

ers." Early on October 26 a multi-agency search was started on the hiking trails near timberline. At 1030 a Portland Mountain Rescue team met the pair descending just west of White River glacier at 7800 feet elevation. The ambulatory subjects were escorted down to Silcox Hut and jeep transported to Timberline Lodge. No medical treatment was required.

Analysis

The two inexperienced, unequipped "day hikers" ignored the posted equipment recommendations and showed a lack of judgment in their attempt to go high on the mountain. Even for an experienced and well equipped party, late season conditions on this volcano make the climb hazardous due to excessive rockfall. (There were five registered parties climbing the South Side route.) The subjects were fortunate that the weather remained fair and unseasonably warm. (Source: Jeff Scheetz)

FALLS ON SNOW, FALLING ROCKS

Oregon, Mount Hood

Following on from the previous report, this summary is presented. Four other accidents involving a combination of falling on snow and falling rocks were reported from Mount Hood from last year. One included a 14 year old boy who slid over a cliff on the south side of the mountain just below Hogsback. He fell 200 yards to his death, and his 12 year old brother, who tried to get to him, was injured in the process as well. Some of the people involved were hikers, some were climbers. Because they were on technical terrain, above timberline, on ice and snow, if an accident occurs, they are considered to be climbing, and are included in the data. (Source: Jed Williamson and various reports from Jeff Scheetz)

EXCEEDING ABILITIES, ASCENDING TOO SLOWLY, EXPOSURE, HYPOTHERMIA, FROSTBITE, WEATHER

Washington, Mount Rainier, Liberty Ridge

About 2000 on May 1, 1992, the park received a message from the emergency radio located at Camp Muir from the summit. The climber, Shannon Stegg (26) was hypothermic, incoherent, and had frostbite. He reported that his climbing partner, Jerry Roberts (26), had left him on the summit the night before and had gone to get help. Two rangers left for Camp Muir and brought Stegg to Paradise the following morning. They learned from Stegg that Roberts had left the summit the evening of April 30 to get help for Stegg, who was suffering from hypothermia. A search was started for Roberts with aircraft and ground personnel. Search teams were placed on all descent routes. Two helicopters were brought in and an aerial search began. The light commercial helicopter found tracks leading down from the summit on the Tahoma Glacier. A military chinook helicopter moved search personnel into position where the tracks entered the trees. By use of ground personnel with helicopter support, Rogers was found. He was totally exhausted, hungry, and suffered from frostbite. There appeared to be no permanent damage.

The search involved two helicopters, 12 volunteers from Tacoma and Seattle Mountain Rescue Councils, two guides from RMI and at least ten park personnel. (Source: William A. Larean, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

Analysis

In an interview with Shannon Stegg, the following information was obtained.

Stegg and Roberts had planned to ascend Mount Rainier from April 23 through April 29, 1992. Their chosen route was to enter from Carbon River and Ascend via the Carbon Glacier. Once atop the summit, they would continue down to either Camp Schurman via Emmons Glacier or to Camp Muir via Gibraltar Rock.

Stegg had successfully climbed in or on the following areas or peaks: The Andromeda Strain, North Face of Mount Temple, and the Patagonia region. Stegg believed Roberts to be the premiere rock climber in the State of Georgia, and known by Stegg to have climbed in the Tetons. Stegg considered Roberts to be in better physical condition.

They arrived in Seattle on April 22, intent on climbing Rainier, in preparation for an ascent of Denali in May. They were surprised to find the Carbon River Area closed. Their route took them across the Carbon Glacier where they cached their cross country skis. They approached the summit via Liberty Ridge. Stegg recalled Roberts saying that he wasn't comfortable in climbing in this terrain, and that Stegg should plan on going alone to rendezvous with the other team awaiting them at Denali. Stegg said there was four days of food between them that could stretch to eight if needed.

They climbed to within 400 yards of the summit in good weather. While there, a storm arrived. The storm lasted three days. Several feet of snow was deposited around and on their tent. Stegg recalled having spent two hours outside attempting to clear the snow away from the tent. He became very chilled and began to notice the onset of hypothermia. The snow had rendered the tent useless.

Roberts had led Stegg to the summit, in search of steam vents they'd read existed. Stegg's eyes had frozen almost closed, he said he could just make out Roberts' shadow. Roberts found a small steam vent for Stegg to spend the night. After fixing Stegg some hot drink, Roberts began to plan a descent to get help for Stegg. Stegg was in a full shiver and very weak.

