FALL ON ROCK, NO "SPOTTING" PROTECTION

British Columbia, Purcell Mountains, Vowell Group

A large group from the ACC General Mountaineering Camp below the Vowell Glacier were bouldering at Tamarack Glen above the north margin of the glacier on July 27, 1990, when one of them, J.D., lost her balance on a ledge, and dropped to the ground about three meters below, doing "two spectacular leaps" on the way and striking her heels three times in all. She then had difficulty walking, because of pain.

The subject's feet were immersed in cold water to reduce swelling, and the group then helped her to get down the exposed moraine to the Vowell Glacier and about one kilometer back to the camp. She suffered a chipped metatarsal bone in her left foot.

Analysis

The group leader had clearly advised everyone to stay low on the rocks and to have a "spotter" for protection. The subject did not take the advice seriously enough—all too easy to do in pleasant surroundings. (Source: Fred Stanley, Lee Tibbert)

FALL ON SNOW/ICE, UNROPED

British Columbia, Purcell Mountains, Vowell Group

On August 1, 1990, two climbers were descending snow and ice unroped, about 50 meters below the summit of Peak 9250 (north of Little Howser) when one of them slipped on loose rock under his crampon, and tumbled about ten meters, badly injuring his left ankle.

His partner descended alone until able to get the attention of an Alpine Club of Canada party crossing the Vowell Glacier below. While the ACC General Mountaineering Camp was being notified, two persons lowered the victim several pitches down steep snow and made him as comfortable as possible on the glacier.

A backup ACC party arrived at 2130, too late for helicopter evacuation, but set up a camp and took over care of the victim, while the first party returned to the G.M. camp.

The victim and his partner were evacuated by helicopter at first light the next morning. The injury was a fracture of the left ankle.

Analysis

The victim was experienced, but one rescuer was quite emphatic that he would not have undertaken to descend the slope on which the accident happened. Perhaps the style of descent was inappropriate. In any case, a rope is often useful in such situations. (Source: Fred Stanley, Lee Tibbert)

SLIP ON LOOSE ROCK, UNROPED

British Columbia, Rocky Mountains, Mount Assiniboine

In August, 1990, two climbers were descending the northeast ridge of Mount Assiniboine after a successful ascent. Two rappels down the ridge, one of them (54) was traversing unroped toward another rappel anchor when he slipped on loose rock and fell 700 meters to his death. His partner descended alone until he could attract the attention of others, who sent for help and came to his assistance.