

## SKIER OF THE YEAR — 1984 —

Neil Harrison was the unanimous choice of the judges for the 1984 Skier of the Year Award.

He is largely associated with the successful FIS events which have attracted world ranked ski teams, but his connection with the sport goes back to 1956 when he joined the North Canterbury Ski Club (now Broken River).

After serving on the committee, including a two-year term as President, Neil became the club's nominated Chairman of the Canterbury Ski Association. It was during this period that he helped develop the provinces' race training programmes, which resulted in the employment of overseas coaches such as Leo Baccajlio, Hans Hefter and Werner Hannl.

In 1977 the first FIS race was held at

### MERIT AWARD

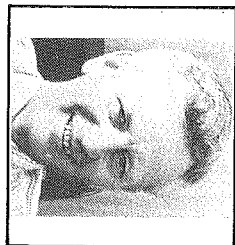
— 1984 —

Richard Johnson has had an intense involvement in NZSA affairs since he was invited to join the Racing Committee in 1976 and was elected to council the following year.

It is ironic that in 1984, when his formal ties with the association finished, the FIS event was cancelled. He was the first chairman in 1977 of the FIS Organising Committee and has been a member of all subsequent committees.

It is in this role that Richard, with his valuable FIS experience and overseas team connections, has perhaps had the most impact. Part of a strong committee chaired by his successor, Neil Harrison, the FIS Series reached a high in 1982 and 1983 when world class Northern Hemisphere teams competed at Mount Hutt.

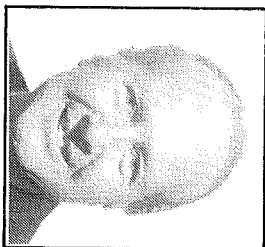
Internationally as a ski administrator, Richard has helped put New Zealand on the map. He represented the NZSA at the FIS Congress at Nice in 1979, at Tenerife in 1981 and Sydney in 1983, and has been a member of the FIS Alpine and Classification Committees since 1979.



Mount Hutt, and Neil was Secretary of both the Organising and the Race Committee.

Apart from one year, Neil has been Chairman of the Organising Committee of an event which has resulted in the regular appearance of some of the world's top skiers on our fields, and a race which has enabled this country's best to compete and gain valuable FIS points.

But Neil's work doesn't stop there. Although elected to the NZSA Council for his first term in October, 1983, he had already been a member of the Racing Sub-Committee for some years. □



Richard was also involved with New Zealand ski teams, of which his talented daughter, Fiona, was a member. In 1978, he managed the New Zealand team at the World Championships at Garmisch, and in 1980 he did the same at the Lake Placid Olympics.

Richard's expertise at this level was not confined to administration. In 1980 he became New Zealand's first international Technical Delegate and acted in this role at FIS events in Switzerland in 1980 and in Australia in 1981 and 1983.

On the "local" scene, he was chairman of the NZSA Racing Committee from November, 1977, to October, 1983; was South Island vice-president of NZSA from 1979-83; and chairman of the association's Alpine Committee in 1980 and 1981. □

## SKIING — FOR THE HELL OF IT

By John Perrin ("Mountain Scene")

**Dew droplets on the perspex windscreens sparkle in the low morning sun. Skiers limp awkwardly in their stiff plastic boots, their breath fogging in the freezing air. For most of them, this will be a new and special experience.**

Lights glow on the instrument panel. The pilot switches on. The engine whines, the blades begin to spin. Slowly at first, then more and more quickly, until they are just a blur scything through the air at nearly 400 revs a minute.

Then we're airborne! Skimming along just above the ground, turning, banking, climbing. Within minutes "civilisation" is forgotten and we're amidst spectacular mountains thousands of feet high.

We touch down on a ridge at 6500ft. It's six degrees below zero, but the sun is shining, there's not much wind, and no one seems to mind. The scenery is breathtaking — the sort that engenders clichés. Three hundred and sixty degrees of blue sky, snow-capped peaks and, far below, a patchwork of farmers' fields.

We have to wait for another load of skiers, so there's time to get to know each other a little, take photos and look around. I climb a ridge and try a few turns to warm up.

Finally, Carl, our guide, leads us to our first virgin slope. We're all excited and itching to make some nice tracks. Carl goes first. Full of optimism, I follow.

Far below another guide waits, filming us with a video camera. "Here comes an expert," he says as I start my run. I am sorry to disappoint him. I make five turns, then hit a snowdrift and execute a special stopping manoeuvre known as the "Head Plant".

The Head Plant has two principal drawbacks. One, it gives you a very stiff neck the next day, and two, it puts snow in places where snow shouldn't be, like in your mouth and down the back of your neck.

Today the snow is a little heavy and we all have trouble turning in it. Most of the party are not advanced skiers, but that doesn't matter. There are no ski-lifts, no crowds, no snow-groomers, no carparks to look at.

The alpine stillness is broken by shouts of laughter and cheering as we head downhill, then falter and roll headfirst into the soft snow.

We finally reach the helicopter and are whisked to another place. This time the snow is even more difficult to ski. The guides have named the slope "Gallipoli" and it makes casualties of us all. But slowly we're becoming veterans, and by the time we reach the top of the third and final run we all manage to perform for the video camera — if not perfectly, then at least with some semblance of control.

After three hours on the mountain, we're sunburnt, exhausted and exuberant. But all too soon it's "home time", and as we head back to Queenstown Airport the pilot treats us with a spin past the summit of the Remarkables.

We approach from behind, flying low over snow-covered slopes. Then, with peaks on either side, suddenly we hurtle into thin air. We all gasp involuntarily, then we smile as we realise we're still in one piece.

That night we head for the pub to watch the day's activities on video. The bar is packed and we huddle around the television trying to appear worldly to the skiers who rode only chairlifts today. Then, as the Head Plants start, we look the other way. □