

that he was dead. The body was loaded into a “Jenny” stretcher and lifted out on a sling by helicopter. As the winds had subsided by then, the machine was able to land in the scree bowl upon its return and pick up the rangers. (Source: D. Humphrey, Kananaskis County East District Ranger)

Analysis

Thomas was an experienced scrambler, but while like most scramblers, his aspirations expanded to great challenges like Mount Fisher, it seems he did not acknowledge the greater hazards those might present. Even talented enthusiasts would do well to associate any of the available alpine clubs or mountain schools for a while, even if only to learn the sort of fear which could have averted this tragic accident. (Source: Orvel Miskiw)

STRANDED, OFF ROUTE, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Temple

On August 6, 1992, Joe P. and Martin L. climbed the east ridge of Mount Temple (3544 meters) but stalled at 2000 when they reached the Black Towers, unsure if they were on route. They bivvied overnight and tried to continue in the morning. After climbing part way up a gully, they found they could not make any more headway because of bad weather and loose rock, and could not climb down from their position either. With darkness approaching, they tried to send an SOS signal by headlamp to the lodge at Moraine Lake. Their signal was seen and the Banff Park Warden Service was contacted. A search was initiated at first light on August 8, and the pair were located in the Black Towers around 3200 meters. They were rescued by helicopter. (Source: Banff National Park Warden Service)

Analysis

These climbers were experienced, but had route-finding problems and were uncomfortable with the type of rock they encountered. Acquiring further information on the climb before attempting it may have kept them from getting off route. The Black Towers have often been climbed straight on, so they are not necessarily ‘off route,’ except to someone who has heard about bypassing them and intends to do so; it’s doubtful that they present climbing as difficult as the Big Step lower on the mountain, so anyone who gets over that should have no trouble negotiating the towers. However, by the time most climbers reach them, they feel the worthwhile part of the climb is behind and want only to get off it, walk to the summit, and then get off the mountain. The Black Towers therefore represents an ominous and unwelcome complication, best bypassed through gullies to the left. (Source: Orvel Miskiw)

FALLING SNOW BLOCK, FALL ON ROCK AND ICE, INADEQUATE BELAY, POOR POSITION

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Temple

On September 1, 1992, two Americans, Doug S. and Mike V., set out to climb the East Ridge of Mount Temple. Early fall snows had left the mountain in winter condition, but the climbers proceeded without incident until they reached the exit gullies that bypass the Black Towers. The choice of the wrong gully, and then verglas on the rock, made for challenging climbing. The climbers were on the last pitch before exiting through a cor-

nice onto the summit ridge when Doug, the leader, ran out of protection for a belay. They agreed to move together with the protection of their immediate placements, and Mike unclipped from the lower station. While digging through the cornice, Doug dislodged a large snow block, which went down the gully and struck Mike. He fell about five meters and injured his leg before Doug stopped him. Both climbers then struggled to the top of the gully and up the ice cap to the summit. Part way down the descent, Mike felt he could not continue, so Doug left him and went on alone for help. He contacted the Banff Park Warden Service in Lake Louise at 2400, and a rescue plan was made for the morning. At daylight, the victim was found, stabilized, and slung out by helicopter to an ambulance waiting at Moraine Lake. He was found to have a fractured fibula. (Source: Banff National Park Warden Service)

Analysis

The two were experienced mountaineers; however, they chose the wrong gully to reach the summit ridge. Bad weather, causing poor visibility, may have been a factor. The correct gully, right of the one they ascended, may have been easier.

It appears that Mike's leg was broken in the fall, rather than by the snow block. An initial free fall on slack rope places a greater load on the belayer. They are both lucky that Doug was able to hold it from his precarious position. (Source: Orvel Miskiwi)

CORNICE COLLAPSE, UNROPED, BAD WEATHER, OFF ROUTE AT NIGHT

Alberta, Rocky Mountains, Mount Temple

On September 12, 1992, James H. (38) and Charles B. (30) met at Moraine Lake to climb the East Ridge of Mount Temple. They set off at 1300, intending to bivouac above the Big Step and finish the climb the following day. They bivvied as planned and resumed the climb at 0800 on September 13. Early snows had encased the mountain in winter conditions, making the climbing slow and difficult, so that the climbers did not reach the summit until 0400 September 14. Due to blizzard conditions, they started down from the summit right away, but unfortunately went the wrong way, taking a rib that led them toward the north face rather than the northeast ridge, the normal descent route. They started out roped up, but soon dispensed with the rope as the traveling appeared to be straightforward. Both continued to wear their crampons over the snow and rock. James slipped and fell into a cornice. It collapsed and he slipped over the edge.

Charles looked for James for a while, but could not spot him, so he resumed the descent to get help. As it was getting light, he then realized that he was on the wrong ridge, so he crossed over to the correct one and continued. By that time, the climbers were overdue, and National Parks Wardens had commenced a search. Charles was picked up by helicopter and evacuated to Moraine Lake at 0800. The search team later spotted James' body at the bottom of the north face of Mount Temple. The cornice which had collapsed under him was right at its apex. The body was slung out to Lake Louise later that morning.

Analysis

James was an experienced mountaineer with many winter ascents, and both climbers were well prepared. But both were fatigued after some 20 hours of continuous climbing, and James was not wearing his prescription glasses due to blowing snow and the cold,