KH: And you did not really do the whole distance before that? You did it in bits and pieces.

RK: No, I only did the whole distance once. Only once. I had done bits many times, many, many times I had done bits. But the whole distance I only did once.

KH: Whereas Kore and Otto did it a number of times, didn't they?

RK: ^{have} Oh, they must have done it a dozen times, I think, yes. They done it lots of times.

KH: They best time they did it in was about nine and a half hours, wasn't it?

RK: Yes. They did not want to - I sort of believed Kore - he might have done it that fast. But they did not even bother ringing ^{back} because they did not break the record. But I think just

Robbie Kilpinen

to make it true, I think they should have rung him back, and then nobody could have doubted it.

KH: That is pretty good. I imagine it is harder for two people together to break the record. I imagine you would be faster by yourself.

RK: I think so too. Because sometimes you feel like going fast at a certain time of day, another bloke might feel he is going too fast and gets a bit and drags behind. And it is very hard to get two blokes to ski the same speed, I think.

KH: I think you would do better by yourself. You know there is a fellow at the university, his name is Robert ^{Caldwell}.

RK: No, I have not met him.

KH: Nobody knows about him. But I heard about him. And he - I spoke to him. He used to do a lot of mountain climbing. He was a really mountain climber until he had a bad accident when climbing. And he used to do a lot of ski touring, and he used to cover enormous distances in Canada in very good times. And he was a real solo guy. He did solo runs and solo ski touring. And he reckons that - this is now ^{or 4} 3 years ago - he skied - he had a number of goes at finding the best route from Kiandra right through to Thredbo in the main range. He reckons, after he did the trip twice, that by the time he did it the third time he had got the best route. And he reckons that he skied Kiandra to Seaman's Hut in eight and a half hours, and that he stayed at Seaman's Hut that night, and skied back to Kiandra the next day, but only got as far as Table Top. He got as far as Table Top in ten and a half hours. He stayed there the night, the second day, and then that little distance back to Kiandra on the third day.

RK: Yes, that would be bloody good running, if he did that.

KH: That is incredible, I think. Especially that he went and turned round the next day.

RK: Have you heard of a bushwalker, a Sydney bloke, called Colin Camel? All the bushwalkers in Sydney, they talk about this bloke. He goes - oh, 60 miles is nothing in a day. Nobody can

Robbie Kilpinen

walk with him.

KH: Not Ray ^{Jerems?}

RK: Yes, I think so. Something like that, his name is.

KH: Because Phil ^{Butt.} does a lot of running, ^{too.}

RK: No, this is just a walker, he is just a bushwalker. And he has had some incredible walks. Nobody sort of - a two day trip is nothing for him. One day, bang, bang, he has - I heard he had walked almost the same time from Perisher to Kiandra what blokes have done running, he has walked, with a rucksack on the back. I have not met the bloke, but I heard. Ross Martin was saying, this Camel, and he was staying in the Blue Mountains, some really tough walks. And what blokes do in maybe three days, he might be there in a day.

KH: Probably Ray ^{Jerems}

RK: Yes, something like that.

KH: Because Ray ^{Jerems} is a ^{tiger...} walker.

RK: They call him Camel anyway, that is his nickname.

KH: But I said to this Robert ^{Caldwell} fellow, you know, next year, "Give us a ring when you are going to do it and we will time you and we will check you out and check you in again. Do it from Perisher to Kiandra."

RK: Yes.

KH: But he has not contacted me. But he is the sort of guy who does not care about publicity, or anything, he is just there to beat himself. He is only interested in beating his own times.

RK: Yes, you should get him over. Because that is what you need, some bloke to go alone, and who can ski on his own. Like these blokes, Dennis ^{Vanzella}, Peter Thompson, I don't think they would really dare to go on their own.

KH: No, you need somebody like Ted Winter, about 50 years younger.

RK: Yes, he would know the way to go.

KH: Oh Ted, he skis day and night. He says he skis more at night than in the day. Because he really got used to navigat-

Robbie Kilpinen

ing by the stars. In preparation for the anniversary crossing last winter, he skied Perisher to Kiandra by himself, and no problems. And then he was going to go back with Paddy Pallin and some of the others, the other old-timers, on the official crossing ^{going to} Kiandra. but, you know, his daughter got burned, had a burned leg. ^{-at..Broken Dam Hut.}

RK: He went back after, he brought his daughter, and he went back again.

KH: That is right. He started off a day and a half later, and caught Paddy, I think, at Guthega, went up with him on the same lines, they both arrived together.

RK: He is a tough bugger. Have you seen his son?

KH: Joel?

RK: Yes. He is so skinny, you would not think he has got any strength, but he skies all right too.

KH: That is right. Joel is apparently going to work down there all the winter this year.

RK:

KH: He is going to concentrate on - he is already down there working.

