

Shannon was seen on the second helicopter flight past the face. Rangers Jackson and Rickert were flown in and determined that Shannon was all right. They spent the night with Shannon and helped him to the helispot on the morning of August 3.

Shannon had pointed out to the rangers where Drake was. Rangers Burgette and Eastman were flown in to a lower helispot and confirmed that Drake was dead. Drake's body was flown to Lupine Meadows at 1200, where it was turned over to the Teton County Coroner. (Source: Dan Burgette, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

Analysis

In the phone conversation with Robert Shannon on August 5, I was told the following.

Drake was very serious about his physical conditioning program. He ran six to nine kilometers per day, and he regularly did a lot of day hikes. He drank very little alcohol and he didn't smoke. Drake usually ate the vegetarian meals that the Lodge offered, so he ate little meat. Shannon considered Drake to be in excellent condition.

Just before the accident, Drake was in very good spirits. Drake remarked about how wet and slippery things were when he started to climb past the overhang. He told Shannon to wait on the ledge until he could find a ledge to set up a belay. Drake didn't seem nervous on the wet rock. He seemed confident that he could climb in these conditions.

Drake was extremely determined to do the climb. When Shannon suggested aborting the climb after they encountered wet, slippery rock, Drake would not even consider it. When Shannon suggested climbing the snow couloir variation that goes east of the regular route, Drake said, "And abandon our route?!" He was inflexible about changing their plans. Shannon became convinced that Drake was determined to do what he set out to do, no matter what. Shannon said, "No way we would have turned back."

Drake seemed determined to climb the route without a rope for protection. He was willing to throw down a belay rope to Shannon whenever Shannon wanted one, but he was unwilling to use one himself.

Neither person had a hardhat, even though they knew that the route is subject to rockfall. (Source: Dan Burgette, Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

FALL ON ROCK/SNOW, CLIMBING UNROPED, INEXPERIENCE Wyoming, Wind Rivers

The following report was sent in by Mark Dale, who was also involved in searching for the victim in the previous report. Dale and his climbing partner, Jeff Hunt, cut their planned stay in the Tetons short because of "bad weather and our low morale due to the accident." He said, "Deciding that things might be more pleasant in the Wind Rivers, we headed down to Cirque of the Towers, where we spent several days climbing some enjoyable routes." But then, the account reveals the following.

On August 6 we took a rest day and stayed near our camp, which was beneath the two Warrior Peaks. About midafternoon I noticed a lone climber on the snow below the Warrior Couloir. He climbed part-way up the snow to the base of the couloir,

then descended and attempted to climb the rock on the north face of Warrior I. (There are only Grade IV, 5.9 routes on this face.) Giving up on this, he descended and disappeared for a while. Later I saw him again ascending the snow and this time he climbed into the Warrior Couloir and soon disappeared from sight.

Around 1630, I heard rockfall from above and looked up just in time to see the solo climber's body come flying out of the couloir in mid-air at high speed, bounce off a rock buttress below, and slide 100 meters down the snow to come to rest on the talus. Jeff and I quickly grabbed our first aid gear, notified a nearby party of the accident and climbed to the body, arriving about 15 minutes later. The injuries were numerous and severe, including massive head injuries, possible broken neck and back, broken wrist, dislocated hip, etc. There was, of course, no pulse or any possibility of reviving the victim, who was probably dead before he stopped moving.

It took the rest of the day to locate the victim's partners, who had both been climbing Mt. Mitchell. We found out the victim was not experienced on snow or ice, yet he was attempting to climb a very steep couloir composed of broken snow, ice, and wet rock.

Thoroughly depressed, we cut our climbing trip short and hiked out the next day. The accident was reported to the Sublette County sheriff and the body was helicoptered out on August 8. (Source: Mark Dale)

FALL ON ROCK, AMANITA MUSHROOMS

Wyoming, Tetons

At 0915 on August 10, 1984, Larry West (37) and Darell Nielson (36) left the Lupine Meadows parking area for a climb on the Petzoldt Ridge of the Grand Teton. Nearing the spring on the first switchback up from the Valley Trail junction, Larry noticed some mushrooms that he thought were of the same variety that he and a friend had eaten before. There were about five of them in a small, damp grove just off the trail and they washed them off and Larry ate two and Darell ate just one. They both had not eaten very much at all that morning.

An hour later as they were approaching the Surprise Lake drainage, Larry mentioned that he felt sick to his stomach. Further along, travel through the section of boulders past the Platforms area became more difficult as they both felt very dizzy and their vision was distorted by not being able to focus on just any one thing. Thirty meters below the Meadows camping area, they dropped their packs and Larry vomited. They slept for a while, became unable to control their extremities, experienced a dreamlike level of consciousness, and Darell laughed for extended periods of time. Realizing that they were in trouble and convinced that they might die, Darell tried to get up to the Meadows for help, but fell and twisted his right ankle.

Rangers Montopoli and Harrington came upon Mr. West and Mr. Nielson about 1330 while on a mountain patrol in Garnet Canyon. They found the pair to be in an altered state of consciousness and rapidly losing motor control. Vital signs and symptoms were communicated to St. John's Hospital, and at 1350 Roger Kjerstad was contacted for a helicopter evacuation. At 1410 Montopoli reported that they were at the helispot, and Jim Dorward flew up from Lupine Meadows at 1418 with medical gear and oxygen. At 1427 the helicopter arrived at St. John's with Mr. Nielson, accompanied by Montopoli, and at 1458 Mr. West was evacuated from Garnet Canyon after having an I-V and oxygen started.