

Bob Jordan had previously made available his ham radio set-up to the Camp. It was set up and functioning every night on a previously arranged schedule. Bob made contact with a radio ham in Calgary later that day and requested a helicopter for the bodies. The message was relayed to the R.C.M.P. in Golden. That evening at 2130 an Okanagan Helicopter with R.C.M.P. Constable Krenz flew into the Camp. A brief inquiry took place, and the bodies were flown out to Mica Creek with the last light.

On August 4th a further flight was made into the area. Corporal Dick Latta, a Club member, made a further investigation and retrieved the victims' effects. He spent about two hours at Base Camp. The majority of the information came from Howie Ridge, Bob Jordan, Jeff Mellor, Art Schwartz and Robin Lidstone. The Camp Manager and most of the remaining Camp participants were all away at various High Camps, and not aware of the accident until their return. The investigation facts were gathered for a Coroner's inquiry to take place in Revelstoke.

Source: R. Matthews

Analysis: The accident happened on a previously travelled and established route. It had been travelled at the earliest hours, and in the late afternoon, by returning parties. The Leader Roly Morrison had previously been over the route. On the day of the accident two parties had preceded the unfortunate group. Indeed, they descended to the scene of the accident to give aid in the recovery. The route was promptly closed by mutual agreement of all climbers, and not used again. The big factor in our favour, which saved the Camp from a major demoralizing incident, was the possession of the radio, which expedited the removal of the bodies.

The accident seems to have been one of the rare no-fault no-blame type which are few and far between these days. In short, it was a bad-luck incident. Bill and Roly were taken from us as swiftly and efficiently as Jake Breitenbach was taken from the Americans in the Khumbu Icefall on Everest, and in the same manner of passing.

*Alberta, Mt. Edith Cavell.* At about 0830 on Saturday, 19 February, four members of the Alpine Club of Canada: Jim Carlson (26), Peter Ford (35), Dr. Chris Smith (36) and Wayne Smith (35) (no relation to Chris Smith) arrived at the start of the Edith Cavell road. Although Wayne Smith had completed the self-registration form, no definite assignment of a leader within the party had been made since all were experienced climbers. Had the need arisen, no doubt Wayne, as the most experienced, would have been chosen by tacit agreement. The car was left at this point since the Cavell road is not ploughed in the winter.

A snowmobile and operator hired from the town of Jasper towed the party two at a time the nine miles to the Cavell Tea House at approximately 5,750 feet. A further two miles on skis took the party to the steeper slopes which lead to the col. The snow was harder here so the skis were left at the bottom of a large scree slope which was then followed to its top. From there steps were kicked in the snow to the col at about 7,600 feet at the foot of the east ridge, which was reached at about 1330. Extra clothing was put on at the col because of a cold wind. A cache of equipment was left there.

The lower part of the ridge has a wide gully leading up almost to the prominent shoulder at about 9,600 feet which may be seen from the town of Jasper. Step kicking was tiring in the hard snow so the party frequently

alternated the lead. The top of the gully was reached at about 1700 and the construction of a large snow cave was started some feet down from its top. Both stoves were melting snow and the cave was almost completed when its roof came crashing down. The whole party was then swept down some 2,000 feet to within a few hundred feet of the col. Pete Ford heard a loud crack and it felt as if he was being crushed as he began sliding head-first down the slope. He was unable to right himself but, as soon as the slide stopped, struggled frantically to free his head and shoulders.

Pete found Jim Carlson nearby, but an initial search for the others yielded only one rucksack. This contained a down jacket which he put on Jim, leaving the sleeves covering his hands, as he had lost his gloves. Jim obviously had a badly broken leg. He seemed not to realize what had happened and did not appear to be in pain as evidenced by his request to stand up if Pete would free his leg. Pete made a further search for the other two covering an area two to three hundred feet from where he and Jim had landed, but found only one more backpack.

Pete slid Jim's lower body into a sleeping bag and covered him with all available clothing. He explained to Jim that he was going for help and took note of his position. With a jar of honey and a headlamp from one of the rucksacks and with the aid of a ski pole from the cache, he started down at about 2000. No attempt was made to find the skis in the dark because of his inability to ski with his broken arm. A non-stop descent was made to the tea house where the attempt to find a telephone by searching for wires was fruitless. Without skis the return to the car through deep snow was an exhausting and time-consuming effort. By the time Pete had reached the car and driven to the nearest warden station, it was about noon on Sunday. The warden's wife phoned the Chief Warden and the rescue was initiated immediately.