RK: That is good. Because we have got this new bloke from Victoria, Chris Allen, who last year went well. He beat all the blokes in the nationals. And he is the same age as Joel Winter. And we are going to get good competition. That is how we might get some ^{where} - all these old buggers - they can pack their skis up. They can teach blokes but they are never going to be any good in big races. I know the ski racing is getting so bloody cunning, ^{now,} carbon fibre poles, and all these ^{Javilni} skis and ^{bullshit.} I don't know, to me, it is a bit too fancy.

KH: Joel is taking a year off. He finished the higher school certificate, and he is taking a year off this year.

RK: He is tough for a little - I used to teach him a bit, to ski. His dad used to pay for his lessons and I would take him around. ^{Some} days he was really crook, and I thought, oh he will

Robbie Kilpinen

not turn up. And I would just go and seek him out. He would be there in his oilskins and he would still come.

KH: Do you know his father used to be the Australian pole vaulting champion - Ted Winter?

RK: Did he?

KH: Ted Winter was - he was telling me - I had him at my place the other weekend. He was a champion athlete for about 20 years, from about the late 1920s right through to after the Second World War, into the 1940s. He was good at long jumping, hop, step and jump, at high jumping, but his main thing was pole vaulting. And he reckons he would have been in the Olympics but they did not have them because it was war time. he missed out on 36, but there was no Olympics in 40 or in 44, when he was at peak, at peak condition. I think that partly explains why he is still so tough. Because he was fit, a top athlete for 20 years. That really staggers me. And he still won an Australian championship at the age of 40 in athletics, ^{he said.} That is incredible..

RK: A bit like Percy Cerutti, he won Australian ^{Championships} when he ^{was} 45, in the marathon.

KH: Who was that?

RK: Percy Cerutti.

KH: That is right, he took up running when he ^{was} 40, didn't he?

RK: Yes, they ^{Kicked} him out of the public service because he was going to die. And he thought, "Something is bloody wrong there." And he just started to eat raw meat and fruits, and he cooked nothing. And five years later, he was our marathon champion.

KH: Did he?

RK: Yes, he got kicked out from the post office, because his condition was such that he would not last very long, he was going to die. And he thought, "Oh, bugger this." And he never looked back. He did not eat anything cooked or any meat - yes, meat he would cook once, but if it was already cooked and reheated, he

Robbie Kilpinen

would not touch it. It was gone off for him. It had to be just cooked once, that was all right. And then he discovered oats. That was his big thing. He just had to eat oats; not to eat butter or drink milk. The Victorian Milk Board paid him four thousand pounds to shut up, because he was telling everybody butter was bad for your heart, and you just can't digest that sort of fat, it just slows you down. And he was screaming round the countryside. And they came and said, "If you just shut up, you will get four thousand bucks." He got the four thousand bucks, and he ^{just} told his athletes not to eat butter, ^{but he couldn't go freely around.} He was a funny bugger, boy, he was funny.

KH: He died in 85 or something, didn't he?

RK: Yes. He was 70. Yes, I went to his birthday when I was once on his camp and he bought - - -

KH: Oh, you went to his camp?

RK: Yes.

KH: What, back when, in the early 60s?

RK: Yes, 62 and 3, I think.

KH: Did you? You did some training with him?

RK: Yes, I got all these ideas there. And he bought a sports car because he went in the - he had an Austin Princess, one of those big things like a Rolls Royce. He went to sleep while he was driving it. He said, "Nobody needs a car like that, it is too quiet, it just goes fast and you don't know how fast it is going." And next thing he came with this bloody little sports car with Volkswagen motor in the back, noisy as hell. He said, "You would never sleep in that." He was the funniest bloody thing in Victoria. Oh, he was outspoken, he was - - -

KH: Did you ever meet Ken Breakspear?

RK: Yes, a few times.

KH: Because he was still racing a bit, wasn't he, in the early 60s?

RK: He used to come and ski with Bruce ^{Haslingden} and the old fellows, they used to - he'll come past..for Paddy Pallin. He

Robbie Kilpinen

might not race, but he is often around.

KH: He used to do that route between Alpine and
Camp, hundreds of times

RK: Yes. ^(race)

KH: He would, from Alpine to the Chalet for lunch and back
again in the afternoon.

RK: He was doing a lot of downhilling there, because in
Perisher, if you were over 75 or whatever, you would get free day
tickets.

KH: If you were a pensioner? Over 65?

RK: Yes. He is old enough and he can ski - and he was
skiing downhill like ^{hell now.} And he had very time in the trials
when they got those national star ratings, or whatever, he did
really decent times. He skied a lot last year. He does not work
any more, he just skied and skied downhill. He had got these new
shovel skis, the really short ones, and he does all right.

KH: Because he was one of the first - I think he was one of
the first really good tourers.

