

Summit Record, 1927.

34 MILES BY MOONLIGHT.

(By Ashleigh O. Davy, M.B., Ch.M., D.L.O.)

Ski-running by moonlight has a fascination known to the majority of the members of the Ski Club of Australia. Ideal climbing and running are provided by the frozen surface of the snow, and the absence of the exhausting heat of the sun makes a wonderful difference when plodding along the level or uphill.

On a clear still night with the moon near the full, the run from the hotel to the summit of Kosciusko and back, a total distance of about 34 miles, can be easily accomplished by an average skier, and will provide a veritable feast of glorious scenery far surpassing anything seen in the harsher light of day.

The time for the trip was reduced last season, first by Kienzle, a member of the Alpine Club, to 8 hours 58 minutes, and shortly afterwards by Gordon and Moulden, of the Ski Club, to 8 hours 55 minutes. Both these trips were made by daylight, the latter one under very adverse conditions. Moulden and I then determined to attempt to further reduce this time by moonlight. Unfortunately neither Kienzle or Gordon could stay up long enough to accompany us. We worked out a schedule of 8 hours 30 minutes, 5 hours up and 3½ hours back.

After a week of heavy snow the weather gave indications of clearing, and on August 11th a steadily rising barometer gave us the tip to be ready to start. A strong southerly wind was blowing until 4 p.m., but it then began to die down, and returning parties of skiers told us of rapidly improving conditions on the other side of Dainer's Gap. Our skis were in good order, and the capacious pockets of our wind-coats were already stuffed with spare bindings and laces, chocolate, an orange and an extra pair of gloves, so having finally decided to start it took us little time to get under way.

Just before leaving we asked Mr. Speet for something to tie to the snow pole at the summit, and he gave us a small padlock. Mrs. Speet saw us off at 5.25 p.m. Moulden set the pace. The snow was excellent going, and Dainer's was reached without undue effort in 21 minutes. We followed the road down the other side, and then proceeded straight along the floor of the valley to the foot of Piper's Gap, to which we ascended on the left-hand side.



MR. H. KEINZLE.

The first man to do the Kosciusko Summit trip in under nine hours, but whose record of 8 hr. 58 min. was afterwards beaten on two occasions.



DR. ASHLEIGH DAVY

While crossing the Perisher Plain we had a fairly strong wind in our faces, and the shelter of the Perisher Gap was very welcome. The climb up to the gap was remarkably easy, as the valley was half filled with snow, and only near the top was a short traverse necessary. Here we were glad to find that the wind had died down again.

The cheery gleam of a light in Betts's Camp was soon visible, and the sight of it stimulated us to a spurt across the flat. Schlink, Fisher and Allen were staying the night there, prior to a day's exploration on part of the Main Range, and as we approached they emerged from the door with a steaming bowl of soup for each of us. Our time to here was 1 hour 58 minutes; 7 minutes ahead of schedule. After seven minutes' rest we set off again, accompanied by Eric Fisher, who made the pace for us for a couple of miles.

We climbed up the right-hand side of Charlotte's Pass, which we reached in 3 hours 45 minutes, or 20 minutes ahead of schedule. On the far side of Charlotte's we were relieved to find a good surface of frozen snow instead of the ice which I had previously experienced there at night. We kept a little below the road, and found the Snowy Crossing without difficulty. This, from a scenic point of view, is the best part of the run.

We decided to approach the summit, via Etheridge, and unfortunately on the way to Sentinel Rock we turned too soon to the left and found ourselves in a small, fairly steep-sided gully, to get out of which we had to make a series of short traverses and kick turns. A detour was then necessary round some roughish country, and this cost us several minutes. Up to Sentinel Rock the snow was perfect, but along the side of Etheridge we encountered ridgy ice. Here we kept well above the snow poles.

At the top of the short run down from Etheridge to Cootapatamba Saddle or Rawson Pass, as someone has re-named it, we found that the summit and the saddle itself were enveloped in a moderately thick cloud. The effect of the moonlight on the swirling tendrils of fog over the pass below us was magnificent, but its beauty was somewhat lost on us, as it looked extremely uninviting to run down into. However, Moulden started off and I followed him rather uncertainly, taking a beautiful "toss" on the way. Having safely reached the pass we found that the cloud limited our range of vision to from about 50 to 100 yards, and while we knew we could easily find the summit by merely keeping on the upgrade for the short remaining distance, we were not so confident of finding the right way down again. About half way up we could only just see the pass, so we decided to leave a stock upright in the snow to act as a guide, and about 50 yards from the summit we implanted another one. It was blowing again now, so we lost no time in reaching the summit, and then tying our padlock to the nearest snow pole.



DR. SCHLINK AND MR. ARNOLD MOULDEN OUTSIDE THE HOTEL KOSCIUSKO.

The run down then commenced, and we soon saw the first of our impromptu snow poles ahead of us. This we retrieved, and, after a little difficulty located the lower one, from which we could again see the Rawson Pass.

Here we paused to see what time we had made, and found that we had taken altogether 4 hours and 50 minutes. Allowing five minutes for the run off it, we estimated we had reached the summit in 4 hours 40 minutes, or 15 minutes ahead of schedule. The run along the icy side of Etheridge proved very bumpy, as we had anticipated, and here we each took a couple of good "tosses." Near Sentinel Rock, where I was running a little distance ahead, we unfortunately became separated. On turning round I could see no signs of Moulden, and I retraced my steps about 200 yards and coo-ee'd repeatedly, but without result. After some hesitation I decided to run down to the Snowy Crossing, where to my relief I found him waiting for me, having arrived by a slightly different route.

From here to Charlotte's was uneventful, and there we were met by Schlink, Fisher and Allen who had some oranges for us. After a "breather" we had a glorious run down, along the left-hand side, the snow being very fast, enabling us to keep our height well. From the foot of this run to Betts's is probably the most uninteresting part of the journey, and our fresher companions were a great help to us, as we were both starting to feel the strain.

At Betts's, which we reached in 6 hours 19 minutes, we removed our skis and went in for a few minutes' spell. The trusty "Mac" had more soup ready for us, and also a large supply of stewed fruit, which latter proved the more acceptable, and refreshed us wonderfully. For the last nine miles we made the pace alternately, Moulden doing the lion's share. We were well ahead of schedule, and for a while thought we might break eight hours. We had an excellent run down the left-hand side of Piper's, but the long pull up to Dainer's seemed interminable, and we finally reached it in eight hours exactly. The run down the road was soon negotiated, and we arrived back at the door of the hotel at 1.35 a.m., making our full time 8 hours and 10 minutes.

We hurriedly awakened Mr. Speet to check our time. Be it ever to the credit of that most genial of hotel managers that he actually appeared pleased to do so. No summit trip has ever been made without one or two small contretemps, and on the whole we had a very lucky and enjoyable run.

The time for the trip can still be greatly reduced. But whether the skier makes the run against time or not, the summit trip by moonlight will afford him a never-to-be-forgotten night in wonderland.