

rock when reaching the ground (no helmet). The belayer said that the victim was a 5.12 climber with years of experience. He sustained a broken hip, collarbone and ribs, and fractured skull—but should survive. (Source: Steve Muelhauser, Park Ranger)

(Editor's Note: Eldorado State Park experiences hundreds of climbers and thousands of climber days each year because of the proximity to the large Denver-Boulder population. Currently, registration is not required. A total of twelve accidents were reported for 1994—not a large number. Three of these were bouldering falls with inadequate spotting, and one was an overdue party that ended with fatigued but uninjured climbers.)

FALLING ROCK

Missouri, Lake of the Ozarks, Truman Reservoir

On October 6, 1994, Phil Rotterman, Cary Winchester and I arrived at the bluffs that abut the Truman Reservoir. We planned to do some sport climbing on some 80 foot high limestone routes.

After I led “The Big Weenie,” we moved on to “Gomerwood,” which Phil led. While setting up a top-rope above, he dislodged a small cantaloupe-sized rock. He yelled, “ROCK.” Cary was to my right at the base of the route. We spotted the rock immediately. It was on a line ten to 15 feet to my right. Cary and I moved farther left. I watched the rock bounce straight down the less-than-vertical face until it was ten feet above me and 15 feet to my right. It hit me in the face before I could see it change direction.

It passed in front of Cary to hit me. He thought it had continued straight down the cliff until he saw me holding my face. Bleeding profusely from a two centimeter cut over and a one centimeter cut under my right eye, I used a roll of toilet paper in my pack to apply pressure and stop the bleeding within a couple of minutes. I never lost consciousness and was able to walk out. We drove to the local clinic where the doctor on call stitched me up—five stitches below, eight above. He told me I was lucky and that I could have lost the eye if hit straight on instead of a glancing blow to the right.

This accident teaches that falling rocks can take bounces that appear to defy the laws of physics and they can hit you before you can see them, let alone react. (Source: Steve Schweiker)

(Editor's Note: Mr. Schweiker gives no indication as to how Mr. Rotterman dislodged the rock, or whether it was done in an attempt to clean the belay area. In any case, we gather they are still friends.)

HYPOTHERMIA, FROSTBITE, EXPOSURE, INADEQUATE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT, FAILURE TO TURN BACK, PARTY SEPARATED, EXCEEDING ABILITIES—INEXPERIENCE, WEATHER

New Hampshire, Mount Jefferson and Mount Washington

On January 14, 1994, Derek Tinkham (20) and Jeremy Haas (20), both students at the University of New Hampshire, set out for a planned traverse of the Presidential Range. They camped, actually a bivouac, as they had no tent, the first night, and continued up the next day, Saturday, in extreme cold weather and wind. High on Mount Jefferson, Haas left Tinkham, who was suffering from hypothermia, in a sleeping bag. He took his mittens off to do this, and lost them in the wind. Haas continued on to the summit of

Mount Washington, arriving there after three or four hours of hiking in severe wind and cold, with his frozen hands tucked in his armpits. Fortunately for him, people in the observatory heard him knocking on the door.

He was treated as best they could for severe frostbite on his face and hands. He was then evacuated and hospitalized. Rescuers found Tinkham's body the following day.

Analysis

This brief account of an accident that caused great grief to the friends and family of Derek Tinkham, great difficulty for all the search and rescue personnel, and great media attention, captures the essential facts of the incident. There are, of course, the causes to be discussed.

The weather forecast a week in advance of the trip called for extreme cold and high winds. The temperature on the summit of Mount Washington the night Jeremy Haas arrived there was -42° F, and the winds were gusting up to 100 mph. Both young men were inadequately clothed for the conditions, Tinkham more so than Haas. On their way up, they passed four different trail heads which lead about a mile and a half to the Gray Knob cabin, where there was a caretaker, a radio, and heat. They had planned, apparently, to spend the night at Sphinx Col.

