

crampons, so Coleman could not effect an ice axe arrest to stop Clement. He was able, however, to dig his feet and hands into the snow well enough to stop Clement's slide after about 50 feet. Although Clement was stunned and seriously injured, he never lost consciousness and was able to help Coleman somewhat in descending further to a snow cave at the normal high camp at Thumb Rock. Clement's right arm and shoulder could not be used at all and thus could not protect Coleman if the latter should fall. A decision was then made to stay at Thumb Rock and wait for help.

Upon learning of the probable accident from Mork and Eldrenkamp, Wilcox notified Chief Ranger Bob Dunnagan at 2:30 p.m. who in turn informed Visitor Management Specialist Bill Larson. Wilcox asked Larson to get the Seattle Mountain Rescue high altitude response team to assist with the rescue. The team arrived shortly after 6 a.m. with two of the four members coming into the Carbon River Ranger Station via NPS helicopter (Aerocopters) and the other two in a personal vehicle. The plan at that time was to fly the team as close as possible to Thumb Rock where they would then evacuate the injured person by ground to a suitable landing place for a helicopter. Unfortunately, the weather deteriorated during the early morning hours and by 6 a.m., there were low, low clouds throughout the Carbon River Valley. An attempt was made by Wilcox to fly as an observer through an opening in the clouds to view the Thumb Rock area from the air, but the ship was unable to find an opening in the thick cloud layer. Instead, the four-man team, consisting of Steve Trafton (leader), Al Errington, Gary Glenn, and Don Goodman were flown up the Carbon River Valley to the foot of the Carbon Glacier where they began climbing toward Liberty Ridge. This flight saved nearly two hours of hiking time.

At 2:15 p.m., a Chinook helicopter came in, picked up Errington and lowered him by winch to the injured climber. After examination, the injured climber was placed in a hoist and lifted to the Chinook and flown to safety. The Chinook pilots have to be given credit for such a performance in a tight spot with gusty winds. (Source: John Wilcox, Mt. Rainier National Park)

Analysis

It is often on descents that a climber's attentiveness is off guard. These climbers were in a place where rockfall is not uncommon. (Source: J. Williamson)

BAD WEATHER, HYPOTHERMIA, NO EXPERIENCE

Washington, Mt. Rainier

Craig Hixon (28), who spent two nights on Mt. Rainier wrapped in a sleeping bag and a torn tent and without shoes, was found alive and well about 7:30 a.m. on Monday, July 2.

"Somebody was looking out for him," said a National Park Service spokesman, Larry Henderson.

Henderson said a MAST helicopter from Fort Lewis lifted Hixon off the mountain east of the Muir snowfield at 8:35 a.m. Hixon, who suffered possible frostbite, was flown to the Harborview Medical Center, where he was receiving oxygen.

Hixon, part of a nine-person Mormon Church group from Seattle, was found at the 8,500-foot level by a Park Service rescue team that spent the night on the mountain.

High winds and heavy snow hit the party, and the group split in two. Hixon tried to make his way down the mountain with three others—Kent Nichols (19), Keith Fickenwirth (15), and Ken Parkes (18).

All but Hixon came off the mountain yesterday afternoon. Nichols was suffering from severe hypothermia.

The party began a descent from 10,000-foot Camp Muir to Paradise Saturday morning.

Hixon lost his boots Saturday, according to fellow climbers. They had become waterlogged. "Hixon was conscious but hypothermic when fellow climbers wrapped him in a sleeping bag and a torn tent," Henderson said. "Frankly, the odds on finding him alive were not very good."

A snowstorm on Saturday and Sunday dumped six to eight inches of new snow and drifts of up to three feet at Paradise, Henderson said. (Source: *The Seattle Times*, July 3, 1979)

Analysis

Hixon had no climbing experience. (Source: Larry Henderson, Mt. Rainier National Park—from a newspaper article)

FALLING ICE

Washington, Mt. Rainier

Dr. John DonLou (34), anesthesiologist from Palos Verdes, California, said today he is still "shell-shocked" over the loss of his right arm in a climbing accident on Mt. Rainier and doesn't know what the future holds.

The arm was amputated above the elbow Sunday at Tacoma's St. Joseph Hospital, after what DonLou called "a freak accident" on Liberty Ridge, about 1,000 feet from the summit, at 9:30 a.m. on June 22.

"I have complete amnesia about the accident myself," DonLou said in a telephone interview from his Palos Verdes home. "I know only what my two climbing companions have told me."

Those companions—Jari Secher-Jensen of Tacoma and Bob Cedergreen, a Palos Verdes physician—said DonLou was struck by a falling piece of ice, weighing from 200 to 300 pounds.

"I was conscious for about ten minutes," DonLou said. "When I awoke, I was hanging, suspended upside down, and my right arm was useless. My friends, who were not hit by the ice but were tumbled a ways down the mountain, came back to me and moved me to a ledge about 50 feet above where the accident occurred. They wrapped me in sleeping bags and went for help. It arrived about eight hours later."

The arm, DonLou said, was so badly crushed that "there was no hope of saving it."

"I had come to your state for the express purpose of climbing Mt. Rainier," DonLou said. "It was a wonderful experience—until the freak accident."

DonLou said he had been climbing for about two years, mostly on rock. One of his biggest regrets, he said, "is that I probably will never climb again."

It is still much too early to talk about his future as an anesthesiologist, DonLou said.