

then we threw down a smoke grenade to help us determine the wind and other conditions,” Taylor said.

“We landed at the 8,200-foot level on a snow ridge. We packed snow on the landing skids to keep the helicopter from toppling and shut down the rotor.” As Studley was loaded aboard the helicopter on a stretcher, Howard Wilhelm volunteered to climb down the mountain so the helicopter wouldn’t be overloaded.

Despite surgery to set the leg, Studley said the accident wouldn’t keep him from challenging mountains.

“I love climbing,” he said. “I made a stupid, bonehead mistake. We didn’t follow the basics, and we weren’t lashed (roped) together.

“I won’t do it again—and I will never climb again without bringing my radio along. It was the most important tool in my rescue.” (Source: Article in *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, July 1, 1992, by Arthur C. Gorlick)

Analysis

A number of mountain rescue personnel pointed out that radios are no replacement for skill and carrying the right equipment and essentials. Assuming that ham radios, CBs, or air traffic locaters will result in timely rescue can lead to a false sense of security, resulting in climbers taking chances beyond their level of skill or ability to self-rescue. In this particular case, the victim was also extremely fortunate that a doctor was nearby. (Source: Jed Williamson)

RAPPEL ANCHOR FAILURE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

Washington, Mount Shuksan

On July 7, Duane Morrison (34) set out with eleven other climbers of the Seattle Mountaineers to climb Mount Shuksan in the North Cascades National Park. The route was the Sulfide Glacier Route. Seven in the party had never climbed before.

After a slow ascent due to the inexperience of one of the climbers on his rope team, the summit was reached at 1230. To expedite the descent, the decision was made by the leader to rappel off the summit pyramid, although most of the other climbing teams that day were using snow chutes and ice ax belays to get down.

Duane completed the first rappel uneventfully and had just started the second rappel when the rock horn that had been used for the rappel anchor fragmented. This was after five other climbers had successfully used the same anchor. Duane tumbled backward down a 70 to 80 degree slope. The fall was estimated to be 180 feet. Duane came to a stop on a narrow ledge in front of another cliff 200 feet high. Suffering only from a badly scraped knee, bruised hands and a sprained ankle, Duane was capable of walking six miles back to the parking area. He was wearing an external frame pack during the fall, which he credits with having prevented him from serious injury.

Here is a summary of what Duane said regarding his accident: “My instincts in this situation clearly said this was an easy downclimb with many easy ledges and boulders. I owe the limited nature of my injuries to physical conditioning, the use of a helmet, the external frame pack and good luck.” (Source: From a letter written to Fred Stanley)

Analysis

Rappel anchors should be checked after each rappel. Natural anchors can be deceptive and should be backed up when possible. If rappelling can be avoided in down climbing, it ought to be considered. (Source: Dean Engle)

FALL ON ROCK, PLACED INADEQUATE PROTECTION, WEBBING PARTED, INADEQUATE CLOTHING

Washington, North Cascades, Eldorado Peak

The accident occurred some time between 1100 and 1300 on Wednesday, July 18. Five climbers had started out together from a camp on the ridge between Eldorado and Roush Creeks. At the saddle where Inspiration and Eldorado glaciers meet, we split into two parties. Three climbers headed up the standard route on Eldorado Glacier, while Joe Davidson (53) and I headed up Inspiration Glacier to the southern rock face. We crossed the bergschrund and started up a series of easy ledges.

After following a diagonal ledge that took me maybe 40 feet above the snow, I placed a loop of webbing around a horn and belayed until Joe reached me. Joe clipped into my anchor and took over the belay. I led the way to the next ledge and I placed a small chock in a crack about 20 feet above him. The chock felt OK against a downward tug.

The rock was now slightly overhanging, not as easy as it had looked from below. I had some trouble finding suitable handholds and slipped down to the ledge. Joe reminded me that I could head back down. I considered downclimbing and taking an easier route, but I decided to angle up to the side to look for better handholds. As I moved to the next ledge, the weight of my pack, the slight overhang, and a weak handhold combined to pull me loose. I was about 70 feet above the floor of the bergschrund.

The chock did nothing to stop the fall. I later found it in the 'schrund. The webbing running through it had torn open. The knot was intact. The fabric just ripped. The belay anchor also failed. Since I did not come across it, I cannot say why. Maybe the rock of the horn cracked, but that is speculation. Anyway, the force of my fall pulled Joe down after me.

My injuries included a broken nose, one deep laceration on the forehead, fractured right wrist, fractured left thumb, and dorsal perilunate dislocation of the left wrist. Joe's injuries included lacerations and a fractured patella.

Also climbing in the area was a National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) group who organized a rescue and radioed an overhead aircraft for assistance. About 2000, the call for help was forwarded to the Skagit County Sheriff's Department and North Cascades National Park. A rescue helicopter from Whidbey Island Naval Air Station was dispatched at first light the following morning. Evacuated by hover hookup from the South Face of Eldorado Peak at 0600, the two injured climbers were flown to United General Hospital in Sedro-Woolley where they received treatment.

Analysis

I should have placed more protection when I encountered a more difficult section. In addition, the runner that tore was old. Perhaps it should have been replaced. (Source: David Kaye—44)

(Editor's Note: A two-page report from Jono McKinney, the NOLS instructor who carried out a 15-hour rescue with his students, indicated that the victims were dressed in Levis, cotton socks, and cotton T-shirts. Their goose-down sleeping bags had become soaked, which contributed to their hypothermia. Neither was wearing a helmet. They were fortunate to have excellent emergency medical care administered by NOLS personnel.)