One could argue that they never should have started out in the first place, especially given the weather and the inadequacy of their clothing and equipment. It is clear that they should have turned back, even before they reached timberline. Rather than turn back when Tinkham could no longer go on, Haas chose to put him in a sleeping bag and go on to the summit of Mount Washington. For everyone from classmates to the rescue team, the two most difficult issues are why they did not turn back earlier, and why Haas did not attempt to get Tinkham back down. The only clue we have for the latter is from an interview with one newspaper, in which Haas said that it was not until just before the peak of Mount Jefferson that Tinkham showed any sign of fatigue. "To turn around would have led us directly into the wind, so we had to keep going forward." He said that it was on the other side of the peak that Tinkham's fatigue and the 100 mph gusts of wind got the best of him. "The two of us were spinning like tops." Once they took shelter behind a wall of rocks, Haas said that Tinkham went quickly into a state where he could no longer take care of himself and had lost all physical and mental will to descend.

When rescuers found Tinkham, the next day, he was only half in his sleeping bag, parka not fully zipped, wearing a lightweight hat and gloves.

A February 4, 1994, editorial in the UNH campus newspaper, *The New Hampshire*, ends with this statement: "The truth is that both Haas and Tinkham were planning the trip since October, both knew the risks, and both were responsible for their actions. The two tragedies happened. An innocent life was lost, and a hero was blamed."

As editor of ANAM, and as a former president of the New Hampshire Outing Club while at UNH myself, I felt compelled to respond, and here is the essence of my letter in response to the editor:

"We have a duty to Jeremy Haas. We must be compassionate and help him through this period of grief. We must help the healing process that will serve to bring him back together with his peers, allow him to accept the reality of what has happened—and of his part in it, and to move forward with his life. And therefore, we must also be honest with him—and with each other.

"For the past 20 years, I have been compiling and editing *Accidents in North American Mountaineering*, an annual publication of the American Alpine Club. Each narra-

tive begins with a headline of key words describing the cause. When I write the report on this accident, the headline will include Hypothermia, Frostbite, Exposure, Inadequate Clothing and Equipment, Failure to Turn Back, Exceeding Abilities—Inexperience, Weather. Following the description, there will be an Analysis. In it there will be no blame, but rather, a description of the kinds of clothing and equipment needed for such a venture, the turnaround possibilities, and what kinds of things might be done under the circumstances these young men were exposed to.

“Though this was indeed a bold exploit, it was by any standard ill-advised, and therefore we should not call Jeremy a hero. Rather, he is a survivor of a very traumatic event. We must forgive in areas where we may find it difficult to do so and learn from the lessons that will continue to unfold.” (Source: Jed Williamson, and a number of reports and newspaper articles, as well as interviews and discussions with key people)

HYPOTHERMIA, FROSTBITE, WEATHER, LATE START, FAILED TO TURN BACK

New Hampshire, Mount Washington, Huntington Ravine

On February 26, 1994, Monroe Couper (40) and Erik Lattey (28) left the Harvard Cabin in Huntington Ravine to climb Pinnacle Gully. They did not start the climb until noon, because they had to return to the cabin for their rope, which they discovered they had left behind. They were last seen high on the route at 1700. They did not return to the cabin that night, and a rescue effort was launched, hampered considerably by cold and wind.

The bodies of the two men were found at the edge of the Alpine Garden above Pinnacle Gully on February 28.

Analysis

When the men started their climb, the sky was clear and winds were 30 mph. The wind was gusting to over 90 mph on the summit by the end of the day, and the temperature was -18° F. Rescuers assumed that the climbers were stopped by high winds and darkness.

They were relatively inexperienced and may not have understood how quickly the weather can change on Mount Washington. They may not have known the mountain well enough to know the other descent options. They carried only one rope, which would have made a rappel descent of Pinnacle Gully more difficult—but the best option for them. (Source: George Hurley)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE AND UNROPED, NO HARD HAT

New Hampshire, Rattlesnake Mountain

On March 16, 1994, Stephen Williams (27) fell 90 feet from a climb on Rattlesnake Mountain, near Rumney, fracturing his pelvis and suffering other injuries that were not life-threatening.

Analysis

This is a popular climbing area in New Hampshire. There are no additional details, but it is interesting to note what good luck this climber had. He was rescued and at the roadhead within two hours.