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Rescue

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"At first they were using sleds and boxes further down the road" on a more gradual slope east of where the accident happened, Anders said. He said he has sledded on that well-used site.

Anders said he didn't know why the boys decided to move towards a part of the hill where a large wind-created cornice curled over the slope.

"Steve and Paul went off the cornice," Anders said. "It was too steep for sleds, so they were sliding down on their rear ends."

He said the cornice broke loose, unleashing tons of snow and trapping the boys. Visitors to the scene Wednesday could see where the slab had broken away, leaving the slope virtually bare down to grass and brush. Cracks ran the length of the remaining drifted snow.

Anders said instinctive action and luck helped his son fare better than Paul Nutting. "Steve pushed away snow with his hand," creating an air pocket, his father said. "They were talking to each other at first. Steve heard Paul say, 'Can you help me.' Steve said, 'No, I can't. Where's Bryant.' Then they blacked out," Anders said.

"It was a good draw of the cards, pure luck," he said. "I pray to God Paul makes it, too. It was purely an accident. They had never sledded there before. What possessed them to go to that cornice I don't know."

After the slide, Bryant sprinted for help.

"He had to run pretty fast," said Greg Jakkola, a youth manpower student employed at the school who was one of the first persons to see the boy. "Bryant came running up. He was crying to his mother. He said there had been an avalanche."

Marshall said Bryant came to find his mother, Kathy

Hall, who is employed by the school cleaning service. Jackie Loper, the school clerk, began phoning Roberts businesses to enlist rescuers, while Jakkola dashed to the gym to alert the team and Marshall.

"I told the kids to get their (street) clothes on. All I had to do was tell them where to go," Marshall said. "Some of them ran there and others got rides."

There weren't enough shovels for everyone, so more were obtained. Calls were also placed for emergency services from the Red Lodge ambulance and the HELP helicopter.

Larry Schwend, a player, said he ran to the scene and found very few people there, though it didn't take long for a crowd to gather. "Another player (Ronnie Wright) and I moved as much snow as we could with our hands."

Teammate Todd Wainscott and Cliff Kober, a Roberts resident, were among the first to find the Anders youth. "He was still conscious. He was just a little red from the cold," Wainscott said.

Kober said, "He shook his head, brushed the snow out of his hair and took off. It was amazing but good."

Wainscott said rescuers asked Steve where he thought Paul might be buried and were told to look to the right. That clue helped rescuers, led by Mike Pettitt, find Paul about five minutes later.

"I found his pant leg," Pettitt said. "I yelled and said I've found him. Everybody came to dig him out. He was real white. It didn't look like he was breathing."

Marshall said, "I think Steve's response made a lot of difference because he was able to tell where Paul was at. And Bryant's judgment made a tremendous difference."

"There was an awful lot of emotion on that hill and an awful lot of praying," he said.

Marshall planned to have the Rockets practice as scheduled Wednesday for weekend games against Belfry and Fromberg. But, he said, "Those kind of things don't seem very important now."