A fully-equipped party consisting of Alpine Specialist W. Pfisterer, an R.C.M.P. officer, and 12 wardens met at the bottom of the Cavell road at 1315. A Bell 63B1 Alpine Helicopter arrived at 1430 and carried Willy Pfisterer and Max Winkler to the scene of the accident.

Jim Carlson and an assortment of equipment were found at once. Jim had died some time before of shock, exposure and multiple injuries. Due to blizzard conditions, another helicopter flight was delayed and the safety hazard increased for the rescue party. The helicopter returned to the accident site at 1600 with an R.C.M.P. Sargeant to act as Coroner and Warden A. Burstrom with his search dog Ginger. Meanwhile the remainder of the rescue team moved up to the end of the road by snowmobile from where two more wardens were airlifted to the site. Communication was kept up between the groups by V.H.F. radio.

The search dog located Chris Smith's body in only 10 minutes at 1630. The dog recovered many articles belonging to the party and found Wayne Smith's body last at 1745 close to where the first body had been found. Wayne Smith had died of asphyxiation — his only major injury being a dislocated shoulder, while Chris Smith had died from asphyxiation, shock and multiple injuries.

Evacuation of all personnel, bodies and gear was undertaken by the helicopter and the rescue completed by 2030.

Pete Ford had an operation on his broken elbow at the hospital in Jasper. The search dog and his master played a very important part in the rescue. Also, the helicopter had proved to be very efficient and time saving.

*Source:* Pete Ford, W. Pfisterer, and Don Linke.

*Analysis:* The members of the party were all fit, well equipped and experienced climbers and had been climbing together several times in the month. They registered for the climb using the Park's self-registration system (introduced a few years ago) and hence did not obtain any advice from the warden service on snow conditions. The Park's Service operates an avalanche detection and protection system at the nearby Marmot Basin ski area, which is only about 10 miles away from the accident site. The winter had been one of very great precipitation which had kept the Warden's service very busy at the ski areas controlling avalanches which left them little time to keep open the Banff-Jasper Highway. The road which had been kept open for the last few winters had to be closed for long periods this season because of avalanches. The history of precipitation in this area indicated the possibility of an avalanche. Earlier in the season there had been a heavy snowfall on top of an icy surface.

The climbers had had no indication at all of the avalanche conditions, either while climbing or while digging the snow cave. The snow came out in solid chunks with no sign of unbonded or metamorphosed layers. There was no cornice above the cave site. A warm front came through at mid-day during the climb and was probably a contributing factor. Pete Ford could hear several minute-long rocky sounding slides during the night as he descended. The cave had been located so as to be not threatened from above, but perhaps it should have also been located other than directly above the slope of the gully. Also perhaps several small caves would have been better than the large one.

Fast thinking and a "Joe Brown" hard hat plus a lot of luck contributed to the survival of Pete Ford.

*Alberta, Canadian Rockies, Mt. Athabasca.* On 20 May Ed Bennington (24), John Root (25), and Barry Watamaniuk (24) were travelling behind another party of three who led a route through the icefall which deviated somewhat from the traditional route on the true left. This variation appeared more reasonable due to a very heavy winter snowfall that had covered or filled in many crevasses and it had the advantage of partially removing the party from the objective dangers of falling ice. The party that had been leading was passed when one of its members dropped a hard hat at the top of the second ice-fall causing the three of them to go back down for it.

The snow was beginning to soften as the sun started to shine on it, so they decided to put on their skis at this point. A party of two on the usual route on the true left-hand side of the glacier passed at this time. John probed the area to the left of a large crevasse but found no signs of a weak snow bridge. John and Ed were waxed first and skied across the probed area to test waxes, then returned unsatisfied and applied a stickier wax. Barry finished loading gear and started off. He appeared to be off balance as he started, probably because he was unfamiliar with cross-country waxes. He may have fallen causing the snow bridge to collapse or it may have just collapsed dropping him about 100 feet. The two who had passed were climbing the third icefall at this time. They were beyond hearing and did not return.

After the accident two of the five climbers went for help and two of the others lowered the third who carried warm down clothing. The victim