

Analysis

The accident location was the site of a fatal crevasse fall several years ago. R.L. was aware of this fact, and insisted on traveling roped even while walking in a well-beaten track. This action probably saved his life.

Glacial travel with a party of two leaves little margin for error. Both persons should be capable of setting up crevasse rescue systems, as the person falling into a crevasse may be injured and unable to survive until outside help arrives. A party of three or four is inherently safer.

Even though the weather was sunny and mild, R.L. carried emergency clothing and a poncho on his back. He ended up needing it. (Source: Clair Israelson, Banff National Park Warden Service)

FAILURE OF RAPPEL, PITON PULLED OUT, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Rundle Ridge

On August 16, 1986, around 0800, David Doucette (38) and Bruce Magee (35) set out to climb the Guides' Route (5.7), a 17-pitch climb on the east end of Rundle Ridge, near Canmore. After a half-hour hike to the starting point, they were on the climb, taking alternate leads. Since the climb was new to them, they took their time, using a guide book to keep them on track.

Around 1800, after climbing all day, they reached a broad, grassy, treed ledge. David led the pitch and found it to be much harder than stated in the guide book. He ran a full rope length, about 50 meters, then drove a piton and secured himself. He belayed Bruce up 25 meters to a ledge where Bruce secured himself to a small shrub and to a piece of protection placed in a crack. David rappelled down to Bruce.

The time was 1930, and they had done 13 pitches. They decided to rappel back to the large grassy ledge. David drove another piton, and secured a sling to it, which was also secured to a nearby shrub. They both rappelled. However, when they tried to pull the ropes down, they found that the ropes were stuck. David prusiked ten meters up the rope, freed them, and reported this to Bruce.

Then Bruce heard the sound of ropes moving at high speed. He turned to see David fall from above, hit the grassy ledge, and then continue down the mountain. In an attempt to stop David, Bruce grabbed the ropes, receiving a rope burn on his hand. David fell about 200 meters and was killed.

Bruce attracted attention by yelling to passing cars, and motorists in turn alerted the RCMP. Park Rangers and RCMP rescued Bruce by helicopter the following morning. (Source: Bruce Magee and Patricia Doucette, Banff, Alberta)

Analysis

The climbers were conscientious and cautious, and had a full rack of climbing equipment. Their equipment was all new and consisted of helmets, sit harnesses, one 11 millimeter 40 meter rope, one 9 millimeter 50 meter rope, stoppers, slings, climbing boots, pitons, and carabiners.

Unfortunately they got off route on pitch 13 onto tricky terrain, as do many climbing the route for the first time. In the guide book, the dots indicating the route span a 25-meter area, leaving the exact path to take up to the climber.

David Doucette fell because the piton pulled from the rock. The evidence for this is

that the piton and attached sling remained with rope. For the rappel down, he was using a Figure-8 and prusik back-up. (Source: Bruce Magee and Patricia Doucette, Banff, Alberta)

FALL ON ICE, INADEQUATE BELAY

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Victoria

On August 20, 1986, three climbers (28, 25, and 21) reached the North Peak of Mount Victoria around 1400. They then descended the north ridge toward the Victorian-Collier Col, the most experienced of the three at the rear. All were wearing crampons and carrying ice axes. A few hundred feet above the col, at elevation 3200 meters, the climber in front stopped on a moderately angled ice slope where the rear climber was going to establish a belay anchor to protect their descent. As the second and third climbers walked down to this point, they neglected to take up the rope between them, allowing 20 meters of slack to accumulate between each pair. As the second climber reached the proposed belay point, he tripped on his crampons and careened down the icy north face.

As he fell, he hooked his crampons several times, breaking his right leg and left ankle. The other two braced themselves and were able to stop the fall, saving the entire party from tragedy. The most experienced climber established ice screw anchors, tied the others to them, and then soloed down the north face and out to Lake O'Hara to get help. The other two were evacuated at dusk by a Parks Canada rescue team. (Source: Clair Israelson, Banff Park Warden Service)

Analysis

Keeping a snug rope between party members at all times would have prevented the long skid which resulted in injury. Quick reaction by two of the climbers prevented all three from falling to their deaths down the face and into the crevasses below. The consequences of a slip on even moderately angled ice or hard snow should not be underestimated. (Source: Clair Israelson, Banff Park Warden Service)

FALLING ROCK, IMPROPER TECHNIQUE, STRANDED

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Temple

On August 27, 1986, a party of two began climbing the Greenwood-Locke route on the north face of Mount Temple. They reached the top of the easy climbing and bivouacked on the traverse ledge at 3000 meters. They resumed climbing at 0630 the next day. About noon, one of the climbers was hit by a rock dislodged while hauling packs up the steep face and crack system. The resulting injury caused him to lose all feeling in his right arm and hand. They elected to continue rather than attempt the descent, and around 1600, the same climber as before was hit in the right shoulder by another rock dislodged by the haul packs. He had great difficulty continuing, as his right arm was now unusable. At 1900 they reached a small ledge and bivouacked.

It rained overnight. At 0630 on August 29, the uninjured climber attempted to lead the pitch above the bivouac ledge and took a 12 meter leader fall, escaping uninjured. He lowered himself to the bivouac ledge. He had planned to lead the four remaining pitches of the upper face, and the injured climber would follow on prusiks. Since this