

In the meantime, J.R. was reported overdue by his roommate at 1000 on February 22. Details were sketchy about his destination; all that R.P. knew was that his roommate had gone to the Icefields, and possibly to Mt. Snowdome. Upon further investigation, it was determined that J.R. was likely attempting Slipstream. J.R. left a note with R.P., saying that if he was not back on Monday that something had gone wrong. J.R. was a very skilled ice climber with minimal winter mountaineering experience.

Wardens initiated an investigation, which included a ground search party skiing towards the base of Slipstream, and a helicopter response. The search party found no evidence of human activity, however visibility was poor due to high winds, blowing snow and obscured skies. The helicopter was on standby waiting for suitable flying conditions. By 1700, the helicopter was still grounded. At 0200 on February 23, R.P. called wardens to inform them J.R. had returned home, and was in the hospital with frostbite.

### **Analysis**

Soloing has become increasingly popular, but there are several hazards that go along with it, aside from the obvious lack of belay capabilities. Most notably, the summit of Snowdome, as well as the lower glaciers, is riddled with crevasses, making unroped travel hazardous. The probability of staying healthy on the Columbia Icefields in bad weather with no bivouac gear is considerably reduced when alone. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service, victim)

## **FALLING ICE, FALL ON ICE**

### **Alberta, Banff National Park, Mount Wilson, Oh Le Tabernac**

On March 17 the lead climber of a party of two was ten meters up the first pitch of Oh Le Tabernac, a water ice Grade 5+ route. He was just above his second screw when he heard a cracking noise. He told his belayer about it just as the ice he was standing on broke free. A ten by three-meter piece broke off and he crashed to the ground sustaining multiple fractures and serious head trauma. His partner stabilized him and ran to the road to get help. He was evacuated by heli-sling by a warden service rescue crew, flown to the Banff hospital, and then flown to Calgary. He died a few days later from his injuries.

### **Analysis**

This route usually has a horizontal crack across it due to the detached nature of the pillar. Although many climbers comment on this feature, this is the first serious accident resulting from it. It is unclear how much ice fell on the victim, but given his injuries, it is likely that he was hit by the large piece which broke free. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

## **CORNICE FAILURE**

### **Alberta, Jasper National Park, Columbia Icefield, Mount Andromeda**

At approximately 0230 on May 30, two climbers (22 and 23) departed the climbers' parking lot to ascend the Skyladder route on Mount Andromeda. Later that morning, they overtook another climbing party of three from Seattle near

the top of the route and proceeded along the summit ridge towards the summit of Mt. Andromeda. The pair was last seen by the Seattle climbers some distance above them, standing near a cornice. Some time later, when the Seattle climbers looked up again, the pair were gone from view. Their tracks were obliterated by blowing snow, so it was not clear whether the climbers had pushed on quickly to the summit. However the Seattle climbers reported the incident later that day in the event that something had gone wrong.

Park wardens initiated an investigation, but were limited by high winds and poor visibility. On the morning of May 31, the weather had improved enough for a flight over the area, and wardens immediately spotted two persons near the bottom of the Northwest Shoulder Direct route, on the glacier. Despite high winds, wardens were able to sling to within half a kilometer of the victims. Both climbers were deceased, after having fallen 550 meters down a near vertical rock face.

### **Analysis**

In reconstructing the likely cause of the accident, wardens believe that the two climbers were standing too close to a cornice on the summit ridge of Mount Andromeda, either together, or close enough that one pulled the other off when the cornice failed under their weight. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service)

## **PROTECTION PULLED, OFF ROUTE**

### **Alberta, Ha Ling Peak (formerly known as Chinaman's Peak)**

On July 6, two climbers set out on the Northeast Ridge of Ha Ling Peak (5.6/5.7). The climbers got off route on the third or fourth pitch, and discovered by the sixth pitch that the climbing was much more difficult than 5.7, the protection was next to none, and the rock was loose. The lead climber decided to retreat and attempted to be lowered from a Friend placed in a shallow crack. While being lowered, both of his pieces of protection pulled out and he fell past his belayer for a total of approximately 80 meters.

The belayer, J.S., lowered to his partner, and found him conscious; however, he soon lost consciousness and stopped breathing. J.S. performed artificial respiration, but soon left to call for help. J.S. reported the incident to some other climbers, and then returned to the base of the third pitch (the victim was hanging between the third and fourth pitches). Kananaskis Emergency Services personnel were slung in and removed J.S. in a screamer suit. The victim was pronounced dead, lowered to the base of the third pitch and heli-slung off the mountain. (Source: Kananaskis Country Alpine Specialist)

### **Analysis**

Both climbers were quite experienced. However, many climbers, both experienced and not so experienced have gone off route on the Northeast Ridge of Ha Ling. The climbers did not have pitons or a hammer with them. Properly placed pitons (if it were possible) may have made a much safer anchor than one Friend placed in a shallow crack. (Source: Nancy Hansen)