



## AAC Publications

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### Long Skiing Fall into Fumarole

Oregon, Mt Hood, South Side

**On June 18, Scott Miller, a 25-year-old skier from Utah, missed a turn while descending from the summit and took a long fall that ended in a fumarole below.** He had planned to ski Mt. Hood and Mt. Shasta en route to a job posting in Northern California. After a rapid climb to the summit via the Pearly Gates, Miller chose Old Chute for his descent. It looked steep and he could feel the snow was hardpacked, but it seemed within his ability.

After starting down by side-slipping, he launched a jump turn but lost his edges on the icy snow and began to slide. Miller slid and tumbled down the chute, hitting some rocks, and fell into an open fumarole, a crevasse-like opening in the snow and ice through which volcanic gases emerge.

Luckily, onlookers had seen his fall and ran over to the fumarole from the Hogs-back. One of these was Win Van Pelt, who had witnessed the skier flying down toward the fumarole. Van Pelt yelled down and was able to confirm Miller was alive and able to move. The skier tried to climb out of the fumarole, but slipped and dropped in even further. Van Pelt confirmed the skier was carrying a harness and asked him to put it on, and then he and his partner rigged a 3:1 haul system and extracted him.

Very fortunately, Miller had only minor injuries, and after assessment he was able to put on his crampons and walk down the mountain with Van Pelt and his partner accompanying him.

### ANALYSIS

Miller wrote: "It's a big step to the more advanced lines on the volcanoes. Don't underestimate a slope looking down from the top, and don't overestimate your ability to ski something just because you've been around [similar slopes] before in controlled environments. Had I spent more time researching, I would have known this [part of the] mountain doesn't get enough sun to ski until late afternoon," when the snow surface softens. "In summary, I got lucky.... I'm an inexperienced climber with a lot to learn still. I got lucky my inexperience didn't get me severely hurt or get me killed." (Sources: Reports by Scott Miller and Win Van Pelt. Miller was interviewed about this incident for Episode 61 of the Sharp End Podcast.)

**SKI FATALITY ON MT. HOOD:** On February 25, an experienced 47-year-old mountaineer was skiing alone in the Illumination Saddle area after summiting Mt. Hood, and was discovered around noon after an apparent fall. He succumbed to his injuries. The skiing conditions on the mountain were difficult and dangerous at the time, with very large ice "chickenhead" formations covering the slopes.

**Images**

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