

MEMORANDUM OF INTERVIEW

Subject: Craig Bigler  
Address: 550 Mtn View Drive  
Moab, Utah 84532  
Date of Interview: February 13, 1992  
Time: 12:25 P.M.  
Regarding: Accident: Gold Basin Avalanche

On the above date and time myself, U.S. Forest Service Law Enforcement Officer Evan K. Lowry and Forest Engineer Aaron Howe conducted an interview with Craig Bigler. The interview took place at Geyser Pass parking lot and trailhead Section 4, T27S, R24E, SLM located on the Moab Ranger District, Manti-La Sal National Forest.

Craig Bigler was one of six persons who were caught in an avalanche accident in the Gold Basin area of the Moab District on February 12, 1992.

Bigler explained the purpose of the trip on February 12, 1992. He stated that Mark Yates who was the Avalanche Forecaster for the La Sal Mountains was checking conditions in the area. Bigler stated that himself, Maribel Loveridge, Bill Turk, Jeremy Hopkins, and Steve Meleski accompanied Mark to observe conditions and enjoy a day of skiing.

Bigler stated that they left the parking lot/trailhead at approximately 10:30 a.m. They then skied up the trail to Laurel Ridge, referred to as the Laurel Hiway. He stated they continued up the ridge. He stated that their observations of snow conditions confirmed their belief that the area was secure. They then skied down into Gold Basin and continued up the basin. They stopped and ate lunch at approximately 1:30 p.m. After eating lunch they continued up the basin until approximately 2:30. Bigler stated that they were in the Turk Mountain cirque with slopes of approximately 30 degrees when the slide released above them from slopes of 40+ degrees. He said it had been their intention to dig a pit to test conditions.

In response to questions Bigler stated that this was a normal size group (6) when they were skiing and that if conditions are believed hazardous only one or two persons would check an area. Bigler stated that he does assist Mark in the forecasting and was paid for his assistance by Mark. He said all other individuals were experienced backcountry skiers who were taking the opportunity to ski. He stated that this seemed to be a typical day and all things seemed normal and in fact seemed less hazardous than some other days. At the time of

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the accident they were stopped discussing whether they should continue or not. Weather conditions were mostly sunny, comparatively warm, and no wind where they were. He stated that there may have been southwest winds on the ridge tops as had been for the past two days. He said there had been three small storms in in the past few days with accumulations of approximately 7-8 inches. He said Mark's charts would show actual amounts. He said they had noticed no recent slide activity other than in Tele Gold on southwest slope. This was where they would normally expect activity in a chute area of approximately 50 degrees.

Other activities caused termination of the interview at this time and we told Craig Bigler that we would talk to him later about the accident.

EVAN K. LOWRY,  
Law Enforcement Officer