

INTERVIEW WITH OLIVER MORIARTY AND CHARLIE FLETCHER BY KLAUS HUENEKE AND TONY PRESTON. 11TH JULY, 1977

OM: ... Everything I have is in Adelaide so I wouldn't be able to get you anything but I can tell you. I'm back in the '38 Ski Year Book which had this article "North-west of Kosciusko" which ... also the *Sydney Morning Herald* came out on their leader page, page 2, when we got back: "Longest Ski Trip Ever Made". I, and Frank Parle, and Danny Whiteman, and it had our photo across the top of the page: "Just returned from making a 200 mile trip through fogs and blizzards." Two hundred miles there and back. I remember it was a great circuit.

KH: Did you go as far as Tabletop? You didn't go towards, in the direction of Kiandra?

OM: No, that was in the earlier trip. This time, you see, everybody had done that one and we'd done it, but this time we wanted to do the western part which nobody had done. That's why I said, we went from Mawson's, around the western face of Jagungal, round the western side, very steep, and into O'Keefe's hut or the Bogong hut.

KH: What did you mostly call it?

OM: Both names. We used both names indiscriminately.

KH: Did you also do that with Mackays ...?

OM: Mackeys was never anything but Mackays... Then we went from there to the Round Mountain hut, then to Pretty Plain - it's all in the article - then up over the Grey Mare and I got to the fact where we'd ride to Mawson's at midnight and found Ray Adams and Jim Pattinson there and that's as far as I got ... And then, we'd been out about ten or twelve days and we'd set out with heavy rucksacks because we knew we were going to be out for a long time and we were pretty tired. Added to which the day at that time was sunny and warm. So we rested a couple of days at the Mawson. Then we set off one morning to go right through to the Chalet in the one day. We left Mawson about seven in the morning and arrived at the Chalet about half past two or three in the afternoon. But on the way, of course, we passed by White's River, below us, the hut. When we were well on our way up to Dicky Cooper, I said to Frank Parle and Danny Whiteman, "D'you know, we've still got some food left in our rucksacks and there's Ray Adams and Jim Pattinson down there. It would be nice to give them the food." And they agreed so I put it all in my rucksack and I whizzed down, gave them the food, and up again, joined them and away we went to the Chalet.

Now nothing more was ever thought of that until after I'd got over my war-time illnesses. I came back to this country in the summer and the people in Sydney, Huey Davis, Cyril King, said, must go and see Ray Adams, he's now settled as a grazier there, up on the Kosciusko road, and how to get there. So I rang up. He said, "You'll stay the night, won't you?" We sat and talked and I just reminded him of this and he said, "Yes," he said, "and you gave us that food," he said, "Then you ran up that mountain to your mates as though it were a flat." It never occurred to me, we used to run up mountains. I've always said I would never use a ski hoist or a ski lift. We just ran up. Of course, we used all kinds of special waxes, you know, for the climbing.

KH: You arrived at Mawson's in the middle of the night, didn't you? You got a shock because there were ski tracks outside of Mawson's.

OM: And heard voices inside.

KH: Where normally there were no ski tracks, well, ski tracks were far and few between then, weren't they?

OM: We had never met anybody out there in the winter, never. We always had the whole place to ourselves. We never, we always had it completely to ourselves.

TP: I came through from Kiandra on the long weekend. I skied through from Kiandra and when I got there, there must have been about twenty people. So we had to retreat and camp down in the trees. It's a very popular spot, Mawson's.

OM: At that time nobody knew these places. This is the point, we were pioneers, you see. Except for stockmen. Even Jim Pattinson had to have Ray with him to take him in because Pattinsons knew Kiandra end - they were born and bred - but they didn't know the centre, you see. But Ray Adams and his great friend, Bill Naphthali, they were the people with the most intimate knowledge of that part. Oh, no, but to finish the story, that's what I wrote in the Ski Year

Book, we were surprised to see ski tracks and hear voices inside. Then a friend of mine in Adelaide, Rod Seppelt - one of the Seppelt wine people - he read this and he said, "And it never occurred to you how surprised Ray Adams and Jim Pattinson must have been when you walked in at midnight." It never had occurred to me. Any rate, that's all written up in the '38 Ski Year Book.

KH: That's also in the *Sydney Morning Herald*?

OM: Yes, on the leader page, page two.

KH: I didn't realise it was in the Year Book as well.

OM: A very long article in the Year Book, very long, about four pages. But, let me see, it's merely an article this long on the leader page and then our photo across the top, page two of the *Sydney Morning Herald* in September.

KH: Do you have a photocopy?

OM: Yes, but they're in Adelaide.

KH: Yes, that's all right, as long as it exists because it's not that important for this article now because it will deal mainly with the crossing. But for any future publications that I might write...

OM: You would like me, then, in due course, to send you photocopies. Actually I've got photocopies because the editors of the Ski Year Book have had them from me and they've also given me permission to quote anything I want from the Ski Year Books in my own article. Let's go further back. The year before that, my cousin, Kevin Darcy, with whom I've just been in Bega, and Jack Darcy, who's his older cousin, and I, we left the Chalet and we went out, White's River, Mawson's, all through that. Now, if you have Paddy Pallin's original editions of the manual Bushwalking and Camping -

KH: No, I've only got the seventh edition.

OM: Well, in the original one all the skiing section was headed by a photograph of a single figure looking out over big snowfields. That's my cousin, Kevin Darcy of Bega. I took it on Gungartan looking out over the Kerries and places. And that, for many years, headed the skiing section of Paddy Pallin's little book. I've got some copies of the original one. So has Kevin Darcy at Bega, and the original of that photograph hangs in what at present is my sitting-room at home. But I'm just about to sell the house over there and come back here to where I belong. Any rate, I didn't write up that trip, I'll tell you why in a moment. Because when we came back we turned up at Spencers Creek, and then as we generally did in mid-afternoon, we left Mawson's that morning and came through. We used to generally make it from the morning to mid-afternoon and looked up to the Chalet where we had left our luggage - we generally did on these trips - and we stood still - the Chalet wasn't there. There were just crows cawing and I said, "The Chalet's burnt down." I thought, oh my God, we're going to go up there and find dead bodies, you see.

Everything was still, except for the sound of crows.

So we went up very dolefully and the old sheds, George Day's stables, were still there, we could see as we got near. Then as we got near we found there were people there: George Day and Margaret his wife were there. George Day was the manager of the Chalet, also a champion skier.

KH: He's still down near Wagga, isn't he?

OM: Yes, forget the name of the place, I know it well. Out from Adelong there. Tumut, Adelong.it's between Adelong and Wagga, down that road. Any rate, we went over and they said, no, nobody was killed, everybody got out alive. And they said, "We've even got your luggage here". All the luggage was thrown out the windows into the snow and survived.

KH: You'd started there?

OM: We always started our trip from the Chalet. Every trip started from the Chalet until we built the Alpine Hut.

KH: Or Betts Camp?

OM: No, never Betts Camp.

KH: Not for you. The Betts Camp was still there, wasn't it?

OM: Oh, I'll come to that in a moment, Betts Camp. That was there all right. So we talked to them and they gave us a cup of tea and so on. Remember, we'd been travelling since early morning, expecting to get a good dinner at the Chalet. They gave us a cup of tea. Then they gave

us some letters and so on they had and we set off for the hotel. We arrived at the hotel about ten o'clock at night. That is, after coming through from Mawson's we still had to make the way down to the hotel with our rucksacks and so on. We left our luggage to follow in due course.

KH: There were poles along the road then?

OM: Yes, there were snow poles. But we never worried about snow poles. Only once we ever thought of the snow pole - I'll come to that in a minute. We just knew it like the back of our hand, we'd been up and down so often. The first day on skis I spent at the hotel to learn a bit about it and the next day, my second day, I skied eleven miles to the Chalet and after that I never stayed at the hotel again. Except for one night that Ken Breakspear and I ran for the Summit record, where we had to stay at the hotel as the Summit record was you left the hotel to the summit and back.

KH: When did you first ski?

OM: It would be about '35 and '36. I only had the few short years because the war came and finished it all for me, just when I was at my height, determined that I would break the Summit record that year.

KH: So you really only had three to four years of skiing?

OM: Four. And yet they told me the last year I was there, I remember someone, one of the old Alpine people, turning to me in the Chalet and he said, "You are the king of the ranges, you know." Let's keep on with the story. So we skied down to the hotel that night and of course the hotel was chockablock, you couldn't even sleep on the carpet. So Jack Darcy rang his home in Bega and they got a friend to drive his car up to the Hotel Kosciusko and we got in and we arrived at Bega at dawn.

KH: At Bega. Bega? On the coast. Yeah, that's quite a long way.

OM: Well, we couldn't stay at the hotel. She was chockablock with the refugees from the Chalet.

KH: What sort of car were you in, do you remember?

OM: No. Any rate, that was that. Now, that year - I'm telling you why I didn't write anything for the Ski Year Book - because that year Paddy Pallin was bringing out the first edition of his Bushwalking and Camping, and he said to me, "I want you to write an article on ski touring", which is in there and was for years afterwards. Then all the photos in the skiing section were by me. There was this one of my cousin, Kevin Darcy, looking out from Gungartan at head of it. Then there were three of us around the fire at Mawson's Hut and it had "Snowing without but snug within". People said, you know, there were only three of you. How were there three in the photo? This was the way we'd do all these sorts of things: we'd set up our camera on a tripod behind us and then throw magnesium ribbon in the fire. She'd flare up, take the thing, then we'd just go back and close the shutter on the camera. That's the way that was taken. It's a jolly good photo, too, if ever you can get that old book.

KH: I've been wondering how I can film with a movie camera inside the huts and using magnesium flares is one way of possibly doing it.

OM: But it only lasts for a short flare, it's only a flare. It was right to take a still photo but ...

KH: But if you snaked it around a bit - ?

OM: Oh, it goes like that. Anyway, you can try and see. We had to try and see. We used to take our campfire photos out bushwalking, camping at night that way. Throw the ribbon into the fire when we all sat still. Then there's another one which is a favourite of mine - it's been published somewhere...oh, doesn't matter - on that long trip. Frank Parle, Danny Whiteman and I outside the Mawson hut. I forget where that was published. Quite recently. And there people are mysified too. Here's the three of us outside the hut and there are only the three of us there in broad daylight and our photo taken. And those two are sitting there and I'm behind with my skis crossed like that and I'm looking through the cross of the skis. And the answer there was, that what we did there was: we put a little white cord onto the lever that pulled down the shutter of the camera and then brought it back. And Frank Parle's sitting like this, with a hand just behind one leg, and the moment we were all ready, he just pulls the cord. That's the way that one was taken.

Any rate, that year I wrote this thing for Paddy and I gave my recipes for cooking out there, too, you see. We used to cook in the camp ovens. I used to make scones always. We were out for

long periods, for two weeks, we couldn't have bread except for the beginning. I used to make scones. And I gave the recipes. We had pemmican from Mawson's Antarctic Expedition and I used to mix this in the scones. It's all in Paddy's little book, my recipes for cooking in the snow.

Now, I go back to the year before this one with Jack and Kevin Darcy. Now, the year before that which would have been '35, '36 - now you'll pick this year up from me now - as the one where I made my first trip up on my second day on skis to the Chalet and then we went out skiing all around, Northcote Pass, and Twynam, and Carruthers, and so on, for a week or two. And that's where I learnt to ski.

TP: Would Tom Mitchell be around then? Would Tom Mitchell be on the scene?

OM: Tom Mitchell was there all these times - Tom and I keep in close touch now. In fact, when my book is ready to publish, I'll ask him to put a foreword in. You'll find Tom Mitchell quoted in this 1972 Ski Year Book, my memorial article to Ray Adams, because how Tom and Ray with the dog team took an injured skier down - I think he'd broken his leg - through a blizzard from the Chalet to the Hotel at midnight. ... Tom gave me the contribution there - we keep in touch.

KH: We went to the Mitchells about a year ago.

OM: Well now, that was my first year. The next year, straight out, I decided to cross from Kiandra to Kosciusko - my second year on skis. Now which year was it?

KH: I think it's '37.

OM: If it was '37 my first year on skis was '36.

TP: Yes, well, it's the '37 Year Book anyway.

OM: If it's the '37 Year Book, it has to be '36 for the trip. The Ski Year Book always covers the year before. So I am right. 1935 was my first year on skis. 1936 we made this trip. Now, what happened on this one was that I'd decided, well, I was going to get to really know that country and in the summer that year, which would be the summer of '35-'36, I arranged with Downey, who had the old hotel at Kiandra, to get a local stockman - a famous man, Frank Yan, one of the descendants of the Chinese of the gold-rush days, the Yan family.

KH: Yes, I've met Tom Yan, I haven't met Frank Yan. Frank Yan would be his father, I suppose.

OM: I couldn't tell you because there were quite a number of them.

KH: Tom's at Adelong now.

OM: He can tell you whether Frank would've been his father or his uncle. And they had Lobb's Hole, too, by the way, for grazing. The Yan family. They lived at Adaminaby then. He met us at Kiandra with pack horses and we went right across the ranges, criss-crossing in every direction. First stop Tabletop Hut from Kiandra and then all through the huts - the Boobee Hut, O'Keefe's Hut, across to Pretty Plain, Grey Mare, Mawson's, White's River, the whole jolly lot.

KH: Do you know when Tabletop was built? Tabletop Hut? Got any ideas on - there was somebody called Chester Foy.

OM: I have an idea it's in my writings. I'm pretty sure it is and who it was built by. They were people from the Riverina way.

TP: Not the Linleys? Wouldn't be the Linleys or someone like that from down that way?