RK: Yes, oh yes, he was. ^{To Bett's Camp and}to Alpine Hut
and back in a day, like nothing. And he takes people in and out.

KH: Did you ever hear about George Aalberg?

RK: Yes, I heard about him, but I don't he was round any
more when I started. Bruce Haslingen ^d knewGeorge
Aalberg. Bruce skied in the old days, in the Chalet.

KH: Bruce?

RK: Haslingen ^d. He runs the farm near Cooma airport, called
Kelton Plains.

KH: Now? Today?

RK: Yes. He is one of the pioneers. He has been out
there, you know, 50 or 51, or something. He went actually
cross country racing then.

KH: But George Aalberg was before that. In the thirties.

RK: Yes, oh yes, a long time before. But Bruce had met
George Aalberg.

Robbie Kilpinen

KH: Bruce Haslingen^d?

RK: Yes. Farm near the Cooma airport. Yes, a farm called
Kelton Plains.

KH: I must call in there.

RK: He is a really nice bloke, and he knows - - -

KH: He would know a lot about the history and the charac-
ters.

RK: Oh yes, he would ^{know} most of the people around.

KH: What, is he in his 60s?

RK: Yes, he would be. A sort of really lively too. Boy,
he has got funny stories. He is a really good bloke.

KH: He tells a good story.

RK: Oh yes.

KH: I am always looking for people who tell a good story.

RK: And he can make such a - he is so funny. Sometimes we
go, after the Balmain Cup or the Perisher Cup, we go down to the
Valley Inn, or Sundeck. And once he went to Sundeck, and he
grabbed one Cooma bloke with him and he went in the kitchen in
the Sundeck, and said, "Excuse me, can we come and have a
inspection? I am the cook from Cooma Hut," he said. And he went
and search through all the bloody things there - a cook from

Cooma Hut - there is no cooks in Cooma Hut, full stop. And he ^{made this}
^{big story.} Then he laughed to himself the next morning. They fooled
these blokes that they were the cooks from Cooma Hut. They used
to ^{go} racing in Victoria, he would come back and then he said - he
had got these old road signs, "Victorian Border" and all this
sort of stuff, he would stick them in his ute and bring them
home. And when the Snowy finished, they had auctions and all
these farmers went in to get a few ^{bikes.} and things. And then
they had 5000 shovel heads, they were all half-worn, bloody use-
less things. But they went for a dollar or something like that,
but a huge load of shit.

KH: Where from?

RK: Island Bend.

Robbie Kilpinen

KH: From the Snowies?

RK: Just old worn out shovels. He bought it just for a laugh, and behind his shed he has got this ruddy heap of old shovels. And stuff like that, he is just - he is a really funny bloke. What the hell! It was fun to - - -

KH: But he was a farmer. He has been a farmer all his life.

RK: Yes, he has got a big farm there.

Robbie Kilpinen

RK:because a company, so many blokes went and it is going to be a resort. And they hoped thisa resort. ThenAnd I would not be surprised if Ken ^{Breakspear} was one of the partners.

KH: Yes, well, I have talked to - I have got a pretty story on Alpine because I talked to Oliver Moriarty. He was the first - the main instigator of the building of Alpine. He was in Canberra last year, and I interviewed him. Then I also talked to the cook, Charlie Fletcher. Charlie Fletcher was a cook there in 1939, 40, and 41. And he told me how they used to drive a couple of head of cattle to the edge of the snow, slaughter them there and hang them from the trees. And people would go down from Alpine and cut their meat during the winter. These sort of stories. I have got some of that down.

RK: Yes, they were a fairly funny mob.

KH: But what was the name of this fellow again?

RK: Alan Cohen.

KH: Alan Cohen.

RK: Yes, he would be about 80 or something now. He still goes skiing.

KH: Where does he come from? Is he a farmer?

RK: No, he is a chemist.

KH: Does he work in Sydney, or something?

RK: No, he is inland. It is not Bathurst, but that way.

KH: Orange - - -

RK: Tamworth, Tamworth. He has got two chemist shops in Tamworth.

KH: Oh, Tamworth. Gee, that is a long way away. He still comes down?

RK: Yes, he is up - - -

KH: And he is in his eighties?

RK: Yes, he is an old bloke, really old bloke.

KH: And he has been skiing for a long time?

RK: Oh, he has been skiing here - I think one - a great

Robbie Kilpinen

he stay?

RK: At Snow Revellers. When you go up in the valley, find out when he is booked in, like early in the season we get these booking lists, and try to find out ^{when} he is here. Alan Cohen. And he knows a lot about old things.

KH: And he still comes up every year?

RK: Oh yes. He has a sort of permanent booking. I don't remember the weekend, but it is early in the year, he stays for about three weeks, or something like that. And then he comes for a week or two later in the year again.

