Ode to ISSW

*Mark Moore—October, 2023*

Once upon a time, not very long ago,

There lived some folks who thought about snow.

How it was sculpted by weather, & draped over terrain—

Changing in situ through temps, wind, and rain.

The snow clung to hillsides, lying in wait—

For a little more stress by those tempting fate.

It was complex for sure, this triple point mess,

And forecasting its structure was oft but a guess.

But those like you sought how, why, and much more.

Coming to workshops & sharing your knowledge store.

Some of you live in the mountains, some nearer to cactus,

But all believe in a merging of theory and practice.

You had names like LaChapelle, Williams, Montagne,

And many more with wisdom to share, and much to gain.

One thing in common has united us all,

As we seek to unravel the avalanche call.

From snowflake to snow slide, we are eager to know,

The intricate science behind an avalanche of snow.

We’re thinking about structure, energy, and strength—

And if weak shears extend a whole test block length.

So, we meet in places like Banff and Sunriver,

Where experience and research are part of the quiver.

Most back country accidents have common themes,

Of living life at the limit of powder filled dreams.

There’s group dynamics, thoughts of “It won’t happen to me”,

But the gloomy statistics remain for all to see.

Though we’ve come a long way towards understanding the snow—

And choosing our terrain based on the danger we know...

We have discovered the problem, and it seems to be us—

And if we apply what we know, when we know that we must.

In older days you studied slopes, snow, weather, and sky—

It wasn’t analyzed with graphics, charts, and chat AI.

But the avalanche cares little for tech, and the latest of toys,

It doesn’t understand skill, or wealth, or sorrows, or joys.

Physics and gravity are what’s on its side,

And idly stressing weakness makes for a risky ride.

Remember snow once fallen is rarely static—

Not like the stuff stored up in your attic.

Based on temperature, structure, and depth of the snow—

It can settle and strengthen…or weaken and grow.

Whatever thoughts you had about it last week—

Don’t matter too much as change it will seek.

And once you’ve decided that all is okay—

And you head towards your favorite slopes to play…

Don’t close your eyes or mind, not for a minute,

Because snow changes for sure, and now you’re out in it.

Continual review & awareness are needed out there—

Especially for friends or life about which you care.

All the tests that you do, and notes that you make—

Will enhance the decisions and routes that you take.

But don’t expect that the snow is aware of your test—

It’s surprised novice and pro and buried some of the best.

Just keep aware that the month or the year—

Is never a sign that you’re all in the clear.

Each day is unique to the evolving snowpack—

And you must probe its memory to find wisdom you lack.

Though our knowledge grows thru research, tests, and control—

It’s only sharing that will change the grim avalanche toll.

Remember slides only choose you when you give them a chance—

And stop using all the moves of the avalanche dance.

Although the pandemic slowed our information sharing,

This workshop here will show how much we’re still caring.

So go forth and learn all that you’re able,

For there’s a happy ending to this snow science fable.

Whatever you learn, discover, and share…

Will help you and others avoid an avalanche lair.

So, ask lots of questions and share what you know,

And we can all stay on top instead of under the snow.

Just remember it doesn't matter why you are who you are, or why you do what you do.

Because in the end, the paths that you take and choices you make are all up to you.

*Have a great workshop!*

*Mark Moore, ISSW23*