OM: It was someone down that way. It's in my writings, I've got it.

KH: What about Broken Dam? Did you call in at Broken Dam Hut? A hut called Broken Dam Hut?

OM: Broken Dam? No, I've never heard of that.

KH: Did you call in at the Elaine Mine?

OM: Oh, well, yes. We went around all the mines there. This is Kiandra?

KH: Yeah, that's right. Elaine is very close to Broken Dam on the way to Tabletop from Kiandra and I was just wondering if you called in there.

OM: We might have, but we weren't interested because it was for a short journey to Tabletop.

KH: What about the Nine Mile diggings? Did you go to the Nine Mile diggings where there's an enormous sluicing hole?

OM: That wasn't our route for skiing. We went all round there. We spent days around Kiandra going everywhere including went down to Lobb's hole and back from there.

KH: I ask about the mining sites because we're interested in the huts that existed there at that time. There are very few huts there now. There are ruins about and that's why I ask whether you

went to these places and whether or not you remember --

OM: The man who can tell you that about that area would be Jim Pattinson.

KH: We are getting quite a bit of information from Bill Hughes.

OM: Well, the other man who was born at Adaminaby and still tremendously knowledgeable on the whole history of the area is Jack Bridle of Talbingo. He's mentioned in all my recent writings and in my book. A descendant of William Bridle, the first settler in the region.

KH: Of Talbingo?

OM: That's where he is now. But Jack was born at Adaminaby. His mother was born in Lobb's Hole. William Bridle went to Cooma in 1832 and it was only the first explorers went there in 1828. There's Bridle Creek just outside. And they'd been in the region from the beginning. Jack was born at Adaminaby and can tell you every bit of the history of Kiandra and he's wonderfully lucid and an excellent historian. He's of the Miles Franklin family - Miles Franklin the writer. The Franklins are also descendants from William Bridle.

KH: How old would Jack Bridle be?

OM: Well, in his late sixties. I can get him on the phone in a moment, if you want to.

KH: No, I go to Tumut sometimes.

OM: You've got to get Talbingo through the Tumut exchange.

KH: I can call in at Talbingo but I'll ring him first.

OM: Yes, ring him. Because, I was with him some months ago, just at the stage of selling his property there and retiring into Tumut.

KH: Oh, he's on a property near Talbingo, is he?

OM: He had a caravan park there recently. It used to be a property.

KH: Oh, on the shores of Blowering Dam?

OM: Yes. I think you'll find that he's just about retiring into Tumut right now. Only a week or two since I spoke to him on the phone.

TP: Why we're so interested in Nine Mile is that in '27, when Schlink went through, Bob Hughes was living in Nine Mile --

OM: Yes, that's right, that's in the story. But we never bothered about it, it was too short a stage for us. Well now, I'll tell you, I'm on this where we went with Frank Yan and we went all over those ranges so that I would know them thoroughly for the winter. This was the whole idea. And we took sealed biscuit tins of concentrated food. We left the first in Tabletop, the next in O'Keefe's, the next in the Mawson, the next in White's as we went through. They were hung from the rafters for my winter trip. That was one reason for having the pack horses.

TP: There are still a few of those around. They might even be your biscuit tins. There are still a few of those odd biscuit tins around.

KH: Do you remember two great big tins of corned beef at Mawson's Hut? Or three? There are two or three tins that have been there for a very long time 'cos the rust is starting to --

OM: No, that'd be after our time. You see, we never, for one thing, took tinned meat. We took dried meat, pemmican, and things.

KH: These tins have got a map of Australia on them, where the border of Victoria is halfway into New South Wales. They must have been manufactured in Melbourne or it was a long time ago.

OM: No, they definitely were never there. Now, what happened then was, that I got Paddy Pallin to make me special blizzard-proof gear: a jacket and a hood which buttoned up - which zipped - no, didn't zip, were only cords, zips were new then, over there - completely blizzard-proof. Well, there'd be a photo, probably, of me, in fact, I think, in that Ski Year Book, '37, at Kiandra in that year.

TP: Who's this, I wonder, in this photo?

OM: Or is it only the others? Did I take them all? Yes, I don't think I could be in them because I took them all. All the chaps with me on that trip with Frank Yan, none of them were willing to come on the winter trip with me. And as I say, I was a member of the Bushwalkers, Sydney Bushwalkers Club, which was the original one. And this Tom Moppett and his fiancée, Jean Trimble, were very ardent bushwalkers, and they had been skiing much more than I had and they heard about it and they said, Will you take us with you? And they were the only ones that

offered to come so that was that. although I wasn't keen at all on having a girl on the trip. We set off from Kiandra in a blizzard. Now, this is all described much better, I reckon, than Tom Moppett describes, in my article "Skiing through blizzards for twelve days" in *The Bushwalker* which was the name of the journal of the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs of Sydney. It's first edition, volume one, number one, of 1937. "Skiing through blizzards for twelve days". Mine is a completely factual account. Tom Moppett's is not, you see. Describing how I went next door to the place first and took out the food and then how we went through expecting to have fine weather and realized that we'd be just fighting against bad weather all the time and so on.

KH: You still have a copy of that?

OM: Oh, yes, and lots of photocopies, too.

KH: I'd better give you some money before you go.

OM: No. I get them done at the University for five cents a page.

KH: You still work for the University?

OM: No. But I have a lot to do with adult education there and my book is all being copied at the University. I promised them a manuscript. Though I've already given them gifts of various things. Oh, they're tremendously interested.

KH: Adelaide University?

OM: Yes. Any rate, we had to fight our way there, through, and then in the end it was impossible, as Tom Moppett describes, to get along the range to the Chalet, and we had to go down across the Snowy. Two nights we had to spend in the snow. But Paddy had - we designed it together - made me this little japara silk tent, pyramidal, and we had an extension to go on a ski stock to hold up the centre. Then had two waterproof flaps on the outside, pile snow around that to hold it in, and then the three of us had to get in there and freeze it out for the night. Two nights we had to do that including this last night. Then the next morning we made Betts Camp for breakfast. And were we glad to see Betts Camp.

KH: You camped out that night?

OM: Oh, yes.

KH: You bivvied out twice? You camped out twice?

OM: Yes. The last night we couldn't make it. We camped out below what is the Perisher there. It fell dark and we were too exhausted to go on anyway and in the darkness we weren't going to try because it was mighty rough. We were going up the Perisher Creek.

KH: Oh, you dropped down from White's, did you?

OM: We had to, to cross the Snowy. We went down the White's River Valley.

TP: You crossed the Rolling Ground and across Consett Stephen Pass?

OM: No. we couldn't get there. We tried several times.

KH: Went down to Munyang before Munyang was there.

TP: That'd be rough, wouldn't it?

KH: Very rough apparently.

OM: Rough? Well, that did my knee, you see. Going through scrub like this and all of a sudden one ski tip dug in soft snow and my heavy pack swung me round on it, like that, and that knee went. Any rate, it took us half an hour to cross the Snowy - this is all in my account, much more factual than Tom's - and then, as I say, we climbed like ants on a wall up the creek on the other side, which would be the Perisher I think, and darkness fell. And we decided to camp the night and we had to spend that night out. But, Tom does say that.

TP: Yes, that and the night he spent out just short of Farm Ridge. That plus across the Doubtful River.

OM: Yes, that's right. The Doubtful was across our path and we wouldn't dare cross it in the dark. Added to which, we were not very sure just where the huts were there, in the dark. So, next morning we made Betts - my article says we sat down to a hearty breakfast - and there was Ray Adams with his dog team. He was on his way up to the Chalet, or back. That was the only transport then.

KH: He did transport people in the dog sled?

OM: This is in my article in the Year Book. That was the only transport, the dog team.

KH: I was wondering what sort of transport they had to the Chalet.

OM: Nothing but the dog team.

KH: I thought they might have had horses or a sleigh or something.

OM: No, no. Nothing but the dog team.

KH: It was Ray Adams who had the dogs?

OM: Yes, trained them.

KH: What, real eskimo dogs?

OM: Not on your life. It's in my article. They were all farm, working farm dogs: collies and kelpies. And there was one, even, a blue-heeler. Said in the photo -

KH: How many dogs?

OM: Oh, you're asking me now. It's in my article of '72.

KH: Four or eight?

OM: At least eight. It's in my article in the Ski Year Book. And he always had some running loose beside so that he could change them.

KH: He'd run from Kosciusko Hotel up to the Chalet, like, once a day or something?

OM: Yes. Some days it was impossible to get through. But this time with the injured skier they had to go through a terrible blizzard.

KH: Did people sit on the dog-sled?

OM: No, just luggage.

KH: Everybody walked up or skied up?

OM: Everybody skied up. There was no walking. Not the times of the year when I went there. There was complete snow cover.

KH: So you had to be reasonable on skis.

OM: Well, I went up on the second day. Wasn't exactly easy and carrying my rucksack.

KH: Have you still got the skis that you used?

OM: I've got one pair. But my Langlauf skis made by poor old Charles Lane-Poole for me from spotted gum are in the Man from Snowy River Museum at Corryong.

KH: Oh, Tom Mitchell's collection.

OM: Long, narrow ones. They were made to crack the Summit record. I'll come to that in a minute. That was that year and you've got the account of that. Then I told you how in summer, January, '39, old Charles Lane-Poole and his daughter, Charles, and John Douglas and Ray Adams and I went out, actually on horseback, to find the site for the Alpine Hut. We decided on this forty acres of freehold which we then bought from John Kidman and we formed the Alpine Hut Club. And the Fletchers - Ray Adams arranged with the Fletchers from Eucumbene - original settlers there from the gold-mining days - still there on the same properties - to bring in the material to build the hut. It all had to be brought in by horses and sledges. And Fred Fletcher who did it is still there. You can ring him up if you want to at Eucumbene, Berridale. He will tell you how he took that in and time after time the heavy loads just broke the sledge runners through and he had to cut down more trees. He made the sledges all from trees he cut en route and built new sledges and got it in.

TP: Did he take it up over Brassy Gap?

OM: Everything went in on the track.

TP: Was it over on that track, though, over Brassy Gap, on past Kidman's? Some of the sledges are still there along the track.

OM: Some of the broken sledges are still there.

TP: There's one at the top of Brassy Gap?

OM: Yes, that's it. Fred and I rode through there this summer and he said, "There's my old sledge there" and tell you all the story. And another place where his two horses, down by Kidman's, actually disappeared down into a bog. And so on. Draught horses he had. He also took in a huge stove which was so big that we used to bake all the bread there in the winter.

KH: A cast-iron stove?

OM: Yes, he took that in the sledge, too.

KH: It's still there but part of it's broken there, now.

OM: Oh, yes, everything's gone to ruin. Makes me cry to go there, or nearly cry.

KH: Oh, you were there in the last summer then?

OM: Well, I won't go near it now but I was about four or five years ago. It was so horrible, I didn't want to go back any more.

KH: It's a lot cleaner now. We've tidied it up a lot.

OM: I'm glad to hear it. Any rate, then Ray arranged with two of the local stockmen - good bush builders, Bill Brooks was one, the other one I forget who - it's in my article in the 1973 ski Year Book, "Stockmen and their contribution to Skiing" - to build it. And we'd only gone down to select the site in January '39 and by May it was fully equipped and Fred Fletcher's brother, Charlie Fletcher, who, like a lot of them, used to do the cooking for the shearers at their home, went in as cook and manager for the season. And the hut was duly opened in May with a tariff of three pounds a week. Ray Adams drove in a couple of bullocks just as the snow was not too thick and kill them and stored it in the snow and we had meat all the winter. Charlie Fletcher cooked bread and of course we had our water supply from up the hill. We ran pipes from a stream uphill to have running water.

Now comes the story: that I went in in July with this Archie Macintyre, now Professor at Monash, who is the only grandson of Professor Sir Edgeworth David who did the original geological studies at Kosciusko, the first Professor of Geology at the Sydney University or in Australia, actually. Archie's his grandson. And Archie's fiancée, Anne, now his wife, and his sister, Anne, who's been staying with him in Melbourne when I've been down there, Frank Parle, who is just retiring as doctor to TAA, my cousin Kevin Darcy from Bega, and one or two more. There were other parties in there as well but part of the thing for going in was that Archie Macintyre and Frank Parle and I were going to make this first traverse of the Grey Mare Range. In the end we had to wait for days to get some fairly fine weather. There was a blizzard. Frank Parle had a cold and unequal to it. And Archie and I did it alone. Straight from the Alpine Hut over to the Grey Mare, way down the range and back again all in one day. Just carrying everything in little bags around our belts. No rucksacks. We couldn't have had the speed if we had rucksacks.

TP: You didn't stay out that night? Was that a day there and back?

OM: We left at dawn and were back at 4.30 at the Alpine Hut.

TP: Would you have gone to the summit of the Grey Mare?

OM: Oh, far beyond that.

TP: Down towards the Twins? Right down.

OM: To the Pinnacle, I think.

TP: The Pinnacle. Oh, that's right down at the end.

OM: I know.

TP: You must have been looking out over the Geehi property, down near Geehi Hut almost.

OM: Oh, yes, we got everything. We photographed it. I know. It's in my book: "The longest and fastest ski trip ever made."

TP: It would have to be - goodness, that's a long way.

OM: We just flew - it is the only way to describe it. We flew over the country. We had no rucksacks. We had concentrated food in these little bags around, all concentrated. And we had nothing at all during the day except a few raisins and things which we just ate as we stood. Then decided we had better turn back as the mists were gathering and the fog. And then we did stop at the Grey Mare Hut and brewed ourselves some cocoa. Other than that we had nothing.

TP: There was no-one at the Grey Mare Hut in those days?