KH: So if I ring Snow Revellers they will be able to tell me when he is booked in.

RK: Yes, they just sort of know when certain people are up and certain - lawyers come on the one weekend, and ^{then come} all the doctors. And then come all these - - -

KH: The chemists.

RK: Yes. There is lots of professional people. They are most sort ^{of} big sorts. There are a few judges and - - -

KH: The Snow Revellers?

RK: Yes.

KH: That is interesting.

RK: And Snow Revellers itself, there is a few sort of old fellows - they do not come regularly, but Rocky Creek. I think was the first club in the Perisher Valley. They were the people who first built ^{that} and then they had a bit of an argument then, and the split up and they started to make Snow Revellers. First they had a little hut, and then they made it bigger and bigger and bigger. And now they have the Snow Revellers, what they have got there. And most of them had skied in the Chalet in the old days, really old timers there.

KH: That would be good.

KH: But I am particularly interested in the ones that went cross country. The ones that might have gone to Mawson's or to Alpine.

Robbie Kilpinen

RK: Alan Cohen never does anything else. He does not even have downhill skis.

KH: He still goes off from Snow Revellers up to the chalet?

RK: Yes, and he used to go almost every day, he would go out, when I was manager there. So he is going to go there, and if he will not be back there and then, he just leaves a bit of a map where he wants to go. And he has got a ~~fox~~...whistle, and he sits in the rocks there and whistle a few ~~foxes~~ and stuff like that. He would not ski far. Like, he used to go skiing with my wife, my wife sort of would ski with him. A very easy, there was sort of a good pastime.

KH: Did you ever go up to Lake *Albina*...?

RK: Yes, a few times.

KH: What other old timers did you meet? Like, in the mountains did you meet any? In 64, 65. Were there any other - because I am particularly interested in people who used the outback huts.

RK: Then I met this bloke once in - what's the creek? Kilby's Creek or something.

KH: Ogilvie's Creek.

RK: Yes, Ogilvie's Creek. There was this bloke, McMahon. But I think he came from Victoria. He has been there for donkey's years. And I think he said he had been building Pretty Plain Hut, and he knew a bloody lot of huts around there, around Ogilvie's Creek.

KH: Because there is a hut on Ogilvie's Creek.

RK: Yes, and there is a few other huts too. And he knew them all.

KH: There are other huts near *Tooma* Dam, like Paton's Hut. And then Wheeler's Hut is on the way to Pretty Plain.

RK: Yes, there was quite a few. He sort of prattled on, there was quite a few huts there.

KH: Yes, McMahon. What was his - it was not Reg McMahon?

RK: I don't remember his first name. He was there with a

Robbie Kilpinen

jeep, and I was just having a bit of a picnic on a sort of table beside the road, and he called in, and we started talking. And he had skied a bit, and he had worked there a long time, and he had been droving cattle there; and he had been involved in Pretty Plains. He had been to Grey Mare. He had never sort of done anything at Grey Mare. But then, further on that way, towards Victoria, he had mucked around there all his life.

KH: So he probably came up from Khancoban or somewhere.

RK: Oh, he was not even - I hung out in Khancoban at that time. He was not from Khancoban, he was - - -

KH: Corryong.

RK: Corryong or something like that. He was from out that way.

KH: Did you ever meet the Mitchells, Tom Mitchell, or ^{Elyne} Mitchell?

RK: Yes, I met Tom. Yes, he reckoned I was going to die.

KH: He reckoned you were going to die?

RK: Yes, he reckoned. "One of these days, doing your stunts, you are going to die." He reckoned all my trips were stunts. He thought I ^{was} just nuts.

KH: Where did you meet him?

RK: I saw him once in Guthega. He was setting out for a little trip with his wife, and George Dudzinski said, "This is Tom Mitchell from Victoria." And he said, "Oh, I heard about you." It was something like, "Give up your stunts, one of these days you are going die. There is no place for fools like you." Or something - he was really angry with me, like he heard I was on my own in Grey Mare, and he did not like that idea.

KH: He is a very outspoken fellow. They say that he is slowing down. I have only met him once. He is not as - he is quieter now. Because he is getting on, he is nearly 70 now, or over 70 I think now.

RK: Yes, he must be, he was old then when I saw him.

KH: He has retired from parliament.

Robbie Kilpinen

RK: Yes. I know the house where he lived now, ^{it was once} ~~^~~ pointed out that is where he lived on top of the hill there.

KH: Did you speak to his wife?

RK: They were setting out. I just sort of met them in the carpark. They were going out and I was going somewhere with Dudzinski.

KH: Because she was a champion skier too.

RK: Yes. He has done a lot of touring. And they wrote a lot of books about mountains. I don't know how many, but quite a few. I have read a few of their books. Some about wildflowers and some about this and that.

