

winch. (Source: Banff National Park Warden Service, and *Crag and Canyon*, June 4, 1986)

### **Analysis**

The climbing party was adequately equipped and experienced. The route may have the reputation of being easy, but one or two moves can be intimidating, and there is loose rock. (Source: Banff National Park Warden Service)

*(Editor's Note: The reports received do not say whether the lead climber was wearing a helmet, but it seems likely that he was not.)*

## **FALL ON ROCK AND ICE, INADEQUATE BELAY**

### **Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Temple**

On July 6, 1986, J.H. (38) and I.M. (23) were climbing the North Face of Mount Temple. Climbing conditions were poor due to fresh snow and verglas above 2700 meters, and cloud obscuring visibility above 2500 meters. The climbers ascended the snow and ice Dolphin to its highest point (3000 meters) immediately below the steep inside corner leading directly to the summit ice cap.

They placed a single #2½ Friend in a crack in the grey limestone rockface for use as a belay anchor. I.M. tied himself to the Friend and belayed through a spring-type Sticht plate. Wearing crampons, and with ice tools on both hands, J.H. began to lead the steep rock face up toward the traverse ledge which runs across the face.

About ten meters out from the belay, he fell, possibly hit by material falling down the steep chute directly above. There was no protection between the leader and the belay, so the leader fell about 20 meters onto steep hard snow before the rope tightened. The anchor pulled from the crack, and both climbers fell 330 meters to their deaths. Their bodies were recovered by a Parks Canada rescue crew the following day.

(Source: Clair Israelson, Banff National Park Warden Service)

### **Analysis**

Evidence on the bodies and the belay site suggest that the poor climbing conditions contributed significantly to the accident. The leader was climbing steep rock wearing crampons, with ice tool wrist loops on, suggesting that ice covered the rock at the time. A few hundred feet to the left, there is a far easier line through this cliff band that avoids the inside corner, which is prone to ice and rock fall. This safer line, used by most parties, would have been apparent in better visibility. The consequences of using only a single piece of protection as a belay anchor are clearly demonstrated in this accident.

The Sticht plate used by the belayer was tightly jammed when the bodies were recovered. Given the weather at the time, it is likely that the wet, probably frozen, rope was too stiff to allow the belay plate to function as intended, resulting in a static belay and high impact on the anchor. The cams of the Friend were gouged on one side only, an observation suggesting that the wet or icy rock on the other side of the crack lacked sufficient friction for a solid placement.

Choosing to attempt the route under poor conditions, insufficient belay anchors, and the jammed Sticht plate combined to result in tragic consequences when the leader fell. (Source: Clair Israelson, Banff National Park Warden Service)