OM: It was a horrible place - dirty, rat-infested. But it was good enough for us to brew a bit of cocoa. Now, we came back to the Alpine. Then a day or so later we left to go to the Chalet. And when we got to White's River, once again we were blizzard-bound. Three or four times, days in succession, we made an attempt to get up and onto the Chalet and every time the wind was so strong, the visibility was nil and the snow and sleet lashing our faces. We had to turn back.

On about the fourth attempt we got through, but fighting our way in a blizzard all the way and we got to Pounds Creek just at nightfall, Pounds Creek Hut. Archie's fiancée and his sister had had it completely. We'd been carrying their packs as well as our own and part of it fighting through the blizzard. So Archie decided to stay there the night with his fiancée and his sister, and there was also a great girl with them, Sybil Sale. She afterwards went on an Everest party. Frank

Parle and I, I suppose Kevin Darcy, too, went on to the Chalet. We got there about eight o'clock at night or a bit later because I know they'd finished dinner.

George Day and Margaret, his wife, got round and got us some dinner and we went and sat in the lounge and in those days the news came on at nine o'clock at night on the ABC. The announcer said: "The Prime Minister, Mr Menzies, is going to make a special announcement to the nation." He came on and he said, "Great Britain has declared war on Germany which has invaded Poland. Great Britain is at war and therefore we are also at war." Just like that. Didn't consult Parliament or anything. So, I had sent up - they had the old Citroen then, with its tracks, an old Citroen car, my Langlauf skis. And the next day I was going to get on them and get ready and I was jolly sure I was going to crack the Summit record because I'd come pretty close to it the year before with Ken Breakspear when he did break it. The next morning I left my skis there, some luggage, and hared off straight down to Sydney and into the Navy and never went back on the snow again.

After the war I was too ill, you see. I had a terrible experience in the Cruel Sea and worst of all was the night they blitzed Portsmouth, the Naval barracks dockyard there, and I was through it all night and ended up with pneumonia. They burnt out the city all in one night. There was five thousand killed. Four days later they told me I was dying with pneumonia and I never got over it. And after the war they put me into Heidelberg Hospital Repat. and operated on my throat and so on. I still used to get these things until the end. My local doctor over at Mt Lofty in South Australia said, "You have got to go out and get your health." And the Commonwealth Medical Officer said, "I agree", and they pushed me out on full superannuation and I established a little farm for myself and then I got perfectly fit again - my gym instructor said more than the equal of the average fit man twenty-five years younger - and wanted to come back to my engineering research work with the Commonwealth.

But I was then senior and more highly qualified than the chief engineer of the Post Office. And did they want me back? Not one bit. So it was decided - at ministerial level - that I was to stay out on superannuation. The doctors took the view, which might have been true or it might have been just influence, that I was far better to keep on the physical work than try and go back into the mill-run of the public service. Now I'm grateful to them for it because it has been good, staying out, and I've only just sold a little farm and cattle this year and now I'm tremendously involved in this conservation work and hoping to go to Europe on it next year.

I'd have gone to Europe this year only now we're bringing out Professor Kenneth Mellamby (?), the leading environmental scientist and nature conservation man from England for a series of seminars which we are going to have. It means I have to stay here and organise it all, big one in Canberra, then Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne, and the organisation is terrific, including the fact that when we got busy, Neil Bennell (?), the owner of Tom Groggin station, off the Alpine Way -- you know Tom Groggin? The Geehi Hut was part of it, which they have resumed and gone to ruins since they resumed it. He said, "We're taking on these big commitments. The Association we formed has to be properly protected legally." Its members went to his solicitors and said, "We've got to be incorporated." [END SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE]

OM: Well, I'll tell you all of them in a minute ... Charlie and his wife, of course, is one of the old Crowe family in Adaminaby/Kiandra, they know the whole history. Now, Fletcher, Fletcher, C. ... Remember, when I went to the war he remained in charge of that hut for years ... I was away, but Charlie, and also he beat Ken Breakspear in the langlauf, when he learnt to ski there. [Telephone call arranging for Charlie Fletcher to call around]

TP: In those days, did you know the area which we now know as the Rolling Ground? Was it known as the Rolling Ground then?

OM: It's the only name by which I know it.

TP: That's good. I'm pleased about that. You didn't mention it earlier, you know, when you referred to it in crossing that area and I was just wondering. The origin of it is probably from the stockmen, I imagine, you know, the rolling nature of the country.

OM: It's the only term we've ever used for it. Although I haven't mentioned it here, it's in my written article. That was '38: "Across the Rolling Ground". But the only reason I haven't mentioned it here, is that I said we went through from White's River to the Chalet. I didn't stop to

go in between, across the Rolling Ground.

[Pause while KH talks to CF on the phone]

TP: Did Klaus tell you that between Bill Gordon and Hughes we managed to locate a few of the original 1927 party [of the Kiandra to Kosciusko crossing]?

OM: Hughes is still alive?

TP: Hughes is still alive and living in Sydney. No-one knew, he just turned up out of the blue. And he - what happened was, there was a, Paddy, Paddy Pallin made a film of the crossing that he did in 19 - oh, late sixties, I think, and he made a film of the crossing from Kiandra to Kosciusko which was shown on television about a year ago, a repeat. And Hughes saw this on television and one day he was in Sydney and he called in at the shop to meet Paddy, told him who he was and he and Paddy got together, had lunch together, and Paddy got in touch with us soon afterwards. And Klaus has been down to see him and -- I haven't, I've met Gordon, William Gordon, who was living at Bobbingale (?), up until recently near Nimmitabel.

OM: Yeah, I went to see him a couple of years ago.

TP: Did you? Well, he's moved down to Sydney now. He's at Point Piper.

OM: I passed the property there. I passed there just the other day going to Bega and I just looked in to, that's where I went to see him. I don't think he ever married, Bill Gordon.

TP: I think he, yes, in fact I think he remarried recently. We tracked him down --

OM: There was nobody with him there. You know, it was out between Bega and Nimmitabel there. Or was it the other side of Nimmitabel?

TP: No, no, this side, the Cooma side, Bobbingale (?) -- it was just across the railway --

OM: I know. I went to see him several years ago.

KH: He got married again recently.

OM: He was batching when I went to see him.

TP: Well, that was probably in between --

OM: About five years ago.

TP: Yes, well, we tracked him originally through Tom and Elyne Mitchell who put us on to Ashley Davey of Bungendore, who's William Gordon's nephew, I think. And through Ashley I found out where Bill Gordon was living. At Bobbingdale (?), well, that's the house where I went to see him.

OM: Actually, it was Ashley Davey and his wife who told me just where to find Bill Gordon's place.

KH: You never skied with him?

OM: No, you see we were younger. In my own account I quote Bertie Schlink as saying in one of his articles, "We did this, we hope that younger skiers will take over where we began". And I arrived and we began immediately to take over and away we went.

KH: Did you meet Schlink? Bertie Schlink?

OM: I didn't but he taught Frank Parle at university, he was in the medical school. He was my skiing companion always, Frank Parle, and Danny Whiteman.

KH: Are they still alive?

OM: Who?

KH: Your skiing companions.

OM: I'm just telling you, Frank Parle's just retiring as doctor to TAA. He's been their doctor from the beginning until now.

KH: Oh, I see.

OM: He's just reached retiring age. He's in Melbourne. I'll be staying with him next week.

KH: You wouldn't have met Bill Hughes, would you?

OM: No.

KH: I think Bill had disappeared from the mountains by then.

OM: He had disappeared when I began.

KH: But you heard about him. Did you?

OM: Oh, well, yes, because, remember, I knew all these people.

KH: I was just wondering how much communication there was between -- especially since Bill was a local from Kiandra. He wasn't one of the Kosciusko mob in a way - he was a bit of an

outsider, Bill.

OM: Yes, but you don't seem to realise that my closest friends, as well as the skiing people equally, were the stockmen. And at Kiandra, Downey the hotel keeper who was Kiandra.

TP: But these are more miners probably, more than stockmen perhaps in those days.

OM: But Downey kept the hotel at Kosciusko - at Kiandra - and that was the centre of it all.

KH: It's just that when you were there in '37 and did your reconnaissance on horseback with Tom Yan ... '36 I was just wondering if Bob Hughes, Bob Hughes' brother must have been in Kiandra or Nine Mile in those days.

OM: Well, I can't remember. The Patericks were there. The Pattinsons were there but whether the Hughes were there I can't remember. We met them all, we stayed at the hotel and got around everywhere for a time until Frank Yan turned up with the horses by appointment and away we went. Of course, the man who can give you all that, if you like to ring him tomorrow, is Jack Bridle of Talbingo. He'll have a history of everybody around Kiandra because they were the first people there and he's wonderfully knowledgeable. He's written a lot of the history of the place.

TP: He's not published, though, that I'm aware of.

OM: Oh, he's had quite a bit published in the *Cooma Express* and the Tumut paper. And he's of the same family as Miles Franklin, the writer.

KH: My article will deal more with the history of the ski touring rather than the huts in this particular case. Because it's commemorating, it's to do with the commemoration of the trip --

OM: Half the huts were only places to use for ski touring.

KH: They still are. We're also very fascinated by the huts.

OM: The Alpine [hut] was built for the reason that we wanted to have a place in the centre of the ranges instead of nothing between Kiandra and Kosciusko. After this '38 trip with Frank Parle and Danny Whiteman, when we did this long two hundred mile trip, and got back to Sydney, and then I did some sleeping and thinking. I rang up Frank Parle and I said, "Frank, what say we build a hut, a resort of our own in the mountains?" "Good idea, Ollie," he said. And away we went.

KH: Did you ever hear about a fellow called Stuart McAllister?

OM: I'm not sure. It doesn't ring a bell.

KH: He was on the first party, he was on Charles Kerry's party that climbed Mt Kosciusko for the first time in winter in 1897 and he was also -

OM: I wasn't born.

KH: I know and it's an inquiry because he's emerging as a possible father of ski touring. He was also in a party of miners who first climbed Jargunal about the same time.

OM: I've read that account, I've read that account.

KH: Also in 1896, 1896 or 1898, and he is said to have skied from Kosciusko to Kiandra in 1899 by himself, to have then joined the annual ski carnival races the next day and won the downhill championships. This would have been in the early 1900s. His name is Stuart McAllister.

OM: I do believe I have something about that. I've got some of the earlier Ski Year Books and one or two of them deals with the history of skiing at Kiandra and how the people down the Kosciusko end used to come up for the Kiandra sports and the Kiandra people used to go down to those.

KH: Yes, but there is very little mention of Stuart McAllister. The only authenticated reports of this - that he was in the Charles Kerry trip - on the first ascent of Kosciusko, the only one who walked up to the top of Kosciusko from Rawson's Pass on his skis and skied straight back down again. All the others apparently left their skis at Rawson's Pass and walked up and back down again.

OM: Where is this recorded?

KH: Now, Wilf Hilder got a transcript of Charles Kerry write-up - another one, not in the Australian Ski Year Book - either from a newspaper or something else - I can dig it up - where this is recorded.

OM: Oh, I'd be very interested.

KH: Then the report about Stuart McAllister's trip from Kosciusko to Kiandra was in the *Sun*

some months ago as part of a larger article on Kiandra and ski touring and a few other stories.

OM: If you get me photocopies of that, I'll send you photocopies of mine.

KH: That's all right. If he crossed from Kossie to Kiandra in 1899, we are really celebrating the seventy-eighth anniversary of the crossing. It may be very difficult to verify.

OM: I know nothing of it.

KH: I'm surprised that - if he did it, one would have thought that Dr Schlink and all the others who wrote up the trips in the late twenties would have heard about him.

OM: No. Schlink really knew very little about these sort of blokes.

KH: But even Bill Hughes.

OM: Bill Hughes should have known.

KH: But I haven't asked him specifically.

OM: But, more or less, as you've said, he was a bit of a loner, Hughes.

KH: Bill was?

OM: He was not intensely interested in it. Now, the man who would have known is Charlie Fletcher's grandfather, Bill Naphthali.

KH: Oh, I think I can probably find somebody down Tumut way or somewhere.

OM: But he's not alive anymore.

KH: Apparently this McAllister was from Bungendore way and there is a McAllister now living at Tarago. Somewhere or other I should be able to find out more about Stuart McAllister.

TP: They're an old Canberra family, McAllister ...

OM: Bill Naphthali wasn't the grandfather of Charlie, but of Charlie's cousin, Maurice Fletcher and Laurie Fletcher, who are down there. Bill Naphthali, no, not Bill, his father, Maurice Naphthali, was one of the original skiers of Kiandra and I'll be publishing some photos of them on their snowshoes, as they call them.

KH: Bill Naphthali?

OM: No, his grandfather Maurice - no, going back another generation. Maurice Naphthali who was in the Kiandra goldrushes.

TP: You've got some old photos of them?

OM: I got them from the Fletchers ... On the snowshoes, jumping.

TP: Did you ever hear of the Boltons at all? From Jindabyne way --

OM: One of the Boltons built the Alpine hut - was a Brooks and a Bolton. Two of the oldest families.

TP: We've got a Brooks' hut and a Bolton's hut down on Finn's River.

OM: We know all about the Boltons. They're connected with the Fletchers.

TP: It's interesting, there is an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1896, where Charles Kerry first went to the mountains and it was the Boltons who showed him around on skis. They took him out to Snowy Plains and up through there, up towards the Alpine, the Brassy, and they were on skis, the old Kiandra butter-pats with the single pole. It's all described in this article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1896. It's an excellent article, actually. I've got a reprint of it.

OM: The Naphthalis and Co. go much further back than that. They go back to the actual goldrush days.

