

# Hikers find body of missing snowboarder

BY JUSTIN HILL  
UTAH VALEY STAFF

The Newbury family finally has closure.

Hikers found the body of Rod Newbury, 20, of Pleasant Grove, ending a search that involved more than 7,000 man-hours in search of three snowboarders killed in a series of avalanches on Dec. 26 in the Aspen Grove area of Provo Canyon. Newbury was the last of the three missing men.

The discovery of his body Sunday ended daily visits to the Aspen Grove area by search crews and family members.

It was an Easter home-

coming for a man born on Christmas.

A group of students from Brigham Young University and Utah Valley State College found Newbury's body around 4 p.m. under 2 to 3 feet of snow in a grove of trees bowled over by the avalanche, said Utah County Sheriff's Sgt. Tom Hodgson.

Funeral arrangements for Newbury had not been set Sunday night. The family was asking that in lieu of flowers donations be made to a trust fund at Zions Bank in Newbury's name.

The money will be used for his son, who will be born in July.

# Missing snowboarder's body found

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group noticed a glove buried in the snow. That led to the discovery of Newbury's body, about 90 feet away from where Merz was found last week and 1,750 feet from where the first of several waves of snow struck a group of snowboarders on Dec. 26.

The discovery brought to an end a search that lasted more than three months and involved hundreds of volunteers in an estimated 7,000 accumulated hours of searching, sometimes in hazardous conditions.

Most of all, it brought closure to a family that has lived for the last 107 days with the near certain knowledge of Newbury's death. "You know, she's very



The Salt Lake Tribune

relieved," family spokesperson Craig Knight said of Newbury's mother, Vae Graham. "You certainly couldn't describe it as happy, but it's a positive thing. She just wants to move on."

Now, Knight said, the family can say goodbye, plan a funeral and prepare with joy for the arrival of Newbury's son, due to be born in July.

Roberts, a student at Utah Valley State College, said he and his college friends had no intention of finding a body when they began their Easter Sunday hike.

"But I'm glad we found him," he said. "I'm glad for the family."

The discovery came at about 3:30 p.m., as the group of six was standing at the base of the slide and BYU student Nick Hatch spotted the end of a glove beneath a fallen tree. Hatch pulled on the glove, revealing a frozen hand. The friends, knowing immediately what they had found, returned to the trailhead and called 911.

Officials had hoped Wednesday's discovery of Merz's body meant they were close to ending their mission. They had spent the last several days scouring the nearby snow for any sign of the final missing snowboarder.

Hoping to capitalize on warmer weather and snow-melting rain, authorities have been searching the area twice a day recently.

"We actually had searchers in that very spot just this morning," Utah County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Tom Hodgson said.

It has been no easy task. Vast terrain and poor weather conditions made the quest difficult. Efforts were hampered by hard-frozen snow, in depths topping the length of 30-foot probe poles. At the peak of the search, near-continuous snowfall created **avalanche** danger.

And even with a melt-off of about 2 feet in recent weeks, searchers had little way of knowing where to probe — Herbert's body was located 1,000 feet from where the **avalanche** hit the group, Merz was carried more than 1,700 feet. Hodgson said Newbury's body had moved about 1,750 feet.

Though officials were certain they had recovered Newbury — some of the 20-year-old's personal effects were located near the body — protocol called for an official identification by the family.

"They came as a family unit," Hodgson said. "It was an emotional time."

"Obviously, they have Rod back home now, and they are very pleased, but now the reality of him being gone is also setting in."

Hodgson said he and the many others who have contributed to the search are experiencing some similar emotions.

"Even for the searchers, this

is somewhat bittersweet," he said. "In an event like this, you become very attached to the family members and you want to report good news to them."

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Tribune reporter Mark Edgington contributed to this report.

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# Third missing snowboarder's body is found

BY MATTHEW D. LAPLANTE  
*The Salt Lake Tribune*

The placard on the makeshift memorial speaks of hope, miracles and love eternal. But it was just one phrase that caught Jesse



**Rod Newbury**

Roberts' attention as he and a group of friends passed the marker at the Aspen Grove trailhead.

"We will find you," it promised.

The vow had been fulfilled for Mike Hebert on Dec. 28, two days after a series of avalanches in Provo Canyon killed him and two friends. It was fulfilled for Adam Merz on Wednesday when searchers discovered his body in a ravine under a covering of fallen tree limbs.

And it was fulfilled Sunday for 20-year-old Rod Newbury, when a member of Roberts'

# Snowboarder

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of the deadly avalanche during a memorial service in January remained there Sunday.

"We're doing good," Rigby said. "The ups and downs are now over."

Funeral arrangements for Newbury had not been set Sunday night. The family was

asking that in lieu of flowers donations be made to a trust fund at Zions Bank in Newbury's name.

The money will be used for his son, who will be born in July.

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# Hikers find body of missing snowboarder

*Sister: 'It's over. We found him. We're bringing him home.'*

**Justin Hill**

THE DAILY HERALD

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than 7,000 man-hours in search of three snowboarders killed in a series of avalanches on Dec. 26 in the Aspen Grove area of Provo Canyon. Newbury was the last of the three missing men.

The discovery of his body Sunday ended daily visits to the Aspen Grove area by search crews and family members. The families of all three snowboarders were at the site Sunday night to finally bring the whole thing to a close, said Wendie Rigby, Newbury's sister.

"It's over. We found him. We're bringing him home," she said.

It was an Easter homecoming for a man born on Christmas.

A group of hikers from Brigham Young University and Utah Valley State College found Newbury's body around 4 p.m. under 2½ to 3 feet of snow in a grove of trees bowled over by the avalanche, said Utah County Sheriff's Sgt. Tom Hodgson. One of the students found what appeared to be a glove protruding from under a



**Rod Newbury**

tree, and they contacted authorities.

Search and rescue personnel had to cut down tree branches to get Newbury's body from the snow.

He was found 90 feet northwest of where search crews found the body of his friend Adam Merz, 18, of Orem on Wednesday.

The third snowboarder, Michael Hebert, 19, of Orem was found two days after the avalanche.

Hours before Newbury's body was found, around 32 people volunteered part of their Easter — some with their families — searching for Newbury,

even though they hadn't been officially called out to the site.

"All of us felt like we had unfinished business, and we wanted to go up there and finish it," Hodgson said, calling the discovery of Newbury's body "bittersweet." "You see these families on a daily basis. ... They're good people, and you want to help bring their family members back to them."

Rigby said her family can't thank search and rescue crews enough for their work. A plaque placed at the site

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