

Analysis

Tying runners around trees of this size is a common practice among climbers in this area. Although this is the first reported accident of this type, perhaps it is a practice that should be reconsidered by everyone.

Although it is unlikely that a hard hat would have made a difference in this particular case (because of the size of the rock), had the rock been smaller or the distance that it fell not so far, it could have made the difference between life and death. (Source: Jim Mark)

RAPPEL FAILURE**Northwest Territories, Baffin Island, Mt. Thor**

On June 8, 1979, a party of seven Japanese climbers from the Shimizu Rock Climbing Club were attempting the west face of Mt. Thor. W. Yamazaki was working alone retrieving fixed ropes and had four ropes on his person. He had set up a rappel with a sling through three bolts when he fell 150 meters to his death.

The anchor point was subsequently checked and the bolts were in perfect order. No main ropes, including the rappel rope, were damaged. The sling was not recovered. (Source: P. Rousseau, Auyuittuq National Park)

Analysis

It would seem that an improper hook-up or sling failure could have been the only possible cause of the accident. It may be that the bulk of the ropes he was carrying interfered with his view of the hook-up.

Removal of the body to Pangnirtung by a five-man recovery party with assistance from the remaining members of the Japanese climbing party took an arduous 54 hours (both ways), with 38 miles covered by skidoo and komatik, and 28 miles covered by foot and mountain rescue stretcher. This illustrates the limited rescue potential in this isolated area where no helicopter or rescue aircraft are available or equipped for this function. (Source: P. Rousseau, Auyuittuq National Park)

(1980)

FALL ON ICE, INEXPERIENCE**Alberta, Kananaskis**

On February 17, 1980, Peter Haase (18) and Marvin Dean (17) were climbing the waterfalls at Heart Creek in the Kananaskis. Both of us had some experience at ice climbing, and I had taken several courses in the sport. This was my second time climbing this season and Dean's first. I had recently purchased a new set of roosterhead ice tools and this was my first time using them.

I led up a short vertical section to a ledge and placed a screw. The ice was very brittle and tended to shatter with every blow. The next five meters were near vertical, bulging somewhat, just below another ledge. I was having trouble placing my tools because of my inexperience with them. I went to place my hammer into the ice on the ledge, but on my first attempt it did not place well, so I removed it to try once again. In doing this, I pulled myself off balance, fell backwards, landed on a sloping section of ice about three meters below and then slid off head first. When the rope brought me to a stop, my legs hit Dean which knocked

him off his feet. I discovered that in the fall I had somehow managed to stick the scorpion tail pick of the hammer into my chest. After putting together the gear, we walked the kilometer to the car and drove to Rockview Hospital.

The pick had penetrated through five layers of clothing and had cut through the skin and the pectoralis major muscle. It cut, but did not penetrate, the chest wall. Treatment was seven stitches—five external and two internal. (Source: Peter Haase)

Analysis

Ice climbing is generally dangerous because of the sharp tools on one's hands and feet. It is generally unavoidable to land on one of these instruments. The probable cause of this accident was that I hadn't gained the proper feel of the tools, and it would have been advisable to have spent some time top roping. It is important to place one's tools with the first blow; however this is not always possible. (Source: Peter Haase)

FALL ON SNOW, INEXPERIENCE

British Columbia, Coast Mountains, Mt. Seymour

Michael Rempel (21) was hiking with two companions on February 23, 1980, when he fell 300 meters down the gully between Mt. Seymour's second and third peaks. At the top of the gully there were about 12 cm of new snow over an icy crust. According to press reports, Rempel had no previous hiking experience. It is not clear whether the party had ropes or axes.

His companions were unable to reach him and went for help. Following an unsuccessful rescue attempt on foot, he was evacuated by helicopter but pronounced dead on arrival at hospital, approximately five hours after the fall. (Source: I. Kay from press reports)

Analysis

It appears that Rempel simply ventured too close to the edge, slipped, and was unable to save himself. Faulty route selection may have contributed. Mt. Elsay, the party's apparent objective, can be reached by descending the gully in question, but this route is safe only for an experienced and well equipped party. Although not leading, Rempel may have been looking for the route when he slipped. (Source: I. Kay)

(Ed. Note: Again, a non-climber finds himself in a mountaineering situation, so we include it for illustration.)

FALL ON SNOW, SKIING, INEXPERIENCE

British Columbia, Coast Mountains, Wedge Mountain

A party of four had been helicoptered to the summit of Wedge Mountain on July 7, 1980, and was descending the northwest couloir on skis. Gerhard Slinger (27) had stopped near the top of the couloir to take photographs when he lost his balance, fell about 800 feet, and sustained fatal head injuries. (Source: D. Cathers)

Analysis

The party had no guide, was apparently inexperienced in mountain skiing, and unfamiliar with the route. The couloir in question is steep and so shaped that anyone falling from its upper part would (as happened in this case) strike rocks before getting to the easier lower portion. (Source: D. Cathers)