KH: Where does one find the descendants of these Boltons, this Bolton who built Alpine?

OM: Charlie Fletcher'll tell you.

KH: Because, we're very interested in a slab hut on the edge of the escarpment above Island Bend, adjacent almost to the Finn's River, below Tin Hut.

OM: The best man to tell you all this would be Charlie's brother, Fred.

KH: Fred Fletcher.

OM: Yes. The property is Bellevue. Do you want the phone number? He's in Queensland at the moment, on holiday... Fred Fletcher is the one who carted all the gear in and unlike Charlie he's remained down there farming, he knows every inch of those mountains backwards. One of the Boltons was stockman for - Fred'll tell you all about this - Con Bolton, I think - at the Tin Hut for the Litchfields.

KH: Where do I find Bellevue?

OM: It's just before you get to the Eucumbene Dam on the right going out from Berridale or

from Cooma. Here we go, Fred and Elsie Fletcher [looks up phone number, goes on to describe the properties in that area] ... Fred has lived and worked there all his life and, until they kicked them out, took stock up and down through the mountains every year and he knows it all like the back of his hand. And you've seen his old broken sleds there.

TP: Well, I'm pleased to know who he was. I've seen it there and admired it, because that's a pretty rough, pretty steep pinch climbing up there to Brassy Gap.

OM: Well, you think of taking that stove in with two draught horses.

TP: Oh, the size of that stove! I've only ever seen one other one like that. My wife's grandparents have got one the same as that. It's called the "Younger", the brand name on it ...

KH: There's one up in the Franklin Chalet, too. It's very similar.

OM: Once again, the Lane-Pooles were chief instigators of the old Franklin hut or chalet. I don't know when the present one was built.

KH: Oh, the Franklin? Oh, yes.

OM: It's quite recent, is it?

TP: No, this is the one that was built about '38 or '39.

OM: That's right. Well, it was the Lane-Pooles. Old Charles Lane-Poole and his daughter. He died two or three years ago. His daughter is living in Victoria.

KH: I heard quite a bit about his ski-making efforts.

OM: Well, the skis he made for me are there in that museum in Corryong.

[OM leaves room to fetch pamphlets and photos]

TP: ... I'm trying to think what it was in the articles.

OM: No, they merely had some snowgums and things. Well, there might be two, I forget. But look, this is what we are up to. ... So that you'll understand the background of what we are doing now, have a look at these photos. Now, here's a picture of the Victorian snow country where they grazed every summer for a hundred and twenty years. Taken in January this year. Another one. This is the Bogong high plains by the way. Another one, one of the Fitzgeralds, original settlers there. Propaganda says "Stocking causes erosion". We say "Rubbish!". Stock never caused erosion, it's the late-lying snow drifts. Bogong high plains: there are snow drifts lying in January and February. But where the stocking is heavy on the Bogong high plains, that's what you got: no erosion, no fire hazard. Pretty Valley: most heavily stocked part of the Bogong high plains.

That's an outlying part of Pretty Valley.

KH: That's above Falls Creek, isn't it?

OM: Yes, that's right. Now, the other part was much farther over to the east, the first one with all the cattle. Pretty Valley again.

KH: You still do quite a bit of riding, then?

OM: It's the only way to get into these places. The propaganda says: "Stocking makes Alpine celery extinct". On the contrary. Only where the stocking is heavy will you find it, as you find it in Pretty Valley there. And you will not find it as much in anywhere in Kosciusko. And the answer is, stock won't eat it because the leaves are prickly. The Dargo high plains, heavily stocked. You know where they are, by the way? The other side of Hotham. ... the Dargo high plains: the cattle doing their job.

KH: The Dargos. Was a fellow called Dargo, wasn't it? It was named after one of the first stockmen or something up there? Dargo?

OM: I haven't asked how the name came about. The Dargo high plains are perfect parklands. It's under snow all the winter. Once again, the Dargo high plains in summer.

KH: What about regeneration? Is the eucalypt regeneration allowed to come through? If you've got grazing of this sort of intensity ...?

OM: You will see some nice young eucalypts there and also an array of wildflowers that you will never see in Kosciusko.

KH: Oh yes? We saw beautiful wildflowers like that. I can show you a slide ...

TP: Right through Pretty Plain, right down to Tooma.

KH: When was that Kosciusko Huts weekend? At Three Mile Dam? That was as late as March, wasn't it? It was in February.

OM: This is in February. That's the most heavily stocked in ...

KH: I'll show you a slide just like that. ... Well, I will!

OM: Yes, but you wait till you see what I show you of Kosciusko. Shannonvale, the home of Fitzgerald's just underneath. I'll show you one of Kosciusko, too, but I'll tell you the reason why it's like that ...

[Charlie Fletcher arrives]

OM: ... Fred's little black mare had to carry me all around, up around Tin Hut ...

CF: When was that?

OM: In January, climbing up rocks like that, pushing through scrub where it used to be nice clear tracks.

CF: That would make you a bit sore.

OM: Never been sore riding in my life.

CF: Haven't you?

KH: Gee, I was sore. I did a five-day trip with a Tumut crowd from Kiandra into Broken Dam, into Mackeys, into Jargunal and right across to Pretty Plain and back out again in five days. And I was really sore. But I haven't done much riding. I really learnt to ride, especially the third day, because I was in the saddle for about nine hours.

CF: It's a long while since I've been in the saddle and I'd get very sore now, I should imagine.

OM: I've never been sore in my life. At the age of seven I rode fifty miles in a day after cattle and no effect at all.

CF: Well, I got very sore the other day up there, skiing.

KH: You still skiing?

CF: I'm still climbing up the hills, you know, the old way. .. I thought this'd be good exercise for me.

OM: I'm just going to show these few photos, then. I'm not going to stay long. I've got to be early underway in the morning and be in Sydney in the evening. So I'm just going to show you a few photos of the Kosciusko park. I've just been showing them ones ... [Charlie fetches his spectacles] I've been telling you about Lobb's Hole. I've got photos in the 1930 *Beautiful Country*.

KH: Where did you live in the 1930s? In Sydney?

OM: I was an engineer there.

KH: In Sydney. You used to come down, these were sort of your annual holidays?

OM: I used to, I'm afraid, sneak more than my holidays. There's historic buildings in Lobb's Hole. Fortunately I've got photos of that in the thirties, just going under. You see, there're flowers. This is Lobb's Hole now. See the flowers? Mean anything? What do you think of them?

KH: Well, how do you mean? It's one type of flower, one species.

OM: It's the poisonous weed, St. John's wort. Thousands upon thousands of acres in the Kosciusko Park but not a single plant in the Victorian high country. ... This is Lobb's Hole as it is now. I got it when the Yans had it for grazing. Beautiful clear country.

CF: This is just natural vegetation here?

OM: Well, it's natural to the so-called conservationists but actually it's thousands of acres of the poisonous weed, St. John's wort, and behind it are blackberries.

CF: They're beautiful trees behind it. They look like willows, a bit.

OM: Oh, that's the remains of a copper mine. Yes, they are willows.

KH: The cattle won't touch the blackberries. They won't keep the blackberries out.

OM: Well, you'll see in a minute what cattle do to blackberries.

CF: You reckon? They're not doing too much on the coast, down the South Coast.

OM: No, it's not just the cattle. It has to be the stockmen and the stock.

CF: Oh yeah, for sure.

OM: The whole point is, if you want a national park, you've got to keep the people in to look after it. Now this is the way Tom Groggin has gone where they have taken it over in the last four to five years. That was clear pasture there before. Now, there's Lobb's Hole again: a huge rabbit warren.

CF: What are these here? Are these mud huts?

OM: That's the old pise building in Lobb's Hole. The Washington Hotel. Jack Bridle's the man

to tell you all about that. Do you know Jack Bridle?

CF: No, I don't know.

OM: Well, your wife ought to. He was born in Adaminaby ... His mother was a Green.

CF: There was a Bridle killed a few years ago. Claude. He'd be some relation to him. He came from Adaminaby. Many years ago. Killed on the road.

OM: I think it was his brother. I'll just go through these photos quickly because I can't stay. I've just been showing photos of the most beautiful green sward of flowers in the Victorian high country - Bogong high plains with stock. But that's what you find now in similar country at Kosciusko. The grass fails to set seed, it's so unhealthy. And here: this will interest you, Charlie - there is Charlie Fletcher turning up to show what is underneath that grass.

CF: Yes, one of them anyhow. That's my cousin, is it?

OM: That's Laurie's son.

CF: Laurie's son. He named him after his father. It's an old family name, the Charles. My father, my uncle ...

OM: This was one of the clear stock tracks going up to the Tin Hut from Kidman's. Look at it now.

KH: That's overgrown up there.

CF: Oh, yes. I'd know some of those. Brian's Pinch was one of the bridle tracks and the other one would be past the Alpine hut.

OM: No. This one was from Kidman's.

CF: Kidman's? Straight up? Yes, I've been up there a few times.

OM: And this is what's happened to Bradley's hut, just getting ready to be burnt up with dry grass and scrub, and that used to be a beautiful place.

CF: Where was that?

OM: Bradley's hut, down near Cabramurra.

KH: Oh, right. Bradley's. Bradley's.

CF: Down the Kiandra end.

OM: Just off the road. It's almost on the road. This is what's happening to the Geehi hut since they resumed it from Tom Groggin's station: thistles, fire hazards, blackberries.

KH: There's a lot of blackberries in Geehi flat.

OM: Now, they are just taking over this part of Tom Groggin on this side and [management] said, when they started it, they haven't finished it yet - the legal part - he wouldn't look after it - becoming overgrown straight away. Now, I was telling them what causes erosion is never and never was stock but where the snow drifts lie late. The area up near the Tin Hut - I've shown them some photographs.

CF: These are the places where you get your drifts, you know, your drift snow. This is what you mean, Oliver? This is where your drift snow lays and that's why the grass doesn't grow. And they were blaming the stock.

OM: Of course they were blaming the stock. But if they want erosion, where it's not kept to a close green sward by stock like this up there near Twynam - there you're getting all your bare patches in between the tufts of dying grass and so on. This is in the middle of the Park with no one to look after it and a huge moss bed has just been burnt out, we reckon, in the last two years. But it's away in the middle ... This is what happens, the way they look after their historic buildings there compared to how beautifully they keep them in Victoria. There is the beginning of the Murrumbidgee River out at Kiandra where it used to be a clear flowing stream, as Jack Bridle's known all his life. It's now becoming clogged and practically never runs.

CF: Which hut is this?

OM: That's the Cooinbil homestead. Now, this one here is what the Kosciusko Park is like after a fire, just bare scorched earth. And this is the remains of severe fires there, so severe the trees not only didn't regenerate but must have killed all the seed in the ground because no seedlings of the trees came back.

CF: Yes, it takes a long while for it to regenerate, you know, after a fire.

OM: Now, on the contrary, here is an area in the Kosciusko Park, beautifully green and fertile, this area in the Kosciusko Park, and perhaps you can tell us why, Charlie, if you look at that

closely.

CF: It's beautiful and green.

OM: Can you figure out where it is?

CF: I suppose it's somewhere where it's been eaten down a bit.

OM: There has been no stock there for twenty five years and it's still in that state. Can you notice there's a bit of a fence at the back?

CF: Yeah, stock'd be coming over from the next-door neighbour's probably.

OM: Look, you're disappointing me. I'm asking you where that is. Well, supposing you went up the back of Kidman's hut on the way up to Tin Hut -

CF: Oh yeah, now. I got it now. This is all round those old stockyards there.

OM: The break - we called it Kidman's Break. That's where thousands of stock were confined at night and the fertilization they had left still keeps it a green oasis and the scrub can't take over.

CF: Yeah, that's right. That was in that break up there just above the hut.

TP: Oh yeah, I know where you mean. Just up the hill behind Kidman's. I know the area well.

OM: We call it Kidman's Break.

TP: Is that what you call it? That's interesting...

OM: It's still like that. There has been no stock there for twenty-five years but the fertilization left by the stock is such - and this you find everywhere - that's a break, a shepherd's break - that the scrub cannot take over and the grass sets seed and remains fertile and it's only in one or two places like that in the park you'll find the emus, grazing in this stretch ... Here's the answer in a nutshell: that is the Upper Murray River which went through Tom Groggin station. That side's Victoria. This side is what they have resumed into their Park. Once they have resumed it into their Park it's going to rubbish and fire hazard. Where they can't resume it, unless the Victorian people do, it is a beautiful parkland. The answer is: if you want parkland you have got to keep the people there to husband it.

CF: Yeah, that's for sure. You've got to have the people to look after it.

OM: There's an article in the *London Illustrated News* of January, 1976. Tony Aldiss, the environmental writer for the *London Times* on the Lakes District National Park of England. And he said there's a danger of it being destroyed because good-meaning people bought up farms there and given them to the National Trust, which meant that the farmers then became tenants. The National Trust - he uses the word - have got greedy and raised the rents and it may not be economical for the farmers to stay and, if they leave, the Lakes District will revert to scrub because it's farmers and their sheep who have made it what it is. Just as here it was the farmers and their sheep who made that park what it used to be. And you haven't seen these, Charlie. This is the way the stockmen still keep the Victorian high country. That's the Bogong high plains... This is in January this year. Now, a couple of the Dargo high plains.

CF: They still allow grazing in Victoria.

OM: The fight is to keep it and not have them do what they have done in Kosciusko. That's the Dargo high plains again.

KH: What sort of camera did you take these with?

OM: I have a Konica. It's a Japanese one. I take slides only.

KH: Not with a telephoto? It's a standard lens?

