

CANADA

FALL INTO A CREVASSE AND EXCEEDING ABILITIES—Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Bow Glacier. Serge and Christianne Pageau (47), Georges Laurier, and two companions left Bow Hut at 1400 hours on July 15 to attempt St. Nicholas by the south ridge. It had rained and hailed all night and rained intermittently during the morning. When they reached the ridge, the summit was in cloud and it started to rain, so they returned, Georges being first on the rope and Serge last. When Georges had crossed the last crevasse, he pointed out holes in the snow bridge to Christianne, who was next. Another party in the area avoided the crevasse because it was wide and the bridge appeared unsafe. When she crossed at 1645 hours, the bridge broke and she fell into the crevasse up to her waist. Her axe was in her hand but she did not react and slipped slowly under the surface of the bridge, the rope cutting itself into the snow, and she losing her axe.

She was tied in with a seat and chest harness, but it was tied incorrectly, so her weight was taken entirely by the chest harness. She was told to stand in the prussiks, which were already attached to the rope, but she said she was incapable. An end of rope was thrown down, but she could not see it. Georges used this rope to cross the crevasse and set up a pulley system to pull her out, but she did not reply to calls after 1650 hours. He then descended into the crevasse but was unable to help her or to climb out again, and the rest of the party was not able to help them. Captain Andrew Durrant of the Canadian Forces Cadets spotted them when returning from a trip at 1700 hours and he and his party recovered Mme. Pageau and M. Laurier from the crevasse at 1730 hours. Her chest harness had to be cut off because it was tight enough to restrict the chest expansion, and resuscitation and heart massage was attempted for four hours but with no success. The body was evacuated by a Parks helicopter at 2055 hours.

It was thought at the time that she had died by strangulation by her chest harness, but the coroner's report said that autopsy had revealed a considerable amount of blood in her stomach, perhaps caused by an aneurysm which was ruptured by the fall. When she tried to vomit, she probably ingested the vomitus into her lungs, perhaps partly because of the constriction of the chest harness. (Sources: Lise Bourgault, Georges Laurier, Kevin O'Connell and Andrew Durrant, collected by E. Whalley.)

Analysis. The main lessons to be learned from the accident are: a chest and a seat harness must be properly tied or it becomes only a chest harness; traveling on glaciers is unsafe unless you know how to extract a person from a crevasse efficiently; crossing crevasse bridges in warm, rainy weather is of high risk. (Source: K. O'Connell.)

FALLING ROCK AND FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE—Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Cascade Mountain. On July 16, 1975, a party of eight army cadets