

of Liberty Wall at 2865 meters, below an apparent fall line of nearly 1500 meters. Autopsy indicated Derdowski died of blunt trauma to the head and torso and Mooney of hypothermia. (Source: Compiled from reports of Larry Duin and Stephen Newell; Edward Wilson, John Wilcox, and William Larson, Mount Rainier National Park; and Paul Williams, Seattle Mountain Rescue)

### **Analysis**

We can all be reminded of three old lessons that come to mind with this incident. First, assumptions can lead to serious consequences. Duin and Newell noted they were apprehensive about allowing Mooney and Derdowski to join the climb. The confusion over roles and responsibilities may have contributed to fatal decisions. Second, lack of food and water still invites hypothermia, especially at altitude. Third, there's nothing wrong in turning back. Failure to do so can place a lot of other people at risk. (Source: Erik Hansen)

## **FALL ON SNOW—INTO MOAT, INEXPERIENCE, FATIGUE**

### **Washington, Chikamin Peak**

Randy Schaffer (33) and Michael Wessels (31) were descending from a climb of Chikamin Peak about 1430 on Sunday, July 9, when Schaffer slipped on a snow slope at the 1725-meter level above the Cascade Crest Trail. He fell into his companion, Wessels, knocking him out of his stance and into a slide further down the slope. Both climbers fell into a moat; Schaffer stopped near the top while Wessels fell about 15 meters further to the bottom, fracturing his pelvis, hip, and lower spine. They managed to get out of the moat and down to the Pacific Crest Trail by about 1500. Schaffer hiked down to Joe Lake to get their tent, sleeping bags, and stove, returning to Wessels at 1900. Schaffer spent the night with Wessels, then left at 0500 on July 10 to summon help.

Seattle MRC was paged by King County Police at 1215, and put three teams in the field. Team one accomplished the 18 km walk to Wessels' location by 2100, and a SPART team arrived about half an hour later. They prepared Wessels for movement to a site suitable for MAST pickup via winch, and began moving him using the wheeled litter around 0045 on July 11. MAST had been unable to fly earlier because of the cloud cover, but the clouds dissipated by the early morning of July 11, and they arrived at search base at 0042. By 0200 the victim had been moved to the pickup location, and by 0230 the pickup via winch and tagline was completed. Wessels arrived in Harborview at 0300. (Source: *Bergrage*, No. 135, September 1989)

### **Analysis**

He (Randy Schaffer) failed to use his ice ax properly twice, first to secure a self-belay while moving on a steep slope, and second to effect a self-arrest after losing his position. Previously, Mike had demonstrated to Randy how to move securely on steep snow, but he rebuffed Mike, stating he was experienced. (Source: Mike Wessels)

*(Editor's Note: See description of Castle Rock accident, April 4, 1989, near Leavenworth, WA.)*