KH: Some about wild horses. So, are there any other huts that you visited? Well, Valentine's would have been there.

RK: Oh yes, I have been to Valentine's. I have actually even spent a few nights sometimes in Valentines. And I have been to ^{Derschko's} a few times, I never - - -

KH: That is always locked, isn't it?

RK: No, it has got a key underneath the mat.

KH: It used to.

RK: Maybe not any more.

KH: No, I don't think so. I think the boys keep it well and locked.

RK: And I went to Pretty Plains in the summer too, a couple of times. I am planning to go actually very soon. There is very good fishing in the river just about two miles down the river. Fantastic fishing, just about every cast you get a fish on it.

KH: Really?

RK: Yes, and I never had such good fishing, trout fishing, in my life. And I have been going to go back and I have not been back, but I am going to go back soon. I have got this old tub; I fix it up and it is just about finished. I am going to drive it up to ^{Toona} Dam and follow the creek up from there and go to try to find that spot. It was ^{just} unbelievable. At least every cast ⁺ you had fish, maybe in the - and I fished about 20 minutes

Robbie Kilpinen

and I could not ^{cast} any more. *out.*

KH: Really?

RK: Yes, it was just that good.

KH: That is the ^{Tooma} River, isn't it?

RK: And they had lots of black snakes and *rubbish* there. But once you see a lot of black snakes, there is a lot of fish there too. It was good.

KH: And so, are you building now, in your profession?

RK: Yes, I do subcontracting, bricklaying in the summer, mainly. I build my own houses. But there are too many hassles - if you ^{are} building a concrete house you have to - I don't know, when I built this house, there was electricians and plumbers and drainers and roof tilers, and everybody just tells lies - tell you when they are coming. Something - "Oh, the truck has broken down - - -" and so much sort of work over- every evening you have got to chase these blokes round. And when I do bricklaying, I just do one line of work and it is much easier.

KH: So you are not building your own houses any more?

RK: No, I might make one more. - I have got this new -this new idea, you build your house more close down the ground. I am looking for some battleaxe where I can sink it in the hills, just one side sticking out, because it will not get hot in the summer, and it should not get very cool in the winter.

KH: A house for you?

RK: Yes, of my own. I don't know if I will ever get a block of land like that in Canberra. Maybe somewhere - - -

KH: But most of the steep land is reserve, isn't it?

RK: Yes, they don't have blocks like that here.

KH: No, that is right. What about Happy's Hut? Did you ever go to Happy's Hut?

RK: Happy's Hut?

KH: It is to the east of Brooks. To the right of Brooks.

RK: Yes. By mistake once - I think it was mistake, we were walking with ^{George} Dudzinski. The next thing we hit this hut

Robbie Kilpinen

there. We did not know it was there. And we hit this hut, and it was a good hut, and that is how we found it. And funnily enough, we were going to go to Brooks's, and there were people in Brooks's. We walked back to Happy's and we slept in Happy's then.

KH: What about Broken Dam Hut?

RK: No, never stayed there.

KH: Or Four Mile Hut?

RK: No, never stayed in ~~Four~~ Mile Hut. *Kiandra*

KH: No huts between Table Top and

RK: Never stayed - - -

KH: Never saw them? You did not know about them, I suppose?

RK: No, we never stopped there. When we set out from Kiandra, we would sort of get as far as Brooks's at least. And then if I went on my own, I tried to get - really go hard and try to get Grey Mare, stuff like that. And maybe walk back to Round Mountain and back to Cabramurra and that way round. But one funny thing too, is, in Perisher Valley - no, Smiggins Holes - but all the road signs, anyway, they were in the wrong places. If you do know the chemist bloke in Jindabyne, Ian McDonald?

KH: No.

RK: No, if you ^{to} the chemist shop in Jindabyne, he knows this bloke, in the old days when they were putting these signs up, Perisher Creek, and so-and-so creek, most of those signs are in the wrong place, they have found later. They are not where they were supposed to be. And he has got a really long story, a funny story, how these places, they are not actually - this Perisher Creek, no, it is not Perisher Creek at all, and stuff like that - Perisher Valley. There is some funny - really, they got it all ballsed up, these blokes who had these signs on the old track, and they put them up in the wrong places. And Smiggins Holes is not in the right place at all. But it served a purpose. They have got the names there now, but it is not where

Robbie Kilpinen

they are supposed to be.

KH: Oh, really?

RK: That Ian McDonald, he is a good bloke, too, if you want to - and he knows the old bugger who put the signs up. He is actually a funny bloke, Ian McDonald. He bought that chemist's shop in Jindabyne. And he makes Guthega Rub, and Kosciusko Cough Elixir, and all sorts of these local medicines. They are not really local, but he puts local names and all the bus people come and buy his Kosciusko Cough Elixir and Guthega Rubs and all this. In the Guthega Rub he has got some special ingredients; he got - some vegetable matter, and all sorts of things. People are really impressed with his medicine. He has only been there a couple of years, but he knows lots of old blokes I have not even met. And he was telling me how these lots of name places and creek, they are in the wrong place on the hills there.

