

packs and Pieps rescue transceivers. They planned to hike up the ridge, and they anticipated a long powder run down the north-facing slopes of Day's Fork drainage, eventually reaching the Big Cottonwood Canyon road.

On the south-facing slope above Alta, they found damp and sticky snow. It began snowing as they neared the ridge, and strong west winds continued to blow. They dropped over the ridge into the area they planned to ski but paused first to dig a snowpit to check stability. They dug a 4-foot pit to the ground and found 6-12 inches of developing depth hoar at the ground, 30 inches of equi-temperature snow, and 6 inches of new snow on top. The men decided it was stable enough to ski.

Although Day's Fork is an avalanche area, it is frequently skied by local powder seekers. Small islands of trees offer limited protection from slides.

Murphy started downhill at about 1530 and stopped by a group of trees. Daum and Holland caught up with him, and all three men continued their run downhill. Murphy and Daum stopped again on the west side of the bowl. Holland stopped in the center, slightly above the others. Suddenly, Murphy and Daum saw the fracture as it broke at the top of the bowl. They shouted a warning to Holland and tried to ski out to the side. Murphy saw the fracture wrap around the entire bowl and knew there would be no escape. He grabbed a tree and hung on tight as the avalanche came down with a gentle roar on the three victims.

It hit Holland first. He recalled the experience: "They shouted and I looked over my shoulder and saw it. The air blast hit me and I remember thinking, 'this is not too bad.' Then the slide engulfed me completely. I remember being pushed around