OM: No. All these are the Dargo high plains. ... What I have got in Victoria is the straight-out comparison. There's basaltic country at about five thousand feet in the heavily-stocked Dargo high plains. Then Professor Turner and Maisie Fawcett had two areas fenced off, they've been fenced off for twenty-five years, in basaltic country, just over a bit, the same height. And my slides just show that terrific fire hazard and rotted dry grass and so on... If you've got anything like that still at Pretty Plain there is only one reason for it. Because it was heavily stocked. Now, I show the same thing in your old area, up towards the Rolling Grounds, by the Sentry, from White's River hut, still in fairly good condition but the scrub is slowly coming in on it because it was extremely heavily stocked.

CF: I've noticed that. Any places where they have been over, say, twenty years, now. I got there fishing at a place one time, along ...

[END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

CF: Did you come in there, after war had been declared in August?

OM: No, it was when we left there, we got to the Chalet, they said war was declared, so it was somebody else that came in and told you war was declared. It would be another party, came in after we left.

CF: I always thought it was you, you know. I pictured it as large as life. I always thought it was you.

OM: No. Tell them something about the Alpine hut, now, after. Who built it? It was Bill Brooks and one of the Boltons --

CF: It was Bill Brooks and Kevin Clarke. They were sub-contract builders around Berridale. All around the district.

OM: There's Boltons still about there, isn't there?

CF: There is Boltons at Berridale. But they don't have anything to do with the hut.

OM: No, but they used to, I think, with Tin hut.

CF: They had country down, what you call, the Back River - on the Burrungubuggee.

TP: On the Finn's River, too. They had one on the Finn's River, anywhere, down below Tin Hut. Down towards -- they had an old hut down there, Bolton's hut.

CF: That probably would have been it. I always thought that most of their country would've been back in, or probably come back in onto, what do they call it in there? They also call it Tolbar in there, I think.

TP: Yes, Tolbar ridge, yeah.

CF: There's two Tolbars. One up towards Eucumbene, in towards between the Brassy and Kiandra, in that way. The Brassy Mountains?

TP: Yeah, that's right. There's a Tolbar ... two Tolbars. You're right. They've still got a Tolbar hut down there.

KH: Those Boltons, from the Finn's River, where would you find the descendants now?

CF: That was Jimmy Bolton, probably Jimmy Bolton, he'd have a son at Berridale ... Ross. Ross Bolton'd know something about that.

OM: Fred'd know, wouldn't he? Your brother Fred'd know.

CF: Fred'd know. He'd know real well all that country. Fred'd be able to give you all the dope on that.

KH: ... It's just that some time ago we went looking for this. We just knew it from a map reference, an old map, this Bolton's hut. We went looking for it and found it, just above the Finn's River, below Tin hut. It's an old slab hut but a lot of the slabs have fallen out. You know, the mortices, the bottom mortice had rotted away. And the slabs had just fallen out.

CF: You know that other hut on what we call the Back River, the Burrungubuggee. There's another hut there, they used to call it Bolton's hut, too. I'm sure of that. See, that could be different Boltons although they're brothers. There was Jim Bolton and there was Con Bolton. I wouldn't be sure about this one that you're talking about on the Finn's River. It still could be a Bolton's hut, I'm not saying it's not, you see, but this other one still exists on the Back River.

TP: Isn't that up near Reid's hut and Oliver's? Somewhere up there? Reid's and Oliver's. I think I know where you mean.

CF: Oliver's hut? Ray Oliver's? Well, that was further up from Kidman's hut in what they call the Hanging Rock in that country .. That's further up. Yeah, well, this is further down --

TP: I know where you mean - there's still a hut there now. The only hut left there now is the ruin of the Reid's, and Oliver's, and there's a, not a new hut but a rebuilt hut they call Constance's, down there. That's the only one that's still standing. It's built out of slabs.

OM: It was always Constance's hut, Charlie.

CF: Yes. Herb Constance from Berridale. ... He was up in that country there, somewhere. And that's up towards Reid's and Oliver's hut.

TP: Yes, the same area. There's three in the same little area, there. There's a bit of a track come over the saddle from Snowy Plains.

OM: Well, the man that will have all this at his fingertips is Fred.

CF: Fred would know where all those are.

OM: Just while I'm here, just tell us a bit more about the people who went into the Alpine hut - I

was only there for the first few weeks.

CF: Well, I was there in '39, the winter of '39, '40 and '41. And '42 I wasn't there because I went into the army.

KH: You were the cook, were you?

CF: I was the cook there.

OM: And the manager.

KH: So, since it started, for three years, you were the cook and bottlewasher?

OM: No, he wasn't allowed to wash up. The rule was that the guests had never to let him wash up. This was the rule.

KH: You had an offsider?

CF: No. The first winter I didn't. They were very good, the guests. They all helped.

OM: That was the rule. They had to wash up.

CF: They hopped in and washed up. They helped chop the wood and all those chores around the hut. Fred and I got the wood in, like, in April and May. We chopped it and he bought it in by two horses and a slide.

KH: Fred Fletcher, your brother. Any other brothers?

CF: Have I got any other -- I've got six others.

KH: Six other brothers?

OM: And they all skied from the Alpine hut. And his sister --

KH: That could be very confusing.

OM: And his sister skied from there.

CF: I've got two sisters, Pat and Laura. Pat was a keen skier, too. And she was langlaufing, skiing around all the hills there.

KH: Did you do much skiing?

CF: Yes, I skied, I'm still skiing. I've been away for a few winters, you know, different times. I haven't done very much for the last few years, since I've been living down here, raising a family. I skied up there for five winters straight at that time [before the war]. Several years before I went up there we used to do a little bit of skiing, then I spent three winters on the snow and then I was away for five winters.

KH: You weren't in the ski corps in Lebanon as well ...?

CF: No, nothing like that. Then I went back to the Alpine hut again in '47 and '48.

KH: To work?

CF: Yes.

KH: Oh, you ran it again? ... the whole winter?

CF: A couple more years, living up there in the ...

OM: Now, one year didn't you beat Ken Breakspear in the langlauf?

CF: Yes. Ken was always terrible keen for me to go langlaufing with him, you know. But, anyhow, I never ever got onto a decent pair of skis for the game, you know, like. The langlaufers or anything like that. So anyhow, I went up the hills up there with him, and we went over to the championships at Kossie in must've been '48, I think.

OM: Did you ski across from the Alpine?

CF: No. As a matter of fact we went down to Berridale and we went up to Kossie by car, I think, and then we skied from there up to the Chalet.

OM: Well, come on, tell us about what happened.

CF: Anyhow, then ran the championships. I'd run in the downhill and the slalom and I lined up with him in the langlauf and I beat him. Beat him in the langlauf.

OM: He must've been sorry he invited you to do it.

KH: How long was it then in those days? How long did you race over?

CF: Oh, it was about ten miles. But, oh, it was a hell of a slog, it was terrible snow.

KH: Up to the Summit and back ... ?

CF: It was more or less just mapped round for about five miles, just round twice like that. Round Betts Camp there ...

KH: Oh yeah, to Betts Camp and back.

CF: Up and round, er, what do they call it? Er, out to left of the Chalet there. What do they call

that country there? Rams Head or something? ... Yeah, back to the timber.

TP: Back around Etheridge somewhere?

CF: Yeah, and back down behind ...

OM: And down to Stilwell.

KH: You did a lot of skiing then. You worked on the snow for five seasons?

CF: Yeah. You wouldn't think that if you see me scratching around up there now.

TP: When you go skiing now, do you ski on langlauf or cross-country gear?

CF: I ski with the old Kandahars.

TP: Kandahars. Okay, so you lift your heels. You're waxing your skis, are you?

CF: I haven't done any langlauf for years and years now.

TP: So you're using Kandahars but you're not waxing?

CF: Oh no, I just scratch along with the rest of them now. Put whatever wax they've got and just hope for the best. I use the tow now.

OM: I'm disgusted, Charlie.

TP: That's what you call Alpine skiing then, really, in a way.

OM: I would never use a ski tow.

CF: I went up there each year, each year I got there, you know. I always spent half the day just running up the hill meself and coming down that way. Then I spend the other half day on the tow.

OM: You got soft.

KH: You go to Perisher, do you?

CF: No. I went to Smiggins.

TP: Would you ever go into Kiandra now and ski out in that country, out towards Tabletop, anything like that? What we call ski-touring, through the trees and timber.

CF: It would be good fun if you have someone to go with you now. I haven't done it for years and years.

TP: Still a lot of blokes doing it.

CF: Yes, more and more, I believe. More and more. Langlaufing.

TP: I've done the crossing a couple of times from Kiandra to Kossie.

CF: Have you? Beauty.

TP: Do it again in a couple of weeks' time. We're commemorating Schlink's crossing in 1927. Fifty years on the 28th of July.

CF: Schlink's crossing. Do you know just where he went?

TP: Yes.

CF: You know his tracks. By gee, there's some rough country down in there, isn't there? When you leave Kiandra and go down. You can see from Kiandra, up at what they call the Quarry, you can see the Brassy from there, can't you?

TP: You can see Jargunal.

CF: You can see past it on the left, you can see the Big Brassy. I didn't realise it was so close. It could be some treacherous country between. You'd have to carry your skis a lot of the time, wouldn't you?

TP: A bit across Happy Jacks, perhaps. Only across Happy Jacks. We ski the rest. Just where there's no snow. We don't take them off otherwise.

CF: Oh, I see, yeah. That would've been a good trip. Gee, I would've loved to have done that trip years ago, you know.

TP: You can still do it.

CF: I'd be a bit long in the tooth now.

KH: Paddy Pallin, who's seventy-six -- you know Paddy Pallin? Who started the bushwalking shops? He's going to do it. He's doing the crossing.

TP: Two weeks time. He's doing it in two weeks time.

OM: Something that would interest you people. You probably don't know. The time Charlie and I are talking about, when we were all skiing, Paddy Pallin had never been on skis.

KH: Yeah, he didn't ski 'till fifty-two or something. He was in his fifties.

CF: Started when he was fifty-two, I believe.

OM: He used to make all our gear. He made all my gear for me and so on. And as I say, got me to write and so on. Charlie, now, when you've finished that, I want to ask you a question.

CF: They went in there in July, 19 - Oh, this was the other one was in 1927? First one?

TP: First one. Schlink, William Gordon and Bill Hughes, John Laidley, Bill Gordon. Five of them did the first crossing in 1927. From Kiandra to the old hotel. Three days.

CF: How long did it take them? Three days?

KH: Only two days to Pounds Creek.

CF: It'd be good going once they got on top there, wouldn't it? Once they got to Jargunal, it'd be good going, I reckon.

OM: Oh, yes. Other people, Reg, Reg Gelling, he did it in one day, I think, more than once. And Archie Telfer.

CF: Where from the --?

OM: Kiandra to Kosciusko.

CF: Yeah? In a day?

OM: Oh, easily.

KH: Charles Anton and this guy, Gelling, got it down to fifteen hours, I think.

OM: Oh, that's very interesting to me. Because in our time, before I began, Reg Gelling had done it, you see. I followed him. Now Anton had never been heard of in those days. I don't think he skied there till after the war.

KH: There's a reference in the '35 Ski Year Book, I think. Where I got this from.

OM: I never heard of him as a ski tourer. Reg Gelling's companions were Archie Telfer, Dr Archie Telfer. And Reg. There was one other. I forget the other.

KH: Telfer had an article in one of the Ski Year Books on the huts, that I've got ...

OM: There is an article covering all of the huts by Richardson. Now which Richardson is this?

CF: Alec. Alec Richardson.

OM: I think so. A.J. --

CF: Richards or Richardson?

OM: Richardson not Richards. That was in the Ski Year Book on all the huts.

TP: Not Colin Gilder? Colin Gilder wrote one in '37, I think.

OM: No, Colin Gilder didn't really know very much. But Richardson, I think, after the war ...

KH: Colin Gilder wrote one on fifty-three ski huts in the thirties.

OM: I know. But it was, that was before I began.

CF: Don. Don Richardson.

OM: Yes, Don Richardson.

KH: His son lives in Sydney. He died now.

CF: Did he? He was a nice chap. I went to his place when I was in Sydney.

KH: In Seaforth.

CF: Yeah. I went over to see him and I just can't remember where it was now.

OM: He was one of your regulars at the Alpine, wasn't he?

CF: Yes, he was. Every year he'd come up there.

KH: Oh, that's interesting. He took a lot of photographs, too, I believe, Don Richardson. He was a keen photographer. Do you remember that at all?

CF: No, I don't. I just forget about that side of it, yeah.

OM: You think he was at the Alpine every year you were there? He was a regular, I know.

CF: Yeah, well, I just can't remember now. I know he was there for a couple of winters, anyhow, without a doubt.

OM: But he was a heck of a nice fellow.

CF: He was a very nice chap.

KH: His son has just lately -- Now he's already in his thirties or something like that. He hasn't taken up skiing as a young bloke. But he's just recently, in the last few years, discovered -- This is Don Richardson's son. He's still got quite a few of his father's photographs. Wilf Hilder, a friend of ours, a mutual friend in Sydney, has seen them.

OM: You don't hear of Tom Southwell-Keeley at all now?

CF: No. I haven't heard of him for years.

OM: Oh well, I had a couple of lunches with him several years back in Sydney. I don't know what happened to him.

KH: What about Jim Pattinson? Do you see him?

CF: I see him from time to time. I haven't seen him for quite a while now. I feel very ashamed of myself that I don't contact him more.

KH: Did you ski with him?

CF: He's very friendly with one of my brothers, he sees quite a lot of him.

OM: Which brother's this?

CF: That's Colin. He lives over in Kambah now. He lived at Gosford for years.

OM: Oh, he's in Canberra?

