

After arising at 0415, they started two hours later, piling into a snowcat at Timberline Lodge to be transported above the Palmer chairlift to 2700 meters. This cuts the 6½ kilometer distance from the lodge to the summit by more than half.

Because most members of the group were on their first climb, they went slowly, stopping to practice self-arrest techniques out of the wind behind Crater Rock.

They quickly learned that Mount Hood is not to be taken lightly. Skiing on the slopes lower down bears no resemblance to skiing on those up above. There is no grooming, no ski patrol and no place to get out of the elements.

Because of the descent troubles, they were fortunate that the weather remained mild and the wind subsided. Unexpected complications could have spelled disaster.

They finally arrived at the lodge at 1820, four hours later than planned. By then the parties were over but just being safe was celebration enough. (Source: Terry Richard, *The Oregonian*, April 30, 1982)

AVALANCHE, CLIMBING ROPED

Oregon, Mount Hood

On Monday, May 24, 1982, a Mazama climbing party left Timberline Lodge (2000 meters) at 0030 for a climb of the Leuthold Couloir Route. The group consisted of leader Bob Williams (34), assistant leader Barry Wright (38), Ray Sheldon (49), Matt Nauman (34), Greg Parsons (34), Alan Peterson (43), Bill Sack (47), Susan Sack (44), and Dennis Stevens (32). Parsons, who had worked an unscheduled extra shift on Sunday, decided to turn back at the 2300-meter level. The remaining climbers reached Illumination Saddle (3000 meters) at dawn; here, they formed three rope teams for the crossing of the Reid Glacier and the ascent up the couloir through the "hourglass."

The weather was fair and, during the crossing of the upper part of Reid Glacier, the leader noted some avalanche debris from the previous day. Once into the hourglass, there was a continuous barrage of small ice pellets and the air temperature began to warm considerably. About 0700, 25 meters into the actual chute of the hourglass, Williams decided to turn the party back.

The last and lowest rope team, consisting of Wright, B. Sack and Nauman, had retreated about one rope length and was crossing an avalanche runnel about two meters wide in which a small amount of debris was running. The amount of debris increased during the crossing and Sack, who was in the middle, was swept off his feet. Wright and Nauman attempted to self-arrest but were pulled off the slope by the force of Sack falling with the avalanche. The three tumbled with the avalanche, approximately 300 meters, before being deposited at the base of the slope. Nauman was on top of the snow and was able to check on Sack who was also on top of the snow but was totally tangled in rope and unable to move. Wright was buried except for his face and right shoulder. As soon as Nauman determined that Sack was not seriously injured, he began to dig Wright out.

The rest of the party descended and untangled Sack, moving him to a safer location; they then finished digging Wright out. After moving the party to a safe location, Williams and Stevens returned to the accident site to retrieve equipment. There was another avalanche but Stevens was able to escape from its path by jumping under the lip of a bergschrund.

After they rejoined the rest of the party, it was determined that the injured would be able to walk out. The party roped up, returned to Illumination Saddle and then walked down to the top of the Palmer Ski Lift (2850 meters). Peterson, Sheldon and Stevens hiked to Timberline. The injured and the remaining members of the party were transported to Timberline on the ski lifts.

Wright was hospitalized and treated for three fractures of the right shoulder; Nauman was treated for a puncture wound in his right thigh, a sprained right knee and damage to the joint lining in his left knee; Sack was treated for a torn knee ligament. (Source: Dick Miller, Portland Unit of Mountain Rescue and Safety Council of Oregon)

Analysis

In July, an informal critique of the accident was held by the Directors of the Portland Unit of Mountain Rescue and Safety Council of Oregon with several of the climbers participating. The critique was conducted because of concern over the increase in avalanche-related accidents on this route—at least three in 1982, one resulting in a fatality. (See following report.) One observation came out of the critique which the Directors felt deserved consideration by climbers attempting this route. In this accident, the climbers themselves were not directly hit by the avalanche. Rather, their ropes became caught in the avalanche; the rope teams were then “sucked into” the debris and carried down the mountain. Had the party not been roped in the areas of the climb that were prone to icefall, rockfall, and avalanche, it is possible, if not probable, that the climbers might have been able to avoid being hit.

On the usual approach to this route, glacier travel is encountered from Illumination Saddle to the bergschrund of Reid Glacier, several hundred feet below the hourglass. Above the bergschrund, the route consists of moderately steep snow slopes. Except in ideal conditions, these slopes are subject to icefall, rockfall and avalanche. The route should be attempted only by experienced climbers who are competent in self-belay and self-arrest with an ice ax. Once past the Reid Glacier bergschrund, parties should seriously consider the choice between the “security” of roped climbing and the possibility of the rope becoming a “suicide pact.” And then, there are certainly those icy conditions in which roped climbing would be more appropriate, with the additional protection of belays, pickets and/or other protecting anchors. (Source: Dick Miller, Portland Unit of Mountain Rescue and Safety Council of Oregon)

AVALANCHE, UNSTABLE CONDITIONS, UNSAFE POSITION Oregon, Mount Hood

On June 20, 1982, an avalanche struck three members of a climbing group at the 3150-meter level of Mount Hood, killing Hugh Hake (45) and injuring Charles Hysmith (31) and Dean Tehee (26).

The avalanche victims were part of a seven-member climbing party from the Ptarmigans, a Vancouver (Washington) club.

One of the climbers, David Fielder (34) of Vancouver, said the party began its ascent around midnight with nine people. Two members of the party decided not to complete the ascent and split off from the group around dawn.