KH: No, it is just that there is a girl in Victoria who is writing the history of skiing for the Victorian Ski Association, or something like that.

RK: Wendy Cross, or somebody?

KH: Yes, Wendy Cross. She is writing a book now on the history of skiing. She would be interested to speak to some of these people. Whereas I am more interested in the history of the huts, and the mountains away from the resorts.

RK: I don't know, the resorts, when you think of them, they are not really in the mountains even. They are just on the edge of the mountains. The Snowy Mountains are away, like - most people don't know. They think, oh, that is the skiing in Australia - but the best snow is away from there.

KH: Around Mount Jagungal, I reckon.

RK: Yes. I think Jagungal is really mountain. It is ^{on} its own, it is in the wilderness there, and you ski any direction from there, and it is good country.

KH: You have been ^{to} Nordheim?

RK: Yes.

Robbie Kilpinen

KH: In the summer?

RK: In the summer. I never went there in the winter.

KH: And how is it going?

RK: From what I heard, they are sort of having a *bit of a* struggle now, because they bought two vehicles, and they were something like \$8000 a pop. And they have wrecked their vehicles already and they need new ones. Because they need *reliable* vehicles because they take their people in and out, mostly. And that is going to be so costly.

KH: They bought two of them?

RK: Yes, Brian Haig and Kore got one. And when they are on a lease, too, like they just keep them for three years. But they will not last that long. Have you been through their track? It is rough, it is just wrecked now. Because when they came through, when there was snow, tracks are *bloody that thick. The road is... just... wrecked...* and they both had new Land Cruisers at the start of the season, and they don't look like new now.

KH: I knew that they were driving right - very close to the huts through thick snow - - -

RK: Yes. And sometimes he was stuck in the one place for three days, something like that. And once in the Bull's Peak Creek he was stuck for three days, too. And the creek froze up and he had to use to use a chain saw to cut it free. And all this trouble getting his people in. And it is such a long way. So now, when you leave the sort of - what is that creek when you - Gungarlin, or whatever - - -

KH: Gungarlin.

RK: Yes, when you leave that, it is an hour of rough, really rough ride, and bloody mud holes. And some bits of the paddocks, you can see he has been going a few weeks that way, and down there, and there is tracks everywhere. He is just wrecking the whole countryside where they are going.

KH: Do they actually own the land?

Robbie Kilpinen

RK: Yes, they own the land.

KH: They own it?

RK: No, actually, what they did ^{now} - the Park has resumed it, but because they got there before, they still can keep their huts there. But I heard yesterday, some blokes came down, they had - they did not know if they would be able to keep, because it has cost them so much, like, getting people there. And they get a few people. It is just about booked out already. But what money comes in and what it costs for transport and getting their stuff in, it is such a long way, he might go bang.

KH: So they don't own the land; they lease it?

RK: Yes, at the moment it has been resumed.

KH: It has been resumed by the Park.

RK: Yes.

KH: Just their bit or the lot?

RK: Yes, because that bit was first of all a big in the Park.

KH: That is right.

RK: Yes, and they sort of know it was going to be resumed, but they thought if they get there early enough, they just would not dare to take it off. But like hell! They took it.

KH: But the Park has to buy it back, don't they? They would have to pay them.

RK: Yes. But I don't know the full story, how it is going to end up. But I think it is most likely it is going to be a disaster, because of the access. If they could fly a helicopter in, it would be all right. But gee, thethat they are building - have you been in Nordheim?

KH: Yes.

RK: It is bloody rugged.And Brian is building his own hut, and Kore is building his own. And Brian carted bricks all the way ^{from} Cooma to this bloody place, and they have got enough rocks there to make a little foundation out of rocks - - -

KH: They are building their own places, as well?

Robbie Kilpinen

RK: Yes, little places for themselves. At the moment they are struggling on with them.

KH: But Gordon Broom, a fellow from Sydney, was going to build something there too.

RK: Yes, I think it is getting out of hand. Brian Haig was here a while ago, and he said he is going to make a hut in Round Mountain, too. And I said, "How are you going to make one in Round Mountain? He said, "You don't need a permit, you just stick one up. They don't care." Because people can use it he has taken skiers up to Round Mountain, have a bit of tucker and come back there.

KH: But the road is not open. It is closed, it is locked. Unless you have a key.

RK: Yes, most likely he does. He gets a key to here. He is a funny bloke, he can get round these officials and all that. He can talk and he can pull a few strings. And Kore said he is so good, he sends him ^{to Council to} get some things and permits, and he is so long-winded and he carries on. And they just get fed up with him ^{Kore} would not get anywhere with them.

