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#100daysofchange

Generational Strength From Leading Ladies

Sue Parry, Head of Ski Patrol at Lake Mountain Alpine Resort, recalls what a great mentor her mother was and how that legacy has helped her through her self-belief in a varied career path.

“My mother was a woman before her time,” Sue reflects. “She got her licence on her eighteenth birthday. That was very unusual for women in 1943, during the war years.” Sue, thinking back, was clearly proud of her mother. “She was very hands-on. She was important in my life for showing me her strengths and encouraging me in my studies. She was ahead of her time.”

Sue started out her career as a maths teacher. “It was harder as a female science student in those days, especially if you achieved higher marks. I was given hell about getting better results than my male prac partner. I started teaching the year that they introduced equal pay for women. I wouldn’t have wanted to teach if men were paid more than I.”

Having retired early due to her skiing interest, Sue was delighted to be given an opportunity at Ski Patrol at Lake Mountain Alpine Resort in 2002. “I was the only woman on shift on many days. There were 2 women and four men back then. Now we have five girls and three blokes.”

“Some people in my early days might have thought I could not do it but were open to see what I could do. I think it’s important to have a desire to be able to do things and not just assume you can’t do it. Don’t underestimate your abilities, but also, don’t make a song and dance if you achieve something. Sometimes I surprise people because I can just get the job done.”

Sue has seen changes in her time at Lake Mountain Alpine Resort including a more pro-active risk reduction program with a pre-emptive approach to preventing possible injury scenarios. She also clearly has great pride in her team. “We have always had quality people in Ski Patrol who work in balance with the work styles of others.”

“I get a great sense of achievement when I admire the work of those I have taught. It’s what they do themselves that make them who they are. I like giving new staff a go, encouraging a cooperative work environment.”

“Gender has never been an issue except when I have to lift stuff,” Sue laughs. “Being head of Ski patrol has challenged me personally, it’s been exciting and very satisfying. So much of what we do could have a horrible ending but we want to do it properly with the best result.”

“There has been no difference between how I was treated when I first started and now, I just have more confidence now.”

When asked about what challenges the job presents Sue explained, “To see if I have the physical strength and the empathy required to do the job well. But, overall, the ease at which we can help people here [Ski Patrol], get them sorted [with first aid] and back to having fun is very satisfying.”

“I believe setting an encouraging example for our guests and younger workers is an important part of our role as managers and just as people, and I hope that something I do has an impact on someone else’s confidence and life like my mother did for me. It’s like passing on a bit of her legacy.”

An article for #100daysofchange by Rosemary O’Reilly.

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