

“Then I heard a snap, a pop,” he said, of his fibula, down by the ankle. “I went a few more feet and stopped, because my other foot was buried under the snow. Similar to the friction of an avalanche, it built up a hard substance around my leg.” Once he dug out his other foot with the ice ax, McGregor said, he saw “that (left) boot had been twisted completely around. It looked like it should have been broke, but it wasn’t.” Herron, who got within 100 feet of the summit Sunday, did not see McGregor fall, as he was on the other side of some rocks at that point in their descent.

“As soon as I stopped myself, that’s when the pain hits real hard,” McGregor recalled. “I sort of focus on breathing, calm myself down, try to collect my thoughts, wiggle my toes a little, bend my ankle, then I feel the pain. I called for (Herron), he came over, and I said, ‘I’m not walking out.’”

Emergency dispatchers got a call on McGregor’s cell phone around 7:30 p.m. but somehow got the mistaken impression the pair were closer to Pamela Lake, a popular fishing and hiking area, according to Linn County Sheriff Dave Burright. Information that came in during the night made it clear that the pair were higher up the slope than earlier believed, at about 7,900 feet, the sheriff said.

“So we burrowed in and stayed there,” McGregor said. “Tom used the ice ax and dug kind of like a small snow cave, wind break. We took the climbing rope and put it on my back, for insulation from the snow, took the foam pad out of the backpack, put all our clothes on, and looked up at the stars and down at the rescue lights.

Linn County Sheriff’s Search and Rescue called for military helicopter assistance because of the danger and difficulty. The climbers were lifted off the mountain at mid-morning on the next day. After an hour at the emergency room, McGregor was released with a temporary cast. (Source: Robert Speik)

### **Analysis**

Neither my partner nor I felt comfortable dropping down the mountain without our crampons on. There were icy areas we crossed that would have been very difficult to navigate without crampons. Common knowledge states plunge stepping with crampons should not be done. It was equally impractical to install and remove crampons to suit the snow and ice conditions. We felt we needed them for the icy sections, realizing they were less than ideal in the soft snow. We saw no perfect answer at the time.

Here are two things I could have done: 1) Turned and faced the mountain to down-climb the icy sections we encountered; or 2) find another route down the mountain. (Source: Brent McGregor)

## **FALL ON SNOW—UNABLE TO SELF-ARREST**

### **Oregon, Mount Hood, South Side**

After successfully ascending South Side on July 23, Zach Usadi-Henrickson (20) slipped on a steep section of snow roughly below the “Mazama Chute”

as he was descending. He was unable to arrest the fall and came to rest just above the fumaroles (steam and sulfur vents) on the west side of the Hogsback at about 10:00 a.m. Usadi-Henrickson's two climbing partners helped stabilize his injuries and called for a rescue.

### **Analysis**

The Cascade Volcanoes are notorious for rotten rock. Climbers usually only climb the steeper technical routes when the freezing level is low and the rock is secured by layers of rime ice. Generally speaking, by early July, most of the ice on the upper mountain has melted away, significantly increasing the risk of rockfall. Additionally, the bergshlund crevasses on the south side of Mount Hood have usually grown to the point that they are a much more formidable hazard than they are during the "normal" climbing season (May-June.)

These individuals chose to climb Mount Hood on the hottest day of the year, with temperatures predicted to be near 100 degrees in Portland and a 14 to 15,000 foot freezing level. According to the climbers, the snow conditions were good at the time of the accident and did not contribute to the accident, though there was significant rockfall that presented its own risks and endangered the patient once he came to rest after the fall. This was the patient's first technical climb, and he may not have been aware of the risks they were taking and the normal protocols for climbing this mountain.

To avoid accidents like this, climbers should: 1) Climb early and during periods when the rotten rock is relatively secure with rime ice; 2) climb with experienced partners who have good judgment, know proper techniques and protocols, and have the proper equipment; 3) research climbs to understand what normal procedures are for the intended route, and any extraordinary risks that may exist; and 4) check condition reports to understand what recent observations may exist.

All three climbers in this party were certified Wilderness First Responders. This training clearly paid off as the patient's two climbing partners did an excellent job of assessing and treating injuries. However, this was one of the classic dilemmas where a patient presented with possible spinal injuries that would indicate that they not be moved, but the extreme risk of rockfall necessitated moving the patient to protect him and the rescuers from more serious injuries. Nevertheless, the party is to be commended for their patient assessment and treatment of injuries, as well as their cooperation with rescuers and helping in the difficult rescue effort. They did very well given the conditions they encountered. (Source: Steve Rollins, Portland Mountain Rescue, and various newspaper reports)

### **FALL ON ROCK—HANDHOLD CAME OFF, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE Oregon, Mount Washington, West Face**

JWS (40) and I (BC, 42) attempted the West Face route on Mount Washington on August 21. It is rated a 5.6 in Jeff Thomas' guide *Oregon High*.