KH: No, Kore would be very brusque - I imagine.

RK: Yes, a bit like me, if I go in the ^{customs} and I get in and there is a queue, I just ^{can't sort of take it} I don't yack on that long. But Brian Haig, he is good. He goes in some office and he just stirs them right up.

KH: Because some people, you know, say that the idea of Nordheim is a really good idea.

RK: It is a good idea. But if people skied in, that would be the best idea, so they would not have to cart them in.

KH: At Alpine, they used to ride in, used to ride in on horseback.

RK: Yes, that would be better, because horses do not wreck the country. They can move in the mud and in the slush.

KH: Across the creeks when they are flowing.

Robbie Kilpinen

RK: Yes. Maybe that is what he should do, get 20 horses or something.

KH: But people would not come then, I suppose.

RK: Most likely not.

KH: They would have to learn to ride, and they would not like that.

RK: Yes, there is a big problem there. And these blokes who just came down yesterday, they said they just might go under because vehicles are so expensive now.

KH: It is about \$120 a week, or something, to stay there, isn't it?

RK: Yes, it cost \$140 last year. But it has gone up, I think, now. We went there at the end of the year. The snow was already ^{gone} when we went up, my family. Kore took us up. Boy, it was cold then. There was no snow ^g round the hut, but a bit of a breeze going on, and you just froze. It was cold. Lucky, it gets buried in the snow, but if it was not, you could not heat it up.

KH: It was very nice the day we called in. I did the crossing from Kiandra to Mulyang in two days. And we went the first day to Boo ^{bee's} Hut. And ^{then} we had a big day, the second day, because we had to go all the way from Boo ^{bee's} to Mulyang. And we called in at Nordheim. And we felt very welcome and had a cup of tea. Only days ^{not at} nights, you know.

RK: Yes. I heard people who stayed there last winter, they did not find it cold. But I found it as bad as Grey Mare on a bad day, it was cold. The wind was sort of whistling around. The construction - mainly the work that Brian Haig ^{has done,} it is ^{wasting} good material sometimes. But it is a mammoth job. Some nights Kore would go and get four loads in the middle of the night in the dark, and do his work in the day too. And then they would sleep a few hours, and start carting - the truck could come only as far as Gunge ^r lin, and then they cart everything on the back of the Land Cruisers ^{on a} trailer. And some stories he has - "in

Robbie Kilpinen

this mudhole I was there for so many hours - - -" They had three days there, stuck like that with the trailer and all the gear in the back.

KH: They must be keen.

RK: Oh yes.

KH: Brian Haig must be a real - I am quite surprised they are going to so much trouble.

RK: Yes. There is no way I would persevere that long. Like, I would not see much, myself, there. Like ^{if} is his business, or whatever. All that punishment and all this. I went in the Land Cruiser there, and it was a good day, not muddy or anything. But gee, I had a sore bum by the time we got - - -

KH: Did you ever stay at Boo ^{bee's} Hut?

RK: Did you ever go there? ^{Below} Far ^{Bald.} Mountain.

RK: Yes, I have been to Boo ^{bee's} :

KH: Or Farm ^{Ridge}, did you ever stay at Farm ^{Ridge}?

RK: Yes, I have never stayed. I have been to Farm ^{Ridge} a few times with George Dudzinski. We stayed in O'Keefe's a few times.

KH: Because some of Farm ^{Ridge} was still standing.

RK: Yes, it collapsed, yes.

KH:it has gone ^{now,} but in the early 60s, when you were there, it would have - a couple of the rooms would have still been standing.

RK: Yes, people stayed there.

KH: Did they?

RK: Yes.

KH: What bushwalkers?

RK: Yes. There was even a bit of a hut up on the ^{Dickey} - Cooper had a hut too.

KH: Yes. You still saw a bit of that?

RK: Yes. It was still - the frame had a ^{few sheets} of tin - tin roof layers and a few boards. But then I think some vandals went and kicked it down, because it was fairly solid, what was stand-

Robbie Kilpinen

ing up there. it did not have much walls, but it would have been all right in the rain, or something. You could have sat under it. And the next time ^{we} went up it was all down. I think somebody ^{had} just flattened it down.

KH: Because some people have talked about rebuilding it.

RK: Yes, it was a nice spot, a nice view there.

KH: What about Table Top Hut? This side of Mount Table Top, going up on your left, just before you go up on your left, there is now only ruins, just bits of tin and wood.

RK: Yes, it was not up even then.

KH: It was not up, no.

RK: But then there was one hut off the Grey Mare ^{back}, or halfway between ^{Dershko's} and Round Mountain - oh, there is one hut down the creek, that must be ^{still there with} a good jarrah floor, not far from the road either, about a kilometre in and then you go down the creek. It has a really good floor, a good tin hut.

