

May 10, 2010

Dear Linvilles,

We have never met. I knew Mikee through Nick whom I went to high school with. Nick and I had several adventures through the years, he is one of my closest friends. I was with Nick, Matt, and Mikee while backpacking in southern Utah. I was also part of the ski trip crew with Mikee on his final days.

There are 2 things about Mikee that I will never forget: his ability to recall jokes and his willingness to have an adventure. If conversation lulled for a moment, Mikee could always pull out a joke and keep the mood light. I once found myself repeating a joke out of the news paper several times just so I would have a joke of my own to share the next time I ran in to Mikee. Our crossing paths was always a thing I anticipated because it usually meant that we were on our way to ski or climb or hike, all passions we shared. Mikee was an ideal travel partner because he brought energy to everything we did.

The night before the accident I sat with the group as we had a dinner of pasta with merinera/alfredo sauce mixed, "pink sauce" as Mikee called it. We sat around the table and drank tea and whiskey and reminisced about the stellar powder turns we made earlier that day. I remember Mikee commenting that this was probably the best ski trip of his life. I thought to myself what it would take for a trip to be the best of ones life. We had perfect weather, a modest and warm hut, delicious food, and good friends to share it with. This was a perfect trip and it filled all of us with a feeling of contentment. We walked the high road to a place that was beautiful and immense and brimming with the challenges that made us feel most alive.

On the morning of the accident sky was blue and clear. The mood was playful as we skinned up the ridge until we reached a chute that was worthy of skiing after the effort of a 60 minute climb. Matt tested the stability of the snow as we all prepared to ski the chute. Mikee called to ski 2nd after Matt and I was relieved because I was intimidated of the entry to the chute. The feeling of standing on top of a run and preparing to ski is like nothing else; the tension is palpable, everything is checked twice and yet the million variables remain in the back of your mind soaking in nervousness until the moment when you finally leave the ridge behind and ski with every bit of your soul. I took this photo as Mikee stood at the entry of the chute before his final run.

Mikee did not suffer. As we reached the place where Mikee had come to rest, he was not conscious. We began first aid. When his breathing ceased, we continued CPR for over an hour while trying to coordinate with search and rescue our location. We did everything that we could to save your sons life. The injuries were too severe and the location was too remote, there was nothing we could do. We stayed with the body and assisted with the evacuation once a helicopter arrived, four hours after the accident.

I want to tell you how deeply sorry I am for the loss of Mikee. As skiers, we all hit rocks and we all take tumbles. Mike hit the one rock in the one terribly wrong spot that caused his tumble. I have spent the last few days thinking what we could have done, what could have been done differently that would still afford us your sons company. Today, I realized that it is impossible to control all the risks in life. You can't stop accidents from happening. What you can do is this: fill your life with beauty. Stack and cram and stuff as much of the good things into your life and take that love with you everywhere you go. This was how Mikee lived. He died doing something he loved with his heart filled with passion for living. I will miss Mikee. I will never forget the day he died, but even more I will never forget how he lived.



ERIC DUCKERT