CF: Yes, he lives in Canberra now.

OM: Where's Jim Pattinson living?

CF: He lives over at Ainslie.

KH: We've been to see Jim.

CF: You've been over to see Jim?

TP: Yes, he knows what we do. He's still got the place of course, at Kiandra, at Pollocks Gully. Do you ever remember meeting Ted Winter at all?

CF: Ted Winter? No.

TP: He's a school teacher from the Blue Mountains. Tall, very tall chap. Makes his own skis and that. He was skiing at Pretty Plains round there in about '38, '39.

OM: I don't remember the name.

TP: He's a school teacher.

KH: In '48 you left Alpine. That was your last year was it?

CF: Yeah, '47 and '48 winter. Yes. Then I came down to Canberra then.

KH: Did anybody else take over your role?

CF: Tom Blyton looked after them then. For a couple of winters. Tom Blyton. He lives in Berridale.

OM: That's one of the very old families.

CF: They lived at Rocky Plains for years and years and Tom's brothers and sisters were raised there at Rocky Plains. He's one of the main men on the Berridale Golf Club. He looks after the club.

OM: He took over after '48, did he?

CF: He took over after '48, yeah.

OM: Now, if I could just step in for a moment. You see, I want you to solve something for me. I have, and I'll be publishing in my book, the picture of Sir Garfield Barwick and his party: Cyril King, Huey Davis and the others. All at the Alpine hut. Sir Garfield took the hut and then he took each one individually. Must've had someone take himself. Put them all round the hut, see. And there's Fred there and your sister, Pat. Now, this is what I want you to tell me in a moment. Fred told me that he got word from Cyril King that Sir Garfield and Cyril - they were friends you see - and these others - a couple of them were scientists, one's a judge now in Sydney, well known, Conybeare - wanted to go in. And, this is what I'm getting at. You must've gone into the army. And they got in touch. Would Fred and his sister Pat take them in and look after them? And they did. Fred and Pat did the cooking.

CF: And the Wards were there, too.

OM: The Wards. Ken Ward and - who was it?

CF: Who was it? Ken? Ken and er, what's that other fellow? His brother. There was a brother, you know, but I don't know if they were there at the same time. The architect. Ken was the architect.

OM: Yes, that's right. Or was he the dentist? ... Yes, this was the dentist. And his wife, Rami (?). Any rate, look, let me try to get at what I'm trying to get at. I've got that photograph and I've got Sir Garfield's permission to publish it. I've had an excellent negative made and a copy. But I can't fix what year it was. Now, it's obvious it couldn't have been '41 or '42. Couldn't get it out of Sir Garfield.

CF: No. It wouldn't be then.

OM: The answer is, it was probably '43.
 CF: '43 or '44. I remember Ken Ward there. But it must've been before I went into the army. That would've been, say, '41.
 OM: You weren't there. Or he wouldn't have got Fred and Pat.
 CF: I remember them coming in later on as you say. They came in later on and Fred and Pat were the ones that looked after them.
 OM: But you don't know what year it was. From what you say, it would have to be '42 or '43.
 CF: It would have to be '42 or '43.
 OM: Couldn't be '42 because you say you were there.
 CF: I went into the army in '42. April.
 OM: Oh. You weren't there in '42?
 CF: I wasn't there in '42, no. '39, '40, '41.
 OM: We'll leave it at that. It could've been '42 or '43. I don't think it was '44. That's all I want to know.
 CF: Pat would know, probably. Some time I'll ask her.
 OM: Where's she living? Up at Goulburn?
 CF: She lives on the Braidwood Road. Anyhow you'd have no trouble getting in touch with them any time because he's with the *Goulburn Evening Post*.
 OM: Still? Good Lord, they used to own it.
 CF: They used to own it, yeah. But anyhow. They sold it to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, I think.
 OM: But he still works on it?
 CF: He still works there.
 OM: Right, we'll leave that at that. Now you get on with what you want.
 KH: What happened after Tom Blyton? He was there for a few years?
 CF: I would say he was probably there two winters. I'm not sure on that point. After that it sort of collapsed, there wasn't enough to ... They couldn't afford to keep a caretaker there or a cook. Anyone that would've come in there for a few years would have brought their own food in and all that sort of thing. Would've cared for themselves. Which they did during the war years.
 OM: From '42 to '48.
 CF: There was a fellow there in '46. Some fellow they had in there, a cook in '46. That's the only other one that I ever remember being there. He was there in '46 because I come out of the army in '46, June, and I went up there for a couple of weeks to the Alpine.
 KH: Do you remember the Mitchells? Tom?
 CF: Yeah, I know Tom, yes. Yeah, and his wife Elyne. Yeah, I met them ... I probably met them after the war.
 OM: They didn't go into the Alpine hut in its earlier years.
 CF: It would've been '47 or '48 I met them. I think they were only just moving through. They came through from ... Mawson?
 OM: Oh, well, Tom was ... He was a prisoner of war of the Japs.
 TP: Elyne said she went up there when Tom was POW. She went up there in about '39 or '40. From Snowy Plains. She wrote that up in her book on the mountains.
 OM: That's right. That's recorded. She was there with Ken Breakspear.
 TP: They skied through to Whites River and through to the Chalet.
 OM: That's right. And Ken Breakspear was there then because he was with her and she has there something about he came to meet her or something and took her in. And you know, when I went to see the Mitchells five to six years back, and having dinner with them, she said Ken Breakspear established the Alpine hut. Tom said No, he did. She didn't know. She wasn't connected with it in the beginning. In fact, that time - Oh, she does say in her book that was the only time she did go into Alpine hut. But I think, as Charlie says, that was during the war. That's funny, Ken couldn't have been away at the war then. Don't know what period he was away at the war ... He was away in '44, I know that.
 CF: ... Yeah, he must've went away in the same year as I --
 OM: Oh, doesn't matter. It's in the book, any rate.

CF: He was there in '41. He must've been ... don't know where he was after that.
 KH: Have you still got your skis from those days?
 CF: Yes, I've still got a pair of them, yes. The old ones. I broke a few up while I was there, too. The mountain ash ones for a start.
 KH: Did you use skins at all?
 CF: No, I didn't actually ever have any skins but I might've had them lent to me at different times, you know. While I was up there. I didn't worry much about skins. I was in pretty good nick and I used to just get up the hills --
 TP: Herringbone?
 CF: Herringbone.
 OM: Just run up.
 CF: Run up.
 TP: Did you use wax?
 CF: Wax properly. Put the right waxes on 'em.
 KH: What sort of wax did you have?
 CF: We used to use -- Tell you a wax that I always like, was "Green Record". And then there were lots of the other different kinds of waxes. I can't think of the names of them now. There was one brand there. There was a real hard, a soft, and a medium in them. They were in small tins. What did they call them?
 KH: Were they sticky wax?
 CF: If you want to run up the hills, you know, say it was soft snow, new snow, you'd put it a bit heavier under your foot, about that much of it. And just wipe it out a bit, you know. Fairly heavy. And then on the tips of your skis ... And on the heels, don't you, Oliver? ...
 TP: Still use the same.
 OM: Something about what you're asking now, Klaus. When I began this, Frank Parle and Co., we always had our seal skins for our long climbs up the mountains. ... This was when we were beginning. But in the last two or three years we became so knowledgeable about using the waxes that we never used skins any more. If we were going to go up a hill we put lumps of wax on and away we went. But my favourite of all was the "klistler".
 Now the thing is, if I was going to go up a mountain, I'd put the klistler on in lumps and then, down the other side, just pushed hard on the skis and it'd all smooth out and away you'd go. I was taught that by old George Aalberg, the original ski teacher at Kosciusko. He was Norwegian. And it was he that taught me how --
 KH: George? He was Austrian, wasn't he?
 OM: No, you're thinking about --
 KH: George Arlberg?
 OM: George Aalberg is Norwegian. The name is Norwegian. .. Ah, it's not spelt the same as, it's A-A-L-B-E-R-G. Whereas the Austrian name is A-R-L-B-E-R-G.
 KH: That's true. Oh well.
 OM: George was very much a Norwegian. As he said to me, he said, oh, he said, they call all these -- When they brought out the first chap, the first one to come out from Austria to teach them. Oh, heavens, what was his name?
 CF: Ernst Skaðarasy.
 OM: Yes.
 KH: At the Chalet? 1934, wasn't it?
 CF: That's the technique that I learnt. It was his technique. Ernst Skaðarasy.
 OM: Yeah, well, he, they brought Ernst out to teach what they called the Arlberg style. What they used to call it then, which had nothing to do with George Aalberg because he was Norwegian.
 KH: That's what threw me. Because the Arlberg technique is from the South.
 OM: Now, George taught me to ski but none of the, he was never a skiing instructor, as Ernst Skaase, Skaðarasy was. You see, he was brought out as a teacher. But George Aalberg was here. He was, I think, a carpenter, something like that, builder, and when they started getting going up at Kosciusko in the thirties, some of them got him to go up there and then, well, they really saw

skiing. George would get on top of Stilwell, down to the Chalet door. In'd go his stock, a jump, turn himself like that. The point was, George said to me, when they got Ernst Skafdarasy out, he said, "Oh," he said, "Give this, that a name. Do this and do that." He said, "We never did anything like this." He said, "In Norway, children, we'd put on our skis and go to school and come home. And everywhere we went, we went on our skis." He said, "We just did these things. We never gave them a name." Now, but the thing is, did he know his waxing! He taught me to wax and that was the secret of a lot of my touring, the waxes. As I say, the first, maybe, two years, I used skins on the long climbs up the mountains. But after that, as Charlie said, we'd put on the wax and we'd run up. When we were up the top, push hard in the snow to smooth out the lumps and away you go.

CF: You'd get to know how to put it on ...

OM: But my favourite was always a klister. George taught me that. And he taught me to use a base of klister and put the other waxes on top if I needed them. Always on the tours he used klister as a base.

KH: Soft wax. But how did he get the hard wax to stick on top of the soft?

CF: Iron it on. Iron the base on, didn't they, Ollie? Iron it on or rub it in with your hand, but you got to get it hot.

OM: A great thing outside the Chalet in the mornings was the old flat irons ...

CF: Put all the other waxes on over the top, you know, the softer waxes. ... They were all solid hickory in those days, weren't they?

OM: My first ones were solid hickory. They were from Norway.

CF: Then they brought in the laminateds ...

OM: Then my later ones were laminated.

CF: Laminated in the full length ...

OM: I've still got a pair of the laminated at home. With a Kandahar binding.

CF: You still run around with the Kandahars?

TP: No, Klaus has got Kandahars. But I've got these ones called "Rat traps" now. With the little pins, three pins.

CF: That's what you want if you're going to move across there, I reckon. The light boots and --

TP: Yes, well, we only use light gear, very light skis and light boots.

CF: Take a spare tip with you?

TP: Oh, yeah, usually. But most of the skis these days -- I've got wooden skis but I've got fibreglass skis, too. And you know, you won't break fibreglass skis ... Oh, I broke a pair, mind you, I did break a pair. I broke a pair on the long weekend just a few weeks ago. I didn't break the ski. I broke the core. The core of the ski is still wood. Down the core. And it's wrapped with fibreglass. And I came down, I was coming down Pounds Creek, off Tate, and I came down and I came into a bit of a gutter, like that, and I went crash! like that. And I bounced on my skis and I didn't know they'd gone. And I skied back to Guthega on them. But when I got home, I had a look and I'd got the camber the other way on the ski. And I fractured the core in the ski. But the outer skin hadn't broken.

OM: Is this fibreglass skis?

TP: This is fibreglass skis. But they've still got a wooden core.

OM: Have they?

TP: 'Cos, to get the spring, yes.

OM: All of them got a wooden core?

TP: Not all of them. Most of them have. Some of them have got a foam like this polyutherine, some sort of chemical foam. But mostly they've still got a wooden core. All the fibreglass skis.

OM: I didn't know that.

TP: ... They gave me a new pair.

KH: Did they? Really?

TP: Yes, I got a new pair. ... 'Cos I've done two crossings on them, from Kiandra to Kosciusko twice, and they gave me a new pair when I broke them so that's a good recommendation. ...

OM: What I'd be interested in, now, see I've had no experience with fibreglass ones. How are they for langlaufing in comparison with wooden ones? Laminated ones.

TP: I've got laminated wooden skis, too, and Klaus still skis on them, but it's a question of balance. With your wooden skis you've got to tar them to get a good waterproof base. Generally, it's much of a muchness. On some conditions the fibreglass ones will run faster but in other cases sometimes the wooden ones will. Generally the fibreglass ones will run faster ...

OM: So generally they would be better?

KH: The racers race on fibreglass only now.

CF: If you got no wax on them, they'll still run, won't they? If there's no wax on them, they still run, fibreglass. Won't stick.

TP: Yeah, but they won't climb, neither. Terrible. They've got another development, still, with the fibreglass ski, the latest development is they've got what they call a stepped sole. The running surface has a serration on it, you don't use any wax. It's like a sawtooth, a sawtooth on the side. You can climb on them.

OM: Well now, to climb on fibreglass, it'd be a matter of the wax, would it?

TP: Yes ... Same as the wood.

KH: It tends not to stick as well I find.

OM: I just wondered if you could get wax at all on the fibreglass.

TP & KH: Oh yes.

TP: Yes, it will, but they reckon the wood will still hold the wax better. On very coarse-grained snow the wood'll hold the wax better.

OM: If you were going to do, on a course, a lot of climbing, I guess you'd be better off with the wooden ones.

TP: You possibly would. It depends a bit on the snow. If it's very coarse sort of snow, which strips the wax off pretty quick, you're better off with wood. This is a personal thing.

