

FALL ON ROCK AND SNOW, CLIMBING ALONE**British Columbia, Coast Mountains, Slalok Mountain**

In late September, 1988, Kirby Inwood, an inexperienced climber in his early 30's, was on Slalok Mountain, a 2650 meter peak about 30 kilometers east of Pemberton. He was ascending rock that was covered with snow and verglas, but which was otherwise easy. In the early afternoon, at the 200 meter level, he slipped and fell. He sustained multiple injuries, including broken bones, cuts and bruises, and internal injuries, and was unable to descend.

A storm kept him stranded for two days and three nights, until Whistler Search and Rescue was able to use a long line on a helicopter to evacuate him to a lower elevation. There he was transferred to another helicopter and flown to the hypothermia unit at Lion's Gate Hospital. Hospital staff who examined him on arrival estimated that he was within two hours of death from severe hypothermia and injuries. It was December before he left hospital. (Source: Doug Fox, Whistler, BC)

Analysis

Easy rock can become very dangerous when covered with a thin layer of ice or snow. Climbers climbing alone should expect the worst and be especially cautious. (Source: Doug Fox, Whistler, BC)

AVALANCHE ON ICE CLIMB**British Columbia, Rocky Mountains, Mount Stephen**

On December 28, 1988, John Owen (30) and David Franklin (33) walked from Field along the railway tracks to a point below "Extra Light," an ice climb on Mount Stephen. From there, they hiked up to the base of the waterfall and started climbing, unroped, the first pitch of nearly vertical ice. About 1400, John had just gained the snow and ice ramp that completes the first pitch, when he yelled to his partner, "Avalanche!" David, following, was part way up and could not see John. About five seconds later, David was hit by the avalanche and was thrown off the waterfall. He ended up partly buried in the middle of the avalanche deposit.

David freed himself from the snow and yelled for John, but there was no answer, and no sign of his companion. David's ankle was broken, he was coughing blood from chest injuries, and he couldn't move his shoulder. He dragged himself to the railway with his ice ax.

About 1800, the crew of a freight train spotted David beside the tracks and stopped the train. They found him still conscious, but very cold and shaking badly. They took him to Field, where the RCMP was contacted. Park Wardens from Yoho and Lake Louise arrived by snowmobile and probed for about two hours. Then the dogmaster arrived, and the dog found John's body in two or three minutes, buried under a meter of snow. (Source: Terry Willis, Yoho National Park Warden Service, and the *Ottawa Citizen*, December 30)

Analysis

John was rated at above average in mountaineering skill. He and David had done a lot of climbing together. It is not clear why they were climbing unroped. The waterfall is

in an avalanche path. Although the avalanche hazard for Yoho in general was moderate, there was a high avalanche hazard at higher elevations and on wind-loaded lee slopes and in gullies and basins on that day.

The chances of survival would have been much better if they had been equipped with avalanche transceivers and probes. Rescue would have started earlier if they had registered out with the Warden Service. (Source: Terry Willis, Yoho National Park Warden Service)

FALLING ROCK, FALL ON ROCK

Labrador, Nain, Mount Sophie

On August 10, 1988, at 1000, Yves (32) and Mike (45) were on the first pitch of an attempted first ascent on Mount Sophie. Yves is an experienced climber, Mike less so. Yves, leading, put a #9 stopper behind a block, and then stepped on the block. The block came away, causing a fall, and removing the protection. He fell 15 meters. The fall was stopped, not far from the ground, by a # 2 1/2 Friend. However, Yves suffered two broken vertebrae. (Source: Yves Laforest, Federation Quebeçoise de la Montagne)

Analysis

The climber tested the block before stepping on it, and it seemed to be good. The loss of protection behind the block resulted in a long fall. (Source: Yves Laforest)

The rock in this range is composed of the mineral anorthosite, which is very hard. It is friable, and so subject to the kind of problem encountered here. It is also probably difficult to place secure protection in it. (Source: S. A. Morse, Geology Professor, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA)