

the bottom of the knoll towards the slide area, disappearing from view. D.W. immediately followed his tracks. At the bottom of the knoll the tracks disappeared. The second avalanche was not heard from D.W.'s position. However, on the right side of the original slide, the two remaining patrolmen, B.H. and D.K., observed the slide and watched S.U. as he was swept away by it.

S.U. did not have his pole straps on his wrists, but did have safety straps on his skis. The snow hit him extremely hard, making it difficult to regain any control. He managed to free himself from his equipment and started swimming with the slide. He credits this "swimming" motion with saving his life. He was thus able to get a maximum amount of air and landed in an upright, sitting position. The patrolman was carried approximately 1,500 feet before being deposited near the top of the deposition zone of the first avalanche.

D.K. was the first to reach the injured patrolman. He was immediately removed to the right side of the slide path and placed out of danger of other possible slides. First Aid was administered and a toboggan called for. S.U. suffered a concussion, the loss of some front teeth, and slight head and shoulder abrasions. His equipment was found spread throughout the slide path: One glove was discovered just below where he entered the slide; one ski pole was found a little further down, caught in a tree; the second pole was located toward the bottom of the slide, about 25 feet above the spot where the skis were recovered.

At the patrol room, the secondary slide had been observed. A hasty party was immediately dispatched, followed by a main party equipped with probes, snow shovels and other equipment, to make a thorough search for any possible victims. The main party was sent back, however, when they received word that the situation was under control, and that the victim was on his way out.

AVALANCHE DATA

The main avalanche, set off by explosives, occurred in a concave bowl. The entire bowl apparently did not slide. An area approximately 50 feet wide remained hanging. According to S.U., as he entered the bowl about 50 feet below the main fracture line, a new fracture was caused by his weight and the entire area slid out, taking him with it. The second slide made its own path for about 75 feet, then broke out onto the main slide path for the rest of the way down the mountain. There seems to have existed a large layer of depth hoar on top of an ice layer. This accounts for the second slide moving so fast, the ice layer giving it an excellent sliding surface. The lapse of time from start to finish of the second slide was approximately five to ten seconds.

COMMENTS

The chance of unstable snow being left hanging adjacent to a newly-fallen avalanche is particularly good in a depth hoar situation. This demands care when working around such slides, especially in the case of rescue operations.