CF: That's what I reckon about a good base on your skis. If you're out for long periods and you struck all these different kinds of snow, and if you haven't got them waxed reasonably well, you're right on the boards, aren't you, in no time? Ice and ...

TP: Once you break through your base wax you start to take in moisture and get ice forming on the bottom of your skis.

OM: That wouldn't happen with fibreglass, though?

CF: They're so close in the grain, the fibreglass, ...? Like glass, isn't it?

TP: Yeah. Well just to give you an idea. To save time, I have walked across creeks with my skis on, with my fibreglass skis on. In other words, I go straight into the creek. I've got some rubber boots, too, now, that go up to about ankle height and to save time on some of those little creeks, even though there's a snowbridge, I can walk straight across. That is an advantage at times...

CF: They don't mark as easy, do they? On the rocks. Do you think?

TP: No, well some of them don't.

KH: Some of them do.

TP: Some of them do. The wood's still pretty tough. The wood's still got a lot going for it.

KH: Some of the plastic ones wear very badly...

OM: Oh, they mark on the stones?

KH: Yeah, you hit a bit of branch stick in the snow, or a bit of rock, and you'll get a mark straight down. Whereas with wood, you can still resrape the surface to some extent. Smooth it out again.

TP: A lot of them have got metal edges too, now, which are good for ice, you know. They've got an edge, a metal edge on the underside.

OM: We always had metal edges on our skis... It's very important on the edging and climbing.

CF: You got your edge, like that's the edge of the ski, it comes up on top as well, doesn't it, now? Instead of only just being on the surface, it covers the side.

TP: Yes, it comes around.

KH: Instead of sitting flat on the bottom, it sits on the side. So that you get a narrow edge of steel on the base.

OM: Well, we never had it any more than just underneath. On the edge underneath.

CF: I noticed that, a lot of the new ones.

OM: Well, would you excuse me if I get along, I've got a terrific day tomorrow. ...

TP: There are still an old pair of hickory skis in at Alpine with the Kandahar-type bindings. And they've got the, they've got a metal edge but it's just the edge that's screwed up from underneath, you know. They're still there.

OM: Well, that's the way they were. That's the only ones I ever had...

CF: That's all we had. I've still got that type of skis and great big long things at that, too. We were always keen on downhill and they had to be long skis. Well, the skis now, nobody ever wears skis as long as what I've got today. You see, when I stand up now, mine are there, look, where the skis they've got today are about here.

TP: Yeah, well, we still use the long skis.

CF: What are you using?

TP: Oh the long skis, oh yeah.

CF: Yeah, you'd have to on this touring, I reckon.

TP: Oh yes. 210s or 215s ... Like this fellow here, like the old Kiandra boy.

CF: Yeah, I see. Oh, they're long, aren't they?

OM: Our rule always was: the length of your skis was you could just put your hand over the top.

CF: That's what we did. Mine was 205s, I think.

OM: Mine were 210s. Oh, that would've been too short for me. That's the length I would've used. But I did have a shorter pair for some of these long tours, they were more manoeuvrable.

KH: That's my father's old pair which he started using in the 1930s in the Alps, in the Austrian Alps. Oh, he skied all over Austria, my father.

CF: Did he?

KH: Always touring.

CF: Hickorys. Solid hickorys. [Everyone examines the skis] ... I used skis that were retipped. I don't know it was mine were actually retipped but I used other skis that had been redone. [...]

KH: ... You would've skied on an outfit like this, skis like that, stocks like this, wouldn't you?

OM: Oh, identical to that! Except, as I said, later I had laminated. When they first had the laminated out. George and I had the first laminated ones. He used to sell skis later. He was the first one to sell skis. Paddy Pallin didn't come in until later. The first skis ... were imported by George Aalberg. I bought all my skis from George Aalberg, except of course for the ones that old Charles Lane-Poole made. ... [Two conversations going at once] ... Yes, old Charles Lane-Poole, he started the Forestry school. He was the founder. The point was, he was an excellent wood-worker himself, old Charles Lane-Poole.

CF: Yeah, I remember. he had one arm, didn't he?

OM: Yeah. And d'you remember the daughter, Charles? She was lovely. ... Any rate, he was a wonderful wood-worker himself. Now, I used to stay at their home, which I think is what is the Tudor house there now ... that's where I used to stay. And as you go into the hall there was a beautiful table of black wood. That and a whole lot of the furniture in the house, he had made himself. Then he said to me, "And I'll make you a pair of skis." He had a wood-working shop. ... He was actually a wood-worker. That was his hobby.

KH: Apparently they rigged up a jig to bend the skis. They made a framework. Once they had prepared the alpine ash planks, or whatever they were, they would put 'em in the, steamed them and put them in a jig overnight or a couple of days and then they were right. They were turning out one pair after another.

OM: Who did this?

KH: Charles Lane-Poole and some of the others.

CF: That was here in Canberra.

KH: In '37 or '38, I think, about that time.

CF: I believe they, he had quite a lot of them interested in, the ones in the club, was it, that were interested in --

OM: He had his Canberra Ski Club.

[OLIVER MORIARTY LEAVES. END SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO]

KH: Did you ever hear about Bill Hughes?

CF: I don't know who you mean. The politician?

KH: No, I mean Hughes, the miner and skier, from Kiandra. Well, he wasn't around when you were around of course.

CF: No, he would've been there long before I would've been there. [unintelligible] ...

... I haven't told you about the hut yet, but if you'd just like to ask a few questions. 'Cos we just kept drifting off on to other ...

KH: We do that all the time.

CF: [unintelligible] ... I've seen Oliver from time to time. He stayed over at our home one night, you know. Came down from up there when he'd been pottering around the hills, you know and he's ... always on this environment thing. He does take it seriously. And he wrote it up, and he's written it up in the *Canberra Times*, ... city papers and all.

KH: It's eleven o'clock. [Tony Preston gets ready to leave - discussion of posters]

CF: In the late thirties and the early forties you know, there were a lot of fellows were very keen on this touring. Oh, they'd get up there, they loved to tour everywhere, like Jargunal and then they'd go to Whites River for a day and all this business. ... [Ken Breakspear] skied from the Alpine hut to the Chalet, that's twenty miles, twenty-two we always thought, up to twenty miles - he skied over there and back in daylight in the winter time. It's pretty good going. In daylight. It would have been, I would say, probably would have been July. Days not very long, either. He skied over and back in daylight. He would've crossed there in times, you know, it was a wonder he ever made it. He used to go across there, he used to just go across by compass. He had limey fogs, you know... Yeah, limey fogs, over there by er, well, I don't know exactly where he used to go, they went through by Tate, or sometimes he used to tell how he used to skirt round Whites River, so he'd have to round to the right in towards Twynam more, wouldn't he? He wouldn't touch on Twynam surely? That'd be too, too rugged. I don't know just rightly where he used to go but he reckoned there was one time he was skiing down this particular place and he just happened to pull up. He put his stock in like that, you know, and he couldn't feel any snow at all. [unintelligible] He was standing on top of a cornice. There was a fog, you know, and he said he couldn't -- you know what it's like in a fog in the snow, you can't see anything, can you? [...]

Some of those cornices can be fifty feet, and they might be, they could be a hundred feet.

TP: Oh, there's some big ones. Big ones up around Gungartan, and around there, too. Very big cornices along there, and up at Tin hut.

CF: Yeah, all along through the Kerries there and in Gungartan, that's right.

KH: Did you ever do any bigger trips yourself?

CF: Only when, you might say, I went through Alpine hut to the Chalet. But we didn't do it in a day or anything. We went to Whites River, stayed the night there, and then went over the next day to make it a bit easier. Because these fellows ... not all real, in good nick, are they?

KH: Did you ever go the other way? Over towards Bogong hut?

CF: I went over to the Bogong, went over there and back, over there and back just for a bit of practice. I went over Jargunal in an hour forty-six, I think, and I came back in an hour twenty-six. It's pretty good going along there though really, you've only got the last little bit to Jargunal.

KH: I'll say. That's quite a trip.

CF: That last bit. Takes half the time, doesn't it.

KH: But it is a fast run back. It's a beaut run back.

CF: Then I went over to Gungartan, and over there. Then I went over to Grey Mare another time.

KH: Not over to Happy Jacks plain?

CF: No, we never went over there.

KH: Never went over there. Or Mackeys Hut or O'Keefes?

CF: We went to Kellys Hut, that's more in Snow Vale area, not far from Snowy Plains, on the Gungarlin.

KH: Do you know the people who own that country now?

CF: Gungarlin? Who owns it? Ray Adams would own something there. He's dead now but his boy would own some of it, I think. Wheatleys would still own some of it up in there. You know

Wheatleys Hut? Just below Kellys hut there, at all? On Snow Vale. Be, er, let me see, who else'd own up in there? ... The Paterick country, who'd own that? I'm not sure who'd own that now. There'd be Adams's, Wheatleys, McPhies, and Sturgeons own some of that up in there, too. Whether she still owns it, I wouldn't know.

TP: You'd remember old Reg Mould up there, too? The Moulds?

CF: Yes, he was up in Spencers Peak way, he had his property.

TP: That hut was burnt down just a few months ago, his old hut. Bloody Park burnt it down.

CF: Did they? That's a shame. What's the idea of burning it down, though?

KH: One of the rangers burnt it down. He didn't do it with Park authority, he did it of his own accord. He didn't like it.

CF: It's a pity. It's a pity to think he didn't like it. That's a shame. I went up there with Reg a couple of times. We took the sheep out there. And I remember that old hut. It had an old bed in it, you know. Just a bag between two rails.

TP: Yeah, a lot of them had those. Same at Pretty Plain. Same as that at Pretty Plain, still to this day. The old bag and rails. Few like that, actually. Where's another one like that? There was one like that in Four Mile originally. But we probably cleaned it out, the one in Four Mile.

KH: You never knew Bob Hughes? Any of the Hughes from Kiandra?

CF: No, I didn't know them, no.

KH: Or the Yans?

CF: I knew them. Tommy and, er ...

KH: You know Tom, do you? Little fellow.

CF: Yeah. He still alive?

KH: Yes. Down in Adelong, now.

CF: Is he? What's his brother's name? Les. Do you know Les?

KH: I haven't met Les.

CF: I think Les, I think he lives out Bobeyan way, in the finish. Ended up somewhere in that country. And one of his sisters married old Bill Paterick. He died a couple of years ago.

KH: Tom Yan's sister married Paterick? .. They're all related, that Kiandra mob.

CF: In that family there was Maxie, Bill, and there was a heap of girls, you know. In the Paterick family.

KH: In the Paterick family, right. And some of the girls are in Canberra? Is that right? The Paterick girls are in Canberra, I believe. At least a couple of them.

CF: They probably could be, too. They'd be the younger ones, you know. Shirley was one of them. Now I'm not sure that she might live down here. Some of them probably moved to Tumut. But Billy's up at er, I think Billy and Maxie are up round about Gosford way, somewhere up that way. They were with the oil drilling company.

KH: Bill Paterick died a few years ago. I saw the notice in the *Tumut Times*.

CF: Yes. He died, I think he died here in Canberra hospital. Yes, he had cancer. He was one of the old skiers up there. I used to see quite a bit of him when I used to go skiing at Kiandra. You know, he was still pretty active --

KH: Oh, you did ski at Kiandra?

CF: Yes. He must've been getting on towards seventy then when he, good old downhiller ...

KH: What about Ted Quinn? Or the Quinns?

CF: No, I don't know him. You met Jimmy? Jimmy Pattinson? He'd be able to tell you all about that Kiandra end.

KH: His wife's better, in a way. His wife's better on the facts.

CF: Oh, is she? Yeah, she was a Thorpe from Adaminaby.

KH: She's pretty good on the people, too, and dates. He's alright but ... What about the Dorans?

CF: Oh, yeah, there was a Doran. And then there was a ... I think one of the Dorans married a Francis, didn't she?

KH: I don't know. There was a Jimmy Doran, wasn't there?

CF: Wasn't there a Sorell up there? Sorell? Jimmy Sorell?

KH: No. Don't know about him.

CF: You didn't mention about him. I think he came from up that way.

KH: Oh, see, I've only met ... It's only people I haven't been to see.

CF: See, I wouldn't have known much about Kiandra because more or less, there wasn't very many people there when I knew much about it, you know. There was only a few families: Pattinsons, Patericks, and Yans, and Bells.

TP: Yes, Charlie [Bell]. I know Charlie pretty well. He's over at Khancoban, living with Don Moffatt there. You know, on Don's place. He's retired now. He does a bit of fishing, shoots a few cormorants.

CF: Still shoots a few foxes?

TP: Oh yeah, foxes. I don't know about foxes. He gets the shags though. They come up off the river, you know. Oh yeah.

CF: He was the fishing inspector there at Lake Eucumbene for years.

TP: He worked for the Park for a while on the gate, collecting the money for a while there. He had a bit of a job there, you know, just on the tourist season. He collected the fifty cents or whatever it was on that gate on the road up to Thredbo. He was doing that for a couple of years. His son's over here still. I think his son was over here working at the university. One son, his eldest boy. Oh yeah, they're still going strong. We stayed with them once. Kit and ... Tell me, back to Alpine again. Do you ever remember the list of names on the back of the door there at Alpine? All the names of everybody that broke their ski tips, can you remember that?

CF: No, I forgot that. There used to be a lot of writing on that tinned food cupboard there.

TP: Yes, a lot of that's still there. But on the back of the door where the wood is stored - all the names are on the back of that door, too. There's a lot of names on there.

CF: I think the bushwalking mob have got it now, haven't they?

KH: Yes. Scouts. Scouts look after it.

