

Looking Backwards. 1922 to 1939 at Kosciusko

By P. M. A. Speet

THE fact that my memories of Kosciusko cover some twenty-seven years may account for the mention of names which most of our present-day skiers have never heard of in connection with ski-ing.

The first person prominently associated with the development of ski-ing and whose enthusiasm, goodfellowship and excellence of address will always stand out in my memory is Percy Hunter. It was mostly due to his fine personality that Kosciusko became popularised as a ski-ing resort. In his effort to do this he was very ably assisted by such stalwarts of ski-ing as the late Percy Pearson, Doctor Schlink, Arthur Pitt, Dr. Oscar Paul, Reg Fagan, the late E. R. Moser, Harold Attwill, and quite a number of others, too many to enumerate.

Of those mentioned above, the only two who were still active club members when I left Kosciusko in 1939 were Drs. Schlink and Paul, the latter still well-known for his complete unselfishness and willingness to teach the weaker members of the Ski Club of Australia. Dr. Schlink, the President of the Ski Club, is generally best remembered by his determined effort to have the Chalet at Charlotte Pass established and, for those of my readers who are not aware of it, it was a most arduous task to persuade the Government to spend enough money to bring into being what is now the most outstanding ski-ing resort in Australia. Those who are enjoying their snow sports at the 6,000 ft. level might well remember the person whose driving force made this possible.

Of the later generation I would mention those who were responsible for the establishment of the Ski Council, which was the first definite step towards the improvement of ski-ing in general. This body has done an incalculable amount of good, notwithstanding the large amount of criticism to which it was subjected during the first years of its existence or, perhaps, because of it.

The Hotel had many distinguished visitors, from time to time, among whom was the late General Birdwood, who visited Kosciusko shortly after the 1914-1918 war, and with his usual affability pretended to remember me as one of his "old" diggers. This, incidentally, made me realise that most people like to be remembered, and was a valuable lesson to me.

One of my dearest friends was the late Percy Pearson, whose enthusiasm for anything connected with Kosciusko was unbounded. This and many other sterling qualities made him a most likeable person, and his tragic retirement from club activities was a severe blow to me.

Highlights in my memories of members of the various ski clubs include one very prominent member whose nocturnal habits included well-lubricated conversation on topics in which the average individual is not well versed. One night, having started a most involved discussion on psychiatry with another member of the club, who disappeared for some reason, he insisted on finishing his thesis with me as an audience. I feel sure that I would even now be quite able to act as an honorary consultant to any of our Orange psychiatrists. Another highlight: Hearing a strange shuffling sound at about 2 a.m. I got up to investigate and found one member on all fours in the corridor going from door to door, sniffing like a dog. To my question what he was doing, he replied that he was looking for his room. I suggested that he could see the numbers better if he stood erect, to which he replied that he didn't think he could stand erect

long enough to read the number, and even if he did he would still not know whether it was his number or not. He was trusting (he said) to his sense of smell to guide him to the right place. Again, I well remember the performance of a very versatile member, who one night practised slalom racing down the main stairway of the Hotel. The worst of it was that he finished his out-run on the mat in a standing position. [I think someone caught him.—An Editor.]

I am quite sure that any members who recognise themselves will have a quiet grin. It is possible, of course, that they wouldn't remember that any of these things happened. I conclude by once again expressing my thanks to all those club members who helped me to make Kosciusko for them what it was to me for 19 years, a home in the mountains.

See Jagungal First

By A. Stone

IN the course of a spring time motor tour in 1920, I was ascending Mount Talbingo on my way to Yarrangobilly, when a snow-capped mountain suddenly came into view glowing in the morning sunlight, majestic above the intervening tree-clad hills and valleys. I was to see Jagungal in after years from many distant view points, standing sentinel over the snow country, but the first picture is my most vivid memory.

I was to recall it many years afterwards in very different surroundings. It was in Switzerland in 1938 at the half-way house on the Parsenn-Serneus run. A discussion arose at lunch-time on ski-ing in other lands. I listened-in and reserved my comments, particularly as I was not looking forward to the second half of the trip down through the pine-clad slopes over icy snow to the Railway. Looking back up the crowded slopes of the Parsenn, which we had just descended, my thoughts strayed back to two cherished memories, one of Charlotte's Pass and the range beyond as I had first seen it years before with one single ski-track on it, and the other was of Jagungal—the Big Bogong standing alone and aloof with a whole season's fall of snow untouched by man.

Still looking up the crowded slopes, I muttered any one valley of our main range is more spacious than all this I see here now, and it would be a rarity to cover another ski-track; nor, I added, would the run home be spoilt by an icy forest path at the finish.

The subsequent descent through the trees to the railway station, dodging bodies and being dodged, gave me plenty of opportunity for comparisons and a distinct hardening of my convictions took place. (Maybe its hardening of arteries in our case, but we would put up with a few people if we had a train line up the Snowy Valley.—Editor.) In fact, when the conversation was resumed in the train going back up to Davos, I had no hesitation about extolling the virtues of a run home from Stilwell to the Chalet, via Trapyard Creek, and another hour's ski-ing after afternoon tea. However, fresh snow fell that night, and the day after we had two glorious runs and we ended up all square with a truce and a farewell party.

I made no boasts or comparisons there, but quietly felt that big towns and thousands of skiers do spoil the runs quickly, and found a little satisfaction in the knowledge that I was going back to a place which is still unspoilt and where I could carry out a long cherished ambition to tour on ski to Jagungal instead of going there in a train.