

Sverre Andreas Kaaten

(Pronounced: Sfairder Andrayus Korten)

The Sverre Kaaten Nordic Shelter is named after this Norwegian who proved to be much more than just a ski jumper.

Born in 1908 in the town of Kongsvinger, Norway, Sverre began ski jumping at the age of five using beer barrel staves as skis. These were made by his father, so he could ski to school. At age twelve he was ski jumping with purpose-made jumping skis and doing well in competitions. In 1928 he boarded the ship “Taronga” and came to Melbourne.

During his time in Melbourne, Sverre competed in many ski jumping competitions in the Victorian mountains - Mt. Buffalo, Mt Feathertop, Mt. Buller and Mt Bogong. In 1929 on the 20th August, Sverre Kaaten established an Australian ski jumping record at Mount Saint Bernard in Victoria. He jumped a distance of 80 feet. (24.38m). This was the start of his deep connection with the development of snowsports in Australia.

In 1930, His Excellency, the Governor General directed the recognition of Sverre Kaaten as ACTING CONSUL FOR NORWAY. He was 22 years of age.

In 1931, while staying at the Hotel Kosciusko and competing in the Australian ski championships, he met a beautiful girl called Ramah Shirleigh Parker from Newcastle. They married on 13th April 1933. He and Shirleigh did not have any children but they enjoyed the company of their dachshound called “Fred”.

Sverre’s skiing contacts and successes made it easy for him to do well in business. He set up in Sydney to sell paper and cardboard all over Australia. When the Second World War broke out, he joined the Australian Forces at age 32. He requested to be a pilot but found he was too old so he joined the Tank Corps. On 30th May 1940, he was naturalised and continued to serve the war effort in Australia, never realising his dream of becoming a pilot.

After the war he reopened his paper business in Sydney, travelled to Germany, visiting mills and imported thousands of different types of paper. He purchased a home in Sydney and a racing horse called “ski jumper.

Sverre was a bit of a practical joker and once had some fun at the expense of a fellow ski competitor who was staying at the Charlotte Pass Chalet. The competitor’s girlfriend was not allowed to stay at the Chalet so the skier would run the 8 miles down to the Kosciusko Hotel “for training”. One day he returned

very tired and complained of his lack of energy. Sverre had difficulty in keeping a straight face knowing he had placed 4 bricks in the fellow's back pack!

He won many ski jump championships and set an impressive time when he skied from Kiandra to Kosciuszko. He supported the construction of the big jump at Piper's Gap but was very disappointed that ski jumping never became a serious sport in Australia.

After he finished competing, Sverre tried setting up businesses that would develop the infrastructure in Perisher. Frustrated with the red tape, he finally sold out to his friend KG Murray who went on to develop Perisher Ski Resort.

He moved into ski administration and was president of the NSW Ski Association and president of Telemark Ski Club. He moved in many social circles and was a regular in newspaper social pages. Sverre was also highly recognised internationally. His Majesty King Gustaf VI Adolf of Sweden, conferred the KNIGHT COMMANDER OF THE ROYAL ORDER OF VASA upon Sverre, awarded at Government House in Canberra on 10th June 1969.

Further recognition came in 1979 when a new triple chair lift was built in Smiggin Holes and was named the Kaaten chair.

The Sverre Kaaten Nordic Shelter

Sverre gave credit to Ross Martin for putting cross country skiing on the map in Australia, for good reason. In 1978, Ross Martin and friends (John Morgan, Ian Hample, David Biggs, Robbie Kilpinen, Ric Macready, Kore Grunnsund, Doug Thorn, Iain Macdonald, Peter Carter and John Aitken) formed a committee to build a shelter in Perisher for Nordic skiers. Sverre Kaaten was overwhelmed when he was asked if they could name the Shelter after him. The funding came from a \$40,000 grant from the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation which was matched by private donations. The list of donors who gave over \$100 can be seen on a plaque on the wall in the original section of the Shelter.

The Shelter was officially opened by Sverre and local member of the NSW parliament John Akister.

Sverre Kaaten died in 1991.

