

for a pair of ski poles to improve his balance. He said his rope team was technically weak, so that he wanted to keep his ax for self-arrest unless I tied into his rope. Our rope teams joined. I attempted to report to the park communications center, but my radio battery failed. We descended slowly to the top of The Cleaver, arriving at 1340.

Auker was cold so I put my down parka on him. I gave him water and orange drink. I switched radio batteries and notified communications center of our progress. Our climbing party rearranged itself on our ropes so that I was immediately behind Auker. (I showed him how I had tied him in. Later, when he felt better, he said he couldn't recognize the knots I had used, even though they are familiar to him.) For the descent of The Cleaver, I held the rope a few feet from Auker's harness and had him slide on his back while I plunge-stepped to control his speed. Turner and Funsten were alert to help me arrest a slip. Auker walked leftward traverses to stay on the cleaver, and rested by glissading the fall-line portions.

He felt much improved at Ingraham Flats. We arrived at Camp Muir about 1615. Auker rested while Walters and Weir packed their camp. Turner, Funsten and I packed our gear, leaving Auker under Walters' eye. Walters is a doctor with EMT/ski patrol experience, familiar with high-altitude medical problems. RMI guides filled three water bottles for me to give the Auker party to save them the time of melting snow.

When we were packed I returned to check on Auker and accompany him on his descent. He felt weak enough that we decided to take him out in a toboggan. I gave him supplemental oxygen at four liters per minute through a nasal canula. Funsten's friend agreed to assist in our descent to Paradise. Ranger Jennifer Erxleben helped prepare the toboggan and package Auker in it. RMI guides offered to monitor the park radio in case we encountered problems in the evacuation. My second radio battery failed as I updated the communications center of our plans. We left Muir at 1830 and arrived at Pebble Creek at 1930. Auker felt sufficiently improved that he preferred to walk the rest of the way. We arrived at Paradise at 2050. I encouraged Auker to see a doctor and left him in the care of Walters and Weir. (Source: John Gillett, NPS Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

*(Editor's Note: There was another case of cerebral edema in WA, this one on Mount Adams at the 9,000 foot level. The victim became very combative. His partner was able to get a 911 call through on a cellular phone. A helicopter evacuation in the early morning hours probably saved the victim's life. He was back at work within a week, but does not plan to go above 8,000 feet in the future.)*

## **LOSS OF CONTROL—VOLUNTARY GLISSADE, NO HARD HAT Washington, Mount Stuart**

On the morning of June 25, Gordon Rieker (31) and Chuck Buzzard (40) left their base camp at 0315 and headed up Ulrich's Couloir, a narrow gully leading to the summit of Mount Stuart.

The two Yakima County employees were not novice climbers. Rieker had been climbing since the early 1980s, Buzzard since 1978. Nor were they strangers to Mount Stuart. This was Buzzard's fourth climb, and Rieker had at least five previous climbs on the mountain. They also had made numerous climbs together.

They reached the summit about 0645. Instead of returning the same way, they headed east to the Cascadian Couloir, which is generally considered one of the least difficult

routes on the mountain. Not far from the summit, they reached a long, steep snow slope where they began glissading, a standard mountaineering practice of sliding while using an ice ax to control speed. Buzzard went first.

"I was out ahead, nearly to the boulders. I looked up and he was doing a regular sitting glissade," Buzzard said.

But something caused Rieker to lose his ice ax. Unable to control his speed, he began an uncontrolled slide into the rocks.

"It happened so fast it's hard to picture," Buzzard said.

The impact broke Rieker's collarbone and several ribs, and caused severe head injuries. He appeared conscious but was unable to respond, Buzzard said. About ten minutes later, two other climbers discovered the Yakima men. They stayed with Rieker, and Buzzard began a long walk out for help.

Off the mountain, he still had to climb another smaller ridge before reaching the car. He then drove to a horse camp. But the camp's radio had been vandalized and wasn't working, Buzzard said. A woman at the camp had a cellular phone, but that required additional driving to reach a point where the phone's signal could be picked up.

Typically, U.S. Army MAST helicopters from Yakima Training Center are dispatched for back-country rescues. But this accident occurred at an elevation of 8,400 feet. That's considered too high for the standard single-engine MAST helicopter, which generally isn't used above 7,000 feet. Instead, a more powerful helicopter had to be dispatched from Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane.

Initially, doctors were optimistic about Rieker's condition. But he died at Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital seven days after the accident. (Source: *Yakima Herald*, from an article by Craig Torianello, July 23, 1995.)

## **RAPPEL ANCHOR FAILURE—ROCK BROKE LOOSE, FALL ON ROCK**

### **Washington, Mount Stuart**

On July 10, Kris Stout (30) and his climbing partner had waited out a storm on Mount Stuart before beginning their descent. Stout was preparing to descend by rope when he tied a line around a rock the size of a car.

As Stout leaned back to begin rappelling, the rock broke loose. It rolled over him and fell 150 feet. One climber said the rock should have been there for another 100,000 years.

Stout's partner was left alone on the ledge, where he waited five hours until he was rescued by other climbers. (Source: *Yakima Herald*, from an article by Craig Torianello, July 23, 1995)

## **FALL ON SNOW—UNABLE TO SELF-ARREST, CLIMBING ALONE, HASTE—RESULTING IN WEARING ROCK SHOES ON SNOW**

### **Washington, Mount Stuart**

After summiting Mount Baker in the early morning of July 9, I drove about 3/4 of the way to Seattle and got a hotel room to dry out gear and repack for a solo attempt of Mount Stuart. On the 10th, I drove from the hotel to the parking area south of the mountain and hiked the four hour approach which brought me to the grassy slopes beneath the West Ridge (4,500 feet). The route planned on was the "West Ridge Route" as described in the Cascade Alpine Guide, Volume 1 by Fred Becky. I made camp and went to bed early. The weather was clear and the temperature dropped a little below freezing that night.