

assure that there will be any feedback for climbers with inappropriate plans or options. In winter or spring it is not safe to descend a trail if the hiker has no knowledge of its current snow and ice conditions. Many gently graded trails traverse steep talus slopes; when the snow fills the trail the traverse may require high angle snow techniques. Other moderate trails may involve pitches which become technical ice climbs. In autumn descent routes with northern exposures might involve encounters with ice not found on ascent routes with other exposures. Under winter conditions, Huntington Ravine is a technical route for experienced alpinists; the Ravine should not be attempted by hikers. (Sources: Accident report by Mark Goebel (USFS) and Doug George (AMC) and a personal interview with Jim Snyder)

*FALL/SLIP ON SNOW—New Hampshire, Mt. Washington, Tuckerman's Ravine.* On Saturday, May 8, Scott Whinnery (25) hiked with two companions to Tuckerman's Ravine for a day of skiing. Scott was a professional ski patrolman and was considered an excellent skier. He was adequately prepared with conventional equipment of normal cold-weather downhill skiing; his gear did not include a crash helmet.

On Friday, May 7, it had rained hard in the Tuckerman Ravine area, thoroughly saturating the upper snow layers. Friday night the temperature dropped below freezing, and hovered near 20° F through Sunday. On Saturday all snow surfaces were frozen hard, an intermittent light snow began falling in mid-morning with a moderate wind, gusting at times to 40 mph, blew throughout the day. Many rocks were exposed at the surface because of abnormally early spring melting.

The fact that the skiing conditions were extremely icy had been prominently posted by the Forest Service Snow Rangers, and words of caution were extended to all visitors by the AMC, Forest Service, and Mt. Washington Volunteer Ski Patrol staffs. (Despite the poor conditions and unsettled weather, over a thousand people were estimated to have visited the area that Saturday, most of them skiers.)

Scott was hiking up the left branch of the uppermost section of Hillman's Highway approximately 12:30 p.m. and was nearing the ridgeline when he slipped out of a foothold and began an uncontrolled fall of over 500 feet down the main chute of Hillman's.

Two doctors were on the scene immediately and found Scott unconscious with shallow and labored breathing; he was observed to have suffered massive head and other injuries. When AMC and Forest Service staff arrived on the scene, the victim had already been secured in a litter and was ready to transport to Hermit Lake Shelter Area, a process that was slowed by icy conditions. Due to the condition of the victim, the Forest Service Ranger requested that a National Guard helicopter be sent. Despite high winds and limited visibility, the helicopter arrived at Hermit Lake Shelter Area at approximately 3:30 p.m.

During the wait for the helicopter, oxygen was administered to the victim,

and his condition was stabilized as much as possible; nevertheless Scott never regained consciousness. He died in the helicopter while in transit between Androscoggin Valley Hospital in Berlin, where he was first taken, and Mary Hitchcock Hospital in Hanover. (Source: Douglas George, AMC)

*Analysis:* When snow conditions are as described above, persistent skiers would be well advised to use a racer's crash helmet. (Source: Douglas George, AMC)

*FALL/SLIP ON ICE, BAD WEATHER—New Hampshire, Mt. Washington, Huntington Ravine.* Rick Welch (21) had soloed Pinnacle and was descending. He wanted to descend Lions Head to Tuck Trail but wind was so strong he decided to descend Central Gully. One-third of the way down Central, just as he was going to place an ice screw, a gust of wind took him off his feet. He was in a controlled self-arrest until he hit an ice bulge. The ice axe was ripped from his hands and he fell over the bulge, breaking his legs. He decided to fall head first to prevent further injury to lower extremities. Fortunately he had a helmet (an Ultimate by trade name) and sustained only contusions of the upper extremities in the rest of the fall. He fell 500 to 600 feet and landed in a boulder patch half way down the fan. I helped him from the exposed boulder patch to a more protected area and collected his gear. We belayed three times to reach the bottom of the fan where we met the rest of the litter party, and littered him to the Wildcat Snowcat at the junction of Tuck Trail and Huntington Fire Trail and evacuated by cat. On the way down Don Dercole of USFS sustained a broken leg in a fall on ice in the Tuck Trail.

It is fortunate that no one else was injured by the icy conditions and that no one was spiked with crampons, as many were worn in the evacuation and descent. It was also fortunate that Welch had the foresight to fall head first to prevent cartwheeling, which seems to cause much more severe injuries. (Source: Chuck Boyd, AMC)

• *PARTY SEPARATED, STRANDED—New Hampshire, Mt. Washington, Huntington Ravine.* To the left of the main gully (Central Gully) in Huntington Ravine are several precipices, the lower of which is known as "The Pinnacle." Several technical climbing routes are established on the Pinnacle, although to this writer's knowledge no official written description of the routes exists.

Edward Wuensch (in his late 20s) of Penfield, New York, and Don Berens (mid-20s) of Rochester, New York, hiked to Hermit Lake Shelter Area on Saturday, July 3, to spend the night. Their intentions were to climb the Pinnacle the next day and return to Hermit Lake for the night. Wuensch was described as an "intermediate climber with three years' experience" by Berens, who said he himself had climbed "seriously for a year and a half."

Sunday, July 4, was predominantly sunny with a light breeze blowing all