KH: Near Round Mountain?

RK: Yes.

KH: That is probably called Round Mountain Hut.

RK: Yes, down a long way, a really deep ride down. And then a bit further ^{up} there was one a hut, but it has long since collapsed. It had a roof on ^{it} back in 62, it must have been, the roof still up and we studied it in the summer, and we thought well, maybe one day we might have to sleep there if it really gets cold. And the next winter we had a look and it just had collapsed.

KH: So one of the huts had a jarrah floor in it?

RK: Yes.

KH: That must ^{be} the Round Mountain Hut. I have not been there.

RK: And it has got a little Chinese hut next to it. A really low hut, and there was a Chinese digger ^{had} lived there. It was so low you could not walk in it. It was sort of a roof, you know, about that height. And we used to go and - it had

Robbie Kilpinen

picks and things, sort of miner's things ^{around} it. It must be Round Mountain Hut because it is so close to Round Mountain. Lots of fishermen go there, because about 10 blokes can sleep on that floor. It is a decent hut.

KH: I think that is the one that is being looked after by a ski club from the other side. People from Khancoban come up there. They have a key to the gate, and they drive up as far as they can, and then they ski into Round Mountain. They call themselves the Round Mountain Ski Club, or something like that.

RK: Yes. That was a good hut.

KH: But it is badly infested with rats. It was last winter. Two guys I know stayed there and they had to put some platforms up in the rafters to get away from the rats. And even then they were still chased by the rats. Very bad - the worst rat plague I have ever heard of.

RK: Did you hear some blokes were in ^{Tin} Hut, and somebody's boot ^{got} eaten by rats? A leather boot. He had the old sort, I think, they did not have these new soles. He had leather boots, and when he woke up in the morning, ^{and} half the boot ^{was} eaten by a rat.

KH: When was that?

RK: I think it was last winter, I heard.

KH: You don't remember who it was, or - - - ^{like that}

RK: It ^{could} have been even Ted Winter ^{or someone} or some of those blokes told me. And then there is ^{this} bloke - ^{from the} Canberra Alpine Club - because somebody - I had some rubber ski boots, and I was selling them, and they were dirt cheap, and he said he would like them. And I thought ^{he didn't like them} but so and so lost his boots, the rats ate themand these rubber ones, they cannot eat them'.

KH: Al ^{an} Bagnall?

RK: It was not Bagnall.

KH: You know, he is an old man of the Alpine Club.

RK: What is the other bloke? ^{his mate} who goes bush-walking. It might have been that bloke.

Robbie Kilpinen

KH: I don't know - - -

RK: Stan *Goodhev* that might have been - he bought some rubber boots, I remember, from me.

KH: Because his leather ones got eaten.

RK: Yes.

KH: Yes, that is a good story.

RK: And it is not impossible. Like, I used to get rats in Grey Mare. I have got a few slides somewhere, and they were big. I had rabbit traps and I put a bit of cheese in it or something, and I often have got them... *just*... by the ^{rem} nose.

KH: In a rabbit trap?

RK: Yes, in the rabbit trap. And they were big rats. Yes, I put rabbit trap on - when I first moved in, for the first week or two, I have a rabbit trap on every night. And I would get one, at least one. Often I would just get to bed and blow the candle out, and it would go bang, it just went off. And I would get a couple in the night.

KH: You did not take rat traps with you?

RK: No. There still must be some rabbit traps round ⁱⁿ there. They were good. We *filled* them really fast. You just touched them and the ruddy thing went off. And they never let them go.

KH: It would kill straight away, would not it?

RK: Oh yes. But often they just got caught by the nose and I got some *slides*.....I must have been sadistic, I laughed when I saw these bloody big rats caught by the very *tip*.

.....

KH: I know how you feel, because I hate rats. Like at Mawson's one year, they were very bad, and they were crawling over my sleeping bag and around my head. Awful.

RK: Especially early in the year they seem to be more, when the snow first comes, they all seem to be around. Maybe I killed them all too. But early, it was - you could not sort of leave - you could hear them running on the tins, scratching everywhere.

KH: Yes. The rabbit traps were still there.

Robbie Kilpinen

RK: Yes.

KH: From the old miners.

RK: We *filled* them a little sort of tricky and they were that - you just touched them and they just went off right away.

KH: Well, I think I have just about got my - any other stories of unusual things that happened, or - - -

RK: Oh, I just cannot remember now.

KH: Or stories that people have told you?

RK: I can't remember now.

KH: Probably when you get in with some of your mates, you will probably remember - - - I think we have just about got it. That is probably enough for tonight.

RK: Yes. If I remember some funny things, I can ring you.

(end of tape)