

ing to friends, and were using separate ropes tied to one sling and anchor point. The sling knot "slipped" as they went over the edge. (Source: Don Mattox, Albuquerque Mountain Rescue Council)

Analysis

At times it is necessary to rappel using only one anchor point. Even then, the anchor point, though it may be a tree two feet in diameter, is only as good as the means by which the rappel rope is secured. Two rappel ropes coming from the same anchor point is not unreasonable under certain conditions, but using separate slings is the minimum which might have prevented at least one of these accidents. The type of knot used was not mentioned, but would be worth knowing. (Source: J. Williamson)

FALL ON ROCK, WASPS

New York, Shawangunks

On July 15, a 23-year-old man was climbing Fat Stick, a 5.7 route, when he was stung by wasps. He fell about 60 feet, sustaining only minor injury to an elbow and hip. (Source: Brad Snyder)

Analysis

Last year it was pointed out that perhaps snake bites are potentially less damaging than 60-foot falls. Bee stings should have been included in that statement. We know of a tragic case in Africa a few years ago, however, where a climber was stung to death by very large bees. This editor and a climbing companion were once attacked by an owl whose nest we encountered while on a new route. This kind of incident may be more than just a rare occurrence. (Source: J. Williamson)

FALL ON ROCK, NO HARD HAT

New York, Shawangunks

On November 22, while seconding a traverse on Rusty Trifle, a 5.3 route, a climber (24) fell about 20 feet and fractured his skull. He was wearing no hard hat. (Source: Brad Snyder)

FALL ON ICE, NO PROTECTION

North Carolina, Whiteside Mountains

At 2 p.m. on the afternoon of February 6, 1978, Jeff Bates (21) from Atlanta, Georgia, was killed in a fall at the base of the North Face of Devil's Courthouse, a large granite outcrop on the north side of Whiteside Mountain near Highlands, North Carolina. Bates was a member of a party of three which had completed the ascent (possibly the first) of a 400-foot Scottish Grade V ice climb on the North Face of the Courthouse the previous day.

The accident occurred while Bates, Truette Stubbs (39) of Atlanta, and I, Dave Buck (26), of Atlantic Beach, Florida, were collecting equipment left the previous day. In that there was gear to be retrieved from both the base and the top of the route, the party had split up, with Buck collecting the equipment left in the woods at the top, while Bates and Stubbs went to retrieve the remaining at the base.

While Bates and Stubbs were on a large ice-covered ledge (about 15 feet wide by 35 feet long) from which the climb had been started, Bates was photographing the route from various angles. At one point he cramponed down a number of feet below the ledge on a 30-degree ice slope which formed the top of a long, low angle ice gully which extended over 200 feet below the ledge. While standing on the ice on the front points of his crampons he went to his knees, apparently to get a better photographic perspective, lost the grip of his front points, and slid down the gully for a distance of over 200 feet. As he first began to slide he seemed not to realize the danger he was in as he retained his grip on the camera, though he did make some efforts to regain his balance. As the speed of the slide increased, he let go of the camera and almost immediately thereafter his head struck an exposed rock, apparently rendering him unconscious. Even in the event that he had had an axe and had attempted to self-arrest, it seems highly unlikely that the attempt could have been successful due to the very hard surface of the ice and the many bulges and boulders in the bed of the gully. Although Stubbs cramponed down immediately to give any aid possible, Bates was dead when he reached him.

The two surviving members of the team reported the accident to the authorities in Highlands, North Carolina, and later in the afternoon, I returned to the scene of the accident with members of the Glenville Cashiers Rescue Squad to recover the body. The recovery operation was completed by 9:30 p.m. (Source: David M. Buck)

Analysis

Although I was not immediately present when the accident occurred, I have been told by Truette Stubbs, who witnessed it, that Jeff was very excited while they were at the base of the climb, very happy at having completed the best climb of his career. I know that we all realized the potential danger presented by the gully, having watched pieces of ice bound down it during our ascent of the frozen waterfall above the previous day, so I do not feel that Jeff, had he kept his mind fully on what he was doing, would have ventured into the gully unroped and without even an axe or helmet. Certainly under no circumstances would he have tried to brace his knees on the ice to get a photograph. Based upon what I know of Jeff's knowledge and ability on ice, and what I have been told of the accident, the only judgment that I can draw is that in his excitement Jeff let his emotions overcome his thinking and made two basic yet tragic errors: he climbed, unroped and ill equipped, into a potentially dangerous position and then tried to brace his knees on a slope of pure water ice.

The possibility that Jeff might have survived the fall had he been wearing a

helmet, as we all did on the climb, must be considered. Whether or not it would indeed have saved him I cannot even guess as I do not know the extent of any internal injuries he sustained in the fall. It can certainly be said, however, that a helmet would have offered some protection at least.

If there is a lesson to be learned from Jeff's death, it is, I think, that none of us can allow our concentration to fail for even a fraction of a second while we are in the mountains. No matter how easy the terrain, how apparently safe the position, we must not allow our minds to wander from the job at hand; we must not let the emotions of the moment overcome our control. (Source: David M. Buck)

SLIP ON SNOW, FAILURE TO USE EQUIPMENT

Oregon, Mt. Washington

On November 12, 1978, Richard D. Swanson (19) and Richard A. Wolf (18), both of Eugene, Oregon, left their car at 7:50 a.m. for a climb of Mt. Washington's North Ridge. They hiked up the North Ridge, arriving at the base of the summit pinnacle at 11:30 a.m. As the pinnacle "didn't look good," according to Wolf, they decided to descend via the normal descent route down the western scree field.

Swanson went first. After descending several hundred feet, Swanson lost his footing and slid to the scree terminus below. The slope was 1700 feet long and averaged 30 degrees. The surface was loose snow, several feet deep at the top, turning to ice and wind pack below. Rocks protruded through the snow over the entire slope. Swanson apparently fell on an ice patch. Wolf removed his own ice axe from his pack when he encountered the ice and descended to Swanson, who was still alive.

Wolf summoned help from the Ski Patrol at Hoodoo Ski Bowl. An Oregon Air National Guard helicopter was dispatched from Salem. A ski patroller was airlifted near Swanson, who was now dead, but darkness prevented recovery until Monday morning, November 13. (Source: Rick Posekany, Santiam Pass Ski Patrol)

Analysis

November is a poor time for a beginner/intermediate climber to undertake a rock climb under mixed conditions. Neither climber had crampons, and both ice axes were strapped into their packs. Wolf took his in hand after reaching the ice from which Swanson fell. Conditions on the North Ridge, up which they hiked to the base of the pinnacle, should have alerted them to possible snow conditions on the descent route. (Source: Rick Posekany, Santiam Pass Ski Patrol)

FALL ON SNOW

Oregon, Mt. Hood

On August 8, two Hood River climbers were found dead near the summit of Mt. Hood by searchers who carefully crossed snow and ice made treacherous by the