

of a larger helicopter to insert the entire team close to the accident scene. At 7:30 p.m. a team of nine rangers was transported to the summit in an Army Chinook and ranger Brenchley led the hasty team of three to the accident scene to assess the situation while Gauthier organized the remaining rescuers for a technical lowering and possible crevasse extraction with litter. Upon arriving at the crevasse, Brenchley's team found Don McIntyre dead and his partner Joel Koury injured but ambulatory. At this point, the sun was setting and teams were restructured; Brenchley descended with Koury and six other rescuers back to Camp Schurman while Gauthier and Kellogg stayed at the crevasse with McIntyre to begin removal operations early the next morning.

The weather remained good the following day and plans were made to fly Koury and the seven rescuers out of the field while Gauthier and Kellogg prepared McIntyre's body for a hoist operation from 13,300 feet. Late morning mechanical problems prevented the Army helicopter from flight and a smaller helicopter was used to transport Koury and the team at Camp Schurman to Ranger Airfield. Unable to hoist with a small helicopter at such a high altitude, Gauthier's team secured the body well out of sight and away from the climbing route for an extraction when a suitable helicopter could be obtained. Weather and the heavy climbing activity prevented helicopter operations for the next five days. On Monday August 4, Rangers Gauthier, Yelverton and Olver were flown to the summit and down climbed to the hoist site. The Army Chinook was able to hoist the body and the team was picked up on the summit.

### **Analysis**

The upper mountain of Rainier is notorious for sudden and unexpected storms that cover the climbing routes and leave climbers disoriented. The newly deposited wet snow made conditions very slick and was sticking to their crampons. Frequent "banging" with an ice ax was required to clean them and most climbers are unlikely to stop, anchor and then clean their crampons. Due to McIntyre's close proximity to the edge of the crevasse, there was little room for self arrest and a simple fall turned into a serious accident. (Source: Mike Gauthier, SAR Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

## **FALL INTO CREVASSE, GLISSADING INSTEAD OF WALKING, UNROPED Washington, Mount Rainier, Inter Glacier**

On August 3, Chris Kapaun was glissading unroped down the Inter Glacier and fell into a crevasse. His partner, Troy Hendrickson witnessed the fall and climbed back to Camp Schurman to report the accident. Rangers Puryear, Kellogg, M. Ronca and C. Ronca responded from the Camp Schurman ranger station with rescue litter and gear. Ranger M. Ronca descended into the crevasse and assessed Kapaun's injuries which included a compound fracture of the arm and possible head injuries. Kapaun had fallen 50 to 70 feet and was not wearing a helmet. With the assistance of other climbers, Kapaun was raised from the crevasse and packaged in a rescue litter. Rangers Gauthier and Olver climbed to the site and began the lowering to meet other ground teams which were assembling in Glacier Basin for a carry out. At the base on the Inter Glacier, Kapaun's injuries were reassessed, and it was determined that he could walk out on his own with the aid of rangers.

### **Analysis**

The Inter Glacier is the primary route for climbers and skiers attempting Mount Rainier's Emmons Glacier. Although the glacier is small by comparison, it still has many large

crevasses and icy sections which necessitate one or two rescues every year. It is strongly recommended that climbers (especially those new to the area) rope up during all glacier travel, even on the Inter.

Glissading is a popular descent technique. However glacier conditions change weekly and old glissade paths frequently lead to newly exposed crevasses. Kapaun did not check his descent path and was unable to see what was ahead of him while sliding. Although the path may have been crevasse-free the week before, that was no longer the case. We strongly recommend that climbers hike down the Inter glacier, or at least check their descent path. (Source: Mike Gauthier, SAR Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

## **STRANDED—LOST, INADEQUATE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT**

### **Washington, Mount Rainier, Disappointment Cleaver**

Early on the morning of September 1, the two-person Connell party called Mount Rainier communications by cell phone to report that they had lost the climbing route in a white out and were unable to find their way up or down the mountain. Without any bivy gear, the party requested a rescue. Rangers Beilstein and Holien were notified at Camp Muir where they prepared for a climb and set out to locate the lost party. After three hours of climbing, the weather cleared and the rangers were able to make contact with them at 12,800 feet. They escorted the team back to their camp at 11,000 feet.

### **Analysis**

The Connell party was climbing the popular Disappointment Cleaver route which normally has a well established boot track to the summit. It was reported to the party when they registered that storms during the preceding days had covered parts of the route. Carrying only fanny packs, the climbers did not have a map, compass or bivy gear and were unable to help themselves. Poor weather had been predicted and other parties reported seeing them head into the clouds earlier that morning. The route becomes entirely glaciated above 12,300 feet, and the climbers were unable to use any ground features for navigation.

Carrying the appropriate gear for a summit climb or day trip is strongly recommended, especially when foul weather is predicted and the route is difficult to follow. Although a cell phone enabled the climbers to request help, proper gear including map, compass and wands would have allowed them to find their route back to camp, thus avoiding the need for rescue. (Source: Mike Gauthier, SAR Ranger, Mount Rainier National Park)

## **FALL ON ICE, ICE SCREWS PULLED OUT—SOFT ICE, FATIGUE**

### **Washington, Mount Rainier, Nisqually Glacier**

Mount Rainier communications received a report of a fallen climber on the Nisqually Glacier from a cell phone call on September 6. The reporting party, a Seattle Mountaineers instructor, indicated that a climber in his group had fallen during ice climbing practice. The climber, Eric Brunson, was leading a moderate angle ice climb in a popular practice area on the Nisqually glacier. Brunson fell near the top of the climb shortly after placing his last ice screw. Due to soft ice conditions, all of his ice screws pulled out and Brunson fell to the ground, a distance greater than 40 feet. Brunson, who was wearing a helmet, sustained a possible back injury during the fall. His team members then moved him to a less hazardous area and the team called for a rescue.