Stegg did recall Roberts studying a route down Emmons Glacier toward Camp Schurman. Stegg tried to talk Roberts out of leaving, in fear that Roberts might not be able to make it down with just a sleeping bag, a powerbar and some cheese for food. Stegg wished Roberts good luck and Roberts was off.

Stegg saw blue sky later that evening. The following morning he felt good enough to search the crater for Roberts, not seeing any sign of him. Believing he could not survive another night on the summit, he began to descend toward Camp Muir, remembering he'd been there previously. He successfully reached Camp Muir. A climbing team fixed him soup and helped him raise help via the emergency radio.

Roberts was interviewed by Plans Chief Wilcox and others at the Kautz Creek heliport, including rangers Larson, Winslow Brooks, and Kirschner. Some information provided by Roberts differed somewhat from that given by Stegg during his interview earlier in the day. Major remarks by Roberts during the interview include the following:

Roberts was very concerned about the physical well being of his climbing partner, because Stegg was suffering from both hypothermia and frostbite. Roberts said that his own condition was good. Roberts felt that he needed to get to Camp Muir to get help for Stegg. When Roberts left Stegg in a steam cave on the north side of the east crater, near Columbia Crest itself, on the late afternoon of April 30, he wandered around the summit crater system until he found a large steam cave near the southwestern part of the crater where he then spent the night.

At daybreak on May 1, Roberts left the summit crater and started down climbing the upper Nisqually Glacier with the intention of going to Camp Muir for help. Neither he nor Stegg was aware of the usual descent route to Camp Muir. They thought the descent was somewhere near Gibraltar Rock, so Roberts headed in that direction. He said he could see Paradise, as the weather was clear and not excessively windy, and he headed generally in that direction. This direction resulted in his going west of Gibraltar Rock to the top of the Nisqually Ice Cliff system, which he recognized as something he could not descend. Because Roberts could see no safe way of descending to Camp Muir, or Paradise, he decided to climb back up toward the summit and descend to Camp Schurman via the Emmons Glacier instead. Despite having good weather conditions, Roberts readily admitted he had none of the essential ingredients for a safe descent: he was alone and unroped, he had no map, no compass, and no knowledge of the descent route to either Camp Muir or Camp Schurman. As a result, he mistakenly thought that by climbing back toward the col between the two summits he could see (Point Success and Columbia Crest), he could descend over the other side to Camp Schurman. He climbed through the saddle between these summits and descended the Tahoma Glacier (instead of the Emmons, as intended) down the "sickle" area, and continued down the major portion of the Tahoma Glacier. Roberts said that he encountered many dangers, walking over snow bridges that spanned crevasses ("crevices," as he termed them) and in some cases descending into and back out of larger and wider crevasse systems. Ultimately he traversed southwesterly across the middle portions of both the Tahoma and South Tahoma Glaciers and reached solid ground on the lower Success Cleaver area around the 8,000 foot level. He then descended snow covered slopes northeast of Pyramid Peak and into Pyramid Park. Shortly after entering the solid forest just west of Pearl Falls, he bivouacked for the night.

The next morning, May 2, Roberts continued his descent down wooded slopes and followed an unnamed stream just west of Pearl Creek until it joined Pearl Creek near the valley bottom at the 4,300 foot level. He then walked a short distance further southwest until he reached Kautz Creek, the glacial river and primary drainage in the valley. Roberts followed Kautz Creek downstream, hoping that it would eventually lead to a road but not realizing where he was. By mid to late morning, he arrived at the Wonderland Trail, where the trail crosses Kautz Creek. Roberts said that he began to follow the trail to the "left" (toward Longmire) but became discouraged because the trail was climbing back uphill and seemed to be leading him in the wrong direction. He elected, instead, to continue following Kautz Creek downhill. As Roberts followed the river down the valley, he heard helicopters flying above him and toward the mountain.

He reasoned that they were attempting to rescue Stegg, whom Roberts thought would likely still be on the summit. Stegg had long since climbed on his own to Camp Muir, contacted rangers, was interviewed and taken to Good Samaritan Hospital for treatment of frostbite.

Finally, shortly after 1500, Roberts was spotted by Ranger Olson in the military Chinook helicopter as Roberts was walking along the river at the 3,000 foot elevation. This is approximately 1.25 miles downstream from the Wonderland Trail Crossing and about 1.75 miles above the Kautz Trail crossing. A Bell 206B III helicopter with Ranger Winslow aboard was able to come to the scene, land nearby and fly Roberts to the Kautz Creek heliport. Roberts was provided food and drink, was interviewed, and driven to Good Samaritan Hospital for treatment of some frostbite on two fingers. (Source: J. Wilcox, Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)