

STRANDED DUE TO MEDICAL CONDITION

Alberta, Banff National Park, Mount Temple, East Ridge

On August 27, while on a solo ascent of the Aemmer Couloir variation (IV 5.7) of the East Ridge of Mount Temple, W.K. started having neurological problems while ascending the couloir. He bivvied on top of the couloir and attempted to continue the next morning. He was still experiencing dizziness, and loss of fine motor control. When he became overdue, a search was initiated. Warden Service rescue crews flew him out from his location on the ridge where he was waiting for help.

Analysis

Solo climbing carries additional risks. In this case, the climber was fortunate to be able to continue to the relatively safe terrain above the top of the couloir. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service, Marc Ledwidge)

FALL ON ROCK, OFF ROUTE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

Alberta, Canmore, Mount Fable, Southeast Ridge

On August 28, F.L. and S.H. were climbing the Southeast Ridge of Mount Fable (Alpine II, 5.5). F.L. states: “ When we got to the base of the buttress, it was hard to tell where the route was, since the buttress looks like a big steep wall. So we hiked to the base of it, traversed (scrambled) right for about a rope-length and then continued scrambling up for about 25 meters. Then the route became more serious (steep rock with small holds and compact rock, but off vertical). Therefore I built up an anchor in good rock with two pieces (one nut and one tri-cam) equalized with a sling and a figure-eight knot. Before leading, I clipped my rope in the nut, which was my first piece. I started leading and climbed for two meters to a vertical rock band of about 0.5 meters. I placed a nut in a shallow crack, which didn’t look so good, but was better than nothing. Then I traversed right for two meters to have a look, came back in the middle (where my nut was) and traversed left for one meter (didn’t look good) and came back in the middle. The easiest climbing seemed to be on the right hand side, so there I went. The grade was pretty easy, about 5.7. (That’s probably why we didn’t turn back: it looked feasible!). The rock was about 70 degrees but hard to protect. I climbed the 0.5 meter vertical rockband and placed another nut in a shallow crack, which didn’t look good, but again was better than nothing. I traversed left for one meter. My last pro came off just because of the rope drag. I traversed left for another 0.5 meter and as I was moving my right foot above my left, my left foot slipped (perhaps due to some sand under my rock shoe). Since the holds were quite small, my handholds were more for balance, so I couldn’t hold my body weight with them and I fell.

My first and only remaining piece came off while falling, so all the force was on the anchor. I passed my belayer on her right-hand side and she stopped me. Her left hand got rope-burned. My fall was about six meters. While free falling, I bounced my right hand side once on steep rock and finally the rope stopped me. My chin was deeply lacerated and bleeding. I

had sharp pain in my right shoulder, right hip and both ankles. My right hand was deeply lacerated, as well as the outside of my right ankle. I managed to stand up on my feet and S.H. lowered me for about three meters to a ledge. She undid the anchor and scrambled down to me. With my first aid kit, she made a large arm sling around my right arm and gave me another triangular for my chin. Then she covered me with my fleece and Goretex jacket. She put all the gear in the packs, coiled the rope, took my car keys, and went for rescue.

The helicopter came one hour after the call. I was lifted to Exshaw and then transported by road ambulance to Canmore.” (He was diagnosed with a fractured scapula and a small pneumothorax. He will make a full recovery.)

Analysis

In the words of T.L.: “Obviously we were off route, the climbing being more difficult than 5.5. Next time, we should back-track and try to find the proper way up, not trying to climb stuff harder than the actual grade of the route.” The protection which the leader thought was “better than nothing” in this case, was not. (Source: F.L., Dave Stephens)

STRANDED, POOR CONDITIONS

Alberta, Banff National Park, The Finger

On September 28, a party of two was reported overdue from a climb on the previous day. A search by Warden Service rescue crews was initiated and the party was located on the rappels on the north side of The Finger (II 5.5). They had spent the night on a small ledge. Overnight temperatures were in the -5 to -10 degree C range. The helicopter toed into a nearby ridge and a rescuer was dropped off to make voice contact with the party. They requested assistance. A party was inserted by heli-sling onto the summit and the climbers were raised back to the top. They were then evacuated by heli-sling from the summit.

Analysis

Although it is likely that the climbers could have continued the rappels down to the notch below, they were unaware that the third-class slabs below were covered in snow from early season snowfalls. It would have been very difficult to negotiate this terrain safely. (Source: Parks Canada Warden Service, Marc Ledwidge)

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT

Alberta, Ghost River, Duveinafees

On October 8, around 1400, B.W. was leading the second pitch of Duveinafees (5.7) when his right foot slipped while bridging and lay-backing a corner. He pulled a fixed pin, a cam (2.5 Friend) and was caught by two fixed pins slung together. He fell about 25 meters hitting a ledge in a crouching stance about halfway into the fall. He landed two meters below and eight meters to the right of the belay. He sustained a femur fracture in the fall. His partner yelled for help and proceeded to lower his partner to the base of the cliff. He then