

saw a way up there, and Sulzbacher set up to belay her. O'Toole placed four chocks as she climbed the pitch. Her fifth point of protection was a runner around a sizable rock horn. She was two to three meters above this runner when a handhold pulled out and she fell, pulling a boulder one meter in diameter with her. The rock horn also failed and pulled out. Chocked protection below arrested her fall. She landed upside down, still secure in her seat harness, but suffered a fractured ankle. O'Toole was able to assist in rappelling down to base camp though later had to be evacuated by MAST helicopter. (Source: Compiled from reports by Steve Sulzbacher and Kathy O'Toole)

Analysis

I was climbing a crack system with a fair amount of moss. I perceived the significance of the moss but chose to continue climbing. As the system was more difficult than the route was supposed to be, I concluded I was off route. I fell when I weighted a handhold and the rock broke off.

I landed head down, back against the mountain, but didn't fall out of my harness because I'd been taught to tighten the waist belt as much as possible, which kept me secure even upside down. My belayer and climbing leader commented that it was fortunate I'd opposed my first two chocks, so as to prevent zippering. The entire party was very supportive. I'm very grateful to the training the Mountaineers provided all of us. It came in handy. (Source: Kathy O'Toole)

LOSS OF CONTROL—VOLUNTARY GLISSADE, FALL INTO CREVASSE, IMPROPER CLOTHING, NO HARD HAT

Washington, Mount Baker

On July 28, 1990, a party of 11 was on three ropes descending the Roman Wall on Mount Baker. At the crest, the team led by Earl Crouse (63) waited for the other two teams to arrive from the pyramid at the summit. When all had arrived, the lead team started down the very steep part of the Roman Wall. Weather was excellent, but the snow was very soft. They followed a deep trench made before by several rope teams, assuming the two teams above would follow behind them in the same trench.

About halfway down, a call came that the second rope team, following a different route and led by Tom Knudsen (39) had fallen into a crevasse. Due to rapid warming, snow surface had softened and broke loose, making arrest of descent difficult. One person on the rope team, William Knudsen (42), had stopped short, but the other three slid into a crevasse two to three meters deep.

The leader, Tom Knudsen, was buried deep in a trench at the back of the crevasse in snow carried in with him in the fall. The second person on the rope team, a 12 year old boy, was buried in a foot of snow, but hollered; the third man in had landed standing up and was able to quickly uncover the boy's face so he could breathe. The fourth man, the boy's father, did not get dragged into the crevasse.

It later took an hour and a half to dig Tom Knudsen out. He was found to have expired, probably from a blow to the head in the fall. Snohomish County SAR helicopter later assisted Bellingham Mountain Rescue personnel in recovering Knudsen's body. (Source: Earl Crouse and William Knudsen)

Analysis

The first three on the team involved were wearing slick outer pants like ski warm-ups, which made glissading very fast, easily out of control. The fourth man, who managed

not to fall in, was wearing wool pants. The snow was very soft, making it difficult if not impossible to self-arrest with ice axes. However, there were four other paths where parties had glissaded in exactly the same spot. Their path was in the center of these four, so probably it seemed safe to try coming down the “easy” way.

In retrospect, I should have been very specific about the danger of glissading, especially at the top of Roman Wall, and explained that you must: (1) be under total control; (2) be 100% certain there are no crevasses below; (3) take note of the kind of clothing you are wearing when glissading. Also, protective head gear would likely have prevented serious injury. (Source: Earl Crouse and William Knudsen)

SLIP ON SNOW, CLIMBING UNROPED, FAILURE TO FOLLOW INSTRUCTION

Washington, Mount Adams

On August 4, 1990, at 0500, a party of three was climbing a moderate slope in stable snow above a crevasse about 3000 meters on Mount Adams' Mazama Glacier. The weather was fair, light winds, low 30 degree temperature. Lee Kelly (58), the leader, and Bonnie Bronson (50) were experienced climbers, though the level of the third member, Mark Stevenson (41) was not known. It was the judgment of Kelly to climb unroped as the slope was approximately 30 degrees and snow conditions were excellent. For reasons unknown, Stevenson suddenly sat down in the snow and started sliding. Bronson stepped out and attempted to stop his fall but was knocked down and slid with Stevenson into the crevasse. In the uncontrolled fall, he landed on top of her. Bronson died instantly of a broken neck. Stevenson sustained a dislocated shoulder. Evacuation was accomplished at 1700 by the combined efforts of three different area mountain rescue units and two Chinook helicopters from Fort Lewis. (Source: Compiled from reports by Lee Kelly, Central Washington Mountain Rescue, and Yakima County Sheriff's Office)

Analysis

Stevenson sat down unexpectedly, contrary to instructions, and as he began to slide he made no attempt at self-arrest. Though experienced, Bronson tried to stop him without self-arrest. I should have been more alert to the mental condition of Stevenson. (Source: Lee Kelly)

(Editor's Note: We don't know whether these climbers knew each other. In any case, the victim either didn't understand or follow instructions. Also, any assumption—rather than knowledge—of levels of competence can lead to complications.)

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED, NO HARD HAT

Washington, Snoqualmie Pass, The Tooth

On August 11, Creth Edward Cupp (31) and Joanne Metzler were climbing the last pitch of the Southwest Face of the Tooth, 5.6, when leader Cupp fell 25 meters pulling two pieces of protection before being arrested. Metzler lowered Cupp, who had severe head injuries, three pitches to a large ledge at the top of the first pitch where Cupp could no longer continue. After spending the night on the ledge, Metzler descended to the Denny Creek trailhead notifying King County Police at 0830 on August 12. Seattle Mountain Rescue was paged by KCP at 0850.