

WORDS BY IAN BURRELL

## HOW DID A COAT ONCE ONLY LOVED BY RURAL AIRLINE WORKERS BECOME THE WORLD'S **MUST-HAVE** WINTER JACKET?

### *The dizzying flight of Canada Goose*

Up on the slopes at Val d'Isère or Verbier, they probably don't spend an awful lot of time dwelling on the humble circumstances of the Hutterites, living in their colonies on the exposed prairies of western Canada.

And yet it is to this transitory Anabaptist community – which has spent 400 years fleeing a succession of persecutors on an exodus from Moravia in Eastern Europe to the uplands of Alberta and Manitoba – that many of the best-clad in this winter's ski resorts will owe their snugness. The Hutterites do lots of business with Canada Goose.

A company that started out providing practical outerwear to those working in or around the Arctic Circle, Canada Goose has grown to become fashionable not just among skiers and climbers, but with the urban smart set from Milan to Tokyo.

The brand's essential component is the Hutterite down which is found in every Canada Goose jacket. The Anabaptists raise large, free-range herds of geese and ducks in the prairie fields and sell the down as well as the meat. Each ounce of down has some two million filaments of

fluff that interlock, trapping the pockets of still air which provide insulation. The finest down, many would say, emanates from a mature Hutterite goose.

During the past few winters, Canada Goose's distinctive parkas, with their coyote fur-lined hoods, have become increasingly popular, in spite of the fact that many of its products sell for close to £1,000. Annual revenues have grown from £2.7m in 2001 to £81m in 2013.

The expansion of Canada Goose from a little-known family business to a globally-recognised and highly-coveted clothing label is largely the result of the vision of one man: Dani Reiss.

He sits down amid clothes rails groaning with Canada Goose jackets in the marketing offices the company has recently opened behind London's Oxford Street to pursue further European growth. Despite his transformational role, Reiss, aged 40, is no outsider. He was five years old when his father first brought him to the three-storey factory in downtown Toronto to have his hair ruffled by the women stitching together the hardwearing coats. "All the ladies,

the sewers, were like family," he says. "Some still work for Canada Goose and they are like my grandparents."

As a high-school student, Reiss spent each summer holiday working at the factory. "I was in packing, finishing and the shipping department, I was in reception and typed letters, and I was in the down-filling room filling jackets with down," he says. "I did every job except for sewing – I still don't know how to operate a sewing machine."

And yet, for all this practical experience, Reiss harboured no ambition to take the reins at a business that his grandfather had founded in 1957, before he was born. In fact, as a teenager he wouldn't even put on the "functional, utilitarian and northern" garments. His parents "tried to get me to wear them as a kid [but] I wanted to wear denim jackets". Canada Goose was so clearly a product for more austere, distant climes that it didn't even have a retail outlet in its hometown.

"The business was definitely in decline and I was not attracted to it. My parents told me, 'Whatever you do, don't do this, because the clothing industry →

