

Gabe, Josh, and Dan all saw the block coming down after it had passed over a rise, before it hit their rope. They all reacted to it by moving (a few steps in each case) and going into self-arrest position.

This was clearly an accident caused by an act of nature. This group happened to be in the path of the sliding snow block. This was a random and unforeseen event, though one that should not be completely unexpected while traveling in steep, snow-covered terrain.

There were no contributing factors, other than being in the path of a falling object, that can be deemed as the cause of this accident. The course was traveling in reasonable terrain and conditions. They were keeping in line with NOLS Accepted Field Practices and general mountaineering practices. The response to the incident was handled well.

We will use this incident as a case study for mountaineering staff. (Source: Drew Leemon—NOLS Risk Management Director and Rachel Knapp—NOLS PNW Mountaineering Program Supervisor)

HEART ATTACK

Washington, Mount Rainier

In early August, Lawrence “Laury” Minard (51), a Seattle native who had moved to London to edit and write for *Forbes Global Magazine*, collapsed and died around 12,000 feet up Mount Rainier during a guided climb.

The Pierce County Medical Examiner’s Office on Friday reported Minard died of arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease, or ASCVD. The condition occurs as fatty plaques build up on artery walls, limiting blood circulation and placing too much strain on the heart. Mountain guides who fought for 45 minutes to revive Minard said he stopped breathing soon after his collapse and never regained consciousness.

Minard’s collapse occurred while he was climbing with a guided party up Disappointment Cleaver, an outcrop of 45-degree rock bordering Rainier’s Emmons Glacier.

Guides with Rainier Mountaineering Inc. say Minard complained he was having difficulty catching his breath and needed to rest. He unclipped from the climbing rope and sat down, but he collapsed and stopped breathing minutes later.

RMI guides halted the climb and performed CPR and other emergency measures, said Peter Whittaker, Operations Manager for RMI. The efforts were witnessed by the other RMI clients, including Minard’s 16-year-old daughter, Julia. Minard’s body was later flown off the mountain.

Park rangers say the zig-zagging route up the Cleaver is usually the steepest and most exhausting portion of the most popular route up 14,410-foot Mount Rainier.

“It’s generally a spot where climbers recognize whether they’re going to make it or not. The top of the cleaver is a common spot for people to turn around and head down,” said Mike Gauthier, lead climbing ranger at Mount Rainier National Park. Climbing the mountain “is still really an almost extraordinary effort for people who are at a reasonable fitness level,” Gauthier said. “At the top,

they're wasted, they're tired—particularly when they're making a two-day ascent.”

Deaths involving heart attacks are virtually unheard of among the nearly 100 people who have died climbing Mount Rainier, its satellite Little Tahoma, or the park's lower peaks. This appears to be the first known case of a climber dying from a heart ailment high on the peak, according to park records. The only death high on the peak thought to have been caused by a heart attack or stroke occurred March 19, 1989, when 54-year-old Wenatchee pilot William E. Saul flew directly into Rainier's sheer Willis Wall. Saul's body was never recovered. (Source: *Bergschlawiner*, August 4)

FALL INTO CREVASSE, WEATHER

Washington, Mount Baker, Coleman Glacier

Rescuers reached two seriously injured climbers on Mount Baker and were bringing them down the mountain in difficult weather conditions Monday morning.

The drama began on Sunday, September 2, about 11:30 a.m. when one climber was killed and three others were injured after falling into a crevasse. The fall happened at the 8,600-foot-level of Coleman Glacier on the western flank of the 10,775-foot peak.

Whatcom County Search and Rescue crews and personnel aboard a helicopter from the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station located the group Sunday, but the chopper was unable to land because of the high altitude. A 42-year-old man with minor injuries was able to get off the mountain, and ground crews reached the two more seriously injured people on Monday, sheriff's deputies said. Foggy weather made another helicopter attempt impossible.

Identities and hometowns of the injured and dead were being withheld. The two injured climbers are a man with back and leg injuries who was camped out at the base of the glacier at the 6,500-foot level and a woman with back and neck injuries who was at the 7,000-foot level. (Source: Dispatch from KOMO-TV, on September 3rd from Seattle)

(Editor's Note: No other details were forthcoming on this accident. The report is included because of the fatality.)

FALL ON ROCK

Washington, Snowqualmie Pass, Chair Peak

On September 8, Chad Engstrom (23) tumbled about 600 feet down a 45-degree rock slope while climbing with his uncle, who saw the accident. Rescuers ran out of daylight and planned to return to the site today to recover the young man's body.

The pair were about two-thirds of the way up the east face of 6,238-foot Chair Peak, about two miles north of Interstate 90. After the two had reached an overhanging horizontal band of granite about 150 feet from the summit, they unroped and started scrambling up the loose rock, said King County deputy Randy Potter. The uncle, a less-experienced climber from Sammamish, grew uncomfortable and stayed behind. Shortly afterward, he heard rock fall, then saw his nephew fall, Potter said.