

Providence Medical Center emergency room. Cut was closed and stitched, no complications.” (Source: George Sainsbury)

### **Analysis**

There has been a series of rockfall accidents in this heavily used gully on the standard route in the last two or three years. The whole mountain is falling apart! Olympic National Park is trying very hard to get everyone to wear helmets, but without notable success. (Source: George Sainsbury)

## **STRANDED, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT**

### **Washington, Exfoliation Dome**

This report came from Calvin Hebert (22) and Greg Belding (22).

We started late in the morning on June 8, and as there is no trail, it took considerable time to approach the wall. We started up Sunday Cruise 46(IV, 5.9), which involved much brush. We completed the climb by 2200 and not being familiar with the descent, chose to spend the night on the summit and go down in the morning. It was a pleasant night and fairly warm. In the morning we chose the shortest way down, which was only going to involve three rappels. We set up and completed one double rope rappel which left us on a broad, grassy ledge. The ropes weren't twisted so we didn't anticipate much trouble; however, when we attempted to pull through the ropes, we had no luck. We pulled and manipulated the ropes for probably an hour but could find no way to retrieve them. We had no way to ascend the rope as all we had were a few short slings and no perlon to prusik, and the rope was largely free-hanging due to overhanging rock.

We anticipated an attempted rescue as we were already a day overdue and an hour or two later, we saw a helicopter that dropped our rescuers on the summit. They lowered a rope and brought us to the top. Shortly after we were on the ground. (Source: Calvin Hebert, Guy Belding)

### **Analysis**

An earlier start and a trail surely would have been nice. We have both been climbing for many years and are familiar with the trouble that sometimes goes along with descending a Cascade peak. Short of carrying more gear and really slowing ourselves down with the extra weight of “what if” equipment, I see no way other than luck that our situation could have been avoided. (Source: Calvin Hebert)

*Editor's Note: The question of how much the weight and bulk slings for prusiking would really be comes to mind.*

## **FALLING ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, FAILURE TO TEST ANCHOR, NO HARD HAT**

### **Washington, Leavenworth**

This accident occurred on June 14, 1987, to Bleecker Morse (37) and Jim Turk (30), as reported by Turk.

Bleecker and I have climbed Icicle Road area a lot, but not since 1984. Since it was our first time out this year, we were only top-roping on clean granite. In the

afternoon we decided to look for something unfamiliar to try and hiked away from the roadside climbs. We followed the base of a cliff band that had a lot of rotten-looking rock until we hit a nice crack that intercepted a ledge about 15 meters up. The rock looked much better here, and there were signs of past use (bolts, etc.). Plus, the ledge had a 5.0 gully we scrambled up to set a top rope. Once on the ledge, the anchors seemed self-evident to me. There were two tailgate-sized flakes that were apparently bonded to the rock formation on the ledge. Bleecker was a very safety-conscious climber, so we looped webbing around each, then set the anchors so that neither one would take a full load in the event of a fall. (The crack was just at the edge of Bleecker's ability, so we planned on falling.) Neither flake showed obvious signs of a fracture that may cause it to fail the way they did.

I climbed first, with Bleecker belaying me with a belay device anchored to a tree at the cliff base directly under the route. I'm not sure, but I seem to remember hanging on the belay when I got just off the ground. I know for sure that I reached up, grabbed the anchor webbing and hoisted myself over the top to avoid having to knock little rocks down on my friend by using the littered ledge itself. The point is, the anchor got loaded at least once by me. Bleecker climbed next. He got just off the ground and peeled off. I had him reeled in tight, since he was just off the deck. I lowered him to the ground and unloaded the belay. At this point, we were hit by rockfall. There was no sound, just rockfall. Bleecker was struck by one of the anchor flakes and was mortally injured. I was struck by smaller stuff and knocked downslope from my belay stance, but not before seeing the other flake land next to Bleecker and me. Bleecker had suffered a depressive skull fracture and probably a broken neck, but was still breathing and had a pulse. I stabilized his head and went for help, although part of me knew he was already gone. Chelan County sheriff's deputy, ambulance crew, and fire department all responded remarkably fast. The evacuation was difficult because of the steepness of the approach and distance from the road. Bleecker was dead when loaded into the ambulance, even though we had IV, oxygen, and a doctor at this point. It had been two hours since the accident. (Source: Jim Turk)

### Analysis

Just prior to the rockfall, we had discussed helmets. Bleecker's was forgotten at home—mine was strapped to my pack. I elected not to put mine on because the route looked immaculately clean; there wasn't a lot of wall left above the ledge, and because Bleecker didn't have one....

(1) Wear helmets! A helmet wouldn't have saved Bleecker Morse, but it would have saved my having stitches in my head. (2) Select a belay stance out of the direct route path if possible. (3) Select anchors as if your life depends on it. It does. (Source: Jim Turk)

### **FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS, EXHAUSTION, HASTE, INEXPERIENCE Washington, Mount Rainier**

On June 14, 1987, Sterling Thomas, and Paul McClelland, both members of the Corvallis Mountain Rescue Unit, were descending the upper Kautz Glacier with Joseph McNeill (32) when the following accident occurred.