

experiencing route-finding difficulties for about an hour, we were preparing the rappel down when we were passed by a good team that knew the route. This encouraged us to continue the climb.

There are other aspects to this cause. For example, John's enthusiasm persuaded me to attempt this route, one I would normally be quite hesitant to try as a first climb of the season. This was John's second or third climb of the season.

2. Possible mild shock from initial fall. Exposure was extreme.

3. Chest harness possibly tied too loosely. According to climbing guide Hans Schwartz of Jasper, this would have to be the case. John had slender build.

4. Nylon shell worn under chest harness. The danger of the shell's low friction did not occur to me until after the accident.

*British Columbia, Purcell Range, Commander Mountain.* On 27 July David Jones, John Christian, Murray Foubister, and Jan Atlung (26) were attempting a new route on a rib of the NE face of Commander Mountain. David Jones led a rope pitch, anchored and belayed his second, then continued up another pitch. Meanwhile Jan Atlung climbed the first pitch and had just clipped into the belay anchor when the last man looked up to see a falling rock outlined against the sky some 500 feet above the leader. Jan was sitting with his back to a 20-foot wall when struck by direct impact by the falling rock. The second called for Jones to come down while the last man came up. There was adequate room at the belay site on a large ledge. Jones drove several more pitons while the other two rigged up prussiks and carabiner brakes, examined Atlung to find the extent of the injuries, and he put him on his back, then the two others lowered them 200 feet down the face as Jones walked down backwards. They then used a leap-frog method to lower Atlung a further 400 feet down a snow and ice slope to safety. Jones then went for help returning in three hours with 20 people, doctors, a stretcher etc. They proceeded to move the victim (whose condition had deteriorated considerably) but after an hour the doctor called for a complete stop and ordered a helicopter.

*Source:* David Jones

*Analysis:* This was a freak rock fall. In the subsequent four hours after the accident no other rocks were observed to fall. The route was to follow a rib on the face and the victim was in a sitting belay (tied in) with his back to a 20-foot wall. The rock struck the back of his head. He was wearing a Romer plastic-shell helmet. The rock impacted helmet into the head of the victim.

*Yukon Territory, Mt. St. Elias.* On 31 July an eight-man party was descending Newton headwall below Russel col and had 700 feet left to drop to glacier. Avalanches had been active in past few days and made great changes in terrain. Descent was down a very large field of debris; snow relatively soft. Ascent had been in a less direct line further north to avoid large crevasses which were now plugged with debris. Party was halted by crevasse about three feet across—no apparent bridges in sight—