

Analysis

The French-speaking Quebec hikers, who had some winter hiking experience, may have misunderstood the warning signs, said Rebecca Oreskes, a public information specialist for the U. S. Forest Service. Nonetheless, the hikers had been advised by AMC personnel in the area not to attempt the hike up the mountain as conditions on the summit were extreme—with minus 33 degree temperatures and 100 mile per hour winds—and the avalanche danger on the mountain's lower slopes very high.

The Lion Head winter trail, long a favorite of winter climbers on Mount Washington, was closed by the Forest Service two months ago after a late autumn landslide created increased winter avalanche risks along the route. Last month the Forest Service established a new alternate route up the mountain. This new route, while steeper than the Lion Head winter trail, is signed and open for winter hiking use. (Source: From an article by Mike Dickerman in *The Courier*, Littleton, NH, January 10, 1996)

(Editor's Note: Had Cassan's partners done a hasty search before going for help, they might have seen his hand. This was one of six deaths in the Presidential Range, four of which would be classified as skiing- and hiking-related incidents. Two were skiing on Gulf of Slides when another skier triggered an avalanche, and they were in the path of it.

Two other fatalities were the result of falling. In one case, a man on top of Lion Head rocks dropped his sun glasses, and when he went to recover them, he fell into Tuckerman Ravine. The other case was a climber who took off his rope on easy ground near the top of Pinnacle Gully and went to see other climbers. He fell to his death, just missing two other solo climbers.

The sixth victim died from exposure and hypothermia during his descent from Mount Eisenhower on a cold winter day.)

FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS—GLISSADING**New Hampshire, Frankenstein Cliff and Gulf of Slides**

At Frankenstein a woman was doing a seated glissade from just below Standard Route. She caught a crampon and was flipped face down for the remainder of the slide to the tracks. Her ankle was injured and she had to be carried to the parking lot.

In the Gulf of Slides a man was doing a seated glissade when he caught a crampon. He flipped and impaled himself on his ice ax through his mid-section. He walked out to the AMC Pinkham Notch Camp with the ax still through his abdomen from the upper left to lower right quadrant. No organs were injured.

Analysis

There is no good reason for glissading with sharp spikes on our feet. (Source: George Hurley)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION**New Hampshire, Cathedral Ledge, Book of Solemnity**

On August 15, a husband and wife team were climbing The Book of Solemnity on Cathedral. The leader crossed the crux traverse (5.9+) in the second lead without placing protection. He belayed at the end of the traverse at the trees on Upper Refuse. The second climber fell while trying to make the hard moves at the crux. Since the rope ran

nearly horizontally to her left, she swung down and left into the wall, sustaining a very bloody compound dislocation and fracture of her left ankle.

Analysis

How can this kind of accident be prevented? First, a leader could continue the lead until he is directly above the crux. This option would require a leader on The Book to climb the 5.5 third pitch of Upper Refuse without placing protection. Using double ropes (the UIAA wants us to call this “half-rope technique”) and clipping only one rope after the crux would allow both leader and follower to have protection. Second, a leader could place protection on the traverse. On The Book, a small Tricam or SLCD fits in a downward opening slot in the middle of the crux.

What could a second climber do when she gets to the start of a dangerous and unprotected traverse? She could leave in the last two (or more) pieces of protection before the traverse and ask to be lowered. On The Book, a 50 meter rope would put her back on the tree-covered ledge. Second, she could leave her rope through the highest protection (adding pieces if she doubts their safety), fasten one end of a quick-draw to her harness and the other end to the rope above (beyond) the protection, and ask the leader to slowly lower her across the traverse. Or, if she is dragging a haul line she could use the haul line, running from her harness through the protection and back to a belay device on her harness, to lower herself across the traverse. The second will end up well below the leader which is OK if there is climbable rock or if she knows how to prussik. If the leader did the lowering, the second will need a place to stand (or hang from a prussik) while she ties a figure-of-eight on a bight on the strand of rope going up to the leader. After she clips this knot to her harness with a locking carabiner (or with two opposed ordinary ‘biners), she can untie her original tie-in knot and pull the tail of the rope through the gear which she happily deserts. Another option does not abandon gear, but is more complicated. Ask. (Source: George Hurley)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

New Mexico, Sandia Mountains, Muralla Grande

On June 23, Carlos Abad (26), Jane Tennesen (33), and Glen Tietgen (35), fell 816 feet from Muralla Grande, a massive face of granite east of Albuquerque. They were ascending a route called Warpy Moogle (III, 5.9), a climb with eight pitches. The route is clean, with solid crack and face climbing.

After the party failed to return home, search and rescue teams were dispatched. They found the climbers at the base of the wall, and proceeded with an investigation.

Analysis

Based on careful examination of the route, the equipment left behind and the damage it sustained, the following is a possible scenario.

Carlos Abad leads the last pitch (5.6) and tops out. Jane Tennesen goes off belay, undoes her anchor, and begins climbing, with Glen Tietgen putting her on belay from below. Abad then falls from the top, zippering out the stopper he had placed and putting a major impact on a Friend, which umbrellas out. The force of his fall pulls his partners with him.