

The search resumed on Friday. Avalanche conditions kept searchers out of April Bowl, where friends expected Sande to ski. Searchers were able to rule out other areas using avalanche dogs. Conditions improved on Saturday, and 120 people looked for Sande to no avail. After another day of fruitless searching on Sunday, November 6, authorities suspended the effort.

The next spring, rangers “figured it was a matter of time before someone stumbled upon him.”⁵ On the morning of July 4, a skier “came across Sande’s body in April Bowl.”⁶ Sandy’s body was partially covered in snow. He was wearing his skis, and the skins were still attached to his skis. About 100 yards away were blue wands that marked an area searched in the days after he disappeared. Cloudy weather prevented a helicopter from recovering his body, so volunteers carried him out on foot.

**In avalanche
runout**

AVALANCHE DATA

No details about the event were available.

COMMENTS

It appears, from the scarce details available for this accident, that Sande was climbing alone in stormy weather and rising avalanche danger without an avalanche transceiver but with the time constraint of returning to Anchorage for a class. Countless backcountry tourers have put themselves in similar situations with no serious consequences. Sande was not so lucky.

**No rescue
equipment**

SILVER FOX, SNOWBIRD SKI RESORT, UTAH | November 7, 1994

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One backcountry skier caught, partially buried-critical, and killed. He was skiing solo prior to the resort opening.

SITE

Snowbird Ski Resort is located in Little Cottonwood Canyon, in the Wasatch Range southeast of Salt Lake City. Upper Silver Fox is a ski run off the summit of Hidden Peak, and generally runs under the Aerial Tram. The resort had not yet opened for the season at the time of this accident.

WEATHER AND SNOWPACK SUMMARY

Sunday, November 7 was stormy, with snow falling and strong winds drifting it.

ACCIDENT SUMMARY

Jeff Waugh (27) had worked several winters as a seasonal employee at Snowbird Ski Resort.⁷ He liked to ski “radical places [and] extreme”⁸ terrain. He had been hiking and skiing the familiar terrain within the ski area boundary for several weeks in October. On November 7, he hiked to the ridge where the tram ends.

Another group of backcountry skiers talked to Waugh around 13:00. They invited him to join their group and ski with them because snow conditions were avalanche prone. “Avalanches are just a matter of luck anyway,” Waugh reportedly said as he declined their offer.⁹ Waugh probably triggered the avalanche shortly after that conversation.

**Traveling
alone**

RESCUE SUMMARY

The search for Waugh began on Monday, November 8, after his roommate reported him missing. Searchers from Snowbird Ski Patrol found the hood of his jacket on the surface of the avalanche debris around 10:00. Waugh was buried face-down. He had suffered significant trauma when the avalanche ran over rocks and through trees.

AVALANCHE DATA

The avalanche Waugh triggered was “sizable”¹⁰ and involved several starting zones. The avalanche in total was about 300 feet wide, and the slab was one to three feet deep.

COMMENTS

Snowbird Ski Resort had yet to open for the season. No avalanche mitigation had been conducted. It was a backcountry snowpack, despite being familiar, in-bounds terrain. In avalanche accidents before ski areas open for the season, or after they stop operations in the spring, the victim often brings an “inbounds attitude” to the unmitigated, backcountry snowpack. As avalanche forecaster Tim Kimbrough put it:

One of the problems is early season enthusiasm. People really aren’t thinking avalanches. ...in reality, early season conditions are often hazardous...so we frequently have serious avalanche potential before people are quite ready for it. But they are ready to go skiing, and the two don’t match up that well.¹¹

**“Red flag”
indications
of danger**

Waugh had skied the area several times in the weeks prior, when the snowpack was more stable. That changed the day of the avalanche, with the snowfall and blowing snow. Waugh’s assessment, if he did one at all, did not appear to change to match the conditions.

If accurate, Waugh’s statement about avalanches being a matter of luck shows either false bravado and little understanding of avalanches, or a very high risk tolerance. Natural avalanches were visible in the area. In similar terrain just upvalley, skiers triggered and were injured in an avalanche. Very little luck was involved in avoiding—or triggering—avalanches that day.

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MISSION RIDGE SKI AREA, WASHINGTON | December 17,

1994

One ski patroller caught and buried; died after rescue. Second ski patroller caught and partially buried in a secondary avalanche.

SITE

Mission Ridge Ski Area is on the eastern side of the Cascade Range, 12 miles southwest of Wenatchee, Washington. Microwave Ridge—and the control route the patrollers were on—runs east from the top of Chair 3 towards Bowl 4.

WEATHER AND SNOWPACK SUMMARY

The early season created a weak snowpack over much of the Cascades. Warm weather in late November created a crust. Surface hoar formed on top of a thin layer of snow covering the crust. A storm began on December 15 and buried the surface hoar and crust layers under very dense new snow.