

submissions

- Seen any good avalanches lately?
- Got some gossip for the other snow nerds?
- Developing new tools or ideas?
- Learn something from an accident investigation?
- Send photos of a crown, of avalanche workers plowing roads, throwing bombs, teaching classes, or digging holes in the snow.
- Pass on some industry news.
- Tell us about a particularly tricky spot of terrain.

Write it up; send it to us.

The *Avalanche Review* is only as good as the material you send: articles, stories, queries, papers, photos. Submissions guidelines available upon request.



SUBMISSION DEADLINES

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Vol. 27, Issue 1	08/01/08

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mailbag

To the Editor:
From: John Brennan
Re: David Sly's Avalauncher piece in TAR 25/4

While researching the *Evolution of the Avalauncher* article that was printed in your journal, I came away with a great deal of knowledge on the subject. As a result, I was quite disappointed to read Dave Sly's recent piece and find numerous occasions where he misleads the reader. While I applaud CIL/Orion's dedication to the avalanche community, I felt compelled to forward some hard facts.

When Dave tells the reader, "CIL/Orion and the Austin Powder Company make and design all parts of the Stubby, allowing for quality control that was lacking in the past," the reader is obviously unaware that Dave is referring to only the plastic body and tail fin of their projectile system. It misleads the reader because the: arming disk, arming disk clip, spacer washer, rivet, arming wire, magnet, magnet anvil, striker, flight safety pin, ejector spring, ejector spring washer, transport safety pin, pull ring, primer ferrule, and the nose cone of the Stubby assembly are all items that Pete Peters of Avalanche Control Systems orders and prepares himself.

Additionally, despite Dave's derogatory connotations to anything "homemade," the previously mentioned componentry of the Stubby are assembled in the home of Pete Peters. Over 1000 of the white Stubby tail assemblies have been prepared there to date. Additionally, the parts used on the Stubby aren't unique to that tail assembly. Rather, they are used on a variety of different tail fin models. Dave feels that "The entire USA market appears ready to switch from homemade fuse assemblies to a reliable factory-made fuse assembly." And, separately, "The Mildet has been used exclusively in Canada for the past six years." First off, portions of the USA market and the entire Canadian avalanche community have been using factory-made cap fuse assemblies prior to the CIL/Orion Mildet—such as the Tec Harsiem and Cobra assemblies. Secondly, to condescendingly call the cap-fuse assemblies that are manufactured by portions of the avalanche specialists in the USA "homemade" is to undermine our training and experience in this work.

When Dave relates that while using the Avalanche Pipe at the Aspen Highlands that "The large explosions emptied the large bowl of any dangerous new deposits," most readers would assume that avalanching had occurred. The fact of the matter is that the 30 cm low-density storm snow, deposited without wind, had no dangerous deposits and that no avalanching whatsoever occurred—not even a sluff.

I have to comment on Dave's assertion that "Fluctuations in temperature play a large role in the diameter of an aluminum barrel; our Stubby procedures address these barrel issues." I had a recent conversation with a Metallurgical Engineer, and by using the coefficient of thermal expansion for the type of aluminum used for Avalauncher barrels it can be stated that from minus 20 degrees F to plus 40 degrees F a barrel's diameter changes by just .00275 inches—less than the thickness of most human hairs. I contend that the incredible heat passed from molten cast explosive to the plastic Stubby bodies during the pouring process plays the major role in whether the full-bore Stubby projectile will fit the barrel properly and that the vagaries of molding plastic parts to tight tolerances is a very minor factor.

Additionally, Dave sells extruded barrels that, according to him, go through a post-production machining process. Avalanche Control Systems, Avalanche Mitigation Services and the defunct Launcher Company all use/used drawn barrels, which come from the manufacturer as stronger, straighter units than the extruded version.

For further discussion, contact me at jb@avalanchemitigationservices.com

—John Brennan

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