CF: Still private enterprise?

TP: Oh, no, it's in the Park.

CF: It's in the Park. It went into the Park? That was freehold country, you know, that, in the beginning. That's how they got it. Otherwise there wouldn't have been a hut in there. Forty acres they took up. Freehold country, it was owned by Kidman. Harry Kidman owned that.

KH [reading]: "Roll of honour of ski tip breakers on the main door of Alpine hut". T. Temperly.

CF: Yeah, I remember Tom. I remember Tom. He was killed over in Timor or Indonesia during the war after that. There you are, I'm second on the list. Look at that now.

TP: You're still there, too. Still there on the back of the door.

CF: What do you know about that. 1940, isn't that ...

KH: G. Cranswick.

CF: Cranswick, now Cranswick.. He was a doctor, I think, or studying to be a doctor.

KH: Most of the skiers were doctors.

CF: I remember that fellow very well. I met him later on, too, as a matter of fact.

KH: What do you remember about him? Any peculiarities?

CF: Any peculiarities? Well, I tell you what, there were three students up there - and I don't know what year that would've been in - all studying to be doctors. Every day they argued. And every subject that came up, they all argued about it. And I thought to meself, by gee, if you blokes ever turn out to be doctors you'll never agree on anything. What else do I know about him? Anything unusual about him?

KH: Well, you said you remember him quite well. So you remember him very well, because ...?

CF: He was a very nice type of a bloke, he was.

KH: Because of a particular ... ? They told good stories or because they ...?

CF: Oh no, he was a very, sort of a quiet sort of a fellow, you know. But a very nice chap. I can't think of the other two fellows' names that were there with him. As a matter of fact, I took them after season was finished and I went back up in there in, must've been late September, you know. They told 'em, like the season had finished more or less, I didn't have any more to look after up there. They'd all gone out. And all of a sudden I get notice to, that these three fellows were coming. So I had the job. I thought, oh, well, I'll go back up. I rode the horse as far as I could -- do you know the Brassy at all? The little Brassy? The track up through there from? I rode as far as I could and I started down the Brassy, you know. There was heavy

snow, you know, like the snow was too heavy, that's about the snowline. So anyhow I let the horse go there, let my horse go there, and I, and I hung my saddle in a tree. And I skied from there. I'd carried me skis over me shoulder. I skied from there in to prepare for these three fellows when they come. Oh, we had a pretty good time, you know, the three of us.

KH: George Douglas wasn't one of them?

CF: Yeah, I know George. Yeah, I remember that name, George Douglas. I think he came from Bega, that'd be him I'm pretty sure. Yeah, he came from Bega, that fellow, he had a dairy farm down there.

KH: Dick Macrossan?

CF: Dick Macrossan. Yes, I know Dick. He was a dentist. He was studying to be a dentist, I think that's the fellow, yeah.

KH: Irving Kalman? ..

CF: Don't know that name, no.

KH: Now, this is Don Richardson, I think.

CF: Oh, he broke one, did he? He had a men's and ski shop in Sydney. Like, men's clothing and everything, you know. And also skis. Yeah. Richards, that's him, Don Richards. ... Bought a pair of boots off ...

KH: Don Richardson ...?

CF: There was a Don Richardson and a Don Richards, too.

KH: The other Richardson that we were talking about here before with Oliver, he wasn't in to clothing. He was either a teacher or something to do with university ...

CF: Up at university. Very well educated. He could speak very well and you could tell he was very well educated.

KH: Harold Ron - somebody. Don't know what it says. Can't read that one.

CF: No, I don't know that one.

KH: Oh, this was after you went to war ...

CF: Yes, in '42. No, I wouldn't have been there then.

[.KH continues to read list]

KH: ... Ken Breakspear.

CF: Hallo, Ken did one. '47, yeah.

KH: And there must be some that I didn't even write down.

[Tony Preston leaves]

CF: I suppose you've been to the Tin hut, too, have you? Just up over the hill there from ... I went up there one night, when I was at the Alpine hut. There was a hell of a frost and the snow was sort of, you know, it had a bit of a thaw on it, you know. You know what that's like to scratch around on when you're climbing. And in the middle of the night, heavy frost on it. And we went up there, this fellow was up there, was staying in the hut at the time. We were at the Alpine hut. And his, I think his grandmother had died, you know, and we got the mission at the hut so we went up to tell him. Oh, it's about five mile, I think, ... about twenty-five mile when you scratch there.

KH: I've stayed at the Tin hut a few times.

CF: Yeah, it's not a bad hut, though, is it.

KH: Oh, it's nice.

CF: Yeah. It was built in a very exposed place wasn't it, sort of on that western side.

KH: And hard to find. It can be really hard to find.

CF: It can be hard to find, yeah. Yeah, I stayed there one time. I helped to muster the sheep round there in Litchfields' country - they had the snow leases there, Jim Litchfield. They had a pretty big run there. There was sheep on it and cattle. And Amos Blyton was the caretaker there, looking after the stock, and he had another couple of other fellows there with him, you know, that's how big a run it was, to look after the stock. And then, when they mustered in the autumn, they took in other musterers. Very enjoyable it was.

KH: You did that for a short time?

CF: I did that, too. I did that in March and early April, 1942. I went from there into the army.

KH: That's a good way of getting to know the country, isn't it? Mustering.

CF: Yeah. Good to see in the summertime, you know. And then I mustered down out around the Whites River, too. That's nice country, isn't it? That's beautiful. Well, is there anything else you want to know about the Alpine hut? I suppose you more or less just want to know about the origination, how it originated, did you?

KH: Oh, well, that's right. We're just interested in the whole history of the mountains really.

CF: All the material was taken in to that hut, you know, by sledge from halfway down the Brassy - you know, the Brassy, going towards Snowy Plains.

KH: I've never been in that way to Alpine... But I know what you mean.

CF: She's a very rugged track but they drove up halfway, they drove up to the, actually the foot of the Brassy, we'll put it that way. You can go a fair way along on the flats and then you get this last steep piece, that would be about, oh, I suppose all told it would be a mile and a half to two miles, you know. Up this, up this last piece, you know, because you couldn't get up there any other way, only by slide and two horses, see. My brother took it all in by slide, the timber, and everything, you know. By gee, it was a terrible track when you got down over that river. Have you been to Kidman's Hut?

KH: No, I've never come in that way. I come in from Constance's.

CF: Well now, if you go up that Back River, it's very rocky. You know up that, what you call, up the Donald's(?) Creek in there. You cross over the Back River and then come onto this other river that comes into the Burrungubuggee, just not far from Kidman's. And anyhow, he couldn't go up this creek. Well, that was the bridle track. He had to go out round it and they cut a track through the scrub, you know. Oh, it was a terrible track. Dreadful. He had to take all the supplies in, too, the same way. And he did that for oh, many, many winters and a lot of time he'd have to pack it all in.

And I took a, I took a bullock, I took a butchered bullock up and six sheep one year, just before I was kicked off. ... I had a slide and two horses and I got almost to the top of the Brassy - you ought to see this little Brassy we call it. Honest, you get almost to the top and there's one piece there you've got to go, and you had to go out round this rock and up round the tree to get there, because there was no other way you could get there. And I almost got up this little incline and the horses threw it in, you know. I was roaring hell out of them, you know, and I thought if they pull up here, I'm sunk. I'll have to unload it. And I could see them, they were there just digging their heels in, they were getting nowhere, you know. And I was roaring hell out of them. Finally, they made it and I was never so pleased in my life that they'd got up down this particular little incline. 'Cos there was no other way I could have got it there. I would've had to unpack it if they couldn't have made it. You could imagine what sort of a job that is, unpacking the meat. You'd get so much up there and come back and get the other. But anyhow I finished up getting it down. It was a, it was just a hell of a track, it's only say, it was roughly about eight miles, you know, but it's about fifty miles of anything else. Frightful track.

We had some terrible times in there, really, you know. My brother took a beast up there one time and they got it within two miles of the hut and the snow was this deep. So there was only one thing to do, was to drive it under a tree and slaughter it. Used a magnum. If he'd missed it, under that tree, well, if it got twenty yards away, you're still sunk, aren't you. Just lucky it dropped under the tree and they pulled it up with an chain. There was two of 'em. Getting it ready. And I went in there, I was cooking that winter, and the guests used to come down every few days, you know, and they used to cut a bit off this beast, it was still hanging up. And, oh gee, it was funny, you know. It would have been a real good photo. I went down there one day - oh, they'd been digging at it for about two weeks, I suppose. They'd come down, cut a bit off it, and take it up and I'd cook it up. And I went down there one day meself, you know, to give a bit of a hand, you know, bringing this, and you see this beast, it was hanging about this far off the ground - as far up as you could see was just the spinal cord where they had been cutting it off him. You would just see this bit of neckbone left. You know, they cut all the meat off his shoulders as far as they could and there was still his two hindquarters left.

KH: That's a neat way, actually, of keeping your meat.

CF: It kept alright because it was cold weather. Another time I hung the beef up there on a cleat near the Alpine hut. You've been there, haven't you? Alpine hut.

KH: Alpine hut? Oh yeah.

CF: Do you know the little creek that runs down there? They call it, er, oh it has got a name, anyhow. There's a few trees over on that creek and I went over and I, anyhow I hung the beast over there. And the six sheep - see this is to start off. And you'd be surprised, you'd think it would keep alright there but you get a lot of changes in the weather there, as well. If it starts to thaw, it's bad for your beef. And do you know what, the sheep dried out - the meat was more or less dehydrated in the finish. The sheep just dried right out from the cold winds and the frost must have been drawing the moisture out of it.

KH: It's a good way of keeping it, I suppose. Make it a bit tough.

CF: I suppose, if I'd done the right thing, I would've soaked it well. It would've sort of come back a bit. But it dried out just like an old dried-up rabbit, you know, these sheep. Anyhow, I better make tracks ...

KH: Oliver's told me so many new things, you know, and you have. ... You get really full, you know.

CF: There's so much I could tell you about up there, you know, but it's, it's no good ramming this sort of stuff into your head if it's not necessary, you know. ... Then there's the Whites River hut, I think that was built by Clarkes. They used to only just pitch a tent out there in the beginning. They had a lot of that country up there leased, you know, snow leased. And they kicked off building this hut, tin hut, and then they lined it and then the skiers came in there.

KH: When was that built then? It was before Alpine, wasn't it?

CF: Yes, that could have been built towards the end of the twenties or the early thirties, I should imagine. And then they lined it. Everything had to be carted in by, nearly everything was carted in, I think, by packhorse. Materials and all that, you know, a lot of bush timber used in it, too. I'm not sure how they got the iron in there - might have been taken in by bullock wagon. I do remember them saying that some of the materials there was gone in by packhorse. You writing an article on it, are you?

KH: I'm writing an article now on this crossing. On the ski crossing. The fiftieth anniversary of it. To coincide with this celebration that we're having at Kiandra. That's for the *Canberra Times*. So it won't be very much on the huts. But I have written an article previously for a magazine, on the huts. And I had an article in the *Canberra Times* last year on Kiandra and the gold-mining there. And any information that I gather, on the huts and so on, will come out again in future articles.

CF: Are you getting on to the right people for the huts? It's very awkward, you know. It's a pity, you see. The old fellows are all dying out in the mountains and there's not too many that are really left. One of my brothers, Fred, he'd be one of the oldest fellows from the hills now - he's over sixty. Anyone else round about his age, well ...

KH: There's a few over at Talbingo. See, people like Tom Yan and Ted Quinn. See, Ted Quinn's over eighty ...

CF: It's good to get on to these blokes before too many more years ...

KH: Oh yes, this is the sad thing. Because Dr Davey - you know, this Davey fellow - now, he skied back in 1929. But he just died out Bungendore way. I missed him, didn't get to see him. But then, on the other hand, we discovered Bill Hughes again. Now, Bill Hughes was in the first crossing in 1927. He's in his seventies, too. He lives at Penrith. We're on to him... Oh yeah, I've taken his photograph and what have you. So's Bill Gordon. There's two survivors of that 1927 crossing. It's starting to come together. There are still quite a few old-timers around - and people like Jim Pattinson. And I'll find others. Your brother. There's others I've heard of that I haven't even followed up yet. There's a fellow from the Currango homestead - now what's their name? Currango. Jim Pattinson knows them.

CF: Currango? Currango. Yeah, well, what's their name, Taylor was up there. You on to them?.

KH: The Taylors. No, not yet. But they're still alive.

CF: Yeah, the old homestead there, wasn't it, Currango? The old station there.

KH: Currango. Yeah, I've never been there. But I've got to go and see them. Now they'll be valuable... They tell me, anyway.

CF: Yeah. There'd be probably some of the Wallace's from Jindabyne. But all those old hands

are gone, too. But the young fellows, some of those young fellows. Evans's. McPhies. Angus and Max McPhie would know a lot about the Grey Mare and all round about Dicky Cooper.

KH: Would they know about the Grey mare mine? Because the mine started again in the late thirties, early forties.

CF: Oh yeah, oh, well, see, previous to that, when the mine was operating, my uncle took beef from Fentonville. He took beef from there, must've packed it in, took beef to the miners. That would be the first company that was in there.

KH: The 1880s.

CF: Well, yeah, and later on than that. Well, that mine been open two or three times, been through two or three hands, hasn't it?

KH: Yeah, I think so. Last time was 1939, 1940.

CF: But McPhies, and then, er, Keith and Ian McPhie, their father was Bob, and Bob had a brother, Dave - they would have known those mountains like the back of your hand. They had Grey Mare all through there, all those runs down there - those big cattle runs.

KH: McPhies did.

[Charlie Fletcher leaves]

[END TAPE TWO]