

April 12, 1997

Well, today was my last ski day for this season, and it was quite a day! The morning was fairly cold and I found decent snow. The new owners were hovering around in a large helicopter in the morning (alot of big construction is going to begin this summer). Around noon it started to warm up alot more and soften things up, but the North Backcountry wasn't GREAT, so I was going to leave a little early. But I decided to make one last run for the season from the very top of Powder Bowl. Well, I missed Powder Bowl and ended up joining a group of people out into the South Backcountry. It was quite a hike, which included climbing vertically up hard-packed snow along rock cliffs, making snow foot steps. We hiked across two mountain peaks to the "King's Throne" (its been several years since I last climbed out to the South Back). From the King I could clearly see Mt. Rainier, Mt. St. Helens, Mt. Adams (to the south), and Mt. Baker (to the north)! We then skied down a run next to "Brain Damage" that had very good conditions and well worth the climb.

I then decided to make one last run (again) down Powder Bowl. Now realize that today's conditions are hard-packed with soft snow (spring skiing), and very fast. Powder Bowl is a VERY steep (near vertical at the top), mostly open bowl with almost always good conditions (hence the name). It is the highest lift-accessible point at Crystal (7000 ft.). There is a group of rock and small trees separating the shoot I was headed down and the bigger bowl. I entered the shoot from the very top (steepest part) by cutting across to get to the center. Well, I entered a little too high where it had vertical ice with grooves. I picked up too much speed and caught a groove that took my ski and sent me DOWN. It is somewhat of a blur, but I think I was feet first initially. Then I got spun around head/hands first picking up alot of speed and not able to stop. I was able to maneuver around feet first, but the speed was too fast and still couldn't stop. Half way down the mountain I finally created enough friction and snow to stop. I took off my snow covered sun glasses (which I'm surprised didn't come off) and saw that everyone in the bowl had stopped and was watching me. My ski was delayed and came flying past me and fortunately nosed-in and stopped a short distance below me. Another skier brought me my pole and checked if I was alright. I then had to carefully maneuver down the steep slope to my other ski. I missed most of the good skiing on the top half! That was the worst and most terrifying tumble I can remember - when I was falling, I didn't know when I would ever stop and I thought for sure I was going to end up in the hospital! I came out of it with just a slightly cut ear (which I didn't even notice until I was driving home). That was scarier than the few times we got stuck on top of high cliffs with potential avalanche risk. Quite the last ski day for the season! And it ended up being a beautiful day.

Now it is Windsurfing Season!!