

READING MONTY ATWATER

The inventor of the Avalauncher was also an accomplished author
By John Brennan

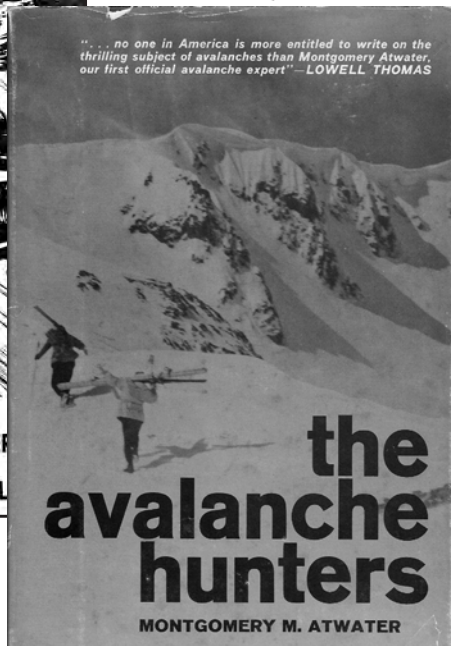
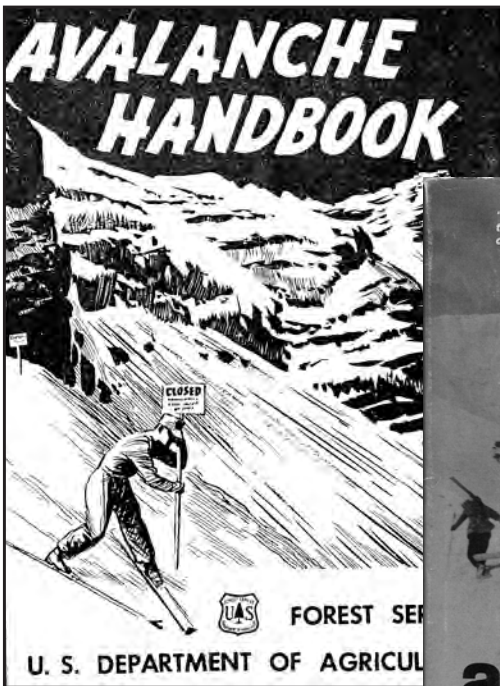
For well over a half a century, Monty Atwater has been recognized as a pioneer in the field of avalanche safety, mitigation and education in North America. What the casual observer may overlook though, is that Atwater was a prolific writer of both fiction and non-fiction books. As this year marks the 50th anniversary of Atwater’s key involvement with the avalanche control for Squaw Valley’s 1960 Olympics (not to mention this year’s ISSW at the same location) I felt I had to elaborate on his literary achievements.

Atwater graduated from Harvard in 1926 with a degree in English Literature. A chronological list of his books can be seen in the sidebar. Besides his books, there are an almost innumerable number of articles that Atwater also published. What I find particularly interesting is the number of fiction books that he wrote during his career as an avalanche specialist. His fiction writings delve into outdoor specialties such as forest fire fighters, snow rangers and ranging cattlemen—trades that Atwater not only knew well but also lived at various times.

While all of these books hold interest for Atwater devotees, some are particularly tricky, if not pricy to track down. While most Atwater books can be found through rare book web sites such as Biblio for under \$30, I paid almost ten times that for the Flaming Forest. Fortunately I picked up almost exactly that amount for writing a piece on Atwater for an industry periodical—it was destiny!

My final and most lengthy search was for the 1949 Alta Avalanche Studies—the precursor to the 1953 Avalanche Handbook (a piece of work that has been updated periodically to the present time). When I tracked down the piece in the National Agricultural Library they found the manuscript significant enough to warrant digitizing it and making it available for all. Feel free to contact me for help in your quest to find these works. Happy reading!

>>John Brennan is a patroller at Snowmass Ski Area in Colorado and a self-proclaimed Monty Atwater fan. He can be reached at jb@avalanchemitigationservices.com



Monty Atwater’s Library:

Non-Fiction

- *Ski with Sverre: Deep Snow and Packed Slope Ski Technique* (1947, with Sverre Engen)
- *Alta Avalanche Studies* (1949)
- *Avalanche Handbook* (1953)
- *The Avalanche Hunters* (1968)

Fiction

- *Government Hunter* (1940)
- *Flaming Forest* (1941)
- *Ski Patrol* (1943)
- *Hank Winton: Smokechaser* (1947)
- *Smoke Patrol* (1949)
- *Rustlers on the High Range* (1952)
- *Cattle Dog* (1954)
- *The Trouble Hunters* (1956)
- *The Ski Lodge Mystery* (1959)
- *Snow Rangers of the Andes* (1967)
- *The Forest Rangers* (1969)

