

a group of climbers had reached the summit pyramid. There was light rain and fog. One rope team was starting up the summit ridge with another rope team moving on the snow along the base when a rock estimated at 200 lbs. slid after a climber removed his hand from it. The rock fell 15-20 ft. striking a member of a rope team below on the head and the right shoulder. The injured climber was dazed and felt that his shoulder was broken. He was given immediate first aid and made warm. Due to the fact that he seemed well oriented and able to travel, he was shifted to the center of the rope and started almost immediately back down from the High Cirque to Snow Dome to the Geophysical Year hut. This trip took about an hour and a half and the patient had to traverse several difficult areas. Two doctors were present in the party and second aid was administered and the patient was flown out the following morning when weather conditions permitted. His injuries included a large scalp laceration, skull fracture, and a severe concussion as well as a comminuted fracture of the right upper humerus and paralysis.

Source: Charles B. Andrews.

Analysis: Several points are worthy of comment. This injury could have been reduced if the climber had been wearing a hard hat despite the fact that this is generally considered a snow climb. A predetermined route to escape rock fall might have helped him avoid injury.

The evacuation of the climber was facilitated by having him move under his own power. Medical opinion at the accident believed that the patient would do himself less damage by moving himself than would have occurred had evacuation by litter been necessary. The fact that a patient with a head injury is often able to navigate rationally for a period of time following even a severe head injury may allow evacuation to a safer area. The severity of the head injury in this patient was not immediately appreciated by a number of persons trained in first aid as well as two doctors. As a general rule, all patients with head injuries should be handled as not being able to care for themselves despite the fact that they are able to help in their own evacuation. The importance of getting an injured climber to a warm, dry area, and prevention of further exposure, however, cannot be overestimated.

Alaska, Mendenhall Glacier. On March 19, Roger Morris (19), Gale Good (19), and Jerry Dove (19) roped together were climbing on the Mendenhall Glacier. One of the party slipped into a crevasse and pulled one companion after him. The rope broke near Dove who was flung free on the other side of the crevasse. Dove walked out and alerted a rescue party. Morris suffered cuts of his head and a hand; Good was bruised.

Source: Newspaper report.

Alaska, Mt. McKinley. On May 11, John D. Graham (65) and his party approached the summit of Mount McKinley. The wind was from the southwest at their back. With his all-down outfit, he did not realize it was 40 below zero. Felix Julen came towards him facing the wind. Graham saw that his nose was frostbitten. He shouted that they would have to put on their face masks right away. He had to pull off his down mitts in order to button his facemask. His woolen mittens inside the mitts

also came off exposing his hands to the cold wind. It was difficult to button his facemask with his cold bare fingers. The 80-mile-per-hour wind caused all his fingers to be frostbitten quickly. After completing the climb the party returned to base camp at 10,000 ft. where they were storm bound. Graham was evacuated by plane on May 20. He still has residual effects of the frostbite.

Source: John D. Graham.

Analysis: (Graham) The facemask should have had an elastic band instead of buttons. If the woolen mittens had had a tight elastic wrist band, or if silk or nylon gloves with elastic wrist band had been worn, the accident would not have occurred. In very windy and sub-zero weather, facemask should be put on before making the final climb to the summit.

Alaska, Mt. McKinley. Two members of the successful Italian expedition on the South face suffered frostbitten feet. Further details are not available.

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