

in the use of an ice ax, he was unable to successfully execute an ice ax arrest after gaining speed. (Source: Rick Perch, SAR Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE AND UNROPED, NO HARD HAT Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Teewinot

Keith Hensler (64) was supposed to pick up a friend, Lance Brown, at the Lupine Meadows trailhead on the afternoon of September 4. When Brown arrived at the trailhead about 1830, Hensler's car was there, but Hensler was not. Brown became concerned about his missing friend and notified dispatch around 2100. The rescue coordinator was notified and he decided to postpone further investigation until the following morning, since it was already dark and no one knew which direction Hensler had gone.

At 0715 on September 5, rangers Byerly and Culbreath were diverted from the Garnet Canyon trail to the east side of Teewinot while rehab crew members Wise, Bywater and Vergilio started up the Teewinot apex trail to search. Hensler's body was found by Byerly and Culbreath at 0950 at the 11,200 foot elevation on the east face route on Teewinot. He had apparently died as a result of a fall.

The body was retrieved in a sling load at 1210 using the contract helicopter, a 206L3 piloted by Mike Doster.

Analysis

Following a September 8 mountain patrol on Disappointment Peak and the Teton Glacier area, rangers Mark Magnuson and Robert Irvine traversed onto the East Face of Mount Teewinot to further investigate the scene of the Hensler fatality; specifically, to locate and retrieve the ice ax that was presumed to have been in the possession of Hensler at the time of his accident.

Upon locating the accident scene at approximately the 11,400 foot elevation (slightly higher than the original estimate), Magnuson and Irvine searched the area. At a point approximately 150 to 200 vertical feet above the ledge where Hensler's body was found, a light colored object was observed in a crack. This object was likely the same item observed at the time of the body recovery and reported to be a faded yellow sling. However, further investigation—aided by a monocular—determined this item to be the shaft of a wooden ice ax. The ax was at the top of a steep chimney, aligned with the likely “fall line” that the victim would have taken during his fall. Upon retrieval of the ice ax (which required 5.6 climbing moves), a billed ball cap was also located, approximately 20 to 30 feet below the ax. The head of the ax was positioned in a crack as if it had been intentionally placed or “hooked” there. Given the difficult terrain above the top of this chimney, it seems likely that Hensler was attempting to *ascend* this steep headwall. The location of the accident is, to confirm what was reported by rangers Byerly and Culbreath, a good 100 yards north of the East Face route. (Source: Mark Magnuson, SAR Coordinator, Grand Teton National Park)

(Editor's Note: In a follow-up interview with Lance Brown, it was learned that the climbing plans had changed due to Keith Hensler's having experienced severe stomach cramps—from drinking double strength Gatorade—on September 1 during their ascent to Surprise Lake. They returned to Lupine Meadows the next day, but Mr. Hensler felt bad about having to cancel his trip, so he offered to buy his friend a guided trip on the Grand with Exum Mountain Guides. While Mr. Brown did this climb on September 3 and 4,

Mr. Hensler made the decision to do the solo attempt.

There is a certain amount of psychological preparation needed for climbs. When plans change and a new objective is chosen—especially if it is in haste, achieving a good frame of mind may be sacrificed for the sake of following a schedule.)

OVERDUE

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Grand Teton

On the afternoon of September 18, rescue coordinator Mark Magnuson was notified of three overdue climbers on the North Face of the Grand Teton. A check of the trailhead found the subjects' vehicle still in the parking lot. According to the reporting party, roommate and co-worker Lauren Gaylord, the group of three—George Stacy (26), Todd Walther (27), and Adrian Foreman (29) had left Jackson just before noon on Saturday, September 16. Their intent was to climb the North Face route and return home on the 17th via Garnet Canyon. As of noon on September 18, they had not returned home and had missed work.

Rangers located the party's vehicle still parked at the Lupine Meadows Trailhead. A check of permits for additional information revealed that the group had not signed out for the overnight, as required by park regulations. An investigation was initiated, including efforts to locate other climbers who had been on the North Face during that period of time. Through this process limited additional information was obtained. Ranger Leo Larson was sent to a vantage point on the Teton Park road with a spotting scope, but was unsuccessful in locating any persons or clues on those portions of the North Face route visible through the scope.

Contact was made via radio with ranger Sara Levson, who was hiking up Garnet Canyon for an overnight at the Platforms. She had not seen the party in question. Climbers descending from upper Garnet Canyon had not seen a group matching the description of the three.

With approaching inclement weather, the complexity of the North Face of the Grand Teton, and information obtained regarding the experience level and equipment of the climbers, Magnuson requested the Yellowstone contract helicopter at 1600 to respond to Lupine Meadows to initiate a reconnaissance flight of the intended route. At 1700, just prior to the Yellowstone helicopter's arrival, the overdue climbers contacted park dispatch by telephone from Dornan's. (Rangers had left a note on their vehicle instructing them to call as soon as possible if they returned.)

Analysis

A follow up interview of the three climbers by rangers Magnuson and Jackson found the following information: Stacy, Walther, and Foreman departed Jackson at 1100 on September 16 to climb the North Face of the Grand Teton. They hoped to climb the first four pitches of the route and bivouac on the first ledge that night. Due to a late start, long approach, slow climbing progress, and route-finding problems, they were forced to spend the first night at the top of the third pitch on a marginal ledge. They continued climbing on the 17th but encountered similar problems, spending that night on the lower section of the second ledge. It then took them until 1300 on the 18th to traverse off the second ledge to the upper saddle. They stated that they expected to find rangers at the Lower Saddle patrol hut to report their status, but none were there. (Rangers Gary Wise and Bill Culbreath had just departed that morning.) They continued hiking